

Developing English for Specific Purposes Programs: A Literature Review

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Abstract: *English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a significant subfield within the realm of English language instruction. In Vietnam, the inclusion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is seen as an essential component within the curriculum of colleges. Developing a scientifically rigorous and efficacious ESP program necessitates a comprehensive study and investigative procedure. In order to provide further elucidation on the subject matter pertaining to the development of ESP programs, the author of this article gives initial findings from research conducted on the concepts, classification, and attributes of ESP. Additionally, the article outlines methodologies and sequential stages involved in the construction of ESP programs. The author of the article aims to provide assistance to educators who are actively engaged in the development of ESP programs and the compilation of ESP textbooks. The goal is to enhance their confidence and enable them to acquire a substantial amount of valuable and well-organized knowledge.*

Keywords: English Learning Approaches, ELT, ESP, ESP Program Development

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1. Introduction

Researchers have been debating the origins and appearance of ESP. According to Trisyanty (2009), ESP is an exciting movement in general English instruction that provides prospects for English instructors and researchers in new career domains. Meanwhile, author Trinh (2019) stated that ESP was born and evolved as a result of two fundamental factors: the growing need to study English, and the advancement of English in the fields of linguistics and educational psychology. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identify three factors that contribute to the popularity of specialist English. The first is the necessity for a new world following World War II, in order to give English the function of an international language uniting countries and promoting socioeconomic progress. Second, ESP is a language revolution in and of itself, in that it serves the demands of learners in more specific circumstances. Third, ESP not only gives language information but also diverse supporting skills and stimulates learners to be enthusiastic about the learning process. As can be seen, scientists have differing perspectives on the emergence of specialized English. This demonstrates that ESP is growing in prominence and role in English education.

English language teaching (ELT) is divided into two large branches, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP (English for Specific Purposes - English for specialized purposes) and EGP (English for General Purposes or GE - General English (basic English/general English)). Many researchers (Islam, 2014; Le, 2010; Trinh, 2019; and Trisyanty, 2009) have agreed on the aforementioned branching approach.

ESP is an essential aspect of English education for non-majors at universities in Vietnam. The necessity to teach high-quality university-level human resources, particularly in the trend of globalization, internationalization, and greater integration, necessitates universities focusing on producing ESP textbooks for students (Trinh, 2019). According to authors Nguyen (2010) and Tran (2015), developing ESP programs is always a big problem for teachers in universities and vocational institutions. Author Nguyen (2010) stressed that constructing an ESP syllabuses requires editing lecturers to thoroughly research and explore different themes in order to effectively serve the teaching task.

The author will clarify several topics linked to ESP and constructing ESP programs within the framework of this study piece. The author differentiates topics connected to ESP and emphasizes the peculiarities of ESP. In addition, the author offers ideas and steps for developing ESP programs. The information offered in this article will assist university lecturers in grasping basic theoretical knowledge before moving on to more detailed phases when participating in the development of ESP programs.

2. Contents

2.1. Definitions, Classification and Characteristics of ESP

2.1.1. Definitions

Researchers address ESP from a variety of viewpoints. As a result, there are numerous definitions. According to Le (2010) most English teachers believe that ESP is only employed in the learner's professional field, such as commerce, aviation, or entertainment, and this belief is not totally correct. ESP is defined as English used in professional work or to serve work in several majors (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Robinson (1991) defines ESP as English courses that frequently strive for the ultimate goal and are based on surveys and needs assessments to establish precisely what students must do and what they can do. Dudley-Evans (1998) defines ESP as a discipline designed to meet the specific needs of learners through the use of the discipline's methods and language activities, with a focus on typology appropriate language for these activities in terms of grammar, vocabulary, context, study skills, discourse, and style. Meanwhile, Richards and Schmidt (2010) claim that ESP is English used to convey information and is limited to specific domains, and that specialized English has vocabulary, syntax, and language elements that differ from Standard English. According to Lam (2011), all of these scholars agree that ESP must serve extremely clear and precise aims and demands of learners.

2.1.2. Classification

It is asserted that ESP courses are presently categorized into two distinct categories, namely academic and professional, on the basis of their intended objectives (Tran, 2019). Vocational and professional English remain subdivided subcategories of professional English. The tree of English teaching provides a comprehensive breakdown of ESP into three fundamental group representations: (1) English for Science and Technology (English for Science and Technology); (2) English for Business and Economics; and (3) English for Social Sciences (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

Academic English (English for Academic Purposes) and professional English (English for Occupational Purposes) are utilized to classify each of the aforementioned representatives. Nevertheless, academic English and professional English remain subdivided into even more narrow domains, including English for Medicine, Engineering, Secretarial Studies, and Psychology, among others. Depending on the teaching/learning content and the learner's particular goals and objectives, these sub-domains may be further subdivided.

Additionally, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) assert that without roots it is unfeasible to cultivate the language tree, which consists of communication and activity, and that instructors must have a firm grasp of the terminology. to underscore that feed is merely a branch of the tree and that the tree develops through activity and interaction, and to provide a comprehensive picture of their learner group through the explanation of the meanings of the terms of the various branches.

2.1.3. Characteristics

As was said in the preceding section, ESP is one of the main subfields of English pedagogy. However, ESP also has certain features that set it apart from standard English. Researchers of extrasensory perception (ESP) have attempted to identify defining features of ESP. Curriculum design, instructional

resources, linguistic features, instructional strategies, and intended audiences are all commonly cited aspects.

Materials, programmatic direction, and student agency are the three defining features of ESP classes (Trisyanty, 2009). Dudley-Evans (1998) organizes ESP's defining features into the following eight categories: First, ESP courses are tailored to the academic disciplines of their students. Second, ESP relies on the fundamental skills and practices of the academic field. Third, ESP is constructed from linguistic aspects (such as vocabulary and grammar), competences, and text genres suited to the tasks at hand. Forth, ESP can be related to or created for certain industries; Fifth, ESP can be used in specific instructional contexts. Sixth, ESP is created for adult learners, whether in higher education or the professional workplace. However, it can also be tailored for middle school students; Seventh, ESP is aimed at students with an intermediate to advanced level of English; and eighth, many ESP programs simplify fundamentals of the language learning process.

In the meanwhile, Lam (2011) described two categories of ESP parameters: absolute characteristics and variable characteristics. There are three indisputable features: In order to accomplish these goals, (1) ESP caters to the needs of students, (2) ESP employs the practices and procedures of the field it supports, and (3) ESP focuses on the variety of language that is suitable for these tasks in terms of grammar, vocabulary, study skills, discourse, and genre. There are also five distinguishing features: First, ESP can be related to or adapted to a particular field of study; second, ESP may employ pedagogical approaches that differ from those often used to teach general English (GE); third, ESP is typically aimed at adults, college students, or professionals in specific settings. (4) ESP is often reserved for students with an intermediate or advanced grasp of English; (5) most ESP courses presume or condition that students have a foundational understanding of language systems.

2.2. Approaches in building ESP programs

2.2.1. *The learning activities-based approach*

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) learning activity is considered a process in which learners use learned knowledge or skills to express new information. Here, learning foreign languages in general and specialized English in particular is no longer considered a perception but an experience based on a foundation of existing knowledge, the learner's ability and motivation towards the subject. the use of that specialized foreign language, and learning is no longer considered a brain process but a process of resolving negotiations between the individual and society. Society sets needs and individuals need to best meet society's needs.

Tran (2015) analyzes that the learning activity-centered approach is a combination of two directions: language-centered approach and skill-centered approach. According to the language-centered approach, the curriculum developer is interested in the language range of the learner and emphasizes analyzing the learner's needs by finding specific areas of language use. Meanwhile, the skill-centered approach is aimed at developing the user's language skills and analyzing the needs of the skills needed by language users.

With a learning activity-centered approach, curriculum and textbook developers need to analyze both the needs of what language students need to learn and the skills to use that language. Learning activity is considered a process in which learners use language and skills to grasp new information. So learning is an internal process of the learner based on the combination of existing knowledge, ability and motivation to use that knowledge. Using one direction or language as the center or skill as the center is not enough because then the needs analysis will be one-sided. Therefore, people who compose programs and textbooks always care about what learners need to learn (What), how to learn (How), and the output results (Outcome) of the learners. Learners play the role of both a learner and a helper to make adjustments to achieve the most effective learning.

Also according to Tran (2015) the approach of taking learning activities as the center will support the compilation of programs and textbooks with many advantages. This is expressed in the following four points: (1) Full understanding of learners' needs in terms of both learning needs (Learning situation needs) and usage needs (Target situation needs); (2) There is a close interaction between curriculum and textbook developers, learners and employers; (3) The content and teaching methods are consistent with the requirements of the course; and (4) The output results are consistent with the course objectives.

2.2.2. Content approach

Content approach is a way of stating a list of topics and themes of a certain field/subject. That is, focusing on identifying and answering the question: What do we want learners to know? This approach is mainly based on the educational content requirements of a science subject, so it is often "academic", heavy on theory and system, especially when the designer pays little attention to the potential, developmental stages, needs, interests and conditions of learners. Banh (2021) points out the characteristics of the content approach in terms of teaching goals, content, methods, environment, assessment, and educational products. Specifically, the author points out the following:

- Teaching goals: Focus on forming knowledge, skills, and attitudes; Teaching goals are not described in detail and are difficult to observe and evaluate; Take the goal of studying for exams and learning to understand as important.
- Teaching content: Content is selected based on specialized sciences, specified in detail in the program; Focus on the system of theoretical knowledge, the sequential development of concepts, laws, and scientific theories; Textbooks are seamlessly presented into a knowledge system; Rigid stipulation of detailed program content can easily lead to a lack of updates.
- Teaching strategy: Knowledge is transmitted by the teacher, and students assimilate the pre-established knowledge; Students are rarely critical and are often "passive"; Commonly, lesson plans are created in a linear format that is followed by the entire class; Students find it challenging to delve deeper as the information is readily accessible in books; Teachers employ a variety of conventional techniques, such as visual aids, hands-on exercises, and presentations.
- Learning environment: Usually fixed arrangement (in rows of desks), the teacher is in a central position.
- Evaluation: Evaluation criteria are mainly built on knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with the content learned, without paying enough attention to the ability to apply knowledge into practice; Instructors often have full authority in assessment.
- Educational products: The knowledge that learners acquire is mainly memorized; Due to available knowledge, learners depend on the Curriculum/Materials/Textbooks; little attention is paid to applicability, so educational products are less dynamic and creative people.

2.2.3. Capacity development approach

Banh (2021) believes that unlike the approach of a content-oriented curriculum, the approach of a capacity-development-oriented curriculum focuses on describing quality output amount. With this way of thinking, output quality is considered the "final product" of the teaching process. According to this approach, teaching quality management shifts from controlling "input" to controlling "output", that is, the learning outcomes of learners.

Sullivan (1995) pointed out 10 characteristics of a capacity development-oriented training program such as: (1) The competencies to be achieved will be carefully selected; (2) Theory is integrated with practice of skills; (3) Essential knowledge needs to be learned to support the performance of skills; (4) Learning

materials are key to the acquisition of competencies and are designed to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills; (5) Teaching methods that require mastery of learning, promising that all participants can master the necessary knowledge or skills, provided enough time is given and appropriate training methods are used. ; (6) The knowledge and skills of participants are assessed when they enter the program and those who already have the knowledge and skills can skip the training or that competency has already been achieved; (7) Learning must follow the learner's own pace and progress; (8) Appropriate training approaches including large group discussion methods, small group activities, and self-study are key components; (9) A variety of learning materials including publications, audio-visual materials and basic mastered role-plays will be used; (10) Completion of training is based on the results of all identified competencies.

Norton (1987) identifies five basic elements in a competency-based training system: (1) Competencies to be achieved must be carefully determined, verified and publicly announced in advance. ; (2) The criteria used in evaluating results and the conditions under which results will be evaluated must be clearly stated and publicly announced in advance; (3) The training program will provide for the development of individuals and assess each specifically identified competency; (4) Competency assessment will take into account participants' knowledge and attitudes but implementation of the competencies is the primary source of evidence; (5) Participants progress through the training program at their own rate depending on demonstration of achievement of specific competencies.

Paprock (1996) indicates five basic characteristics of this approach: (1) competency approach based on learner-centered philosophy; (2) access capacity to meet policy requirements; (3) approaching competence is a real-life orientation; (4) the capacity approach is very flexible and dynamic; (5) standards of competence are clearly formulated.

The author also explains that these basic characteristics lead to the advantages of the competency-based approach: (1) Allowing personalization of learning so that learners can decide for themselves to supplement their shortcomings. yourself to be able to complete your specific tasks; (2) Pay attention to output results; (3) Competency approach creates flexibility in achieving outputs: in unique ways appropriate to individual characteristics and circumstances; (4) Furthermore, the competency approach also enables the clear definition of what needs to be achieved and the standards for measuring achievements.

2.2.4. Output-based approach

To overcome the disadvantages of content-oriented programs, since the late twentieth century there have been many new studies on teaching programs, including many new concepts and models of teaching programs. Trinh (2019) argues that the output-oriented teaching program or, more broadly, output-oriented education, also known as output-driven education, is discussed. since the 90s of the twentieth century and is increasingly receiving attention from many countries.

The output-oriented educational program aims to ensure the quality of teaching output, achieve the goal of comprehensive development of personality qualities, and focus on the ability to apply knowledge in practical situations. to prepare people with the ability to solve life and career situations. This program emphasizes the role of the learner as the subject of the cognitive process.

Output-oriented teaching programs focus on describing the quality of output, which can be considered the "final product" of the teaching process. The management of teaching quality shifts from controlling "input" to controlling "output", that is, student learning outcomes.

The output-oriented teaching program does not stipulate detailed teaching contents but stipulates the desired output results of the training process, and on that basis, provides general guidelines for selection. content, methods, organization and evaluation of teaching results to ensure the achievement of teaching

goals, that is, achieving the desired output results. In an output-based program, learning goals, i.e. desired learning outcomes, are often described through general personality attributes (Attributes) and specific required outcomes (outcomes). through a system of competencies. Desired learning outcomes are described in detail and can be observed and evaluated. Learners need to achieve the required results specified in the program.

The introduction of training standards is also to ensure quality management of education according to output orientation. The advantage of an output-oriented educational program is that it facilitates quality management according to the specified output results, emphasizing the application capacity of learners. However, if applied in a biased way, without paying enough attention to teaching content, it can lead to gaps in basic knowledge and the systematic nature of knowledge. In addition, the quality of education also depends on the implementation process.

2.3. Steps to develop an ESP program

According to Banh (2021), any training program at the university level in general usually has to go through 5 steps. These are: (1) Analyze training needs and determine the context; (2) Determine goals and output standards; (3) Design the program; (4) Implementation; and (5) Program evaluation. For ESP programs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) recommended 6 steps in the following order: (1) Identify and analyze language use needs; (2) Identify and analyze learning needs; (3) Write programs; (4) Document writing; (5) Application; (6) Evaluate the learner's results after the course. Le (2010) believes that after being equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, teachers who compile ESP programs can start designing the program following these steps: Analyze learners' needs, language level, and scope of specialized knowledge; Determine the goals of the course; Determine the amount of knowledge appropriate to the duration of the course; Determine specific teaching methods and types of classroom activities; Determine testing and evaluation methods; Collect, select, classify and process documents for use in the program; Article design; Appraisal and put into use; Evaluate the program after the pilot phase; Editing and finishing.

3. Conclusion

As English training at the university level is currently focused on improving quality, ESP teaching is receiving more and more attention. In particular, the development of ESP programs and documents is of essential importance, directly affecting training results. Recognizing this problem, the above study has made an effort to understand and systematize basic knowledge related to ESP to help lecturers have good preparation when participating in compiling ESP textbooks. The main contents presented include definitions of the term ESP, characteristics and classification of ESP, approaches in building ESP programs and basic steps to carry out program development work. Although this knowledge does not introduce all aspects of ESP, it is also generalized, evaluated and selected to help teachers compile textbooks more effectively.

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