From Globalization to Corporate Communication: A Critical Review of ESP in Business English

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Abstract

This study explores the theoretical foundations, historical development, and pedagogical implications of English for specific purposes (ESP) in the context of business communication. It critically examines the development of ESP from a linguistic and pragmatic reaction to globalization by addressing the specific communicative needs of professionals in the business sector. The review emphasizes on the significance of need analysis, genre theory, and discourse analysis in developing proper ESP curriculum. Special emphasis is considered on business English as a lingua franca, intercultural communication, and the expanding importance of corpus-based research in building learner-centered curriculum. Though the domain has made tremendous progress, there are still issues in integrating standardization with the various, real-world demands of international corporate communication. This review suggests a more context-driven, flexible, and integrated method of teaching ESP in business context.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, business communication, need analysis, genre analysis, English as a Lingua franca

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) arose in the 1960s in response to the increased demand for personalized language teaching. Within ESP, business English has grown into a prominent branch known as English for Business Purposes (EBP). With the growth of worldwide trade, cross-border collaboration, and business expansion, business communication in English has become an essential ability. English for specific purposes is a kind of approach for English language teaching that focuses on professional as well as academic context and settings. It is not general English teaching but specialized English language teaching to address the specific goal according to the particular needs of learners (Anthony, 2018). It may use different teaching strategies, and it is designed for adults in their professional or specific areas. It is generally meant for intermediate or advanced learners of language. Notably, three factors; the demands of a brave

new world, a linguistic revolution, and an emphasis on the learner are responsible for the emergence of ESP.

Swales (2014) brought the theory of genre analysis to ESP, emphasizing on how language serves in different social settings in specific academic and professional contexts. The study particularly contributed the development of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). ESP as well-known paradigm that provides an adaptable and thorough understanding of ESP (Dudley Evans & St John, 1998). It combines the language analysis, needs assessment, and teaching methods, using aspects of both applied linguistics and language pedagogy. There is another theoretical impact that is the study of register and discourse, which stressed the link between language and context. It considers language as functionally determined by content area of subject matter, participants, and mode of communication of discourse. Discourse analysis has been used by ESP researchers to discover patterns of language use in specialized writings, helping to improve understanding of how meaning is created in academic and professional genres. Another theoretically interesting topic is the evolving role of the ESP practitioner. ESP instructors as more than just teachers; they are also needs analysts, course planners, material developers, and researchers (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Objectives

To explore the theoretical foundations of ESP in business communication.
To analyze current pedagogical practices and curriculum design of business communication.
To explore the challenges of teaching and learning of ESP.

Methodology

This research uses a theoretical literature review technique to explore and synthesize scholarly opinions on the usage of English for specific purposes (ESP) in business communication (Snyder, 2019). A library based research approach was used, depending on pre-existing scholarly sources to critically examine the use of ESP in business communication (George, 2008).This study uses a qualitative, critical review design to investigate the relationship between English for specific purposes and business communication. The methodology is based on a rigorous review of existing scholarly literature, curriculum models, and instructional methods.

The literature for this review was selected using inclusion criteria as suggested by Booth et al. (2021), for selecting from scholarly value for ESP, business English, or business communication. The study studies the theoretical contribution of different scholars and research publications included peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, and conference papers, especially applicable in higher education and professional business settings. This paper analyzed the research articles published mostly between 2010 to 2024, including seminal works regardless of chronology. The exclusion criteria included in this paper is exclusion of non-academic and blog-style articles from this research.

Historical and Theoretical Background of ESP

ESP was originated in the years following World War II, mostly in reaction to the rise of the world economy and the growing significance of English as the language of science, technology, and international communication (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). ESP was first established as a separate field under English Language Teaching (ELT) in the 1960s, mostly due to the need for English among professionals in non-English speaking nations, including scientists, engineers, and business people (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Sridevi (2017) explored the status of ESP in India and focused technical and vocational education contexts with their inherently multilingual and multicultural student populations who require tailored, discipline-specific English instruction rather than a general-purpose approach. English for academic and occupational purposes was integrated as a result of the growth of technical schools that teaches in English medium. Another study in Indonesia, Putri et al. (2018) reported that listening and speaking English language are most important in tourism and hospitality sector for their professional performance. They further claimed that ESP course should address these needs of learners to communicate appropriately with customers and stakeholders. In both vocational training and higher education, ESP grew popularity because ESP courses are in line with STEM fields which are becoming more and more available in Chinese universities (Basturkmen & Basturkmen, 2010). According to Fortanet-Gómez and Räisänen (2008), EU programs have strengthened ESP integration by promoting intercultural communication and content-language integrated learning. In certain fields, corpora are being used more and more to teach writing and vocabulary (Hyland, 2002). Bankole et al. (2023) reported that ESP is used in industries like mining, aviation, and healthcare. Universities and

polytechnics in South Africa and Nigeria have adopted ESP curricula. The influence of ESP programs on Pakistani graduates employed overseas is examined by Zahra et al. (2023). The study explored that existing ESP course designs may not fully satisfy the actual professional requirements, showing the need for curriculum revision and restructuring. Xing et al. (2025) did an auto-ethnographic study which reported the dynamic process of rural EFL teacher identity development. It emphasized the challenges and evolution of professional identity within a context shaped by historical, geographical, cultural, and pedagogical challenges.

Understanding how culture affects interpersonal communication is becoming more and more crucial in this era of economic and technical advancement, and intercultural competency is now more crucial than ever (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Teodorescu (2010) concluded a new ESP-based lingua franca that satisfied their requirements for intercultural communication, business dealings, and information sharing that had to be provided to non-native speakers transcending linguistic and cultural awareness in global environments, working together with individuals from various national, cultural, and language origins. A study in Bahrain, Ibrahim and Barnawi (2022), mentioned that English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in Syrian state Arabic-medium universities. This is a challenging category to define in the English language teaching discipline in terms of learners' proficiency because everything depends on how well a person knows English which need to be counted as a speaker of the language. Basturkmen (2025) reported that ESP has become more well-known for its professional and vocational uses as a result of the rapid increase of English language learners worldwide.

Learning challenges in ESP courses have been noted in other studies, particularly when learners tried to become well known with study techniques and technical terms in specialized fields (Tan et al., 2023). Hyland (2022) mentioned that there is the role of ESP teachers which is one of the most important elements affecting the success of ESP programs. These teachers must undertake a variety of tasks, such as planning courses, establishing goals and objectives, fostering a supportive environment, and assessing student performance. Anthony (2018) argued that the main concerns of ESP have always been concerned with needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation. Three primary areas of attention have been the focus of the discipline of ESP: language, pedagogy, and the learner's particular interests, whether they cover the area of academic, professional, or vocational. In the backdrop of globalization, ESP has emerged as the

primary communication tool in Englishized domains including science, technology, education, and business (Hyland, 2016). Basturkmen (2019) argued in the context of New Zealand that students are viewed by ESP in terms of their roles in work or study, and ESP courses emphasize needs relating to work or study rather than general interests or personal needs.

With the growth of English learners all over the world, ESP has gained popularity for vocational as well as professional purposes. ESP has a strong foundation and places an important role in facilitating people to do communication in different profession (Sarré & Whyte, 2017). A study in Vietnam (Pham, 2013) concluded that ESP teaching and learning facilitate in business communication and its development is also increasing in the universities of the USA and UK. Another study in Vietnam (Tran & Pham, 2022) concluded that smart devices and high tech modern equipments, contextual practices and need based content facilitated in ESP teaching and learning.

Enesi et al. (2021) in the context of Albania reported that communication and performance is the key for success or failure in the long run of ongoing educational process. ESP lecturers teach from more than the prescribed course book including materials made from real life communication and implementing effective approach to teaching. Estaji and Rahimi (2014) concluded in the context of Iran that both ELT and ESP classrooms should be recognized by educators, supervisors, curriculum and materials designers, teacher trainers, and language policy makers. Another study in the context of Saudi Arabia, Us Saqlain et al. (2020) concluded that the foreign writer's text makes it more difficult for students to learn ESP so that there is need of contextualized learning. Chen and Wu (2013) mentioned in the context of Taiwan, to help students meet the demands of the labor market, business English teachers should focus on students' English language proficiency, business background knowledge, attitude, communication skills, ability to think independently, and adaptability. Dou et al. (2023) in the context of Malaysia reported that international development and globalization in the case of language education program have inspired a rapid transition from learning traditional English for specific purposes. The study also concluded that there is a necessity of need analysis and curriculum should be tailored to particular student-centered needs. Similarly, another study in the context of Cyprus and Greece (Kakoulli-Constantinou & Papadima-Sophocleous, 2020) reported that development in information and communication technology have changed the way people

interact, learn and communicate. The study also claimed that ICT tools are important tools in teaching and learning of ESP.

Fitria (2020) in the context of Indonesia concluded that there are many challenges in teaching and learning of ESP such as lack of teachers' qualification, low-quality textbooks, untrained teachers, diverse learners, demands of learning ESP, multilingual settings, lack of proper ICT equipments, and lack of need-based curriculum. Similarly, in the Indonesian context, a study undertaken by Iswati and Triastuti (2021) revealed that lack of training, lack of proper need analysis of learners, large classrooms, and diverse English language proficiency of learners are the major challenges of teaching and learning ESP. Another study in the context of Rwanda, Bosco et al. (2020) revealed that the majority of students are inspired in ESP courses, but different factors such as lack of appropriate facilities, trained teachers, large classrooms, and fear of speaking practice are the major problems of teaching ESP. The study prescribed different ways to facilitate ESP, such as internet, audiovisual related tools, and language laboratories that should be made available for the students. Another study in Cyprus, Ahmed et al. (2023) reported that chat GPT is an interactive tool in ESP teaching and learning that helps to simplify the learning process by providing examples of business communication, and students can enhance their grammar and communication skills by the help of it. Poumba and Gong (2023) in a study conducted in China reported that ESP based model is appropriate for teaching English to non-native English language students, and ESP helps to bring motivation to the learners. Another study in China (Zhao et al., 2022) revealed that the ESP course should address real-life communication and future job-oriented communication. The study also suggests that teachers' pedagogical decisions in ESP teaching should be according to the needs and demands of students to motivate in professional, job-oriented communication.

Sharma (2015) argues that with the founding of Durbar High School in 1854, Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana is credited with officially introducing English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal. In Nepal, English is not considered a second language. Many industrialized and emerging nations, including Nepal, teach and learn English as a foreign language. Gautam (2022) reported that due to the Rana monarchs' political interest, English was first taught in Nepal's educational system in 1854 and language practices in Nepal has been gradually shifted and changed throughout the history because of neoliberal impacts and globalization. Shrestha

(2008) reported that English is not recognized as an official language in Nepal rather it is a language of international communication and used in specific fields.

Above literature concluded that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) adapts English language training to the unique requirements of students in academic, professional, or technical domains. The language, abilities, and communication techniques specific to a given field such as commerce, medical, engineering, or aviation are the main focus of ESP, in contrast to general English. As cross-border cooperation, digitalization, globalization and communication become more intense due to complex globalization. ESP enables non-native English speakers to access global information networks, pursue further education, and operate in international settings. Bridging linguistic and professional barriers globally is made possible by this specialist approach to language learning, which improves speed and relevance.

Key Theoretical Framework

ESP emerged in the 1960s as a reaction to globalization, economic growth, and technical progress. It differed from general English by focusing on specific communicative demands associated with professional or academic situations. Swales (2014) brought the theory of genre analysis to ESP, emphasizing on how language serves in different social settings in specific academic and professional contexts. His works particularly contributed the development of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Hyland (2014) reported another theoretical impact, that is the study of register and discourse, which stressed the link between language and context. This viewpoint regards language as functionally determined by subject matter, participants, and mode of communication of discourse.

Ikramovna (2024) mentioned that ESP is needed at present context to address the specific needs of learners which address the need to focus on tailoring language instruction to meet the specific goals of a particular group of learners. Need analysis is one of the prime factors in developing ESP programme because the particular vocabulary, language proficiency, and communication skills which the students need to achieve in order to develop their academic, professional, or occupational objectives can be addressed from proper need analysis (Dou, 2024). Similarly, a study in Algeria, Kehal (2024) reported that ESP stands out for its dedication in matching language instruction to particular academic or professional goals. In contrast to broad English classes, ESP seeks to provide students with the specific language skills required for their

chosen fields of study or employment. Another study in Uzbekistan, Uralovna (2025) concluded that needs analysis is essential for adjusting ESP curriculum to meet the linguistic and professional needs of learners. The study highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders and flexibility in curriculum design for enhancing students' engagement. The theoretical basis of ESP is interdisciplinary, dynamic, and it includes elements from parts of   linguistics, education, and social sciences. It prioritizes students' needs, real-world language use, and context-appropriate communication. By focusing on authentic tasks and domain-specific language, ESP ensures that students develop practical and relevant language skills that will help them in their professional or academic careers.

Inevitability of ESP in Business Communication

Accounting, business, e-business, economics, finance, human resources, insurance, IT, law, manufacturing, marketing, production, as well as real estate, the stock exchange, overseas trade, and transportation are just a few of the many topics that fall under the umbrella of business English (Situmorang et al., 2023). English language as a lingua franca paradigm serves as the foundation for the use of English as a business lingua franca in both written and spoken communication (Roshid et al., 2022). ESP (English for Specific Purposes) refers to specialized English language instruction created to address the unique communication requirements of professionals working in business settings. Zanola (2016) in the context of Italy concluded that on the framework of ESP research, more focused consideration of the influence of strong verbal and written skill on corporate communication of English language is required. Similarly, another study in Oman, Chan and Mcgrath (2024) reported that business communication is diverse and complicated as public speaking courses should be tailored according to the needs and expectation of different proficient audience rather than being standardized or adapted from different sources. Students gain a sense of accountability as well as recognition for their knowledge and a platform to showcase it, both of which serve as powerful inducements for engagement and education.

A study in Pakistan, Mahmood (2017) concluded that students of management stream are examination-oriented and basically most of the learners prefer writing skills which facilitated them to pass the final exam but they are not concerned with speaking skills in the classroom, and they feel difficulties communicating with their clients. The study further reported that the main driving force in ESP is need analysis which is the major factor in curriculum development in the

ESP program. Need analysis is one of the strategies for getting the report of actual needs that are required to address the needs of learners (Brown, 2016). Developing an educational module and appropriate teaching strategies is a clear goal of need analysis. A study in Saudi Arabia, Alsamadani (2017)explored how students and instructors perceived the success of an ESP course in addressing learners' academic and professional needs in a university setting. The findings revealed a mismatch between course content and actual language requirements in students' disciplines.

A study in the case of India, Thavabalan et al. (2021) concluded that relevant training can help the employees to develop their professional communication skills. A special kind of the training is necessary to enhance the speaking skill of learners in order to enable them to do business communication in work place. Takino (2020) in a qualitative study of 32 Japanese business people reported that while nonnative speakers may feel weakened by linguistic proficiency, other elements like information value, commercial ties, and goal sharing may additionally shape and impact power dynamics in the workplace. Zulfah and Mujahidah (2018) concluded in a qualitative study in Hong Kong, interviewees who employed in banking mentioned a desire for language training programs, specifically in spoken English for everyday use and social interaction as well as presenting abilities and they focused on spoken English for everyday business interactions. Another study in Indonesia, Kurniawan et al. (2024) concluded that Islamic bank employees needs higher reading skills than speaking, listening, and writing abilities since they work with written papers in English more often so that bank employees require English language materials associated with banking, accounting, and computer programs. The study further suggested that since bank workers also utilize computer programs, all computer words and instructions are in English, employees should be able to pronounce computer, accounting, and banking jargon correctly in order to meet these requirements. They also require the ability to communicate via email or electronic mail. Khalabuzar (2024) concluded in the study of Ukraine that the design of ESP course for business English should be combined with modern technology of teaching and learning. It should be oriented on the formation of knowledge and skills which are related to modern business communication by considering the process of globalization.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of Business Communication focuses on helping learners acquire the English language skills needed for effective communication in professional, corporate, and commercial environments. It is based on a comprehensive multidisciplinary theoretical framework that includes ideas from applied linguistics, communication studies, discourse analysis, and business practices.

Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Business English

In order to overcome any cultural and anticipated inequalities, it is recommended that an ESP course promote candid conversation in contextual setting. Creating suitable assignments that foster students' critical thinking abilities is also advised in ESP course (Tymbay, 2022). Content relevance is a key aspect of ESP teaching that leads to preparing students to use English in a professional context (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015). Alsamadani (2017) mentioned that ESP teaching should be suited to the needs of learners, including the language skills they need to master and the learning context as well as the contents in the course should be also based on need analysis.

Another study in Taiwan, Chen (2010) argues that ESP course is designed with content based syllabus and especially designed for English as foreign language (EFL) learners to accomplish the immediate needs of communication. As more and more businesses require their employees to speak many languages, business English is becoming more and more crucial in today's internationally interconnected world (Mäkiö, 2016). Allowing students to communicate with others in a business setting, whether through correspondence, in-person meetings, or other means, is the aim of any business English course. Thus, a business English language course could cover subjects like business English reading, letters, and resumes, as well as business jargon, advertising, marketing, and conditions of sale. Huhta et al. (2013) argues that learners are taught to accomplish tasks that are needed in professional environment in foreign language. Need assessment is an integral part of ESP content development. It provides the basis for content needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, and material selection as well as development that are related to the definition of Business English or English for Business Purposes (Widodo, 2017).

Belcher (2009) argues that since the inception of ESP, it has undergone constant development and evolution, and this trend is anticipated to continue. ESP teaching combines subject matter with English language instruction and allows students to apply what they learned

in English class to their professional lives. ESP teaching draws the interest of learners in their professional field to motivate them and interact with speakers and text. Hyland and Jiang (2021) in the context of UK concluded that classroom practices continue to be crucial to the specific field, and there has been a steady interest in specialized content relevant text especially written texts as well as in higher education and business English. Jendrych (2013) reported in the context of Poland that employers in the competitive business world try to hire people with strong language proficiency as well as nonlinguistic abilities. Acquiring these extra competencies and skills is not simple. Alhasani (2018) argues that different kinds of English books, various electronic resources and visual materials have accelerated the speed and proficiency of English language acquisition.

Teaching business English is a significant aspect of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), requires pedagogical approaches that are practical, learner-centered, and match with the expectations of the business world. Business English is more than just teaching vocabulary and grammar, it also emphasize the communication, intercultural, and strategic skills required to perform effectively in professional settings.

Challenges and Opportunities in ESP Implementation

The growing global need for language training catered to the unique requirements of pupils in academic, professional, and occupational contexts has made English for Specific Purposes (ESP) an essential area of English language instruction. Mohamed and Alan (2022) argued that misjudging the needs of students might result in instruction that is ineffective or irrelevant. Many English language instructors may lack the subject-matter expertise or ESP-specific instructional techniques because they were trained in general English (Zaman, 2024). The study emphasizes cultural inclusion, learner-centered design, and the incorporation of digital technologies. The study also points out difficulties like the requirement for continuous training of teachers and the creation of frameworks for uniform assessments. Similarly, Laborda and Litzler (2015) in the context of Chile argues that readily available resources frequently do not

correspond with the professional settings of learners, necessitating that instructors create or modify information, which takes time and may not be standardized.

A Serbian study, (Dashtestani & Stojkovic, 2015) revealed that successful use of online platforms, corpora, and interactive tools might be hampered by unequal access and low levels of digital literacy among teachers and students, despite the enormous promise of digital resources. The results shows that although some technologies, including as wikis, corpora, and course learning management systems have proven effective in ESP training but there are little empirical data to support the use of other technologies. In another study, Zahra et al. (2023) in the context of Pakistan reported that performance evaluation is difficult since standardized testing approaches frequently fail to capture the practical and contextual character of ESP learning objectives. The study concluded that undergraduate students' knowledge from their individual universities is insufficient and the course outline has to be modified and added to in order to make it more useful in the workplace. Sakti et al. (2024) reported that a well-rounded strategy that blends in-person training with digital resources is suggested in order to close the gap between conventional and contemporary methods. A remarkable, comprehensive and successful ESP education is provided by application of blended learning models and cooperative online learning environments.

Shahid et al. (2023) reported that, ESP enables highly tailored curriculum that correspond with learners' career objectives, boosting motivation and usefulness. There are other issues with curriculum design in ESP. Developing a flexible yet organized curriculum is a challenging endeavor because of the variety of learner demands and professional contexts (Basturkmen, 2015). Similarly, Anthony (2018) claimed that problem remain in keeping a balance between field-specific materials and actual field based language proficiency without overloading students or compromising language acquisition objectives. In another study, Flowerdew (2012) argued that the successful implementation of ESP program is disturbed from an institutional policy by making resource constraints, such as a lack of the specialist resources, suitable assessment instruments, and administrative assistance. Similarly, Tsou and Chen (2014) argued that another important factor in the implementation of ESP programs is learner's motivation. Learners may not be interested if it is unclear about how language acquisition will affect their future employment.

Kim (2008) in the context of South Korea, argued that ESP is now very important for specific language skills development, efficiency, safety, security matter in the fields of aviation, maritime, and medical English. Institutional demand for ESP training is a result of regulatory agencies like the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) requiring English proficiency criteria. Another British study, Alexander et al. (2008) claimed that ESP develops intercultural communication abilities. It teaches students not only linguistic proficiency but also pragmatic and social nuances because it is frequently used in multilingual, multicultural settings. Bocanegra-Valle (2015) in the context of Spain reported that the scope of ESP has been further expanded via technology integration. ESP teaching may now be given in a flexible and interactive manner by the development of digital technologies and e-learning platforms. Learning management systems, virtual simulations, and corpora are among of the tools that have changed ESP classrooms into dynamic, real-world training settings. Yusuf and Karlsson (2024) argued that ESP provides options for continuing education and lifetime learning, particularly through online platforms. ESP is now a flexible and accessible learning option since professionals can access field-specific ESP content at any stage of their careers. Curriculum development and interdisciplinary cooperation provided another noteworthy opportunity. In another study, Hyland and Shaw (2016) claimed that in order to provide courses that are both linguistically and professionally relevant, ESP encourages cooperation between language instructors and subject-matter experts. This collaboration guarantees cultural appropriateness and material authenticity. According to Basturkmen (2015), ESP serves as a link for professional skill development and real lifetime learning in fast-paced work environments.

The implementation of ESP is challenging task because it includes professional expertise area, which has enormous potential for effective language education. We need to address the issues such as instructor training, material development, and assessment design in ESP course. Similarly, taking advantage of opportunities such as using digital tools, technologies, multidisciplinary collaboration, and real-world applicability can transform ESP programs into effective tool for the academic and professional development.

Conclusion

English for specific purposes in the field of business communication has a long history of integrating linguistic theories, pedagogical practices, and changing communication needs in global business environments. As a result, ESP has expanded its scope from a needs-based context of English language teaching to a complex, research-oriented field with varied methodologies and epistemologies. The growing dominance of English as the global business lingua franca also poses fundamental challenges to linguistic imperialism, standardization, and cultural diversity issues that any ethical ESP pedagogy must take into consideration. Business English as lingua franca and intercultural communication frameworks call for a change of paradigm from a more exclusive, context-insensitive teaching model to a more inclusive, context-sensitive teaching model. ESP in business communication should continue to evolve with the integration of corpus-informed techniques, technological integration, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The history of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in business communication illustrates the interaction of linguistic theory, globalization, and pedagogical innovation as responses to the shifting needs of professional communities. From its post-World War II origins in response to global economic growth to its contemporary, learner-focused focus on communicative competence in actual work settings, ESP has evolved into a complex, learner-centered strategy for developing programs that reflect actual business communication practices. Given that business English will remain a lingua franca in diverse and digitally enabled work environments, ESP offers a useful model for training students to meet the range of professional demands they are likely to encounter.

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