Journal of Scientometric Research, 2026; 15(3):991-1004.
https://www.jscires.org

Research Article

The Paradox of ESP in English Language Education: A Hybrid SLR-Bibliometric Analysis of Cross-Disciplinary Expansion and Marginalization

Mochamad Imron Azami*, Slamet Setiawan, Ahmad Munir, Ririn Pusparini, Kinanti Resmi Hayati, Rida Fahas

Department of Language and Literature Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, INDONESIA.

ABSTRACT

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has experienced significant interdisciplinary growth since the 1960s, yet it remains paradoxically marginalised within mainstream English Language Teaching (ELT) frameworks. This hybrid systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis investigates the expansion of ESP across academic disciplines, its degree of integration into ELT programs, and the underlying factors contributing to its ongoing peripheral status. A total of 73 peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from Scopus, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. Data were analyzed using VOSviewer for bibliometric mapping and thematic synthesis for qualitative insights. ESP has extended into at least 18 disciplinary domains, including Engineering, Business, Medicine, Tourism, Maritime, Military, and Islamic Studies, though the depth of integration varies widely. Bibliometric analysis indicates that general ESP and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) dominate scholarly discourse, while specialized sub-fields remain under-theorized. Despite formal inclusion in higher education curricula worldwide, practical implementation is limited by policy–practice gaps, underdeveloped teacher professional identity, insufficient interdisciplinary collaboration, and ideological biases that privilege general English and frame ESP as vocational rather than academic. These findings highlight the "ESP paradox": a field that continues to expand across disciplines while remaining systematically marginalized within the educational structures that stand to benefit most from it. The study offers implications for curriculum policy, teacher professional development, and future research directions

Keywords: Bibliometrics, Disciplinary expansion, English for Specific Purposes, English Language Education, Marginalization, Systematic literature review.

Correspondence:
Mochamad Imron Azami
Department of Language and Literature Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, INDONESIA.
Email: 25020956029@mhs.unesa.ac.id
ORCID: 0000-0002-7572-5327

Received: 03-07-2026;
Revised: 19-08-2026;
Accepted: 26-10-2026.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of English for Specific Purposes in the 1960s was a direct response to the growing demands of globalization and the increasing prominence of English as a global lingua franca, which diverged from General English by targeting specific communicative needs within distinct fields of study or professional disciplines (Supunya, 2023). Initially catering to commerce, science, and technology, ESP has since broadened its scope to encompass a wide array of specialized domains, including English for Academic, Medical, and Business Purposes (Alvarez-Gil, 2021). This diversification reflects a natural outcome of focusing on the precise linguistic and communicative requirements of particular professional or occupational groups, leading to a proliferation of sub-types such as English for Research and Publication Purposes and English for Hotel Management (Fitria, 2023; Hyland, 2022).

The underlying pedagogical principle of ESP is rooted in needs analysis, aligning instruction with the specific linguistic demands learners face in their target professional or academic communities (Gutierres *et al*., 2020). Despite its foundational role in language education since the 1960s and its ongoing evolution to meet specialized communicative demands, ESP faces a paradox: broad cross-disciplinary expansion alongside persistent marginalization within the broader field of English language teaching (Supunya, 2023). This systematic review, therefore, aims to critically examine the factors contributing to both the expansive application of ESP across various disciplines and its simultaneous peripheral positioning within academic and institutional frameworks.

This review synthesizes recent empirical research to elucidate these conflicting trends, particularly examining the pedagogical methods, research foci, and application issues that characterize contemporary ESP scholarship (Yan, 2025). Specifically, we analyze prevailing research trends in ESP, identifying predominant areas of investigation and methodologies employed in recent

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript TECHNOMEDIA

DOI: 10.5530/jscires.20260300

Copyright Information :
Copyright Author (s) 2026 Distributed under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

Publishing Partner : Manuscript Technomedia. [www.mstechnomedia.com]

studies (Yan, 2025). This comprehensive approach integrates a bibliometric analysis with a systematic review of the literature from 2011 to 2023 to objectively map the knowledge area, identify the current status, major research themes, evolution, and emerging trends in the field (Tan *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, this review addresses the pedagogical implications of ESP's expansion, considering how instructional practices have adapted to diverse disciplinary contexts while also investigating the systemic factors that contribute to its underrepresentation or perceived secondary status in mainstream English language education. This systematic review responds to existing calls for a comprehensive synthesis of the ESP literature, providing a foundational resource for both established and nascent researchers to examine this multifaceted research trajectory (Supunya, 2023). To address this gap in the research, the researcher provides the following research questions:

1. How has English for Specific Purposes (ESP) been expanded and implemented across different academic disciplines?
2. To what extent is ESP integrated within English Language Education programs?
3. What factors contribute to the marginalization or limited presence of ESP in English Language Education programs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The multifaceted nature of English for Specific Purposes is evident in its continuous evolution, branching into numerous subfields such as English for Medical Purposes, English for Business Purposes, and English for Vocational Purposes, reflecting the dynamic communicative needs of diverse professional landscapes (Dou *et al.*, 2023). Recent systematic reviews further illuminate these trends, highlighting the increasing specialization within ESP and its pedagogical implications (Yan, 2025).

For instance, a recent analysis of ESP research in the Middle East and North Africa region between 2019 and 2024 reveals a focus on enhancing professional and academic performance across various specific target situations (Kaivanpanah *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, global trends in Language for Specific Purposes research indicate a broadening array of orientations across academic, business, medical, nursing, communication, tourism, political, professional, and religious domains, with English dominating the research landscape (Umbar *et al.*, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of frameworks such as Content and Language Integrated Learning and the Common European Framework of Reference further underscores the nuanced pedagogical approaches being developed to address these specialized linguistic requirements (Umbar *et al.*, 2024). However, despite the growing diversity and specificity within ESP, challenges persist, particularly gaps in subject-matter knowledge among ESP instructors, a lack of authentic, field-specific learning materials, and issues with curriculum alignment (Sintia *et al.*, 2025).

These challenges frequently necessitate interdisciplinary collaboration between language specialists and subject-matter experts to develop contextually relevant resources and address the specific technical language and genre-specific discourse required (Sintia *et al.*, 2025). The sustainability of ESP, therefore, hinges on fostering such interdisciplinary engagements, which can be achieved through various collaborative models, including dyads, triads, and larger interdisciplinary teams (Supunya, 2023). Such collaborations are crucial for overcoming the identified challenges, particularly the scarcity of authentic materials and the imperative of precise curriculum alignment in specialized academic and vocational settings (Sintia *et al.*, 2025). This collaborative approach ensures that ESP instruction effectively bridges the gap between general language proficiency and the highly specialized communicative competencies required for specific professional or academic contexts (Sintia *et al.*, 2025).

Defining English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

The conceptualization of ESP has evolved significantly since its inception, shifting from a primary focus on the linguistic features of registers to a more holistic consideration of discourse communities, genre analysis, and socio-cognitive aspects of communication in specialized contexts. This expanded understanding encompasses not only the specialized terminology but also the pragmatic and rhetorical conventions inherent to specific fields (Kamberi *et al.*, 2020).

Consequently, contemporary definitions of ESP emphasize the development of strategic communicative competence tailored to particular professional or academic environments, integrating linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies (Pilla *et al.*, 2025). This evolution underscores a shift from a purely linguistic perspective to one that acknowledges the complex interplay of language with disciplinary knowledge and socio-cultural practices, thereby foregrounding the role of ESP in facilitating effective participation within specialized communities (Sintia *et al.*, 2025).

This broader conceptualization necessitates pedagogical approaches that move beyond traditional language instruction to incorporate authentic materials and student-centered learning, thereby reflecting the nuanced demands of professional communication (Pilla *et al.*, 2025). This adaptable nature renders a fixed definition of ESP challenging, as it is fundamentally contingent upon the specific goals and evolving needs of learners, whether academic, occupational, or scientific (Khalili, 2025). Early definitions, such as those proposed by Munby, Hutchinson, Waters, and McDonough, consistently emphasize that ESP instruction is driven primarily by a thorough analysis of learners'

specific communication needs, thereby making content and methodology inherently learner-centric (Chaovanapricha and Chaturongakul, 2020).

Strevens further distinguished ESP from General English, emphasizing the bespoke nature of ESP materials, which are meticulously crafted to align with specific contexts and address learners' needs precisely. This client-driven approach underscores that ESP is not merely English instruction for specific fields, but rather a methodology in which the curriculum is explicitly designed to meet the identified needs of a particular learner group (Alousque, 2016; Mohamed and Alani, 2022). Other researchers describe ESP as a particular case of the general category of special-purpose language teaching, or as a research approach to teaching and learning that meets learners' specific needs by using appropriate activities in grammar, lexis, study skills, and genre (Akbulut, 2016).

Historical Development of ESP

The emergence of ESP as a distinct field of language pedagogy is often attributed to several convergent factors that gained prominence in the mid-20th century, notably the post-World War II boom in science and technology, which necessitated a common language for international communication (Ennis and Prior, 2021; Mahmood and Ghafar, 2024). This global shift propelled English into an unparalleled position as the lingua franca of scientific and technological discourse, thereby fostering an urgent demand for specialized English-language training to facilitate international collaboration and knowledge dissemination.

Furthermore, the rapid expansion of international trade and diplomacy during this period also generated a significant need for English proficiency tailored to specific professional and vocational contexts. This increased demand highlighted the limitations of General English instruction in addressing the highly specialized communicative competencies required for these domains, thereby catalyzing the development of purpose-specific language programs (Hidayatulloh, 2022; Sandal and Özkan, 2022). Consequently, English for Specific Purposes evolved to contextualize English language use, develop specialized materials, and conduct targeted research, initially focusing on scientific and technical English before expanding into fields like Medical and Legal English (Silva, 2020).

This expansion was further fueled by a linguistic revolution that shifted focus from universal grammar to communicative competence and learner-centered approaches, recognizing that effective language learning is deeply rooted in the practical application of language within relevant professional or academic settings (Trisyanti, 2009). This methodological shift positioned ESP as an adaptive, demand-driven approach to language education, specifically designed to cater to the unique linguistic requirements of various professions and academic disciplines (Hyland and Jiang, 2021).

This movement, often referred to as the Languages for Specific Purposes movement, prioritized equipping learners with English proficiency directly applicable to their professional or academic pursuits, rather than general language acquisition (Ouarniki and Andaloussi, 2022; Zaghar and Zaghar, 2021). Key historical drivers for the emergence of ESP include the post-World War II surge in scientific, technical, and economic activity, which established English as the primary language for international communication, and the 1970s oil crisis, which further propelled the need for English in global economic exchanges (Bilokcuoğlu, 2012; Ibrahim, 2019).

These geopolitical and economic shifts, combined with advancements in linguistic theory that emphasize communicative needs, created fertile ground for the formalization and expansion of ESP methodologies and curricula (Hattani, 2019; Mohamed and Alani, 2022). The post-war global economic ascendancy of the United States significantly solidified English's role as the international language, further contributing to the burgeoning need for ESP across diverse sectors (Khadam, 2023). This historical trajectory underscores how ESP emerged from pragmatic necessity, distinguishing itself from General English through a learner-centered, needs-driven pedagogical framework (Siddique, 2018).

Specifically, Hutchinson and Waters identified three foundational factors contributing to ESP's early development: the exigencies of a "Brave New World," a transformative linguistic revolution, and an emergent emphasis on the learner (Dou *et al.*, 2023; Ibrahim, 2020). The "Brave New World" encompassed the economic and technological expansion following World War II and the subsequent oil crisis, both of which cemented English as the primary vehicle for global exchange and communication (Chapon, 2015; Mbato, 2016).

ESP in the Context of English Language Education

This era, characterized by rapid advancements and increased international interdependence, necessitated a specialized English that could effectively serve as a conduit for complex scientific, technical, and economic discourse (Akbaş, 2021; Qadi, 2023). The linguistic revolution, concurrently, shifted pedagogical focus from a prescriptive grammatical approach to one emphasizing communicative competence, thereby influencing ESP to prioritize functional language use relevant to specific domains (Ouarniki and Andaloussi, 2022).

This paradigm shift in language pedagogy, coupled with the burgeoning global reliance on English for diverse professional and academic interactions, underscored the critical need for an educational framework capable of delivering targeted linguistic competencies for specialized contexts (Pradheepa *et al.*, 2025). This development was further accelerated by the growing economic power of certain oil-rich nations and a corresponding rise in international students pursuing education in English-speaking

countries, necessitating tailored English-language instruction for these diverse populations (Kahramanoğlu *et al*., 2018; Rahman, 2015).

Consequently, this led to the recognition that ESP needed to cater to learners' specific requirements, with content and methods intrinsically linked to their motivations for acquiring English (Vera *et al*., 2023). This learner-centered approach, emphasizing specific needs analysis and a utilitarian purpose, distinguishes ESP from general English instruction (Zaghar and Zaghar, 2021). This conceptualization highlights that ESP is not merely a subset of English language teaching but a distinct methodology in which curriculum design and instructional strategies are fundamentally driven by learners' professional or academic objectives (Gatehouse, 2001). This emphasis on utility and specificity allows ESP to transcend traditional language pedagogy, focusing instead on developing practical language competencies within a relevant, domain-specific context (Kavlu, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The literature search was conducted across multiple databases, namely Scopus, Taylor and Francis, ERIC, and ScienceDirect, to ensure broad and reliable coverage of studies in applied linguistics, English language education, and ESP-related research. These databases were selected due to their credibility and extensive indexing of peer-reviewed publications. This multi-database approach was chosen to reduce the coverage bias that is intrinsic to single-database reviews. Previous bibliometric studies on ESP-related literature have been based on a single database, such as Scopus; although this database has a large range of disciplines indexed, it does not cover all publications that are indexed mainly in education-oriented or discipline-oriented databases like ERIC and ScienceDirect. This review aimed at triangulation by integrating various indexing sources such as Scopus, Taylor and Francis, ERIC and ScienceDirect to minimize the likelihood that relevant studies were systematically missed because of the scope of a single indexing source, to a greater extent in education (ERIC), to a lesser extent in general multidisciplinary (Scopus or ScienceDirect), or not at all in applied linguistics and language education (Taylor and Francis). The search focused on publications within a defined timeframe to capture both foundational and recent developments in the field.

The search string was designed with combinations of key terms ("English for Specific Purposes" OR ESP) AND ("English Language Teaching" OR ELT OR "English Education" OR "Language education") and all of this string was used in all four databases (Scopus, Taylor and Francis, ERIC, ScienceDirect) with each one's basic search interface. 1,066 records were obtained by further narrowing the search using the filters available on the platform: Subject area (Education), Article type (Article), and the time period (2011-2026). A total of 2,868 records were found, 217 by Scopus, 188 by ERIC, and 1,397 by ScienceDirect. It is recognized that the string was not independently adapted to the native field syntax, controlled vocabulary (such as ERIC Thesaurus descriptors), or truncation conventions of each database, and that this methodological approach has implications for the comprehensiveness of retrieval, which is discussed in detail under limitations.

After the initial search, the corpus was processed using a multi-jurisdictional systematic screening procedure, following the PRISMA 2020 framework. Of the 2,868 records, two were duplicate records and were removed for identification, leaving 2,866 records for screening. At the screening stage, the number of reports was reduced to 720 by excluding conference papers (n=880), book chapters (n=785), review articles (n=297) and books (n=184). Of those 669 reports, 51 were not retrieved in full text because they were not open access. When screening for eligibility, each of the 669 full-text reports was considered by hand and either included or excluded from the sample based on the following criteria: (a) having to do with the intersection of ESP and ELT in higher education contexts, and (b) being published in English (Japanese and French were excluded). If the content was not related to the ESP-ELT intersection, then the report was also not included. This process resulted in 73 articles being part of the review (Figure 1).

All 73 included records were then exported as RIS and CSV files and imported into VOSviewer for mapping of citation patterns, co-authorship network and keyword co-occurrences, while the full texts were manually thematically synthesized to answer the three research questions. This process of using both bibliometric mapping and qualitative thematic analysis helped triangulate quantitative results on the disciplinary spread of ESP and qualitative results on the conceptualization and integration of ESP into ELT programs.

To get a clearer picture of how ESP research has evolved over the years, this study drew on a combination of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis. Using both approaches together made it possible to trace how ESP has grown and shifted within the broader landscape of ELT, covering its development, the methods researchers have favored, and the ideas that have shaped the field. Rather than relying on a single lens, the study blended the richness of qualitative thematic analysis with the measurable clarity of bibliometric mapping (Marzi *et al*., 2025). To keep the process honest and well-documented, the study followed the PRISMA 2020 framework at every stage, ensuring that each step remained transparent, traceable, and credible from start to finish.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the findings drawn from a combined SLR and bibliometric analysis of existing literature on ESP within ELT. The results are organized to directly address the three core research questions guiding this study. Regarding how ESP has

expanded and been applied across various academic disciplines (RQ1), the analysis maps publication trends, recurring keywords, and thematic patterns that reflect its growing reach across fields of study. Regarding the extent to which ESP is woven into English Language Education programs (RQ2), the SLR offers an in-depth look at how individual studies conceptualize and adapt ESP within formal educational frameworks, while the bibliometric analysis reveals the density and direction of research attention in this area. Finally, in addressing the factors that have pushed ESP to the margins of English Language Education programs (RQ3), both methods work together to surface underlying methodological gaps, thematic blind spots, and structural patterns that may explain why ESP remains underrepresented or inconsistently integrated in certain educational contexts. Together, these analytical layers paint a comprehensive picture of how ESP has evolved in the digital era and where the field still has room to grow.

Analysis of ESP expanded across various academic disciplines

A density visualization of ESP topics expanded across various academic disciplines in research is shown in Figure 1.

The density visualization map presented in Figure 2 provides compelling evidence in response to the first research question about how ESP has expanded and been implemented across academic disciplines. Generated in VOSviewer, the map illustrates the distribution and prominence of ESP-related keywords drawn from the analyzed publications, where color intensity shifts from cool blue at the periphery to bright yellow at the core, reflecting the relative frequency and density of each keyword's occurrence in the literature.

At the center of the map, "English for Specific Purposes" stands as the dominant node, confirming its foundational role as the umbrella concept from which discipline-specific applications branch. This central positioning signals that ESP has not remained a narrow or isolated field, but has instead served as a growing hub connecting a wide range of academic and professional domains. Terms such as "English for Academic Purposes," "Business English," and "Engineering" cluster around this core with moderate-to-high density, indicating that these disciplines have been among the most active in adopting and integrating ESP frameworks into their educational and professional practices.

Further toward the periphery, more specialized sub-fields including "English for Medical Purposes," "English for Tourism," "Maritime English," "Military English," "Islamic Studies," and "English for Geography" appear with lower density levels, suggesting that while ESP has indeed reached these disciplines, its implementation remains comparatively limited and underexplored. This uneven distribution reveals a clear pattern of expansion: ESP has grown beyond its traditional boundaries, yet the depth of its integration varies considerably across disciplines. Taken together, the density map visually affirms that ESP has undergone meaningful expansion across a diverse spectrum of academic fields, while also highlighting that certain disciplines remain at the margins of this growth a finding that carries significant implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and future research directions within the broader ELT landscape.

Geographic Reach and Institutional Contributions to ESP Research

Figure 3 displays Geographic Reach and Institutional Contributions to ESP Research.

Figure 3 illustrates the global distribution of institutional affiliations contributing to ESP research in the reviewed literature. China emerges as the most prolific contributor, with 15 affiliated institutions, reflecting the country's substantial investment in English language education reform and its growing presence in applied linguistics scholarship. Indonesia and Iran follow with 7 and 6 affiliations respectively, suggesting that ESP research is increasingly driven by non-Anglophone, developing contexts where English serves as a critical academic and professional gateway. The United Kingdom, with 5 affiliations, represents the primary Anglophone contributor, while countries such as Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia demonstrate moderate engagement, each contributing between 2 and 3 institutional affiliations.

The remaining countries, including Vietnam, New Zealand, Slovenia, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia, among others, each contributed one to two affiliations, collectively underscoring the geographically diverse yet unevenly distributed nature of ESP scholarship. Notably, the dominance of Asian institutions, particularly from East and Southeast Asia, points to a broader pedagogical shift in which ESP is no longer a field shaped predominantly by Western academic traditions but is increasingly negotiated within local educational, economic, and policy contexts. This distribution also raises important questions about whose research voices are centered in the global ESP conversation, and whether the field's expanding geographic reach translates into genuine epistemic diversity or merely mirrors existing publication hierarchies.

Distribution of Publication Outlets

Figure 4 displays the Top Publishing Journals in ESP Research.

Figure 4 presents the frequency distribution of journals publishing ESP-related studies in the reviewed dataset, revealing a notably uneven concentration of scholarly output across publication venues. Cogent Education stands out as the most prolific outlet, with 8 published studies, followed by the Journal of English for Specific Purposes with 6 studies, together accounting for a substantial portion of the total corpus. A second tier of journals, including Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Journal

of Language Teaching and Research, and Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, each contributed approximately 3-4 studies, suggesting a moderate yet consistent engagement with ESP-related themes. The remaining journals, among them English for Specific Purposes, Ampersand, English Language Teaching, Social Sciences and Humanities, Studies in English Language and Education, and Cogent Arts and Humanities, each contributed 2 studies, indicating a broad yet thinly spread dissemination of ESP scholarship across diverse publication contexts.

This distribution points to a broader tension within the field: while ESP research is expanding across disciplinary and geographic boundaries, its publication landscape remains concentrated in a relatively small number of journals. The prominence of Cogent Education, an open-access, multidisciplinary journal, is particularly noteworthy, suggesting that ESP scholars may be gravitating toward more accessible venues rather than field-specific outlets. This pattern raises questions about the visibility and disciplinary legitimacy of ESP as a field, particularly when its research is dispersed across general education and humanities journals rather than consolidated within dedicated applied linguistics or language teaching publications.

DISCUSSION

RQ1: Cross-Disciplinary Expansion and Implementation of ESP

The Breadth of Disciplinary Reach

The bibliometric analysis reveals that ESP has expanded well beyond its traditional strongholds in science and technology, now permeating a diverse range of academic and professional disciplines. Across the 73 articles analyzed, subject areas span Engineering (*n*=6), Business English (*n*=5), English for Tourism (*n*=3), English for Medical Purposes (n=3), Maritime English (*n*=1), Military English (*n*=1), Nursing (*n*=2), Islamic Studies (*n*=1), Pharmacy (*n*=1), Accounting (*n*=1), and Geography (*n*=1). When these are combined with the core ESP and EAP categories (*n*=39), the dataset accounts for at least 18 distinct disciplinary domains-a figure that illustrates the remarkable horizontal growth of ESP as a field of practice and inquiry.

The most extensively researched ESP domains in this dataset remain general English for Specific Purposes (*n*=28) and English for Academic Purposes (*n*=11), confirming their continued centrality within the field. Engineering English attracted six publications, underscoring the sustained demand for technical communication skills in global engineering workplaces. Studies such as Rahaman *et al.* (2026), which examined the frequency, skill hierarchy, and functions of English in Bangladeshi engineering workplaces, and Janenoppakarn and Rajprasit (2025), who developed an online intercultural engineering English course in Thailand, exemplify the practical orientation of this subfield. Similarly, Çal *et al.* (2022) documented how Turkish engineers negotiate language demands across professional contexts, highlighting the gap between formal instruction and occupational linguistic realities.

Business English emerged as another well-represented subfield, with contributions from scholars in the UK, Poland, the Czech Republic, and China. Chan (2024) called for a stronger interface between research and pedagogy in Business English, while Wieczorek (2024) advocated for eclecticism as a key instructional principle. These studies converge on a shared concern: that the theoretical advances in ESP scholarship are not always translating into improved classroom practice, a tension that becomes even more pronounced in less-resourced disciplinary contexts.

Emerging and Peripheral Domains

Several studies in the dataset illuminate the expansion of ESP into disciplines that have historically received limited attention. Maritime English, for instance, is represented by Simanjuntak (2024), who developed a multiliteracy-based communication learning model for maritime students in Indonesia. English for Islamic Studies was addressed by Hidayati *et al.* (2025), who designed an LMS-based ESP course for undergraduate Islamic Studies students at Universitas Negeri Malang, a contribution that reflects the unique intersection of religious higher education and professional language needs in Indonesia. Nursing English appeared in two publications (Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Mulyadi *et al.*, 2025), both of which explored technology-enhanced approaches to integrating language and nursing competency development. Pharmacy English received rare direct attention through Horiuchi's (2023) reflective account of forty-three years teaching English to pharmacy students in Japan, offering longitudinal insights into the sustainability of niche ESP instruction.

Military English was examined by Siegel *et al.* (2025) in a scoping review covering three decades of research, revealing not only the specialized communicative demands of military contexts but also the fragmented and undertheorized nature of this subfield. Likewise, English for Geography was explored by Drašler and Kavalir (2026), who compiled a discipline-specific vocabulary list for geography students in Slovenia, and Drašler and Hyland (2026), who developed a technicality measure for ESAP vocabulary in the same discipline. These contributions, though individually modest in scope, collectively signal that ESP's disciplinary reach is still actively expanding and that many professional domains remain under-researched.

Discussion: Expansion Without Depth?

The cross-disciplinary expansion of ESP documented in this dataset is simultaneously an index of the field's vitality and a marker of its unevenness. While general ESP and EAP continue to attract the bulk of scholarly attention, peripheral sub-fields such as Maritime English, Military English, Pharmacy, and Islamic

Studies English remain represented by single studies or thin bodies of literature. This pattern is consistent with Basturkmen's (2022) observation that ESP research in the Asia Pacific region tends to cluster around a limited number of disciplinary contexts, leaving many professional domains without a robust evidence base. The data also reveal a predominantly needs-analysis and materials-development orientation across many sub-fields, suggesting that the field has prioritized applied utility over theoretical depth, a tendency that may limit the generalizability of findings across disciplinary contexts. As Salmani-Nodoushan (2020) argued, ESP must engage more critically with its own conceptual foundations to sustain its relevance and legitimacy as an academic discipline.

RQ2: The Extent of ESP Integration within English Language Education Programs

ESP in Higher Education Curricula

A significant proportion of the studies in this dataset address how ESP is being incorporated or resisted within formal educational structures. Evidence from across the corpus suggests that while ESP has achieved a degree of institutional presence in higher education globally, its integration remains uneven, largely dependent on institutional priorities, resource availability, and the professional identity of ESP practitioners. Kamberi *et al.* (2020) evaluated the quality and relevance of ESP in Macedonian higher education, concluding that despite its nominal presence in university curricula, ESP programming frequently falls short of learners' actual professional and communicative needs. This finding resonates across the dataset, with multiple studies documenting the persistence of misalignment between ESP curricula and the real-world language demands of target disciplines.

Studies from China dominate the RQ2 literature, reflecting that country's intensifying effort to align English language education with professional and economic development goals. Wu (2024) examined an ESP-integrated college English teaching model in Chinese vocational institutions using an SMCR communication framework, reporting high levels of student engagement but also significant structural constraints on sustainable implementation. Zhang (2013), in an earlier contribution that

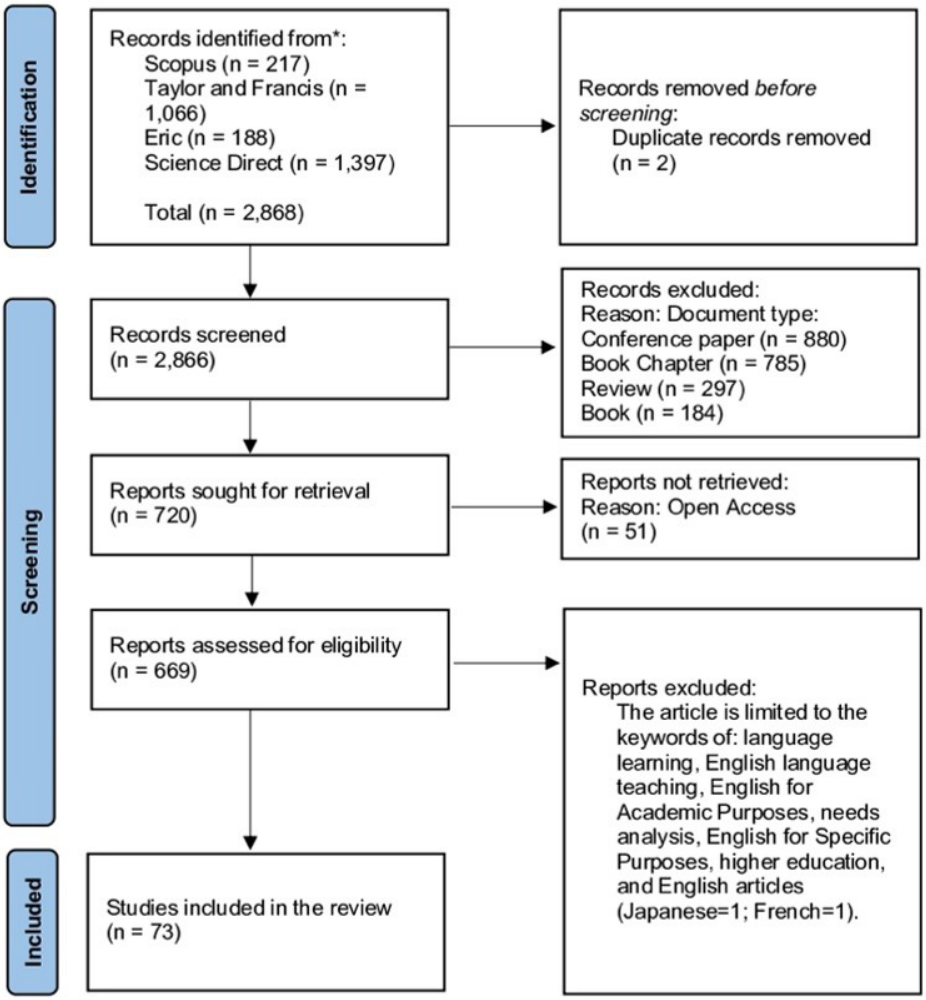


Figure 1: Systematic Literature Review Database using PRISMA.

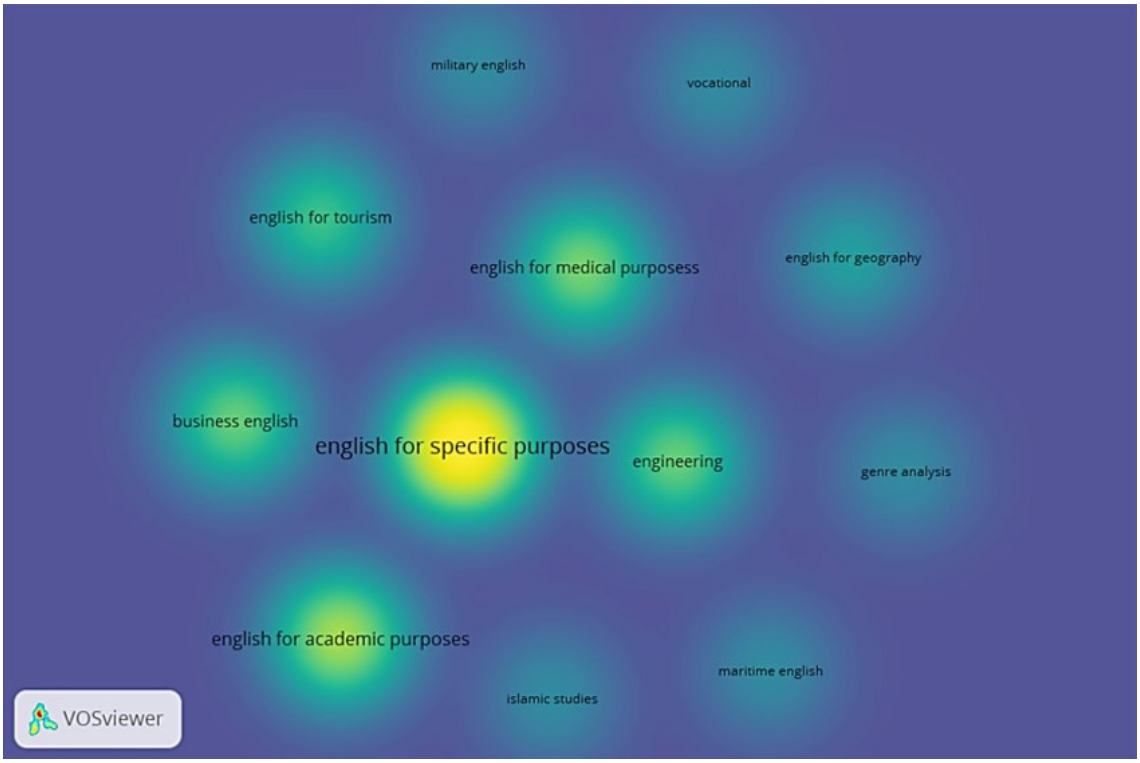


Figure 2: Density Visualization of ESP-Related Keywords Generated via VOSviewer.

has since accumulated 13 citations, proposed an autonomous inquiry-based approach to ESP instruction that anticipated many of the learner-centered frameworks that have since become standard in the field. Zhao, Li, and Zhong (2022) examined the role of teacher emotions in ESP pedagogical decision-making a relatively underexplored dimension that foregrounds the human dimensions of curriculum enactment.

The integration of EAP into English-Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts represents a particularly active research frontier. Galloway, Sahan, and McKinley (2024) analyzed the relationship between ESP and the global surge in EMI programs, arguing that ESP plays an important but often neglected role in supporting both students and content-area instructors in these settings. Zhou and Delogu (2026) investigated professional development opportunities for EAP teachers in Chinese EMI contexts, finding that many practitioners lack the disciplinary expertise needed to navigate the language-content interface effectively. These findings collectively point to a structural tension: as EMI expands, the institutional demand for ESP grows, yet the professional infrastructure to meet that demand lags behind.

Technology and Innovation in ESP Integration

A recurring theme in the dataset is the role of digital technologies in enabling new forms of ESP integration. Several studies explored the use of digital tools, including gamification, AI-based feedback, corpus analysis software, and learning management systems, as vehicles for embedding ESP into existing educational programs. Sujannah, Suwarso, and Unsiah (2025) investigated the relationship between ChatGPT use and learning autonomy among ESP students at Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia, finding that AI-assisted learning fostered greater student independence in language-focused academic tasks. Sun and Tan (2026) conducted a quasi-experimental study on the impact of Kahoot! on ESP vocabulary development among Chinese EFL learners, documenting statistically significant gains in vocabulary knowledge, though noting important limitations related to learner motivation and game dependency.

The use of generative AI in EAP materials development was addressed by Ngo and Fians (2026), who found that EAP teachers in UK universities were actively if cautiously integrating AI-generated content into their materials, raising important questions about pedagogical ethics, attribution, and the maintenance of disciplinary voice. Pan (2025) evaluated a rubric-indexed AI feedback system for medical English education in China, reporting improvements in writing quality but also flagging the risk of over-reliance on automated feedback in high-stakes disciplinary writing contexts. These technology-focused studies reflect a broader pattern: digital innovation is increasingly a site where ESP integration is negotiated, with practitioners experimenting at the boundary between technological affordances and pedagogical purposes.

Discussion: Partial Integration and the Gap Between Policy and Practice

The evidence from RQ2 suggests that ESP occupies an ambiguous position within ELT programs: formally acknowledged in

curricula and policy documents, yet constrained in practice by institutional, pedagogical, and professional gaps. Bui (2022), reporting on student and teacher perceptions of effective ESP teaching in Vietnam, found that both groups valued clear disciplinary relevance and interactive instruction but noted that many ESP courses continued to prioritize linguistic accuracy over communicative functionality. This misalignment between pedagogical ideology and classroom reality is a thread that runs through much of the RQ2 literature and points toward deeper structural issues that are taken up in the following section.

RQ3: Factors Contributing to the Marginalization of ESP

Institutional and Structural Factors

The marginalization of ESP within formal English language education is one of the field's most persistent paradoxes. Despite its documented relevance and the growing body of evidence supporting its effectiveness, ESP remains under-resourced, undervalued, and institutionally peripheral in many educational systems. Stojković (2019), in a frequently cited article titled 'Possible Reasons Why ESP is Under-Recognized in Academia,' identified a cluster of structural and ideological factors that sustain this marginalization: the dominance of general English as the default model for language education policy; the perception of ESP as a vocational rather than academic discipline; and the relative absence of ESP from mainstream applied linguistics research agendas. Benabed (2022), examining an Algerian university context, further documented how systemic shortcomings, including inadequate institutional support, unclear course objectives, and poorly defined teacher roles, impede the effective delivery of ESP programs even where formal provision exists.

The issue of materials development is a concrete manifestation of these structural constraints. Talib *et al.* (2026), reporting on barriers to ESP materials development at Gorontalo State University in Indonesia, identified limited institutional funding, insufficient time allocation for ESP course planning, and a lack of collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists as key obstacles. These findings align with those of Hurajová (2021), who examined the potential of collaborative models between ESP/CLIL specialists and disciplinary teachers in Slovak higher education, concluding that while such partnerships are pedagogically promising, they are rarely institutionalized in practice.

Professional Identity and Teacher Development

A second cluster of marginalization factors relates to the professional positioning and training of ESP practitioners. Several

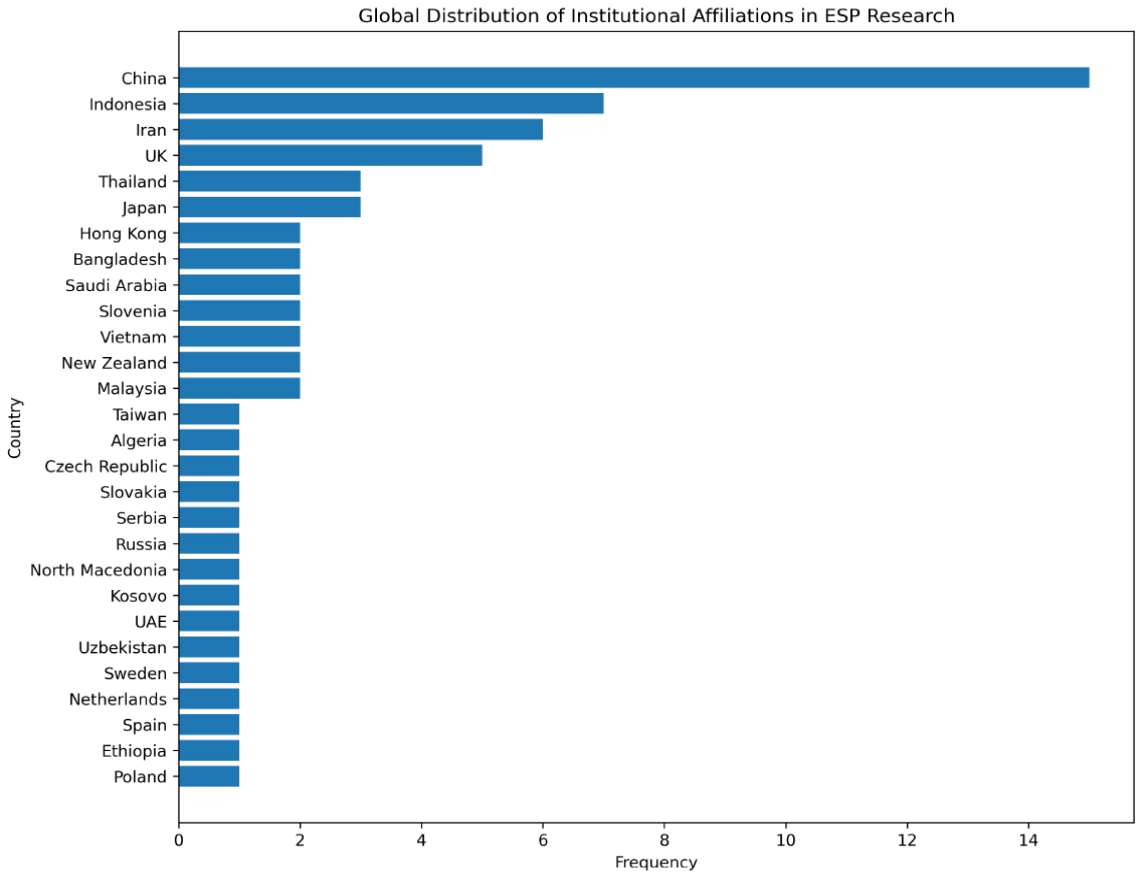


Figure 3: Global Distribution of Institutional Affiliation in ESP Research.

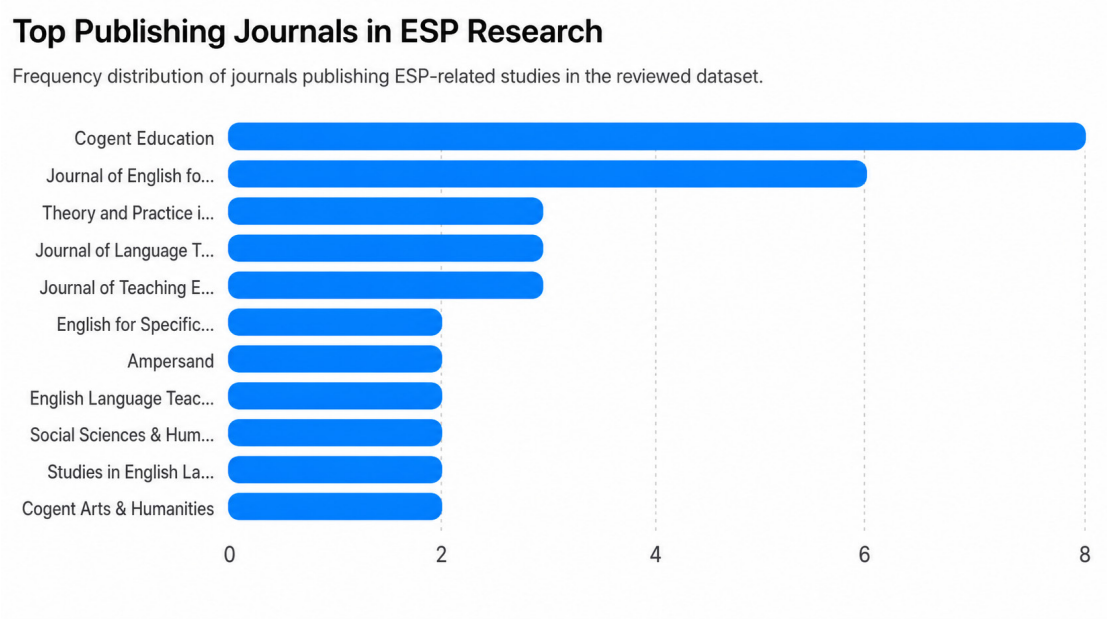


Figure 4: Top Publishing Journals in ESP Research.

studies in the dataset illuminate the precarious professional identity of ESP teachers, who frequently navigate between the expectations of language education and those of disciplinary content areas, without fully belonging to either. Ghanbari and Rasekh (2012) explored the professionalization of Iranian ESP practitioners through an apprenticeship-of-practice framework, finding that institutional mentorship structures were largely absent and that practitioner expertise was developed informally and unevenly. This finding anticipates a concern raised by multiple later studies: that ESP teaching is often assigned to general English teachers who lack the disciplinary background needed to contextualise language instruction within target professional domains.

Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2022) examined EAP teachers' expertise in UK higher education, finding that many practitioners held hybrid and contested professional identities positioned between language teacher and disciplinary insider, but without the institutional recognition afforded to either role. Du (2025), using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to analyze EAP teacher development challenges in Chinese higher education, found that structural contradictions between institutional goals, teacher agency, and student expectations created persistent tensions that undermined sustainable professional growth. Kohnke, Zou, and Zhang (2022), examining pre-service teachers' beliefs about EAP instruction in Hong Kong, found that many trainees entered the profession with limited understanding of the specific competencies required for EAP teaching, suggesting that pre-service preparation programs inadequately address the realities of ESP practice.

Ideological and Epistemological Marginalization

Beyond structural and professional barriers, several studies in the dataset point to ideological and epistemological factors that sustain ESP's peripheral status. Kiczkowiak (2024) examined native speakerism in ESP and Business English textbooks, documenting how the privileging of native-speaker authorship perpetuates a reductive and exclusionary model of English competence that sits uneasily with the multilingual, multipurpose orientation that defines contemporary ESP pedagogy. This finding connects to broader critiques of the epistemic asymmetries embedded in global ELT publishing and curriculum design, in which the knowledge and practices of inner-circle scholars and publishers disproportionately shape the field's intellectual agenda.

The syllabus inconsistency identified by Liaghat and Latif (2013), specifically the misalignment between ESP and general English course syllabi for Persian literature students in Iran, points to a more localized but equally significant form of ideological marginalization: the tendency for institutional stakeholders to treat ESP as an add-on to existing general English programming rather than as a distinct pedagogical paradigm requiring its own curriculum logic. This treatment reflects what Stojković (2019) described as the 'add-on' positioning of ESP in institutional planning, a positioning that systematically undervalues the intellectual and professional labor involved in ESP curriculum design and delivery.

Discussion: The Paradox at the Heart of ESP

Taken together, the findings across RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 illuminate the central paradox that motivates this study: that ESP has simultaneously expanded across a remarkable range of academic disciplines and professional domains while remaining institutionally marginal within the very ELT programs that might

logically house and support it. This paradox is not incidental; it reflects deep tensions between the instrumental demands of professional English education and the institutional conservatism of language education systems that continue to privilege general English over discipline-specific forms. This paradox does not just seem to be a qualitative impression that can be deduced from reading the 73 included studies; it is supported by the bibliometric evidence itself. As can be seen in the density visualization (Figure 2), the nodes that represent "English for Specific Purposes" have a very high density and are very well connected with other nodes in the network, while nodes representing disciplines (Maritime English, Military English, Islamic Studies) are at the periphery of the map, having low density. This quantitative pattern aligns with the qualitative result of RQ3: these disciplines are institutionally thinly represented but still present in other disciplines as isolated studies, not as research programs. This is what makes the ESP paradox not just an interpretative assertion, but an observed empirical phenomenon, where a network structure of books is juxtaposed with thematic, mostly institutional, marginalization. As Basturkmen (2022) noted in her review of ESP research trends in the Asia Pacific, the field's vitality is most visible in practitioner innovation and localized curriculum development, yet least visible in institutional policy and structural support.

The expansion of ESP into peripheral disciplines such as Islamic Studies, Maritime English, Military English, and Pharmacy attests to the field's responsiveness to real-world professional language needs. Yet the thinness of the research base in these areas, often represented by single studies, suggests that expansion is proceeding without the consolidation of robust disciplinary knowledge communities. This pattern of expansive fragmentation, rather than deep disciplinary integration, may itself be a structural consequence of ESP's marginalized institutional position: when ESP practitioners lack institutional recognition and research support, they innovate in isolation rather than in community, producing a field that is broad but uneven, responsive but not yet systematically theorized.

The main novelty of this study compared with previous reviews of the ESP literature is the combination of a systematic review of the ESP literature and bibliometric mapping in order to track not only the extent of ESP development but also the reasons behind this development and its lack of institutional legitimacy. Previous reviews tended to highlight the thematic variety of ESP studies or their patterns of citations and collaborations, but this study combines both aspects in at least 18 disciplinary areas, thus generating an evidence base that connects the diversity of disciplinary uptake with the depth of institutional integration. The dual lens allows the ESP paradox to be seen as a structural pattern, not simply a descriptive review as previous studies did.

LIMITATIONS

There are some caveats to be noted. The first problem is that it was searched using one string throughout the four databases without trying to tweak the string for each search platform syntax, controlled vocabulary, or truncation behavior. This method was used to afford consistency in the search process, but might have reduced the comprehensiveness of retrieval within databases that have different kinds of indexing systems, such as using thesaurus-based descriptors in ERIC. Some of the disciplines in RQ1 (such as Islamic Studies, Maritime English, Military English) had only one publication, and this may have been because of the retrieval limitations rather than due to the actual scarcity of research in these areas, and this should be distinguished when interpreting the extent of ESP's cross-disciplinary growth. Secondly, the review included only four databases and English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles; despite this being a quality control measure, some grey literature, books, conference proceedings, as well as non-English literature might also contain relevant evidence. Reviewers should consider using database-specific search strategies and expanded source triangulation and cover grey literature to enhance the comprehensiveness of the evidence base in future reviews.

Further, the analysis was performed with the exported bibliographic records as they were sent to the VOSviewer software, and all author names, institutional affiliations, and keyword variants were not manually cleaned. This can lead to semantically similar entities (for example, different versions of institution names and synonymous variants of keywords) being depicted as separate nodes in the network visualizations, which may cause a division of some thematic clusters instead of a consolidation. Using a thesaurus file in VOSviewer prior to mapping would help future replications of this analysis to harmonize such variants

CONCLUSION

This hybrid systematic literature review and bibliometric study has examined the complex and paradoxical trajectory of English for Specific Purposes within English Language Education. Drawing on 73 articles from major academic databases and analyzed through VOSviewer and thematic synthesis, the findings illuminate a field that simultaneously demonstrates remarkable vitality and persistent marginalization, which this study has termed the ESP paradox.

The first research question addressed the breadth of ESP's cross-disciplinary expansion. The evidence confirms that ESP has permeated at least 18 distinct academic and professional domains, extending well beyond its original roots in science and technology to encompass Engineering, Business, Medical, Tourism, Maritime, Military, and Islamic Studies, among others. Bibliometric mapping reveals that while general ESP and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) attract the greatest scholarly

attention, numerous peripheral sub-fields remain thinly theorized and underrepresented in the literature. This uneven development suggests that disciplinary expansion has been quantitatively broad but qualitatively shallow in many emerging domains.

The second research question examined the extent of ESP's integration within English Language Education programs globally. The findings reveal a troubling gap between policy intent and implementation reality. Although ESP holds a nominal presence in higher education curricula across many countries, its integration is frequently superficial, constrained by inadequate needs analysis, misalignment between institutional goals and classroom practice, and insufficient institutional support. Rather than being treated as a core pedagogical framework, ESP is often positioned as a supplementary or vocational track, reflecting the ideological subordination of specialized language instruction to the dominant paradigm of General English.

The third research question explored the factors contributing to ESP's persistent marginalization. Several interrelated causes were identified. Structurally, ESP practitioners face barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration, limited access to authentic field-specific materials, and underdeveloped professional identities that are caught between the roles of language educator and subject-matter specialist. Ideologically, the perception of ESP as vocational rather than academic continues to undermine its legitimacy within institutional frameworks. These structural and ideological factors operate in tandem, creating conditions under which ESP expands externally across disciplines while remaining institutionally peripheral within the very educational systems that stand to benefit most from its full integration.

The implications of these findings are threefold. For curriculum policy, institutions must move beyond nominal inclusion of ESP and commit to genuine alignment between specialized language programs and disciplinary content, supported by systematic needs analysis and continuous curriculum review. For teacher development, investment in ESP-specific professional training, including collaborative models that bring together language specialists and subject-matter experts, is essential for building the pedagogical capacity required by ESP's interdisciplinary demands. For future research, the field would benefit from greater scholarly attention to under-researched domains and geographic contexts, as well as longitudinal studies that track the relationship between the depth of ESP integration and learner outcomes in professional and academic settings.

In sum, resolving the ESP paradox requires not merely pedagogical innovation but a fundamental repositioning of ESP within educational policy and institutional culture, one that recognizes specialized language instruction not as a peripheral utility but as an indispensable component of preparing learners for the communicative demands of contemporary professional and academic life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Doctoral Scholarship Program for Indonesian Lecturers (PDDI), the Center for Higher Education Funding and Assessment (PPAPT), and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology for the financial support provided for this research.

ABBREVIATIONS

ESP: English for Specific Purposes; **ELT:** English Language Teaching; **SLR:** Systematic Literature Review; **EAP:** English for Academic Purposes; **VOSviewer:** A computer software tool used for bibliometric mapping and keyword density visualization; **ERIC:** A discipline-oriented database for education; **CEFR:** Common European Framework of Reference; **CLIL:** Content and Language Integrated Learning; **RQ:** Research Question; **PRISMA:** Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, a 2020 framework used for transparent screening and identification; **RIS:** Research Information Systems file format used for exporting bibliographic data; **CSV:** Comma-Separated Values file format used for exporting bibliographic data; **LMS:** Learning Management System; **ESAP:** English for Specific Academic Purposes; **EMI:** English-Medium Instruction; **AI:** Artificial Intelligence; **CHAT:** Cultural-Historical Activity Theory; **SMCR:** A communication modeling framework consisting of Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver; **EFL**: English as a Foreign Language; **TBLT:** Task-Based Language Teaching; **SSCI:** Social Sciences Citation Index; **PDDI:** Doctoral Scholarship Program for Indonesian Lecturers; **PPAPT:** Center for Higher Education Funding and Assessment.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

Ait, H. (2019). ESP needs analysis at the Moroccan university: Renewable energy engineering students at EST Fes as a case study. Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 4(1), 101–115.https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v4i1.218

Akbulut, F. D. (2016). ESP Needs Analysis of University Preparatory School Students: Learning-Centred Approach. Mustafa Kemal University Journal of Social Sciences Institutes, 13(36), 181-202.

Alousque, I. N. (2016). Developments in ESP: From register analysis to a genre-based and CLIL-based approach. Revista de Lenguas para Fines Específicos, 22(1), 190–212. https://doi.org/10.20420/rlfe.2016.310

Álvarez-Gil, F. J. (2021). Possible implementation of subjects taught using English as a Medium of Instruction methodology in tourism studies. Language Value, 14(2), 68-86.

Basturkmen, H. (2022). Current trends in ESP research in the Asia Pacific region. World Englishes, 41(4), 512–522.https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12601

Benabed, A. (2022). Investigating ESP present-day thorny shortcomings at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret in Algeria. LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 25(1), 1–22.https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v25i1.3969

Çal, A., Admiraal, W., & Mearns, T. (2022). The what–how–why of English in the workplace: Perspectives from Turkish engineers. European Journal of Engineering Education, 47(2), 333–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2021.1946014

Chan, C. S. C. (2024). Strengthening the interface between research and pedagogy in business English and beyond. English for Specific Purposes, 74, 23–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2023.12.001

Chaovanapricha, K. & Chaturongakul, P. (2020). Interdisciplinary teacher collaboration in English for Specific Purposes subjects in a Thai university. English Language Teaching, 13(5), 139–148.https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n5p139

Dou, A. Q., Chan, S. H., & Win, M. T. (2023). Changing visions in ESP development and teaching: Past, present, and future vistas. Frontiers in Psychology, 14, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1140659

Drašler, A., & Hyland, K. (2026). A technicality measure for ESAP vocabulary: Exploring geography. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 80, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2026.101655

Drašler, A., & Kavalir, M. (2026). Compiling a custom corpus and word list for ESAP: The case of English for Geographers. English for Specific Purposes, 81, 92–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2025.09.004

Du, J. (2025). Keep the change alive: Challenges and chances for EAP teacher development through the CHAT lens. Sustainability, 17(8), 3302.https://doi.org/10.3390/su17083302

Fitria, T. N. (2023). Implementation, challenges and solutions of multicultural education in school. PRIMACY Journal of English Education and Literacy, 2(2), 85-106 .https://doi.org/10.33592/primacy.v2i2.4085

Fitzpatrick, D., Costley, T., & Tavakoli, P. (2022). Exploring EAP teachers' expertise: Reflections on practice, pedagogy and professional development. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 59, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101140

Galloway, N., Sahan, K., & McKinley, J. (2024). English for specific purposes in surging English-medium instruction contexts. Journal of English-Medium Instruction, 3(2), 236–259.https://doi.org/10.1075/jemi.23011.gal

Ghanbari, B., & Eslami Rasekh, A. (2012). ESP practitioner professionalization through apprenticeship of practice: The case of two Iranian ESP practitioners. English Language Teaching, 5(2), 112–122.https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n2p112

Ghaskil, A, S. (2022). I am a global learner: The Urge to Establish an ESP Master Program in the Algerian University. In H. Andaloussi (Ed.), ESP Teaching Today: Current Practices, Challenges and Perspectives (pp. 52-61). Democratic Arabic Center.

Gouabi, K. (2023). ESP and Business English for Postgraduate Students in the Department of Economics, Tahri Mohamed University, Bechar, Algeria. Arab World English Journal, 14 (1) 476-485. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no1.30

Gutierres, A., Lindemann, I. L., & Menoncini, C. (2020). ESP teaching in contemporary medical education in Brazil. Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies, 73(1), 205–225.https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2020v73n1p205

Hajeer, A. (2024). Teaching ESP in the digital age: Implications for crafting effective course descriptions for online learning. Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 12(1), 255–267.https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP231116021H

Hidayati, D., Widiati, U., Zen, E. L., & Ivone, F. M. (2025). Developing an LMS-based ESP course for Islamic undergraduate students. Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 11, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101635

Hidayatulloh, S. M. M. (2022). Searching for ESP teaching models to match the text-based instruction for senior secondary vocational schools. International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching (IJIET), 6(2), 262–278.https://doi.org/10.24071/ijiet.v6i2.4388

Horiuchi, M. (2023). Forty-three years cheerleading for pharmacy students and pharmacists as an English teacher. Yakugaku Zasshi, 143(3), 261–279.https://doi.org/10.1248/yakushi.22-00148

Bui, H. P. (2022). Students' and teachers' perceptions of effective ESP teaching. Heliyon, 8(9), e10628.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10628https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10628

Hurajová, Ľ. (2021). Can close cooperation between ESP/CLIL experts and disciplinary teachers in higher education lead to fostering English education environment. Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 9(1), 129–136.https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP2101129H

Hyland, K. (2022). English for Specific Purposes: What is it and where is it taking us? ESP Today, 10(2), 202–220.https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2022.10.2.1

Hyland, K. & Wong, L. L. C. (2019). Specialized English: New directions in ESP and EAP research and practice. Università degli Studi di Trento. https://doi.org/10.13124/9788860461711

Hyland, K., & Jiang, F. (2021). Delivering relevance: The emergence of ESP as a discipline. English for Specific Purposes, 64, 13–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2021.06.002

Ibrahim, H. H. (2019). The role of an ideal ESP practitioner. Open Journal of Modern Linguistics, 9, 76-91. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2019.92008

Ibrahim, H. H. (2020). Needs Analysis as a Prerequisite for Designing an ESP Course for Medical Students. Open Journal of Modern Linguistics, 10(2), 83-103. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2020.102006

Janenoppakarn, C., & Rajprasit, K. (2025). Development of a New 'Engineering English for Intercultural Communication' Online Course to Prepare New Engineers for Working in Intercultural Workplace Settings. LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 18(1), 228–267. https://doi.org/10.70730/MFHC3285

Kaivanpanah, S., Alavi, S.M., Bruce, I., Hejazi, S.Y. (2021) EAP in the expanding circle: Exploring the knowledge base, practices, and challenges of Iranian EAP practitioners. Journal of English for Academic Purposes. 50, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2021.100971

Kamberi, L., Ali, F., Zhou, Y., Hussain, K., Nair, P. K., Ragavan, N. A., & Cobanoglu, C. (2020). Does higher education service quality effect student satisfaction, image and loyalty? A study of international students in Malaysia. International Journal for Quality Research, 14(1), 185–200.https://doi.org/10.24874/IJQR14.01-19

Kamberi, L., Ameti, M., & Dragoescu Urlica, A.-A. (2020). On the quality and relevance of English for specific purposes in higher education. International Journal for Quality Research, 14(1), 303–312.https://doi.org/10.24874/IJQR14.01-19

Khalili, K. (2025). English for Specific Purposes teaching practices: Teachers' perspectives. Journal of Languages and Translation, 5(2); 75-87.https://doi.org/10.70204/jlt.v5i2.598

Kiczkowiak, M. (2024). Who gets to be an ELT course book author? Native speakerism in English for specific purposes and business English course books. Frontiers in Education, 9, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1473353

Kohnke, L., Zou, D., & Zhang, R. (2022). Exploring pre-service teachers' beliefs about EAP instruction in China: A case study. International Journal of Educational Research Open, 3, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100179

Liaghat, F., & Latif, F. (2013). The study of the inconsistency between ESP and general English course syllabi for the Persian literature major. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3(2), 318–323.https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.2.318-323

Mohamed, O. I., & Alani, N. N. (2022). English for Specific Purposes: An overview: Definitions, characteristics and development. English Language Teaching, 15(12), 28–36.https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n12p28

Mulyadi, D., Wijayatiningsih, T. D., Hartiti, T., & Singh, C. K. S. (2025). Bridging language and nursing proficiency: Technology-enhanced TBLT integrated into CLIL in ESP instruction. Studies in English Language and Education, 12(3), 1153–1170.https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v12i3.43482

Stojković, N. (2019). Possible reasons why ESP is under recognized in academia. Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 7(3), 405–409.https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP1903405S

Ngo, T. N., & Moreira Fians, G. (2026). Between prompting strategies and ethical concerns: How EAP teachers develop materials with Generative AI. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 81, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2026.101680

Pan, Y. (2025). Leveraging generative AI powered rubric-indexed feedback as a formative assessment strategy for enhancing medical English education. Innovative Higher Education. Advance online publication, 28, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10791-025-09830-9

Pilla, M. P. A., Fiallos, B. A. G., Molina, P. E. C., & Melo, N. N. N. (2025). Development of communicative competence in specific contexts: Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in fields such as Medicine, Business, and Technology. Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, 9(1), 10262-10276. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v9i1.16636https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v9i1.16636

Rahaman, A., Saha, S., Hamid, M. O., & Khan, H. R. (2026). Use of English in engineering workplace: Frequency, skill hierarchy, and functions. Ampersand, 16, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2025.100252

Salmani-Nodoushan, M. A. (2020). English for specific purposes: Traditions, trends, directions. Studies in English Language and Education, 7(1), 247–268.https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i1.16342

Sandal, Ö., & Özkan, Y. (2022). The evaluation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program at an engineering faculty at a private university in Turkey. Research in Pedagogy, 12(1), 253–269.https://doi.org/10.5937/IstrPed2201253S

Shi, W. (2018). The essential issues of the ESP classroom from a reflective view. English Language Teaching, 11(6), 16–22.https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n6p16

Siddique, S. (2018). Teaching ESP at the tertiary level in Bangladesh: A general perspective. Journal of NELTA, 22 (1–2), 76–88.https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v22i1-2.20043

Siegel, A., Vance, M., & Nilsson, D. (2025). Military English language education: A scoping review of 30 years of research. Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 19(5), 433–451.https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2024.2370986

Silva, E.V.d. (2020). Business Portuguese in the age of digital instruction. Global Business Languages, 20, 41–52. https://doi.org/10.4079/gbl.v20.3

Simanjuntak, M. B., Selasdini, V., Malau, A. G., Barasa, L., Cahyadi, T., Winarno, & Herawati, S. (2024). Development of maritime English communication learning model based on multiliteracy pedagogy. Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 7(5), 2025237.https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2025237

Sintia, D., Perdana, I., & Karani, E. (2025). ESP in Practice: A Literature Review of Challenges Faced by Teachers and Learners. ENGLISH JOURNAL OF INDRAGIRI, 9(2), 584-597. https://doi.org/10.61672/eji.v9i2.3003

Sujannah, W. D., Suwarso, P. N., & Unsiah, F. (2025). The correlation between ChatGPT use and learning autonomy among ESP students. Cogent Education, 12(1), 2517508. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2517508

Sun, Y., & Tan, D. A. L. (2026). Investigating the impact of Kahoot! on the ESP vocabulary knowledge development of Chinese EFL learners: A quasi-experimental study. Cogent Education, 13(1), 2614815.https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2614815

Supunya, N. (2023). A Systematic Review on ESP Teachers: Current Focus, Collaboration, and Sustainability. rEFLections, 30(2), 287–317. https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v30i2.267295

Talib, R., Larasati, Y. G., Tanipu, Z., & Mohammad, T. F. (2026). Barriers to developing effective ESP teaching materials at Gorontalo State University. Cogent Education, 13(1), 2608411.https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2608411

Tan S., Harji M. B., & Hu X. (2023). A Bibliometric Analysis of English for Specific Purposes from 2011 to 2023 Using Citespace: Visualizing Status, Themes, Evolution, and Emerging Trends. Journal of Language and Education, 9(3), 159-175. https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2023.17632

Trisyanti, U. (2009). Developing materials for ESP (English for Specific Purposes) class. Jurnal Sosial Humaniora, 2(1), 66–77.http://dx.doi.org/10.12962/j24433527.v2i1.666

Umbar, K., Zulkifli, & Masani. (2024). Current Trends in Language for Specific Purposes Research and Their Relevance to Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP): A Systematic Literature Review. International Journal of Religion, 5(5), 1097-1112.https://doi.org/10.61707/rhfvk271

Wieczorek, A. L. (2024). Eclecticism as a key factor in successful business English instruction. XLinguae, 17(4), 284–299.https://doi.org/10.18355/XL.2024.17.04.17

Wu, X. (2024). Research on ESP convergent college English teaching: A perspective of SMCR communication modeling. Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences, 9(1), 1–14.https://doi.org/10.2478/amns-2024-1562

Yan, H. (2025). Trends in Empirical Research in English for Specific Purposes: A Systematic Review of SSCI-Indexed Journal Articles (2014–2023). Sage Open, 15(1), 21582440251328460.

Zaghar, F., & Zaghar, E. W. (2021). Tailoring Potent Courses for ESP Learners: A Way to Better Fulfil Their Demands. Arab World English Journal, 12(2) 414-423. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.28

Zhang, J. (2013). The ESP instruction: A study based on the pattern of autonomous inquiry. English Language Teaching, 6(3), 72–77.https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n3p72

Zhang, L. (2023). Neural network based college English informatization learning environment construction with ESP teaching mode. Computer-Aided Design and Applications, 20(S12), 172–187.https://doi.org/10.14733/cadaps.2023.S12.172-187

Zhao, H., Li, D., & Zhong, Y. (2022). Teacher emotion and pedagogical decision-making in ESP teaching in a Chinese university. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.955474

Zhou, J., & Delogu, P. (2026). Bridging EAP and EMI: Professional development for EAP teachers in Chinese higher education. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 79, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2025.101623

Cite this article: Azami MI, Setiawan S, Munir A, Pusparini R, Hayati KR, Fahas R. The Paradox of ESP in English Language Education: A Hybrid SLR-Bibliometric Analysis of Cross-Disciplinary Expansion and Marginalization. J Scientometric Res. 2026;15(3):991-1004.