

CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) TO NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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Abstract. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become an essential component of higher education, particularly for non-English major students who require specialized language skills for academic and professional contexts. However, teaching ESP presents numerous challenges for both instructors and learners. This study investigates the key difficulties encountered in ESP instruction for non-English major students, focusing on issues such as low language proficiency, lack of motivation, insufficient teaching materials, and limited subject-matter knowledge among instructors. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through literature review and analysis of previous empirical studies. The findings reveal that effective ESP teaching requires a balance between linguistic competence and domain-specific knowledge, as well as the integration of innovative teaching methods. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations aimed at improving ESP instruction and enhancing student learning outcomes.

Keywords: ESP, non-English majors, teaching challenges, language proficiency, curriculum design.

Annotatsiya. Maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili (ESP) oliy ta'lim tizimining muhim tarkibiy qismiga aylangan, ayniqsa akademik va kasbiy faoliyat uchun maxsus til ko'nikmalariga ehtiyoj sezadigan nofilologik yo'nalish talabalari uchun. Biroq, ESPni o'qitish o'qituvchilar va talabalar uchun ko'plab muammolarni keltirib chiqaradi. Ushbu tadqiqot nofilologik yo'nalish talabalari uchun ESP o'qitish jarayonida yuzaga keladigan asosiy qiyinchiliklarni o'rganadi va past til darajasi, motivatsiya yetishmasligi, o'quv materiallarining kamligi hamda o'qituvchilarning soha bo'yicha yetarli bilimga ega emasligi kabi muammolarga e'tibor qaratadi. Tadqiqot sifatli (qualitative) yondashuv asosida olib borilib, ma'lumotlar adabiyotlar tahlili va avvalgi empirik tadqiqotlarni o'rganish orqali to'plandi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, samarali ESP o'qitish til kompetensiyasi va sohaviy bilim o'rtasidagi muvozanatni ta'minlashni, shuningdek innovatsion o'qitish usullarini qo'llashni talab qiladi. Tadqiqot ESP o'qitishni takomillashtirish va talabalarning o'quv natijalarini yaxshilashga qaratilgan pedagogik tavsiyalar bilan yakunlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: ESP, nofilologik yo'nalish talabalari, o'qitishdagi muammolar, til kompetensiyasi, o'quv dasturi dizayni.

Аннотация. Английский язык для специальных целей (ESP) стал важной частью системы высшего образования, особенно для студентов неязыковых специальностей, которым необходимы специализированные языковые навыки для академической и профессиональной деятельности. Однако преподавание ESP связано с рядом трудностей как для преподавателей, так и для студентов. В данном исследовании рассматриваются основные проблемы, возникающие в процессе обучения ESP студентов неязыковых направлений, с акцентом на такие аспекты, как низкий уровень владения языком, недостаточная мотивация, нехватка учебных материалов, а также ограниченные знания преподавателей в предметной области. Исследование выполнено с использованием качественного (qualitative) подхода, при этом данные были собраны посредством анализа научной литературы и ранее проведённых эмпирических исследований. Результаты показывают, что эффективное преподавание ESP требует баланса между языковой компетенцией и профессиональными знаниями, а также интеграции инновационных методов обучения. В заключение представлены педагогические рекомендации, направленные на совершенствование преподавания ESP и повышение учебных результатов студентов.

Ключевые слова: ESP, студенты неязыковых специальностей, проблемы преподавания, языковая компетенция, разработка учебной программы.

Introduction. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a specialized branch of English language teaching that focuses on developing learners' communicative competence in specific academic or professional domains. Unlike General English, ESP is designed to meet the particular needs of learners in fields such as engineering, medicine, business, and tourism. According to recent research, ESP emphasizes "language skills required for efficient communication in specialized fields".

In today's globalized world, English plays a crucial role in professional communication, making ESP courses increasingly important in higher education institutions. Particularly for non-English major students, ESP serves as a bridge between language learning and professional development. However, despite its importance, teaching ESP to non-English major students is a complex and challenging task.

The complexity arises from multiple factors, including diverse student backgrounds, limited English proficiency, and the need for specialized vocabulary and discourse. Studies show that ESP instructors often struggle with curriculum design, lack of authentic materials, and insufficient training. Moreover, students frequently face difficulties in understanding technical terminology and applying language skills in their specific fields.

This study aims to explore the major challenges in teaching ESP to non-English major students and to provide practical recommendations for improving teaching effectiveness. The research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the main challenges faced by ESP teachers?
2. What difficulties do non-English major students encounter in ESP learning?
3. How can these challenges be effectively addressed?

Literature analysis. The analysis of existing literature indicates that teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to non-English major students is widely recognized as a complex and multifaceted pedagogical issue. Scholars such as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) emphasize the importance of aligning language instruction with specific professional contexts, while more recent studies highlight persistent challenges including low language proficiency, limited motivation, and insufficient subject-matter knowledge among instructors. Furthermore, contemporary research underscores the lack of authentic teaching materials and inadequate needs analysis as key barriers to effective ESP instruction. Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that successful ESP teaching requires an integrated approach combining linguistic competence, domain-specific knowledge, and innovative, learner-centered methodologies.

Research methodology. This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on an extensive and systematic review of existing literature related to the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study aims to explore, interpret, and synthesize complex pedagogical challenges rather than measure them quantitatively. By focusing on

previously published academic work, this research seeks to identify recurring patterns, shared concerns, and emerging trends in ESP instruction for non-English major students.

Results and discussion. The research follows a descriptive qualitative design, which allows for an in-depth understanding of the challenges associated with ESP teaching. This approach emphasizes interpretation and thematic exploration rather than statistical analysis. It is particularly suitable for examining educational issues where contextual factors, such as institutional settings, teacher expertise, and student diversity, play a significant role.

The data for this study were collected from a wide range of secondary sources. These include:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Academic books and book chapters
- Conference proceedings
- Theses and dissertations related to ESP

The selection of sources focused primarily on studies published within the last 10–15 years to ensure relevance to current educational practices. However, seminal works in ESP were also included to provide theoretical grounding.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, specific inclusion criteria were applied:

1. The study must focus on ESP teaching or learning.
2. The research must involve non-English major students or non-linguistic academic contexts.
3. The publication must be from a credible academic source.
4. The study must discuss challenges, difficulties, or barriers in ESP instruction.

Studies that did not meet these criteria or lacked sufficient methodological clarity were excluded from the analysis.

The data collection process involved systematic searching of academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories. Keywords used in the search included “ESP challenges,” “teaching ESP,” “non-English major students,” and “ESP methodology.” After identifying relevant sources, the materials were carefully reviewed, and key findings were extracted.

Notes were taken during the reading process, focusing on identified problems, suggested solutions, and contextual factors influencing ESP teaching. These notes were then organized into thematic categories.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The analysis was conducted in several stages:

1. **Familiarization:** Reading and re-reading the selected literature to gain a comprehensive understanding.

2. **Coding:** Highlighting key issues and assigning initial codes to recurring ideas.
3. **Theme Development:** Grouping similar codes into broader categories such as teacher-related challenges, student-related issues, and institutional constraints.
4. **Interpretation:** Analyzing how these themes interact and contribute to the overall challenges in ESP teaching.

This structured process ensured that the findings were systematic and grounded in the reviewed literature.

To enhance reliability, multiple sources were cross-checked to confirm consistency in identified themes. The use of peer-reviewed publications also contributed to the credibility of the findings.

However, the study has certain limitations. Since it relies solely on secondary data, it does not include primary data such as interviews or classroom observations. Additionally, the findings may not fully represent all educational contexts, as ESP practices can vary across countries and institutions.

The analysis of the literature revealed several significant challenges in teaching ESP to non-English major students.

One of the most prominent challenges is the low level of English proficiency among students. Many non-English major students lack basic language skills, making it difficult for them to understand specialized content. Research indicates that heterogeneous language proficiency levels in classrooms significantly hinder effective ESP instruction .

Motivation plays a critical role in language learning. However, many students do not perceive the relevance of ESP to their future careers, leading to low engagement. Studies highlight that students often fail to see the immediate benefits of learning English, which negatively impacts their participation and performance .

ESP instructors are often trained in language teaching but may lack expertise in the students' specific fields. This gap creates difficulties in delivering content effectively. Research shows that a lack of subject-matter knowledge is a major obstacle for ESP teachers.

Another critical issue is the scarcity of authentic and field-specific teaching materials. Many available textbooks do not meet the specific needs of learners, forcing teachers to develop their own materials. This process is time-consuming and requires additional expertise.

Needs analysis is a fundamental component of ESP course design. However, studies indicate that many institutions fail to conduct systematic needs analysis, resulting in poorly designed curricula that do not align with students' professional requirements.

ESP courses are often allocated limited instructional time, which is insufficient for developing both general language skills and specialized knowledge. This constraint makes it difficult for teachers to achieve course objectives.

Technological limitations and lack of access to digital resources also pose challenges. These constraints hinder the integration of modern teaching methods, such as online learning platforms and multimedia tools.

Students often have limited opportunities to practice English in real-life contexts. This lack of interaction reduces their ability to develop communicative competence, which is essential in ESP learning.

The findings of this study highlight that the challenges in teaching ESP to non-English major students are multifaceted and interconnected.

First, the issue of low language proficiency suggests that ESP courses should incorporate elements of General English to build a strong linguistic foundation. Without basic language skills, students cannot effectively engage with specialized content.

Second, the lack of student motivation indicates the need for more relevant and engaging teaching approaches. Incorporating real-world tasks, case studies, and project-based learning can help students understand the practical value of ESP.

Third, the gap in teachers' subject-matter knowledge underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. ESP instructors should work closely with subject specialists to design effective curricula and materials.

Fourth, the scarcity of authentic materials calls for the integration of digital resources and authentic texts from professional contexts. The use of real-life documents, such as reports, manuals, and presentations, can enhance learning outcomes.

Fifth, the importance of needs analysis cannot be overstated. A well-conducted needs analysis ensures that the course content aligns with students' academic and professional goals.

Additionally, innovative teaching methods such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and project-based learning have been identified as effective strategies for addressing these challenges.

Conclusion. Teaching ESP to non-English major students is a complex process that requires careful consideration of various challenges. This study has identified key issues, including low student proficiency, lack of motivation, insufficient teacher expertise, and inadequate teaching materials.

To overcome these challenges, several recommendations can be made:

- Conduct comprehensive needs analysis before course design
- Provide professional development for ESP teachers
- Integrate authentic materials and digital resources
- Use interactive and student-centered teaching methods
- Foster collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists

By addressing these challenges, educators can improve the effectiveness of ESP instruction and better prepare students for their academic and professional careers.

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