



Introducing Researching English for Specific Purposes

Lindy Woodrow

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The demand for English language competency has increased drastically over the last few years. With the globalization of markets, increased international communication, and the need for students to compete on a global stage, English proficiency has become a critical skill for success (Ahmed, 2022). The ever-growing demand for English language proficiency underscores the importance of employing unique pedagogical approaches such as English for Specific Purposes (henceforth ESP) to meet the highly specific linguistic needs of different groups of language learners. As a result, ESP has become a significant area of research in recent years.

Through her work, *Researching English for Specific Purposes*, Lynda Woodrow offers researchers a comprehensive guidance for mastering the constantly changing field of English for Specific Purposes. The author meticulously presents the main challenges in the field of ESP research while offering a well-structured and insightful analysis of the topic. In her book Woodrow makes an attempt to present the historical basis of the commencement of ESP research, its current status, and challenges, while providing readers with a strong nucleus to understand the field's development. Despite being written primarily for novice ESP researchers, Woodrow's book also has great value for language policy-makers, teacher educators, and linguists.

In terms of structure, this book is divided into ten chapters presented sequentially. The first chapter starts with a concise introduction of ESP research and its historical background. Chapter 2 discusses the initial steps in conducting ESP research. More specifically, the author underlines the significance of selecting a research topic. This is followed by an emphasis on the importance of linking current research to relevant literature in order to develop a theoretical foundation for the study. This chapter also addresses the evaluation of sources.

The third chapter is devoted to the study of common theoretical approaches in ESP research, namely multimodality, cross-cultural rhetoric, academic

literacies, and systematic functional linguistics. Examples drawn from the research literature are used to support the key strengths of each point of view. To widen the readers' understanding of ESP research, Woodrow goes deeper in Chapter 4 and successfully outlines ESP research aspects related to English for Academic Purposes, English for Business Purposes, English for Occupational Purposes, etc. Furthermore, the author incorporates empirical evidence from relevant publications in ESP, including language analysis, needs analysis, evaluation, and teaching and learning ESP.

The fifth chapter focuses on ESP study design, particularly methodological techniques and research paradigms. Then, the author clarifies how paradigms from the theory of constructivism, post-positivism, pragmatism, and positivism contribute to study designs employing hybrid, quantitative, and qualitative methodologies. Along with relevant instances, the fundamental attributes of each paradigm found in ESP research are discussed as well.

In Chapter 6 Woodrow demonstrates the application of quantitative research methodologies in ESP research. The author posits that ESP research can accommodate a variety of methods, including experimental, quasi-experimental, cross-cultural, survey, longitudinal, etc. Additionally, she presents a concise overview of various data collection techniques, such as surveys and corpora. Next, she examines various instruments, such as Likert scales, rating scales, binary choice, and open-ended questions. The chapter comes to an end with the presentation of the most frequently used techniques for data analysis in ESP research, including regression analysis, factor analysis, analysis of variance, and T-tests.

In Chapter 7, qualitative research and its methods (action research, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, etc.) are the main topics. Following a description of each technique, the author provides a comprehensive overview of several research methods, such as think-aloud procedures, observations, diaries, and interviews. She also presents methodologies for analyzing qualitative data, including content analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, analytical-critical discourse analysis, and genre analysis. It is worth mentioning that this is the longest chapter of the book.

In Chapter 8, the author makes an attempt to provide clarity and place psychometric qualities within the framework of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) research. She then emphasizes how crucial validity, dependability, and other ethical issues are to ESP research. According to Woodrow, validity and reliability are vital in qualitative and quantitative research designs. Going

deeper, she recommends factor analysis and internal consistency metrics for quantitative research, whereas for qualitative research, Woodrow stresses the case for the application of expert judgment and inter-rater reliability. Along with that, the author also discusses the ethical implications of permission, anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality. Woodrow concludes this chapter by outlining the premise of the researcher's positional accuracy, which is critical for conducting qualitative research. In the next chapter, the author advances from theoretical considerations to helpful advice on composing research papers. She does this by outlining several procedures for writing, summarizing, and publishing research papers.

In the final chapter, the author provides an overview of various ESP publishers and resources that can be helpful for ESP research procedure and publication. Additionally, the author lists a number of scholarly journals that are relevant to ESP and its research methods.

All things considered, this book deserves appreciation in several aspects. First, the primary strength of this book is its writing style and language, which make it easy for the readers to comprehend ESP research concepts. The second distinctive feature of the book is the author's usage of evidence to support her ideas. Rather than presenting ad hoc data, Woodrow incorporates the outcomes of prior studies to bolster her arguments for the audience. The interconnection between the author's ideas and existing literature strengthens the appeal of this book. An additional noteworthy aspect of the book is that it offers a thorough overview of study themes, models, designs, and instruments in ESP research, as well as practical and theoretical guidance on how to carry out studies providing recommendations specific to each stage of the research process.

The book is also marked with certain shortcomings. More specifically, less attention is attached to how ESP has been changing over time. Although the book discusses traditional methods for studying ESP, it falls short when discussing how technological advances, especially artificial intelligence-powered tools, have changed the field. Furthermore, the book does not go far enough in analyzing sociopolitical impacts on ESP research. The ways that sociopolitical power and educational policies might influence the objectives and methods of ESP programs are not sufficiently explored here. Besides that, the book places a limited emphasis on research methodology, expressing a relatively strong preference for quantitative approaches over mixed-methods and qualitative studies.

Finally, the book could have included some complementary sections. Each chapter lacks a summary or conclusion section, which is crucial, particularly for longer chapters. Moreover, there is no list of sources to help readers in identifying issues worthy of further investigation. A section on “Directions for Future Research” is also absent.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, this insightful book deserves praise and recognition for offering fresh and in-depth perspectives on ESP research methods and practice. By discussing different ESP research tendencies and study techniques, the book significantly advances ESP research.

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