English for Specific Purposes Research and Practice in the Past 20 Years (2001-2020) in China: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper reviews the literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research in 15 CSSCI foreign language journals in China's CNKI database over the last two decades. The data have been quantified and visualized with Citespace. This paper analyzes research advances and themes, and then puts forward suggestions based on the current situation of college English teaching in China. The findings reveal that: 1) ESP publications have shown a rising trend during the past 20 years; 2) The study of ESP in academic dissertations is mainly at the MA level; 3) ESP research focuses on such issues as relationships between ESP and college English, academic English, corpus and teaching modes; 4) The dominant method of ESP research in China is non-empirical while more and more empirical studies have emerged since 2011. This study also critically analyzes the research limitations and recommendations of the ESP study.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, ESP, research advances, Citespace

1. Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) has always been a trendy research topic in international English teaching and English language research. ESP refers to "the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the learners' goal is to use English in a particular domain" (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). It is a learner-centered and needs-based English teaching practice (Dashtestani, R., & Stojković, N., 2016). In ESP teaching, English is taught as a subject that aims at the "learners' real world (or wishes)" (Momtazur Rahman, 2015). ESP is an essential branch of English teaching and learning because "different contexts require different mastery of the language" (Rafifiq, K. R. M. et al., 2021).

The development process of ESP in China can be divided into two stages (Cai Jigang, 2015). The first stage (1994-2004) is the theoretical exploration period, and the second stage (2009-) is the practical experiment period. Under the strong advocacy of the academic community, ESP has made gratifying achievements: In May 2011, ESP Committee was established. In April 2013, the first ESP syllabus, Reference Framework for College English Teaching in Shanghai Universities (Trial), was published. In 2017, the *College English Teaching Guide* issued by the Ministry of Education in China included ESP in the college English curriculum for the first time, proposing that "colleges and universities should offer ESP courses based on students' needs" (Wang Wenxuan, 2016). Since then, ESP has gradually developed into the mainstream of college English teaching. However, few scholars have summarized the research progress of ESP teaching field in China.

Previous reviews of ESP research and practice in China (e.g., Zheng Jinjing & Wu Ting, 2007; Jiang Yichao & Li Na, 2010; Huang Jian, 2018) have provided us with insights into the status quo and hot issues of the field. However, most of these reviews lack of quantitative analysis and comprehensive evaluation. Thus, by using Citespace software, a "latest development of a generic approach to detecting and visualizing emerging trends and transient patterns in scientific literature" (Chen, 2006), this study provides a systematic literature review.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic review of the ESP study from 2001 to 2020 in China. Based on the review, this paper also investigates the limitations and recommendations for the ESP study. This study aims to focus on four questions:

(1) What are the situations and trends of ESP research in China between 2001 and 2020?

(2) What are the ESP research themes during this period?

(3) What are the limitations of ESP research in China?

(4) What are the recommendations for ESP study in China in the future?

2. Method

2.1 Subject Characteristics

The author chooses 15 journals in China as research subjects. These 15 journals are: *Journal of PLA (People's Liberation Army of China) University of Foreign Languages, Shandong Foreign Language Teaching, Journal of Foreign Languages, Foreign Language and Literature, Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education, Foreign Language World, Foreign Language Education, Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice, Foreign Languages Research, Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, Foreign Language Research, Journal of Xi'an International Studies University, Modern Foreign Languages and Foreign Languages in China*. All 15 journals are CSSCI (the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index) from CNKI database. CSSCI was developed by Nanjing University's China Social Science Research Evaluation Center to retrieve the collection of papers and citations in Chinese social sciences. The academic journals it chooses reflects the latest research results in various disciplines in China's social science community, with high academic value and impact factors, CNKI (www.cnki.net) is "China National Knowledge Infrastructure", founded in 1995, which is one of the most popular databases in China, indexing all of the journal articles, MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations, magazine articles, newspapers, etc, in China. Therefore, the articles chosen can reflect the research trend and quality of ESP in China.

2.2 Sampling Procedures

The author searched articles in 15 CSSCI journals within the foreign language research area in CNKI Database. These journals are referred to as A1, A2, A3, … A15 respectively in table 1. The retrievals of the database are restricted to the period between 2001 and 2020. To ensure the specificity of the reviewed articles, the keywords used for the retrievals are the Chinese words "English for Specific Purposes" and "English for Special Purposes", and the English phrase "ESP". To further narrow down the research, the keywords combinations are used with "and" and "or", and retrieved alternatively as "title" and "keywords". After retrieving the search result, the author deleted duplicate entries and ones that are irrelevant to this research. As a result, 179 journal articles published during this period were selected as the subjects of the study.

3. Results

3.1 Quantity of Articles and Trends

Figure 1 shows the annual number of ESP research papers published in 15 CSSCI journals from 2001 to 2020. The trend line indicates that ESP research in China has witnessed continuously grow over the past 20 years. The number of research papers is growing slowly, with many peaks and valleys. Although it declined in 2010, 2012, and 2014, it reached a new high in 2011, 2013, and 2015. In 2016, the ESP study in China heated up to its highest point. Research climax during this time reflects the increasingly urgent demand for English research and the working skills of university graduates in our society.
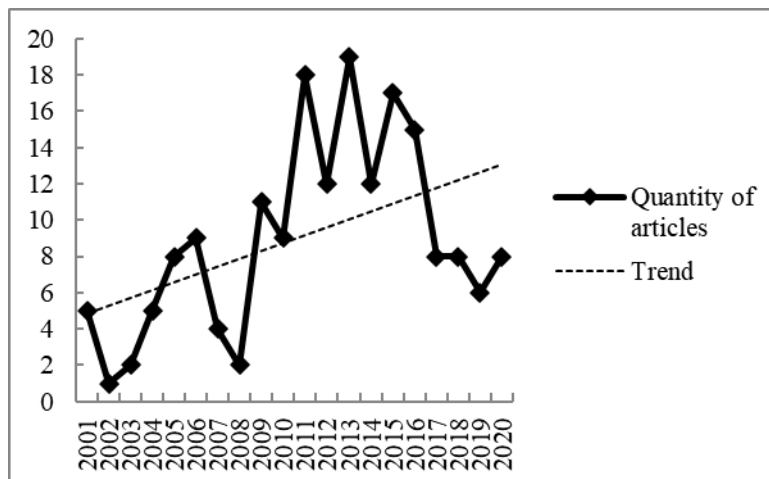

Figure 1. The Number of ESP Research Articles Published from 2001 to 2020

This increase reflects the guidance of several documents in China. In 2007, the Ministry of Education of China promulgated the *College English Curriculum Requirements* to guide English teaching to non-English majors in higher education in China. In 2010, the Ministry of Education promulgated *The Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Program (2010-2020)*, which sets out the requirements for the training of high-quality professionals. In 2015, the *Guidelines on College English Teaching of China* were issued by the Ministry of Education. For the first time, it added ESP to the college English curriculum system, and proposes that "colleges and universities should provide ESP courses that reflect the characteristics of the school-based on needs analysis, which should also reflect the specifications of the training of talents in schools and the needs of students". Two years later, *the Guidelines on College English Teaching of China* (2017) clarified that three sets of courses should be designed for the college English curriculum. They are called English for General Purposes (EGP) courses, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, and English for Intercultural Communication (EIC) courses, each of which carries equal weight in the course system with EGP highlighting philosophy and values, and ESP and EIC focusing on instrumental and humanistic features respectively (Xu & Fan, 2017).

Table 1. Quantity of Journal Articles in Selected 15 CSSCI Journals

Year	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	Total	Percentage
2001						1	1				3					5	2.79
2002						1										1	0.56
2003						1					1					2	1.12
2004		1				2	1				1					5	2.79
2005		1			2	2	2				1					8	4.47
2006		3				2					2				2	9	5.03
2007		1								1	1				1	4	2.23
2008						2										3	1.12
2009		1			2	5	1				1				1	11	6.15
2010				1	4		1	1			1		1			9	5.03
2011		1		5	3	2	1			3					3	18	10.06
2012					2	1	2		1	1	2				3	12	6.7
2013					2	2	3		4		4		1		3	19	10.61
2014				2	1		1		1	1	2	2			2	12	6.7
2015	1			1	1	2		1	3	4	1	1	2			17	9.5
2016				1	4	2	1		2		2	2			1	15	8.38
2017		1				1	1		1	1		2			1	8	4.47
2018		2			1				1	2	1		1			8	4.47
2019		1		1	1							1	2			6	3.35
2020			1			1		1			2	2		1		8	4.47
Total	1	12	1	11	23	28	15	3	13	13	25	10	7	1	17	179	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the number of journal articles published in selected 15 CSSCI journals over the past 20 years varied from each other. The top three are *Foreign Language World* (28), *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education* (25), and *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching* (23), followed by *Foreign Languages in China* (17), *Foreign Language Education* (15), *Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice* (13), *Foreign Languages Research* (13), *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching* (12) and *Foreign Language and Literature* (11). On the contrary, few ESP research papers have been published in the *Journal of PLA (People's Liberation Army of China) University of Foreign Languages* (1), *Journal of Foreign Languages* (1), and *Modern Foreign Languages* (1).

Table 2. Quantity of Journal Article, MA thesis, and Ph.D. Dissertation in CNKI

(Retrieved on 16 Aug 2021)

Year	Journal Article	MA thesis	Ph.D. dissertation
2001-2005	21	43	0
2006-2010	35	165	2
2011-2015	78	214	7
2016-2020	45	105	4
Total	179	527	13

Findings also reveal that the trend of several published journal articles coincides with the quantity of MA (Master of Arts) thesis and Ph.D. dissertation (Table 2), which all shows a peak from 2011 to 2015. From the CNKI database, there are 540 pieces of MA and Ph.D. thesis about ESP research. However, most studies are at the MA level, compared to less than 20 papers at the Ph.D. level.

3.2 Content of ESP Research in China (2001-2020)

In this study, the retrieved original data are directed to CiteSpace analysis software, one of the mainstream software of knowledge domain visualization, and the research progress and frontier hot spots are searched through keywords and cluster analysis. The time-slicing is set as "from 2011 to 2020", the year per slice is "1", and "keyword" is chosen in Node Types. "Top 50 per slice" is chosen for analysis. The result of the visualization can be seen in Figure 2.
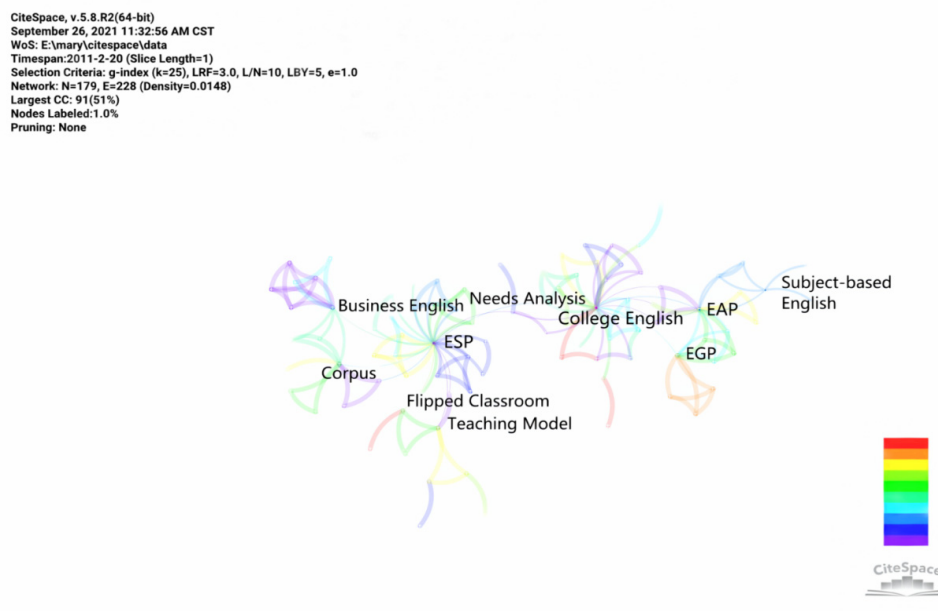

Figure 2. Visualization of Keywords (Analyzed by CiteSpace)

The data in Table 3 represents the frequency of different keywords appearing in the selected articles. As is shown in Table 3, college English and its relation with ESP are the hot topics in current research. However, investigation on needs analysis and teaching model in ESP can go further.

Table 3. Summary of Keywords

Keywords	Count	Keywords	Count
College English	19	EGP	4
ESP	18	Subject-based English	4
EAP	11	Needs Analysis	4
Corpus	6	Flipped Classroom	3
Business English	4	Teaching Model	3

As can be seen from Figure 3, There are four keywords studied from beginning to end in the timeline (2011-2020): English for Specific Purposes, ESP, College English, and College English teaching. English for Specific Purposes and ESP reveal the category of research topics. College English and College English teaching show two perspectives of ESP research. Research on Corpus and Academic English has also been at the center of studies until 2018. Research on College Teaching Reform ended in 2015 before the Ministry of Education in China issued the *Guidelines on College English Teaching of China*. In the same year, English for General Purposes (EGP) began to attract researchers' attention.
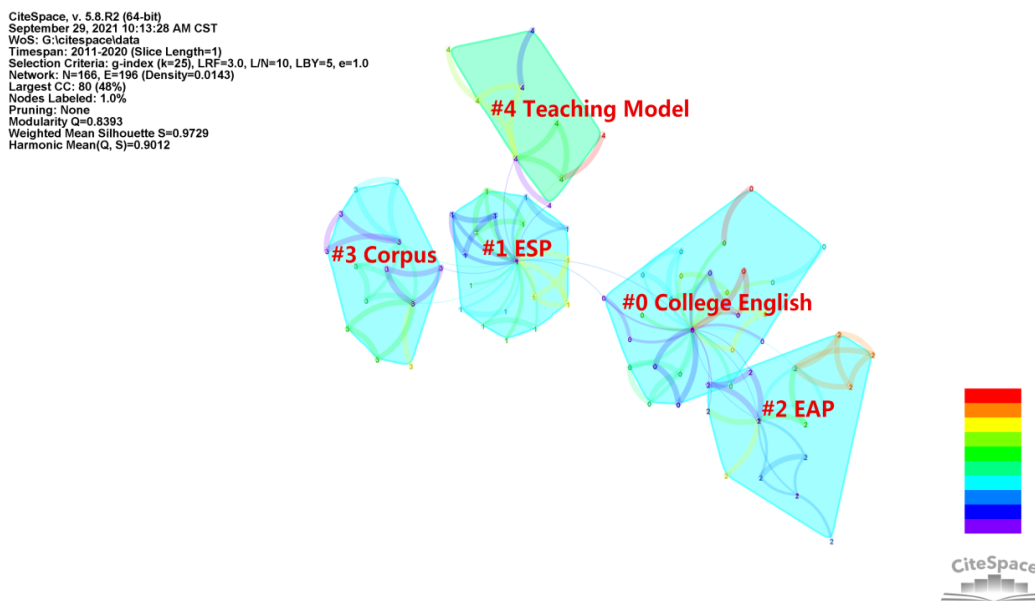

Figure 3. Visualization of Keywords Clusters (Analyzed by CiteSpace)

According to the visualization of keywords clusters analyzed by CiteSpace, 46 clusters have been found. The number of links is 166, and the number of lines is 196. Modularity Q = 0.9012, Silhouette = 0.9729. The network is divided into five co-citation clusters: College English, ESP, EAP, Corpus, and Teaching model. The clusters are arranged according to silhouette in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Clusters

Cluster-ID	Top Terms (LLR)	Silhouette	Mean (Year)	Size
1	ESP	1	2014	18
0	College English	0.987	2014	25
3	Corpus	0.982	2013	13
2	EAP	0.965	2014	15
4	Teaching Model	0.944	2014	9

3.2.1 ESP and College English

In recent years, the reform of College English teaching in many colleges and universities in China has been actively explored, but it has also caused a certain degree of controversy. One of the most controversial debate topics in current College English teaching in China is whether EGP should be replaced by ESP.

The first opinion is that future college English teaching in China should focus on EGP (Hu Kaibao & Xie Lixin, 2014). EGP has always been the core of College English teaching in China (Yang Feng & Sun Ling, 2013). Based on an empirical study of a university in West China, Li Fengqi & Zhang Yong (2016) believe that EGP courses should not be replaced as they meet students' needs and develop their language abilities.

The second opinion is that the content of College English in China is ESP (Sun Youzhong & Li liwen, 2011), EAP (Cai Jigang & Liao Leichao, 2010; Ma Wulin, 2011; Cai Jigang, 2014) and EOP (Huang Ping & Guo Feng, 2011). Sun Youzhong & Li Liwen (2011) suggest cutting down College English courses and increasing the number of ESP courses. Ma Wulin (2011) believes EAP aims to lay a solid foundation in the English language for learners to engage in professional courses in English in the future. Cai Jigang proposes a shift from EGP to

EAP in order to return to the nature of College English teaching, which is, to have a strong English reading ability of foreign language books and literature, to be able to correctly write foreign-language articles and to communicate academically with peers in a foreign language. Huang Ping & Guo Feng (2011) proposed that university English teaching should be a combination of EAP and EOP to meet the needs of college students.

The third opinion is that both EGP and ESP should be the content of College English teaching as they are complementation of each other (Wen Qiufang, 2014). Yin Hesu and Yan Qigang (2011) proposed a two-level college English teaching system: The basic English level (basic English learning and EGP) and the professional English level (ESP and bilingual courses for junior and senior undergraduates). Wang Yinquan et al. (2016) put forward a diversified College English teaching curriculum based on students' needs analysis. This curriculum consists of academic English learning courses, practical English learning courses, and courses to prepare students to study abroad. Hu Jiehui (2014) constructed a modular, menu-based college English curriculum system of EGP (basic and advanced language training course), ESP (EAP and EOP), and ELE (cultural and international communication) courses.

The establishment of a computer-based corpus related to EAP/ESP text provides ESP teachers and students with useful learning and research resources (Han Jin-long, 2003). In the 1980s, Yang Huizhong presided over the construction of China's first corpus- Jiao Da (Note 1) English for Science and Technology (JDEST), which marked the beginning of corpus linguistics research in China. In the following 30 years, the ESP corpora of various sizes and types have been established: Guangzhou Petroleum English Corpus (GPEC) (Zhu Qi, 1987), A Parallel Corpus of China's Legal Documents (PCCLD) (Sun Hongren & Yang Jianding, 2010), Bilingual Corpora of Tourism Texts (Li Dechao & Wang Kefei, 2010), English-Chinese Parallel Corpus of Science and Technology (Chen Xiaoxiao & Ge Shili, 2012), Corpus of Textiles and Fashion Design (Donghua University, 2015), Academic English Writing Corpus (Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, 2016), Agricultural Technology English Dissertation Corpus (Liu Ping & Liu Zuoxiong, 2018).

Pedagogical uses of ESP corpora in China include ESP vocabulary teaching and learning, ESP reading, ESP writing, and translation education. Liu Ping & Liu Zuoxiong (2018) verified the validity of EAP vocabulary learning based on the ESP corpus. They have also found a similarly positive result in ESP vocabulary learning among Ph.D. students (Liu Ping & Liu Zuoxiong, 2020). Feng Zhengbin & Wang Feng (2016) gave a comprehensive description of vocabulary educational applications of Corpus of BEN (Business English News). Zhang Jihua et al. (2009) suggested constructing ESP corpora to collect lexical patterns to benefit both ESP practitioners and learners.

3.2.2 English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Although scholars have reached a consensus on the nature of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as "to develop academic English oral and written skills needed in their professional studies" (Zhang Weilei, 2018) and "to cultivate international academic communication skills" (Wen Qiufang, 2014), they have not yet agreed on the starting year to teach EAP courses in colleges. Scholars have spared no effort to introduce and promote successful cases of EAP teaching at universities in Hong Kong University (Cai Jigang, 2011), Cheng Kung University (Cai Jigang, 2013), The University of Nottingham Ningbo (Shu Dingfang & Chen Suyan, 2009), Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (Zou Bin, 2015). In the process of localization, scholars have tried to explore an EAP teaching model suitable for their school and academic situation. Xin Tongchuan (2013) did action research to investigate the problems in graduate students' oral presentation (a fundamental ability in EAP). Liu Hui (2014) used Schema Theory to analyze how to select the reading material in EAP teaching. Luo Na & Xiao Qiaoling (2011) used graduate students in a university as a case study to explore the EAP acquisition model.

3.2.3 Teaching Model

More and more researchers in China have focused their attention on ESP teaching theory and practice. The widely accepted teaching models among Chinese scholars are as follow:

A. Flipped Classroom Approach

Based on an online teaching platform, Cao Peisheng (2020) adopts the flipped classroom approach in Police English Course teaching and finds it effectively solves the problems of low challenge, limited classroom participation, inadequate learning efficiency, and deficient practical ability. Sun Xianhong et al. (2017) investigate the time distribution of ESP teaching in five Chinese universities. They find that the proportion of understanding theory is so high that students have little time to improve their practical application and critical analysis abilities. To solve the problem, they propose to apply Flipped Classroom Model to ESP teaching. As a

result, students' multiliteracies are developed, and their ESP learning is effective through designing the pre-class resources and classroom activities. Liu Xueqing (2017) agrees that Flipped classroom approach is effective in that it adapts to English language learning characteristics, meets the individual need of students from different academic backgrounds, and optimizes the ESP teaching procedures.

B. Production-oriented Approach

Production-oriented Approach (POA) has a similar principle as OBE (Outcomes-based Education) (Spady, W. D., 1994; Chandrama Acharya, 2003) with the "defining expected learning output - achieving expected learning output - evaluating learning output" procedure (Gu Peihua et al., 2014). It was introduced by Wen Qiufang (2015; 2017a; 2018a) in ESP teaching. Liu Lingyan & Du Jun (2018) implement (POA) in the Law English course to improve the English language using the ability of post-graduates in a Chinese university. In the Motivating-Enabling-Assessing teaching process, students are found to be more interested in the course and more active to learn. The oral production tasks enable the students to use the English language to communicate and also think critically. Wang Yu et al. (2019) present the POA framework for engineer students. The framework involves three-tier input–production procedure. The three tiers are divided into beginner, intermediate, and advanced based on students' English language proficiency levels. Both the production and assessment process combines online and in-class activities which emphasize the teacher's role as a screenwriter-producer-director.

C. Content-based Instruction

Content-based Instruction (CBI) (referred to as Content-based Language Learning (CBLL) by some scholars) is believed to be effective as "the role of knowledge structure acts as a bridge between language learning and content learning" (Mohan & Beckett, 2003). Gu Yihua (2011) suggests the "Adjunctive theme-based language instruction" in ESP teaching. ESP courses are taught by language teachers as an adjunct to professional courses on the same content. Cao Xiuping (2016) uses CBI to teach Medical English to postgraduates in a Chinese university as she believes it emphasizes the integration of subject content and language meaning, which helps students master systematic subject knowledge through the use of foreign language. It also combines focus on form and focus on content in order to achieve the goal of language learning. Three content-based teaching models adopted from Briton & Donna (2004) are used in the study. English language teachers use the "Theme-Based Instruction Model" and present content material as the basis for language analysis and practice. "Sheltered Content Instruction Model" is taught in the second language by a content area specialist and is believed to benefit learners from the adjustments and simplifications made by native speakers in communication with the second language learners (Krashen, 1981) and from a low-anxiety situation. In the "Adjunct Language Instruction Model", students are enrolled in two linked courses — a language course and a content course which share the content base and complement each other in terms of mutually coordinated assignments. The researcher suggests using the "Theme-based Instruction Model" for beginners and the "Sheltered Content Instruction Model" for advanced students.

D. Task-based Language Teaching

Qin Yizhu (2016) explains the application of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the process of ESP teaching for medical postgraduates. She suggests using real situation dialogues instead of discussions in the pre-task phase. In the task cycle phase, she designs English communication activities so that students cooperate in groups. For the post-task phase, one or two groups are chosen to perform in front of the class while other students observe and make notes. The teacher points out the errors students make in grammar or English use during their performance and then has practiced these problems. Huang Yunting & Suo Quanbing (2019) design various tasks in Chinese Traditional Vernacular Architecture English teaching. These tasks become the driving force and support for students to learn, read and improve. The integration of knowledge, the input of English, and the extension of reading have constructed a system of effective English learning. Although the above teaching models are different in practice, they all put learners in the center of learning and value the guidance of teachers.

3.3 Methodological Analysis

This paper classifies 179 articles into 2 categories: empirical research and non-empirical research. The empirical research is further divided into quantitative research, qualitative research, mixed-method research, and experimental studies.

Table 5. Analysis of ESP Research (2001-2020) (Based on Research Methodology)

	Empirical Research				Non-Empirical Research
	Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research	Mixed-Method Research	Experimental Studies	
Quantity of Articles	23	6	15	10	125
Total	54				125

As can be seen from Table 4, in the past 20 years, the dominant proportion of ESP research in China use non-empirical research methods, reaching 70% (125 out of 179), while empirical research methods accounted for only 30% of the total, which illustrates the imbalance of ESP research methods in China. In 2010, ESP teaching in China seems to have ushered in another spring. ESP academic seminar and ESP Teacher Training Session was held and China's first ESP journal China ESP Research was published this year. Since then, empirical research on ESP has gained more and more interest among Chinese scholars.

Within the 54 articles using empirical research, 23 of them use quantitative research method, including questionnaires to collect data on attitudes and needs towards ESP teaching (Zhang Tianhua, 2011; Li Danyun, 2014) and ESP textbooks (Guo Yanling, 2011), enterprises' requirements of students' English competence (Bai Jing et al., 2009), the current situation of ESP teaching (Zhang Li, 2015; Zhang Wenxia et al., 2017; Sun Xianhong et al., 2017; Huang Yueping & Shu Yue, 2020) and curriculum design (Zhao Junfeng, 2006), ESP teaching effects (Gu Zhizhong, 2006; Ji Peiying, 2017; Yi Han, 2018), ESP textbook evaluation (Li Silong, 2017), or quantitative analysis of literature review in the following aspects: ESP research of China (Huang Jian, 2018) and abroad(Cao Ying, 2017), international advances in Business English (Wang Lifei & Li Lin, 2014), genre study (Deng Liming et al., 2012), EAP writing (Yang Dongling & Chen Jianlin, 2015), ESP teaching material (Yang Gang & Chen Jianlin, 2013). We can also find articles concerning ESP language: a corpus analysis of EAP writing (Zhao Xiufeng, 2004), corpus and database of ESP translation (Wu Changhong, 2014), multi-dimensional analysis of register variation in Business English (Jiang Jinlin & Xu Jiajin, 2015), evaluative stance in EAP discourse (Hei Yuqin & Hei Yufen, 2011).

There are 6 qualitative research articles including interviews to investigate the current state of ESP teaching (Wang Junkai & Chen Jie, 2015) and case studies (Yin Hesu & Yan Qigang, 2011; Huang Fang, 2011; Zhu Jinlan, 2015; Zou Wenli, 2013; Chen Jinshi & Dong Jinwei, 2018).

Mixed-methods research is more and more popular among Chinese scholars as the data from one source could enhance, elaborate, or complement data from the other source (Cresswell, 2014) and it is beneficial for validity. 15 articles using mixed-method can be found in which researchers combine questionnaires, surveys, and interviews in research mainly concerning ESP teaching and learning (Wang Beilei, 2004; He Yuyin, 2007; Huang Ping, 2011; Guo Jianjing, 2012; Gu Zhizhong, 2012; Guo Jianjing, 2013; Kong Fanxia & Wang Yun, 2015; Ren Yue & Liu Qin, 2020; Wei Mei, 2020; Xu Xiaoshu, 2019; Xu Xiaoshu et al., 2020), and EGP (Li Fengxi, 2016; Zhang Weilei, 2018), needs analysis (Cai Jigang & Chen Ningyang, 2013), and action research (Xin Tongchuan, 2013).

The experimental studies are used to examine the effectiveness of ESP teaching (Zhang Xiaofen, 2010; Liu Xin, 2013; Xu Liuming & Liu Zhenqian, 2016; Liu Ping, 2020) curriculum design (Chen Hong, 2013; Zhao Ke, 2015; Wang wei, 2015; Cao Peisheng, 2020), and ESP learning (Kong Fanxia, 2016; Liu Ping, 2018).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Limitations of ESP Study in China

ESP study in China from 2001 to 2020 has several limitations. First, although there is a large number of journal articles on ESP study in China, many repetitive studies can be found, especially on the nature of ESP and its position in college English. Second, the research field of ESP is narrow and lacks depth. Compared with foreign ESP research, which has shown a multidisciplinary trend, ESP study in China still devotes most of its energy to the exploration of teaching practice. For example, the area of ESP corpus construction has not yet achieved high results. Third, the ESP evaluation system in China is not mature. Unlike College English, ESP evaluation in China is still in a state of no standards, which causes a significant amount of time and resources waste (Wang Li & Wang Hua, 2019).

4.2 Recommendations for ESP Study in the Future

First, the College English follow-up curriculum needs to be developed. This curriculum should base on needs analysis and highlight the characteristics of different universities and colleges. Second, in order to deepen the research of ESP study in China, various industries will be taken as a breakthrough, and scholars will use multidisciplinary theories to guide the practice of language teaching. Third, standards of ESP competency and ESP evaluation systems should be established. This calls for the training of ESP teachers to improve the reliability and validity of ESP assessments.

According to the retrieval of CSSCI foreign language journal articles in the China CNKI database, the ESP study has gained great achievement in China. The number of MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations also increase steadily, which implies significant research interest in ESP in Chinese higher education. Although non-empirical researches play a dominant part in the ESP studies, empirical studies are increasing at a high speed since 2011. The main focuses of ESP studies are on four aspects including relationships between ESP and college English, academic English, corpus, and teaching modes. This article analyzes the ESP study in four main themes, but there are other fields of theory studies that need analysis such as needs analysis, ESP curriculum, syllabus design, discourse analysis, and genre studies. For further review study, content analysis can be done in these areas.

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Note

Note 1. Jiao Da is the Chinese abbreviation of Shanghai Jiaotong University.