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Updating the Landscape: A Systematic Review of Emerging Trends in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Research

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the emerging trends in related research in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) from 2020 to 2024 using a systematic literature review (SLR). In higher education, the concept of EAP has expanded due to globalization and internationalization, providing essential language skills to enhance students' learning competency. After setting the inclusion criteria for selecting papers and following PRISMA, there were 71 papers used for the analysis. The analysis was categorized into various aspects, including valuable information in the related EAP papers (25 lists of Q1-Q2 journals, countries of affiliation, years of publication, numbers of authors, keywords in abstracts, and titles of the studies) and thematic analysis (focuses, types of research, frameworks, research tools, samples or participants, key findings, and suggestions for further studies). From the systematic analysis, it is found that qualitative research is used the most, and the attention of previous studies is pedagogy, instructors, and learner experiences. Interviews are the most used tool for data collection, with sample sizes typically ranging from 11 to 50. Most importantly, the analysis in the suggestion for further studies highlights the investigation of social justices, multimodalities, digital tools, and technological integration in language learning.

Keywords: *English for Academic Purposes, Systematic Literature Review, PRISMA, EAP*

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Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is emerging in higher education since the notion of internationalization has been concerned from educational policy makers in many countries. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which typically divides into English for Occupational English and English for Academic

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Purposes. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) further categorizes EAP into English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) and English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP). ESAP refers to specific areas such as medicine, engineering, or science. In an academic context, EGAP refers to four skills, such as listening and note-taking, academic writing, or discussion. The term "EAP" appears around 1974, but it is more generally used in 1975. As cited in Cowie and Heaton (1977), this term was raised in the seminar at Birmingham University, which emphasized the problems of overseas students' English language in higher education. The book "Study Skills for Students of English" by R. C. Yorkey was published in 1970, and "Study in English: A Practical Approach to Study Skills in English as a Second Language" was published in 1975. A variety of aspects have been studied and continued since that time.

EAP's priority is to prepare students (especially Second language students) to pursue their education at a higher level. The educational skill enhancement program places a strong emphasis on academic language skills. The presentation may consist of an intensive course covering specific content within a limited time frame, with the aim of enabling students to meet university enrolment requirements. According to Gillet (2022), EAP is a language and communicative practice designed for students or those who require English instruction. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) also mentioned teaching English with specific purposes to assist learners in completing studies and conducting research. Hyland and Shaw (2016) also said that EAP is teaching and researching, emphasizing the communicative needs of students in higher education. They also discussed the role of teachers in the EAP context, describing them as facilitators who can support students in both textual and social dimensions, starting with the concept of understanding and then applying, critiquing, and implementing it to social practice or reality. It means that EAP can encompass the academic practices and communicative requirements.

The focus of EAP extends beyond language improvement; previous studies also focused on academic literacy, academic communication, discourse competency, and content-building (Schmitt & Hamp Lyon, 2015). Zhang (2025) explores the use of the local grammar approach to analyze classification in academic writing and its implications for EAP pedagogy. Zhang argues that local grammar patterns offer a more precise way to describe classification structures than previous models. He emphasizes their role in gradually improving students' academic writing and their potential for identifying terminology in complex discourse acts. Chung et al. (2025) investigate the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by first-year undergraduates in Hong Kong to acquire academic vocabulary, a crucial yet often overlooked component of EAP courses. Moreover, Yin et al. (2024) asserted that EAP encompasses not only academic practices but also the addition of critical thinking skills; this topic is rarely explored in the current context. For instance, a study by Ken Hyland and Feng Jiang in 2021, using a bibliometric approach to analyse 12619 research articles in an EAP context, demonstrates a significant increase in EAP research over the past 40 years. The results indicate a shift towards academic writing, language description, and the study of learning and communication in social relationships, with Asian countries significantly contributing to these studies in EAP. And for over 40 years, the scope of studies has always covered teaching, learning, and classroom practices, as well as discourses and implications. In 2022, Douglas E. Bell's study highlights the lack of focus on methodology and pedagogy in EAP, as most previous studies have primarily focused on "what" rather than "how." The paper also suggests a more critical

approach to transferring pedagogical practices from mainstream ELT to EAP. Maggie Charles (2022) also examined the contribution of BALEAP to EAP research from 1975 to 2019, using a corpus of 1,310 titles from BALEAP proceedings and Professional Issues Meetings. The most frequently used research topics include students, language, writing, courses, assessment, and specificity. This study provides recommendations for future studies in EAP that should focus on disciplinary/interdisciplinary contexts as well as digital and multimodal genres. However, there is a lack of synthesis in studies examining the current trend in EAP, particularly following global shifts like COVID-19 and the integration of AI in educational settings. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the current trends in EAP research using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method.

A systematic literature review of SLR is a detailed analysis of related studies in a specific area. SLR is different from literature review in various aspects, such as critical evaluation on specific research questions, goals (identify, review, summarize, synthesize), and systematic planning of research conduct. The term “SLR” is defined by scholars in distinguishing fields. According to Feak and Swales (2009), SLR defines systematic study to clarify the existing studies and implications. In addition, Gough et al. (2017) and Turney (2023) mentioned that SLR is one type of literature review that gathers various research studies using repeatable methods to find, understand, critique, and synthesize all existing evidence for answering the specific research questions, and the rigorous methods can reduce bias. In addition, it can reduce bias by considering and evaluating all existing and available evidence, transparent methods, and replicated and updated reviews. Consequently, SLR is a systematic review that offers a comprehensive overview of the latest and most recent relevant studies.

SLR involves various procedures, including formulating specific research questions, developing protocols, searching for all relevant studies, applying the selection criteria, extracting data, synthesizing the data, and writing/publishing a report (Turney, 2023). Some scholars mentioned that these rigorous steps are time-consuming, and the scope of study is narrow. Each stage necessitates a meticulous examination of certain details, such as the inclusion of PICOC (population, intervention, comparison, outcome, context) in the descriptive analysis. Furthermore, the planning should be clear and systematic, covering many initial concerns, such as criteria for selecting a digital library, the acceptable and standard database, or the inclusion and exclusion of selected samples (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2007). The analysis of systematic literature reviews across various fields such as frailty in geriatric care (Sternberg et al., 2011), carbon accounting (Stechemesser & Guenther, 2012), creative learning environments (Davies, 2013), and the International Classification of Functioning (Cerniauskaite et al., 2011). The focus of the studies is their effectiveness in analysing and synthesizing related studies. The study covers a wide range of topics, from healthcare to education. Therefore, SLR can guide informed decision-making and policy enhancement. Moreover, the findings can also reveal gaps and implications for further research.

These reviews demonstrate the value of consolidating knowledge and shaping discourse across disciplines, paving the way for future investigations and advancements in practice. Previous studies of EAP have evolved from the past to the present. However, a comprehensive understanding of the EAP landscape is required to systematically explore the impact of major global changes, especially in the post-COVID-19 era and AI transformation, which are shaping the future of language classrooms and other fields. The pandemic changed learning styles

through online platforms and the process of improving academic skills, while AI tools are becoming helpful assistants in various contexts, such as instruction and assessment. So, this research aims to fill this gap, and the findings can be adapted to fit the current situation in the AI era since this study provides updated information for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Therefore, this study highlights the current trends in EAP research using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. Research questions cover:

RQ1: What is the updated synthesis of emerging trends in research articles about English for Academic Purposes (EAP) from 2020 to 2024?

RQ2: What research methods have been used in studies on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) published between 2020 and 2024?

RQ3: What are the identified gaps in the current literature on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) between 2020 and 2024, and what are the proposed directions for future research?

Methodology

This review is explored based on SLR methods, so the study employed a three-step approach developed by Tranfield et al. (2003). The steps of the study start with planning the review, then sampling the publication (data collection: inclusion and exclusion criteria), and the last step is analyzing and demonstrating the result.

Step 1: Planning

Databases

For this study, Scopus and Google Scholar were used. In addition, the frequently published journals related to EAP were used for gathering the relevant literature. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, and TESOL Quarterly (Gillett, 2022). Furthermore, the journals included in this review are only in Q1 and Q2 because of their high quality and acceptable academic standards.

Search terms/keywords

This study used a combination of general and specific keywords to ensure that all relevant literature was captured, including "English for Academic Purposes", "EAP pedagogy", "English for Academic Purposes (EAP)", "EAP research", "EAP trends", "Emerging trends in 2020-2024", "EAP in 2020-2024", and "EAP research methods."

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The clear and concise criteria can ensure the quality of this study. The following table shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample included faculty who taught in each of the five colleges at the university: 109 instructors (30%) taught in the College of Social Science and Humanities, 82 (23%) taught in the College of Science and Engineering, 75 (21%) taught in the College of Education and Professional Studies, 58 (16%) taught in the College of Health, and 40 (11%) taught in the College of Business. Each instructor provided data on one course. Approximately 259 instructors (71%) provided ratings for face-to-face courses, and 105 (29%) provided ratings for online courses, which accurately reflects the proportion of face-to-face and online courses offered at the university. The sample included 107 courses (29%) at the

beginning undergraduate level (1st- and 2nd-year students), 205 courses (56%) at the advanced undergraduate level (3rd- and 4th-year students), and 52 courses (14%) at the graduate level.

Table 1

Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Accessibility	Open access	Closed access
Language used	English	Other language
Type of source	Journal	Book, Conference proceedings, Digital libraries of universities
Type of literature	Research article	Dissertation report, Book chapter, Letter, Survey, Summary form websites
Focus of the study	EAP, Education, Academic English	Other focuses
Period	2020-2024	2019 and below

Screening and Selection Process: All articles were analyzed based on titles, abstracts, and keywords, types of resources, and year of publication after being collected from the search. The remaining papers were then reselected based on the inclusion criteria. The step of screening and collecting papers is demonstrated in flowchart.

Step 2: Conducting

For conducting the review, data extraction was outlined to gather foundational information from relevant articles for general analysis and in-depth synthesis. The scopes include journal names and ranking in SJR, research titles, authors, year of publication, and country of author affiliation. After that, each paper was identified based on specific purposes, including aims/objectives of research, types of research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), data collection methods and sample size, theoretical frameworks/conceptual models, results/implications, and suggestions for further studies.

Step 3: Synthesizing

Outline for Data Synthesis can be divided into two methods: 1. descriptive analysis: numbers of papers by year, Author (s), year of publication, journal name, ranking in SJR, country, and numbers of authors, Words' correlations; 2. thematic analysis: emerging trends or main areas of studies and methodological shifts (tools/Frameworks/Samples), and gaps, implementation, and suggestions for further studies.

Flow Chart 1

Research Articles Selected in Screening Process (SLR) Source: Moher et al. (2009)

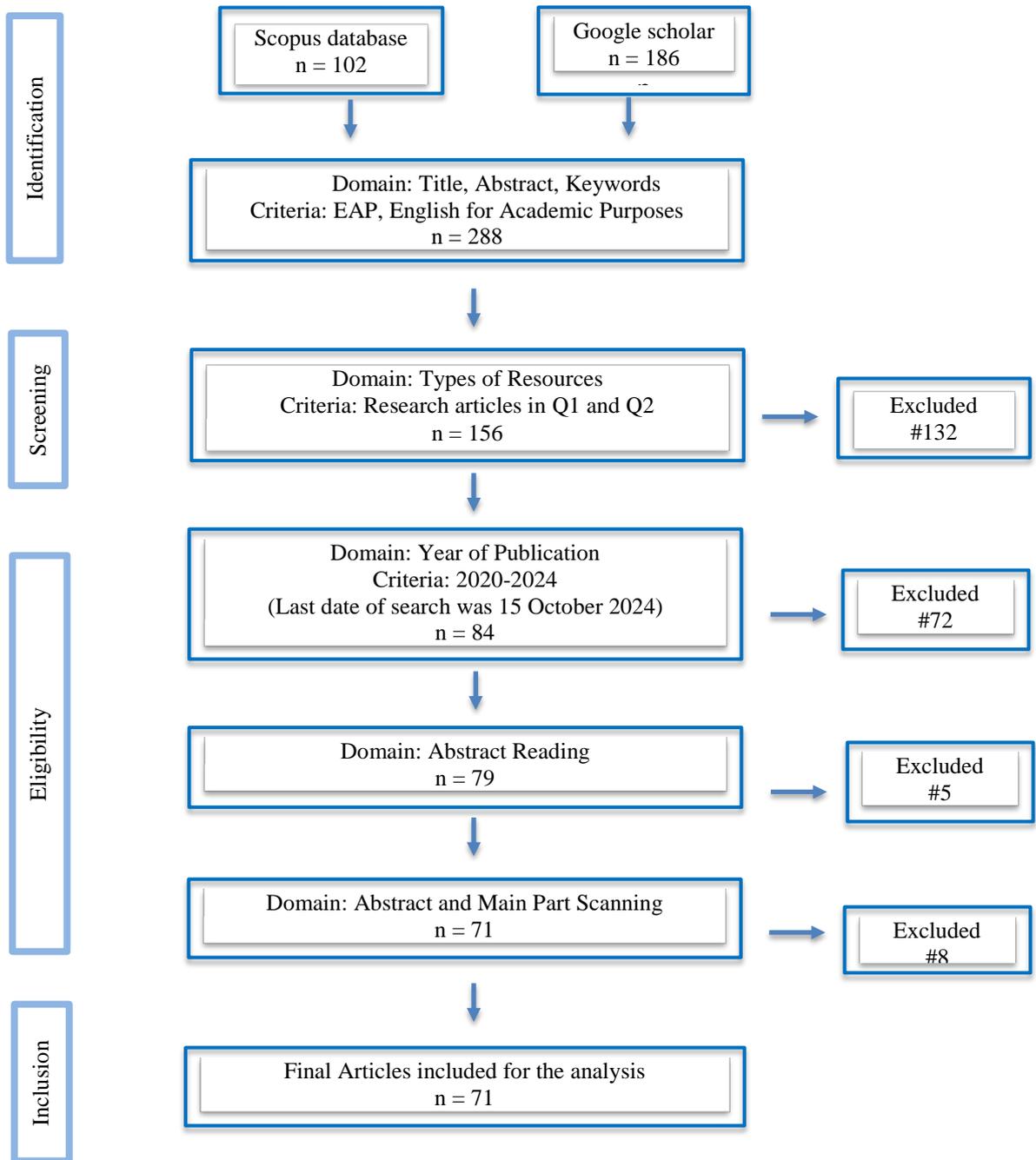


Table 2

Example of Data Extraction for Collecting Relevant Information

Authors	Articles	Aim	Types of research method	Research Tools	Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework	Sample Size	Finding	Gaps/ Suggestions for Further Studies
	Exploring Iranian EAP Teachers' Well-Being: An Activity Theory Perspective	explores the well-being of 13 Iranian EAP teachers.	Mixed Method Research	questionnaire, narrative frames, and semi-structured interviews	Activity theory	13 Iranian EAP teachers.	Three key themes related to EAP teachers' well-being. First, the content they teach serves as both a source of positive and negative emotions. Second, both the subject matter and the institutional environment play a crucial role in shaping their sense of purpose in EAP instruction. Third, sociocultural factors influence how they interpret and find meaning in their teaching. Overall, findings suggest that EAP teacher well-being is a complex, multi-layered construct shaped by personal experiences, institutional structures, and broader sociocultural contexts. These factors, in turn, significantly impact their professional identity, emotions, and teaching practices.	In particular, the findings highlight how content plays a key role in EAP teachers' well-being, a point that has little, if any, been documented in previous research. Thus, the findings move the body of knowledge forward by showing less-trodden dimensions of language teacher well-being and EAP teacher professionalism.

(Nazari & Karimpour, 2024)

Step 3: Synthesizing

Outline for Data Synthesis can be divided into two methods: 1. descriptive analysis: numbers of papers by year, Author (s), year of publication, journal name, ranking in SJR, country, and numbers of authors, Words' correlations; 2. thematic analysis: emerging trends or main areas of studies and methodological shifts (tools/Frameworks/Samples), and gaps, implementation, and suggestions for further studies.

Results

The results of the analysis and synthesis were represented in terms of descriptive and thematic analysis. The general information of related articles includes lists of selected journals in Q1 and Q2, frequency of publication per year (2020-2024), numbers of authors' contribution, the countries of authors' contribution, and keywords correlation in research titles and abstract keywords. The second part is the core of the analysis, it is presented in thematic analysis. The highlight includes main focuses/research trends, types of research methodology, tools and techniques for conducting research/theoretical and conceptual framework, and the last part convers gaps, implementation, and suggestions for further studies.

Descriptive Analysis (General Features)

Descriptive analysis can portray the general overview of selected literature/articles in EAP context. The general detail can lead to an in-depth explanation.

Journal list

The variety of publications in high-ranking journals in English for Academic Purposes represents a dynamic landscape. It is guaranteed that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) holds significant importance in academic settings and higher education. Moreover, the suggestions and directions for further studies are provided significantly. The top published journal is "Journal of English for Academic Purposes," consisting of 39 research papers. It demonstrates the prominent role of contributing and conducting research in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which has led to current trends in existing research. In addition, "English for Specific Purposes," "Teaching English with Technology," and "Language Teaching" also collectively published various papers in EAP emphasizing the development of language learning competency and technology. In addition, the presence of Q2 publications such as "Journal of Asia TEFL" and "Frontiers in Psychology," with fewer article counts, suggests other research directions that may not have achieved the same level of importance or quality. The journal list is presented in Table 2.

Table 3

Journal List

Journal	ISI Quartile	Numbers of Articles
Journal of English for Academic Purposes	Q1	39
English for Specific Purposes	Q1	3
Teaching English with Technology	Q1	3
TESOL Quarterly	Q1	3
Journal of Asia TEFL	Q2	2
Language Teaching	Q1	2
Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education	Q1	1
Australian Review of Applied Linguistics	Q1	1
Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	Q1	1
Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics	Q1	1
Frontiers in Psychology	Q2	1

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International Journal of Educational Research Open	Q1	1
Journal of Computing in Higher Education	Q1	1
Journal of Second Language Writing	Q1	1
Knowledge Management & E-Learning	Q2	1
Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics	Q2	1
Language Related Research	Q2	1
Language Teaching Research Quarterly	Q2	1
LEARN Journal Language Education and Acquisition Research Network	Q1	1
Learning and Individual Differences	Q1	1
Lingua	Q1	1
Linguistics and Education	Q1	1
Sage Open	Q1	1
Studia Linguistica	Q1	1
Teaching and Teacher Education	Q1	1
Total		71

General information

Table 3 demonstrates general information of selected articles in terms of countries of affiliation, articles published between 2020-2024, and the numbers of authors' contribution.

Country of affiliation

Most researchers are affiliated with China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, with 34 authors indicating an emphasis on EAP in East Asia. This suggests that educational sectors in this region place a high priority on improving English proficiency in internal academic contexts. The UK (13 affiliations) and USA (9 affiliations), countries where English is the primary language, host numerous international students who utilize English as a second and foreign language. It reflects academic English's historical significance and key roles in language learning and applied linguistics. Additionally, Iran (8 affiliations) and New Zealand (6 affiliations) are experiencing the emergence of EAP-related studies. Therefore, it indicates the continuous growth of EAP in the global world.

Articles published by year

The COVID-19 pandemic's transformations and reevaluation of techniques certainly improved higher education EAP research in 2021 to 19 publications. The output declined slightly in 2022, suggesting stability, then decreased in 2023 because of academic reforms. However, 16 EAP research articles have been documented in 2024, indicating increasing interest as education systems implement new methods.

Authors' contribution

The data on authors' contributions reveals how people are working together in the field of EAP. Single authorship is rare; only 18 articles were written by one person (16% of the total). Most researchers prefer to collaborate; 28 articles (25%) involved two authors working together.

This shows that partnerships are quite common, allowing researchers to share ideas and responsibilities. There are also 14 papers where three authors contributed (13% of the total), which suggests that smaller groups are often favored. As the number of authors increases, the number of articles decreases—only eight articles have four authors, two have five authors, and one has eight authors. This pattern indicates that smaller teams are more common in EAP research, probably because working in smaller groups makes it easier to communicate and complete projects efficiently. Overall, it seems that researchers like to work together, but they tend to form smaller teams to tackle specific topics in EAP.

Table 4
General Information of Selected Articles

Category	Subcategory	Frequency
Country of Affiliation (Frequency of Authors' affiliation)	China/Hong Kong/Taiwan	<u>34</u>
	UK	13
	Iran	8
	USA	9
	New Zealand	6
	Canada	5
	Australia	4
	Japan	3
	The Netherlands	2
	Turkey	2
	Indonesia	2
Articles Published by Year (Numbers of articles published each year)	<u>2021</u>	<u>19</u>
	2022	17
	2023	12
	2024	16
Authors' Contribution (Numbers of authors' contribution each paper)	1	18
	<u>2</u>	<u>28</u>
	3	14
	4	8
	5	2
	8	1

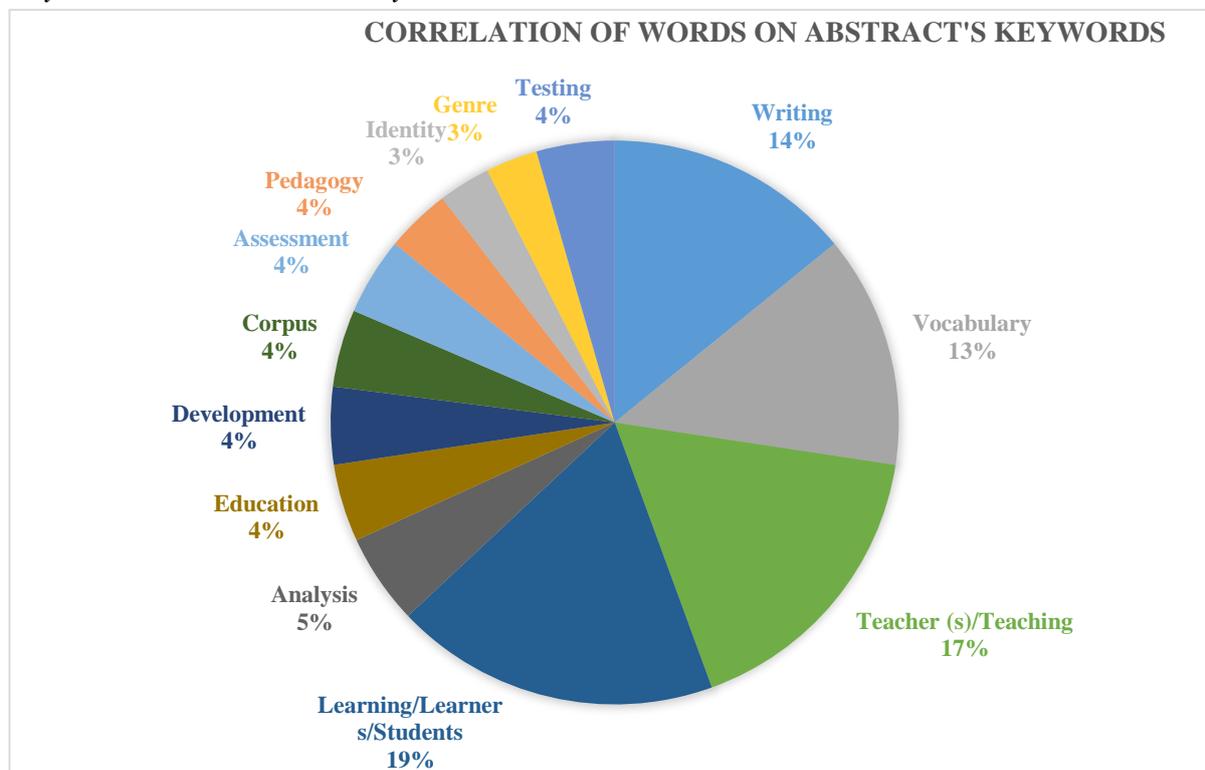
Keywords correlation in “Keywords in Abstracts and Titles”

AntConc program was used to analyze the frequency of words. The analysis of frequently occurring words in relevant literature abstracts can be divided into two main parts: priority and applied methodology. Firstly, the words that are most frequently occurring in EAP show various emerging trends, including "learner/learners/students (19%)", "teacher(s)/teaching (17%)", and "writing (14%)". There are various aspects that are indicated through this frequency, such as the experiences of learners, effective practices in language instructions, the enhancement of essential academic skills, learner-centered approaches, and the effectiveness of learning and teaching strategies. Additionally, the terms "vocabulary" (13%), "assessment" (4%), and "testing" (4%) demonstrate the ongoing interest in EAP. Secondly, the occurrences of "analysis" (5%), "corpus" (4%), and "pedagogy" (4%) suggest a methodological study

focused on linguistic analysis and instructional approaches. Overall, this systematic review not only sheds light on the major trends that are currently shaping EAP research, but it also finds possible gaps that need more research, especially when it comes to figuring out how teaching methods affect students' identities in a variety of school settings.

Figure 1

Keywords Correlation in “Keywords in Abstracts and Titles”



Note: The related words such as EAP, English for Academic Purposes, English are not included in the analysis.

Thematic Analysis (Core Features)

Main focuses

After the analysis, the collected data was categorized into 11 aspects based on the purposes or aims of the research articles. The main focuses are demonstrated in figure 4. The majority of popular to least explored areas of study are presented into four parts, including key areas, notable areas, emerging areas of interest, and less explored themes.

Key areas

The dominant landscape of EAP-related research is "Teacher Development," with 14 papers. It represents the enhancement of instructor's skills and knowledge. In addition, this result emphasizes the significant role of teacher preparation and career development leading to designing effective pedagogical methods and productive training. The second aspect is "Curriculum Development in EAP," with 11 papers; it refers to emerging various disciplines together for supporting learners' acquisition. The third aspect is "Assessment and Evaluation." With 10 papers, it interprets the ongoing efficacy for measuring learners' outcomes, accountability, and quality assurance in their EAP program.

Notable areas

"EAP for specific purposes" (9 articles) represents the trend of using the English language in specific academic contexts. It also shows the importance of EAP in various disciplines. The next aspect is "Integration of Technology in EAP." It highlights the globalization and transformation of learning and teaching in an innovative and technological era. In addition, digital tools and online resources can assist in developing learning experiences; therefore, online platforms and multimedia resources are continually increasing. In a similar vein, "Cultural consideration in EAP" with 7 articles emphasizes the correlation between intercultural communication, language learning, and teaching practices.

Emerging areas of interest

The scopes in EAP research that are less investigated include "Learner Autonomy in EAP (5 articles), Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies (3 articles), and Emerging Research Methodologies in EAP (3 articles)." It represents self-study and leads to blended learning. In addition, vocabulary knowledge seems to play an important role in academic essential skills and the introduction of new methodologies to investigate EAP-related phenomena. These emerging trends suggest a growing interest in effective vocabulary teaching methods and diverse research approaches within the field.

Less explored themes

Even the portions of selected articles can be the representativeness of the EAP-related research based on the process of SLR, whereas the underrepresented themes in EAP can reach further studies in the future. First, the scope of "Social Justice and Equity" should be implied to representation in curriculum, experiences of marginalized groups, resources' accessibility, inclusive pedagogical approaches, or effects of inequality in the EAP environment. The second aspect is "Multimodal Approaches in EAP." It lacks attention to teaching methodologies. It is advantageous for media communication. However, it can extend to employing various modes of media, such as video and audio, which can boost the comprehension and engagement of students. One interesting aspect for further study is how multimodal EAP classrooms can be applied to study students' learning outcomes.

Table 5

Main Focuses

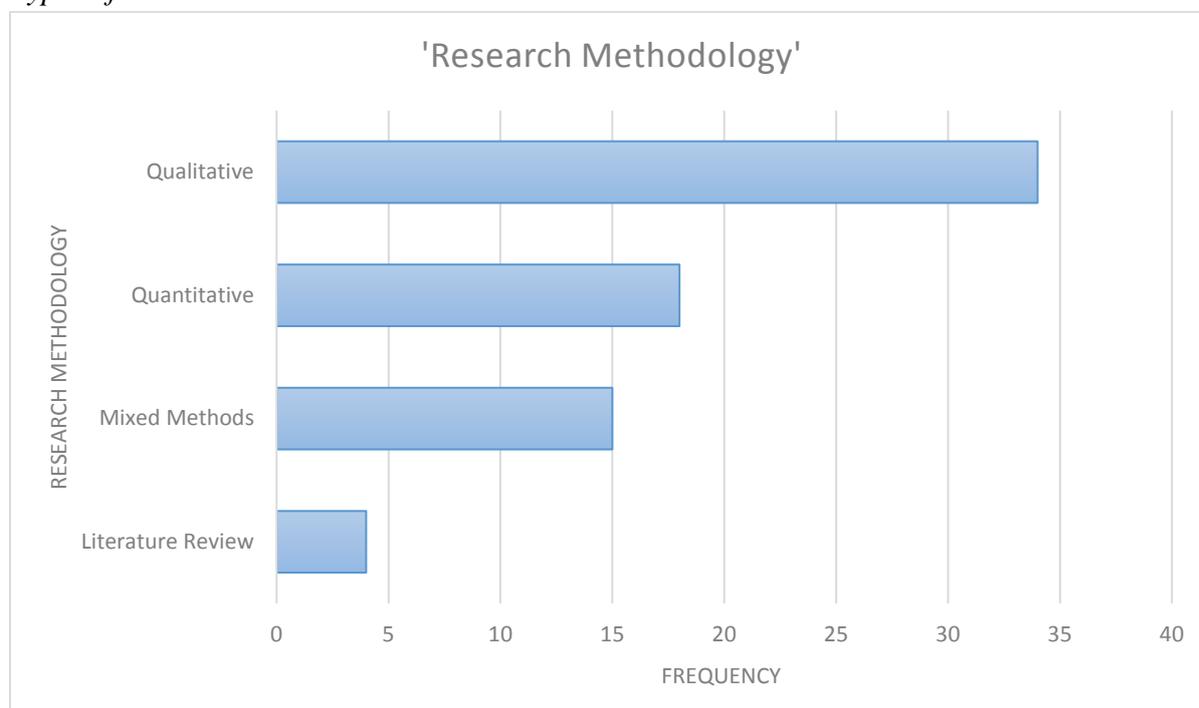
Topic	Number of Articles
Teacher Development in EAP	14
Curriculum Development in EAP	11
Assessment and Evaluation in EAP	10
Current trends in EAP for Specific Purposes	9
Cultural Considerations in EAP	7
Integration of Technology in EAP	7
Learner Autonomy in EAP	5
Emerging Research Methodologies in EAP	3
Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies	3
Multimodal Approaches in EAP	1
Social Justice and Equity in EAP	1
Grand Total	

Types of research methodology

In the analysis, there are four types of research methods found in EAP-related research. The result of the synthesis indicates that the qualitative research method is the most frequently used (34 articles), followed by the quantitative method (18 articles), the mixed method (15 articles), and the literature review (4 articles). As is shown in Table 4, the dominant research types consist of nearly half of the samples. It shows that previous studies about EAP are most focused on in-depth comprehension, teachers and learners' experiences, and comprehensive perceptions of those who are related to the context. In the second range, many previous studies employing quantitative research have focused on testing, measuring outcomes or output, assessment and evaluation, and analyzing research trends, all of which typically involve the use of quantitative data and methods.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques is employed in 15 articles, reflecting a more comprehensive understanding by using insightful analyses supported by quantifiable data. Most of the selected samples utilized a mixed method approach, highlighting the impact of teaching practices, assessing program effectiveness, and evaluating perceptions and needs. The focus can shift towards exploring and understanding EAP circumstances; it will let researchers and educators understand individual experiences and broaden patterns and trends of studies. Lastly, for the researchers, pay attention to finding gaps and always use the literature review technique for synthesizing.

Figure 2
Types of Research



Theoretical framework

Based on the analysis of frameworks and conceptual aspects, it was found that language learning and acquisition are the focus of EAP-related research. The main frameworks are Vocabulary Frameworks (Nation, Brown, etc.), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Mobile-

Assisted Language Learning, and Corpus-Assisted Language Learning. These frameworks were employed for investigating the process of developing essential skills and knowledge that affect academic success (foundations for effective and supportive learning environments). Moreover, pedagogy and instructional practices are some of the important conceptual frameworks that were used in EAP studies, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre analysis, and translanguaging teaching. These concepts have the potential to develop effective teaching strategies, assist in the design of instructional materials, and promote methods that enhance learners' critical thinking, cultural awareness, and classroom interaction.

Intercultural communication and teacher development are also emphasized using the frameworks of intercultural rhetoric, contrastive rhetoric, and multinationalism. This framework can effectively showcase the diversity present in the international and globalized context of higher education. In addition, the framework of teacher cognition, identity, and professional development highlights support and growth for educators. This dual focus ensures that teachers are well-equipped to meet the challenges of EAP instruction and that they can effectively aid learners from varied cultural and linguistic contexts.

Table 6*Theoretical Framework*

Focus	Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework	Frequency	Total
Language Learning & Acquisition:	<i>Vocabulary Frameworks (Nation, Brown, etc.)</i>	7	
	Second Language Acquisition (SLA)	2	
	Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)	1	
	Corpus-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)	1	
	Incidental Vocabulary Learning	1	19
	Self-Regulated Learning	1	
	Grammatical Complexity (Biber et al. 2011)	1	
	Readability & Academic Word List (AWL)	3	
	Cognitive Load Theory	1	
	Bilingual Vocabulary Learning	1	
EAP Pedagogy & Instruction	<i>English for Academic Purposes (EAP)</i>	15	
	English for Specific Purposes (ESP)	2	
	Genre Analysis	3	
	Critical English Language Teaching (CELT)	1	
	Social Justice Pedagogy (SJP)	1	
	Translanguaging Pedagogy	1	
	Flipped Classroom Model	1	26
	Critical Thinking	1	
	Dialogic Scaffolding	1	
	Needs Analysis Theory	2	
Assessment & Evaluation	EAP Assessment Theory	1	
	Socio-Cognitive Validity Framework	1	6
	Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions	1	
	Logic Model Framework	1	
Intercultural Communication & Rhetoric	Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) & Meta-discourse Analysis (MA)	2	
	Contrastive Rhetoric (CR)	2	
	Production of Space	1	12
	Language Socialization Theory	1	
	Agency Conceptualization	1	
	Affective Literacies	1	
	Critical Pedagogy	3	

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	Multinationalism and Language	1	
Teacher Development & Identity	Teacher Cognition, Expertise, Professional Development	2	
	Language Teacher Identity (LTI)	1	
	Community of Practice (CoP)	1	
	Identity Change	1	7
	Teacher Attitudes in Educational Technology & EAP Instruction Dynamics	1	
	Practical Knowledge (TPK)	1	
General Frameworks & Theories	Activity Theory	2	
	Sociocultural Theory of Language Learning	1	
	Corpus Linguistics	2	
	Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)	2	
	Conceptual Metaphor Theory	1	11
	Data-Driven Learning (DDL)	1	
	Learning Transfer, Low-Road & High-Road Transfer	1	
	Appraisal Theory	1	

Research tools

The research tools that were employed the most in EAP research are interviews (with a frequency of 46), which emphasize the importance of qualitative research for gaining an in-depth understanding of individuals' perceptions and experiences through various interview types, including semi-structured, focus groups, and individual patterns. The second tool, used with a frequency of 19, is questionnaires, which collect data that can support the qualitative insights. Additionally, corpus analysis (15 times) reflects an interest in exploring vocabulary, patterns, and usage of language within EAP and linguistics fields, bridging qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative Data Analysis, which includes thematic analysis, content analysis, 9-frequency coding procedures, 8 classroom observations, and 6 video recordings, aims to capture real-world interactions and language use in educational settings.

Table 7

Research Tools

Research Tool	Frequency
Interviews (including semi-structured, focus group, individual)	46
Questionnaires	19
Corpus Analysis	15
Qualitative Data Analysis (thematic analysis, content analysis, coding procedures)	9
Classroom Observations	8
Video Recordings	6
Teaching Journal	5
Analysis of Textbooks	4
Field Notes	4
Writing Tests	4
SPSS	3
AntConc Software	3
Thematic Analysis	3
Literature Review	2
Analysis of Authentic Academic Texts	2

Academic Word List	2
General Academic Vocabulary Test	2
Narrative Inquiry	1
Analysis of Existing Research and Phrases from EAP Textbooks	1
Data Sources (video/audio recordings, diaries, field notes, institutional documents)	1
Duo ethnographic Dialogue	1
Pedagogical Examples	1
Pedagogical Interventions	1
Assessment Criteria	1
ANOVA and t-tests	1
Web of Science Database	1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	1
Narrative Surveys	1
Metaphor Analysis	1
Test Samples Analysis	1
Syllabi Analysis	1
Writing Proficiency Test	1
Lexical Complexity Analysis	1
Syntactic Complexity Analysis	1
Retrospective Interviews	1
Mann-Whitney U tests	1
Kruskal-Wallis tests	1
Learner-Initiated Puzzles	1
Annotation Tool (CIRRUS)	1
Audio Recordings of Classroom Instruction	1
Student Assignments	1
Teaching Journal Entries	1
Heuristic Strategies	1
Discourse Analysis and InVivo Coding of Student Expressions	1

Samples or participants in the studies

Teachers serve as the samples or participants for the data collection; these studies are teacher-focused and emphasize the comprehension of beliefs, experiences, and personal development. This approach closely aligns with the student-centric approach, emphasizing students' perspectives and experiences. This focused approach mirrors EAP's practical approach to integrating teaching methodologies and learning outcomes. Moreover, as the result of the analysis shown in Table 7, the wide range of samples and participative categories include EAP researchers and experts, research papers, related books, writing assignments, diaries, and students' assignments, highlighting the subject's expanding complexity and the incorporation of diverse contexts and theoretical frameworks.

Table 8

Research Samples

Participant Category	Examples	Research Focus
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EAP Teachers	Nazari & Karimpour (2024), Kohnke et al. (2022), Valizadeh & Xodabande (2021), Almuhanha (2024), Karimpour & Mazlum (2024), Fitzpatrick et al. (2022), Atai et al. (2022), Charles & Hadley (2022), Hanks (2022), Aksit & Aksit (2022), O'Connell (2022), Mazgutova et al. (2022), Bao et al. (2024), Hu et al. (2024), Gao & Cui (2021), Gao & Cui (2024)	Beliefs, experiences, practices, professional development, curriculum design, assessment, identity development, teacher training
EAP Students	Kohnke (2024), Vu et al. (2021), Mortenson (2021), Skoufakia & Petric (2021), Liu et al. (2023), Maswana & Yamada (2021), Tsai (2021), Kohnke & Ting (2021), Hong & Yoon (2023), Yeager et al. (2024), Huang & Wible (2024), Zhang & Cheng (2021), Crosthwaite et al. (2021), Kaivanpanah et al. (2021), Zhang & Su (2021), Weekly et al. (2022), Wright et al. (2022), Pu & Xu (2022), Banister (2021), Neumann et al. (2020), Li et al. (2020), Bhowmik & Chaudhuri (2022), Soltani & Tran (2022), Morgan & Ahmed (2023), Zhang & Liu (2023), James (2023), Li et al. (2023), Warnby (2023), Asadnia & Atai (2022), Charles & Hadley (2022)	Perceptions, experiences, learning processes, vocabulary development, writing skills, communication strategies, cultural challenges, use of technology, assessment, note-taking strategies, identity development, academic discourse socialization, genre
EAP Researchers and Experts	Hyland & Jiang (2021), Yin et al. (2024), Palmour (2023), O'Connell (2022)	Beliefs, perspectives, assessment practices, research trends, framework development
Other samples/ Participants	Xuan & Chen (2024), Ge et al. (2022), Valizadeh & Xodabande (2021), Ilchenko & Kramar (2020), Hanks (2022), Oakey (2020), Bhowmik & Chaudhuri (2022), Su & Wei (2024) (Research papers, books, diaries, newspaper, writing assignment)	corpus analysis, literature review, theoretical frameworks)

Table 8 illustrates the trends in research sample sizes in EAP studies, with many sample sizes falling within the range of 1-10, accounting for 26.8%. It reflects a focus on qualitative research methods for in-depth case analysis. Additionally, 32.1% of studies have sample sizes between 11 and 50 participants, supporting findings that emphasize specific contextual insights while maintaining some level of generalizability. However, only 10.7% of studies have a large sample size of 51–100 participants, 7.1% have a sample size of 100–500 participants, and only 5.4% have samples over 500 participants. This suggests that conducting large-scale research in this field could pose significant challenges in terms of resources and study design. Therefore, there's room and a potential need for larger sample sizes to enhance the external validity and generalizability of findings.

Concerning methodological trends, EAP research frequently employs small sample sizes, with 58.9% of studies analysing groups of 50 participants or fewer. This practice indicates a preference for qualitative methodologies that prioritize detailed examinations of specific cases or contexts. Moderate sample sizes (51–500 participants) are used in about 30% of studies, supporting quantitative approaches that allow for greater generalization across larger populations. The relative rarity of huge sample studies suggests potential resource constraints, such as limited access to extensive participant pools or funding. Understanding these limitations emphasizes the importance of methodological diversity, encouraging the use of

both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve comprehensive insights into EAP teaching and learning.

Table 9

Percentage of Samples/Participants

Sample Size Range	Frequency	Percentage of Total Studies
1 – 10	15	26.8 %
11 – 50	18	32.1 %
51 - 100	6	10.7 %
101 – 500	4	7.1 %
501 – 1000	2	3.6 %
1000 +	1	1.8 %
Total	56	100%

Suggestions for further studies

The analysis of suggestions of previous studies are grouped into six categories based on the main scopes of the studies in terms of teacher development and experiences, student learning and perception, EAP assessment practices, technological integration in EAP, cultural consideration in EAP, and academic language and discourse. The analysis is presented in Table 8.

Table 10

Suggestion for Further Studies

Main Research Areas	Suggestions for Further Studies
Teacher Development and Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of institutional systems and policies on teachers’ freedom and responsibility • Comprehensive teacher training frameworks • The identities of teachers
Student Learning and Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions’ effects on academic writing and vocabulary • The impact of different elements (discipline, proficiency, culture) on student requirements • The importance of student agency in EAP • Cultural influences on writing and the development of critical thinking skills • Developing focused vocabulary interventions for specific needs • The integration of technology for enhancing language and content learning
EAP Assessment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive evaluation structures incorporating critical thinking • Evaluation standards examination for improved equity and uniformity • Evaluation of training techniques affecting student performance and outcomes • Investigation of emerging technologies to improve assessment reliability and learner feedback in EAP
Technological Integration in EAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The long-term impact of AI-powered grammar checkers on student writing skills and language development • The effectiveness of various mobile apps for vocabulary acquisition across disciplines and proficiency levels • The design and implementation of effective online annotation tools • The impact of different online platforms and digital resources on student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes • The ethical considerations related to using AI and other technologies in EAP and ensuring equitable access for all students

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Cultural Considerations in EAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The specific cultural challenges faced by EAP learners from diverse backgrounds and developing strategies for addressing these challenges• The impact of translanguaging on EAP student writing development and their attitudes towards language use• The role of silence in EAP classrooms, including how silence can be interpreted as a form of resistance or agency• Culturally responsive EAP curricula and teaching materials that acknowledge and respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of learners
Academic Language and Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of vocabulary-learning strategies and the specific vocabulary needs of students across various disciplines• Effective methods for teaching academic vocabulary (the use of corpus analysis, authentic texts, and strategies for expanding vocabulary depth)• The use of metadiscourse strategies in different EAP writing genres and the impact of explicit metadiscourse instruction on student writing quality

Discussion

The systematic literature review highlights the importance of EAP in meeting the demands of global higher education. It emphasizes EAP's dynamic and evolving nature amid rapidly changing education. However, the numbers of studies in EAP evolving are rarely explored in some areas to meet the requirement of glocalized working skills. The results show that there should be a focus on effective teacher preparation in the EAP setting, new curriculum ideas, incorporating technology and using methods from different fields to improve student achievement, and assessment practices.

One significant finding of this systematic literature review is the evolving focus on effective teacher preparation in the EAP context, which underscores the critical importance of curriculum innovation and technology integration. This aligns with Hyland and Shaw's (2016) insights, which emphasize the necessity for EAP to adapt to meet the diverse needs of international students. The analysis confirms that the development of EAP teachers has been significant, supported by Flowerdew and Peacock's (2001) assertion that well-trained educators can substantially enhance academic language preparedness and improve learners' outcomes. Even though this modification is essential to enhance teaching and learning outcomes, considering how well-prepared teachers are for the rapid changes in academic expectations. There are various aspects to be further considered, such as the criteria and standard frameworks for measuring effectiveness, suitable topics for training, and strategies for adjustment. To illustrate, many teacher preparation programs have sometimes applied conventional pedagogical techniques that may not be adequate for educators in the complex reality of their jobs. These programs frequently place more emphasis on delivering information than on creating adaptable teaching techniques, which are essential for encouraging student participation and success in a variety of classroom environments. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the standards by which 'effective teacher preparation' are defined. The idea that EAP instructors will automatically improve academic performance through training alone is seriously flawed in the absence of a standardized framework that takes into consideration a variety of teaching circumstances, including institutional and cultural issues.

Curriculum innovations are further highlighted, as the integration of EAP within specific academic disciplines aligns with the conceptual framework proposed by Hyland and Shaw (2016). The results emphasize that the curriculum should not solely focus on language skills but rather contextualize them within the core subjects to enhance students' engagement and

critical comprehension. To illustrate, Kohnke et al. (2022) suggested that the current CE curriculum was insufficient and that students lacked motivation to learn English in general. Kaivanpanah et al. (2021) also highlighted the significance of comprehending the needs and perceptions of EAP teachers to enhance instructional practices and curriculum design. However, the increasing focus on interdisciplinary methods in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) requires careful consideration.

Although contextualizing learning and increasing student engagement are the goals of integrating language skills with fundamental academic topics, this strategy carries the risk of overlooking the depth of linguistic details that are essential to successful EAP training. This reduction in meaning may result in students being insufficiently prepared and struggling to understand academic conversations and vocabulary specific to their fields. For example, if the EAP curriculum primarily emphasizes broad topics and cross-disciplinary skills, students might not receive the focused instruction needed to grasp the complex concepts of academic writing, critical reading, and discourse practices relevant to their areas of study. As a result, their performance in academic environments, where precise language use is crucial, may decline. Additionally, there may be difficulties when subject-specific content is combined with language acquisition. Students might encounter it challenging themselves to acquire proficiency in languages. Additionally, there may be difficulties when subject-specific content is combined with language acquisition. Students might find it challenging to acquire proficiency in languages. In conclusion, merging EAP with other courses can be advantageous, but it must be done correctly to guarantee that students receive focused language training along with their topic learning; a balanced approach is required.

The technology-driven outcomes in EAP's incorporation are concerned with potential disparities in access since there are different learning environments. Students may come from various socioeconomic backgrounds, so there might be some inequities. While interactive platforms and online resources may draw the attention of students, they may not sufficiently address important language skills—such as academic writing, critical thinking, and disciplinary discourse. Furthermore, the efficiency of technology in language education may be considerably influenced by the pedagogical techniques used by teachers. If instructors have insufficient knowledge to use technology effectively in their curricula, they will be overused or underused, resulting in a lack of meaningful learning results. In brief, it is significant to balance the use of digital tools with a major focus on language learning and teaching. It is undeniable that there are potential benefits of integrating EAP instruction with technology, but it should be used effectively to ensure that technological competency can lead to language proficiency and academic achievement.

Tests and assessments in an academic context should be considered since the essential skills and knowledge in an EAP setting are complicated. Most researchers focus on the effectiveness and reliability of assessment methods to support those needs. This result is linked with the study of Gillet (2022), who claimed that standardized tests cannot reflect the complexity of academic language skills. Therefore, by using both objective and qualitative methods, EAP programs can provide comprehensive input that meets each student's unique learning needs. However, the challenges of assessment standards are debated across diverse educational contexts. The issue of formative and summative evaluation is ongoing. While formative assessments give continual guidance and help students develop, summative examinations are

still commonly employed for certification and academic placement. The question remains: should EAP assessment adopt a more continuous evaluation paradigm, or should standardized examinations continue to play a role in evaluating student proficiency?

In conclusion, while EAP's growing focus on teacher training, curricular innovation, and evaluation procedures shows a constructive move toward achieving students' different needs, these advancements must be carefully considered. Addressing the problems and limitations presented by present approaches is critical to ensure that EAP remains a responsive and effective area capable of promoting academic achievement.

Implications and Future Directions

There are several implications for EAP pedagogy, educational policy, and future research based on the findings of this systematic review. The first aspect is the development of an EAP instructor training program to prepare for related skills such as AI-enhanced learning environments and EMI challenges. In addition, some scopes should not be left out, such as policy development, updated-relevant skills for the AI era, comprehensive teacher training frameworks, and teachers' identities and their impact on teaching practices and development. The second implication is prioritizing digital literacy with language learning in curriculum design. The primary purpose should reflect the authenticity of academic communication in the transformation of the AI era. The investigation of the impact of specific interventions on students' learning and perception needs to be focused on for further study, such as academic writing and vocabulary acquisition, exploring factors such as discipline, language proficiency, critical thinking, and cultural background. The last significant aspect is assessment practices. It should be adapted to various alternative evaluation methods. Future studies should focus on developing comprehensive evaluation strategies that incorporate critical thinking while aligning with EAP educational objectives. Additionally, improving equity and consistency in assessment can be achieved by establishing effective evaluation criteria. By addressing these gaps, EAP can continue to evolve as a dynamic and responsive field that meets the needs of students in an increasingly globalized and technologically driven academic landscape.

Conclusion

The systematic literature review is applied to investigate the emerging landscape of EAP research papers from 2020-2024. The results demonstrate the key trends and significance of developing learning outcomes for learners in higher education, highlighting various aspects such as the enhancement and preparation of lecturers, the learners-centered approach, curriculum design, assessment and testing, and the integration of technology. All the studies led to the same goal, which is the development of academic language proficiency. In an educational context, EAP remains one of the significant components of higher education after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, it can be said that the collaborative efforts among teachers, students, and disciplinary experts can lead to academic success. In addition, this study also provides insightful aspects for conducting further studies. This study has a limitation in that the selected studies for review cover a specific timeframe, and the rapidly changing evolution of technology and pedagogical practices may result in findings that are insufficiently representative of the most recent trends or future practices in the field.

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Competing Interests

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Appendix A

Authors and Focus

Focus	Frequency (Number of Articles)	Author's Contribution
Teacher Development in EAP	14	(Nazari & Karimpour, 2024); (Kohnke et al., 2022); (Almuhanna, 2024); (Mannion et al., 2021); (Gao & Cui, 2021); (Bao et al., 2024); (Hu et al., 2024); (Gao & Cui, 2024); (James, 2023); (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022); (Atai et al., 2022); (Aksit & Aksit, 2022); (Khodjieva et al., 2022); (Hanks, 2022)
Assessment and Evaluation in EAP	10	(Xuan & Chen, 2024); (Liu et al., 2023); (Yin et al., 2024); (Karimpour & Mazlum, 2024); (Yeager et al., 2024); (Palmour, 2023); (Zhang & Cheng, 2021); (Siegel, 2021); (Weekly et al., 2022); (O'Connell, 2022)
Curriculum Development in EAP	11	(Vu et al. 2021); (Maswana & Yamada, 2021); (Hong & Yoon, 2023); (Su et al., 2024); (Wright et al., 2022); (Neumann et al., 2020); (Oakey, 2020); (Li et al., 2023); (Gui et al., 2023); (Ilchenko & Kramar, 2020); (Zhang & Su, 2021); Su & Wei (2024)
Integration of Technology in EAP	7	(Kohnke, 2024); (Kohnke & Ting, 2021); (Knežević et al., 2020); (Dashtestani, 2020); (Arifani et al., 2020); (Arifani & Jumadi, 2021); (Asadnia & Atai, 2022)
EAP for Specific Purposes	9	(Ge et al., 2022); (Valizadeh & Xodabande, 2021); (Tsai, 2021); (Matinparsa et al., 2023); (Basturkmen, 2024); (Sachisthal et al., 2021); (Crosthwaite et al., 2021); (Li et al., 2020); (Zhang & Liu, 2023)
Cultural Considerations in EAP	7	(Connora et al., 2022); (Kaivanpanah et al., 2021); (Huang & Wible, 2024); (Pu & Xu, 2022); (Bhowmik & Chaudhuri, 2022); (SOLTANI & TRAN, 2022); (Morgan & Ahmed, 2023)
Learner Autonomy in EAP	5	(Huang, 2024); (Jakonen & Duran, 2024); (Charles & Hadley, 2022); (Banister, 2021); (Walsh Marr & Mahmood, 2021)
Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies	3	(Skoufakia & Petric, 2021); (Coxhead, 2021); (Warnby, 2023)
Emerging Research Methodologies in EAP	3	(Omidian et al., 2023); (Charles, 2022); (Hyland & Jiang, 2021)
Social Justice and Equity in EAP	1	(Mortenson, 2021)
Multimodal Approaches in EAP	1	(Tastanbek, 2024)