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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS TRANSITIONING FROM ENGLISH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES TO ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC/ACADEMIC PURPOSES: CHALLENGES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This systematic review aims to synthesize a body of scholarship on the transition of English language teachers from English for General Purposes (EGP) to English for Specific Purposes (ESP)/English for Academic Purposes (EAP), with a focus on their challenges, solutions, and professional development. A total of 37 texts were selected as the focal literature for thematic analysis. Six strands of challenges under the themes of emotional tensions, ESP/EAP-related knowledge, course materials, target students, collaboration with content teachers, and research practice, each coupled with corresponding solutions, were identified. To address these challenges, transitioning ESP/EAP teachers follow diverse and individualized learning trajectories that are shaped by their previous learning and working experience as well as their contextual conditions. These findings are expected to facilitate English teachers' EGP-to-ESP/EAP transition, inform the design of ESP/EAP teacher education programs, and provide a reference point for future research on transitioning ESP/EAP teachers.

Key words

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article reports a systematic review of the empirical studies on English teachers making the transition from teaching English for General Purposes (EGP) to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)/English for Academic Purposes (EAP) with special emphasis on their challenges, corresponding solutions, and professional development (PD). English language teaching can be divided into EGP and ESP (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). EGP focuses on general English competence development (Gao & Cui, 2021a), while ESP addresses "the specific communicative needs and practices of particular social groups" (Hyland, 2007, p. 391) in academic, professional, and occupational contexts (Basturkmen, 2019), with its dominant offshoot, EAP, dealing with academic communicative practice (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

Over the past five decades, ESP and EAP have emerged as "a major force in English language teaching and research" (Hyland, 2007, p. 391) within tertiary education across global contexts, driven by the globalization of markets, the internationalization of higher education, and the trend of English becoming the lingua franca for research publication and business communication (Bruce & Bond, 2022; Hyland, 2022). An increasing number of international students travel to study in Anglophone countries or participate in English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) education in their home countries (Bruce, 2022). To prepare students for success in global academia and job markets, countries such as China, Iran, and Japan have either incorporated ESP/EAP courses into EGP curriculum or replaced EGP with ESP/EAP curriculum (Iijima et al., 2019; Kaivanpanah et al., 2021b; Li & Cargill, 2019a). This expansion has led to a parallel growth of ESP and EAP practitioners (Ding & Campion, 2016), most of whom are recruited from EGP/TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)/GE (General English) teachers (Alexander, 2012; Ding & Bruce, 2017) with humanities backgrounds.

This shift from EGP to ESP/EAP teaching represents a significant pedagogical and professional transformation for English teachers, who require substantial support from both institutional stakeholders and scholarly literature charting successful cases and effective practices of transitioning ESP/EAP teachers. Yet despite its growing importance, ESP/EAP is viewed as a "low-status service activity" (Hyland & Shaw, 2016, p. 2). ESP/EAP practitioners are often perceived as marginalized support workers or teaching-only staff, suffering from heavy teaching loads and administrative work (Ding, 2019). EAP directors often fail to support practitioners in developing a knowledge base in EAP or pursuing scholarship of teaching and learning (Ding & Bruce, 2022). This situation "places the burden on practitioners themselves to develop without the institutional support" (Ding, 2019, p. 68).

While their previous EGP teaching experience and qualifications provide some foundation for ESP/EAP instruction in language teaching and classroom management (Ding & Bruce, 2017), transitioning ESP/EAP teachers reported that

their EGP experience was inadequate for addressing the challenges of ESP/EAP instruction (Meihami & Krajka, 2023). Multiple studies have documented considerable challenges faced by transitioning ESP/EAP teachers (e.g., Martin, 2014; Suherman, 2024). However, a systematic review of empirical studies examining their challenges, solutions, and PD is lacking. Such a review is necessary, as the insights to be generated can not only offer practical guidance for teachers making the EGP-to-ESP/EAP transition, but also provide valuable implications for developing ESP/EAP teacher education programs, while serving as a reference point for institutions and policymakers to support transitioning teachers across diverse educational contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Roles and responsibilities of EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers

With ESP and EAP teaching being a "theoretically grounded and research informed enterprise" (Hyland & Wong, 2019, p. 1) that relates to specific disciplines, ESP and EAP practitioners are expected to assume multiple roles and responsibilities. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) delineated five key roles of ESP teachers, including teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator of student learning, courses and materials. Extending Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) early proposition, Atai et al. (2018) examined nine Iranian EAP teachers' perceptions of their role identities and identified eight roles, including 'creators and users of learning opportunities', 'selectors and users of teaching/learning materials', 'assessors and evaluators', 'researchers', 'realizers and facilitators of the development of learners' (full) potentials', 'observers of ethicality', 'learners', and 'teacher educators'. Belcher (2006) emphasized that ESP teachers are first and foremost needs assessors. Additional responsibilities reported by EAP teachers in recent literature include increasing students' motivation (Kaivanpanah et al., 2021a) and fostering students' critical thinking (Derakhshan et al., 2024).

These diverse roles and responsibilities make ESP/EAP teaching challenging for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers (Alexander, 2012; Campion, 2016; Meihami & Krajka, 2023). Consequently, PD on the part of ESP/EAP teachers is necessary in order to acquire additional knowledge and skills.

2.2. ESP/EAP teachers' need for developing new knowledge

Developing EAP-related knowledge has been collectively reported as a paramount concern for EGP teachers transitioning to EAP (Ding & Bruce, 2017; Ding & Campion, 2016). Several pertinent terms used in the current ESP/EAP literature include content knowledge, subject matter knowledge, specialist knowledge, specialized

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knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Content knowledge and subject matter knowledge are often used interchangeably to denote teachers' knowledge of the subject. Specialist knowledge, drawing on Ferguson (1997), similarly refers to knowledge of the content/subject matter of the students' discipline or profession. By contrast, specialized knowledge refers to "knowledge of disciplinary cultures and values", "knowledge of the epistemological basis of different disciplines", and "knowledge of genre and discourse" (Ferguson, 1997, p. 85). PCK denotes teachers' understanding of how to present and formulate the specific subject matter or content to make it comprehensible for their students (Han et al., 2021; Shulman, 1986). ESP/EAP pedagogical knowledge falls under PCK.

2.3. EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher development

Teacher development is the key to developing professional knowledge and skills, preparing for change, and promoting job satisfaction (Craft, 2002; Guskey, 2002). EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher development is of vital importance for successful ESP/EAP teaching and ESP/EAP-oriented educational reform. The British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) is currently the primary organization making a systematic effort to promote ESP/EAP practitioners' PD (Atai, 2021; Ding & Campion, 2016). The BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of EAP outlines the knowledge and skills expected of EAP teachers. However, this framework was derived from surveying among expert practitioners and will need to be adapted for use with transitioning EAP teachers (Alexander, 2010). Achieving the outlined competencies requires specialized training. Yet most EAP teachers' initial teacher education is in TESOL (Ding & Bruce, 2017), thus creating a significant gap in their expertise. Moreover, the number of qualifications and master's programs in ESP/EAP is low and they are carried out in limited settings, such as in the UK context (Ding & Campion, 2016). There have been occasional reports of small-scale university-based training programs from the Chinese context: Li and Cargill (2019a) reported an innovative training program offered by an external experienced EAP professional (Cargill in this case) to a group of novice EAP teachers from different Chinese universities, while Gao (2021) reported an ESP training program hosted by a participant's English Department at a Chinese university. Nevertheless, it seems such programs remain in dearth overall.

Additionally, the marginalization of ESP/EAP and its practitioners (Ding & Bruce, 2017), coupled with insufficient financial, staffing, and time resources (Bond, 2022), impedes PD opportunities for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers. In neoliberal universities, ESP/EAP is seen as a *business* or *industry*, ESP/EAP centers are expected to generate profits (Ding & Bruce, 2017) as "auxiliary educational service providers" (Hadley, 2015, p. 39), and ESP/EAP courses are regarded as 'support service' courses (Ding & Bruce, 2017). Consequently, limited financial and training support are provided for ESP/EAP practitioners (Bond, 2022; Jiang, 2022), forcing transitioning

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ESP/EAP teachers to independently address their challenges and advance their PD. Scholarship on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' experience would thus be potentially enlightening for seeking solutions to challenges.

2.4. Review studies on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers

Ding and Bruce (2017) seemed to have provided the only review of transitioning EAP teachers in a chapter focusing on entering the field of EAP in their book. They synthesized seven studies, published between 2001 and 2016, on teachers moving from TESOL to EAP, all conducted within the UK context. Their analysis identified several prominent themes, including knowledge transfer from TESOL to EAP, EAP-related knowledge, informal learning, teacher qualifications, EAP teaching methodology, and teacher dispositions. Specifically, they found that while a strong TESOL background and TESOL qualifications lay the groundwork for EAP teaching, the most important theme noted by transitioning EAP teachers is "the need to develop new areas of knowledge, specifically knowledge relating to discursive forms and practices in academic subjects" (Ding & Bruce, 2017, p. 99). Their findings also underscore the importance of informal learning, e.g., communicating and collaborating with colleagues, team teaching with experienced teachers, reading books and literature, and attending meetings. Additionally, they reported the need for developing EAP pedagogy to implement an EAP syllabus. Finally, they noted that attitudinal attributes, e.g., a strong sense of self-efficacy, can aid in the TESOL-to-EAP transition.

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The brief review by Ding and Bruce (2017) offers useful insights into the experience of English teachers moving from EGP into EAP. Yet the studies they reviewed were limited to the UK context and up to 2016. A more up-to-date and comprehensive picture needs to be put together. On the potential challenges faced by transitioning EAP teachers, they primarily focused on EAP knowledge, methodology, and qualifications. Nonetheless, EAP practitioners were also found to teach "in difficult conditions, with very large classes, high teaching loads, little support, few resources and very few opportunities to develop" (Ding & Campion, 2016, p. 548), suggesting that they may grapple with additional challenges. Hence, a synthesis of their challenges and no less importantly, the corresponding solutions will be of potential value for transitioning ESP/EAP teachers and policymakers.

Whilst Ding and Bruce (2017) outlined some solutions and informal learning activities, it remains unknown if they have been implemented or proposed by others in practice. To fill these gaps, this literature review aims to synthesize empirical studies on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers to address two research questions:

- What challenges did English teachers confront while transitioning from teaching EGP to teaching ESP/EAP and what solutions were practiced or proposed to tackle these challenges?
- How did the transitioning ESP/EAP teachers engage in PD?

3. METHODS

A systematic review was conducted to identify and synthesize the pertinent evidence in the literature. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021) were employed as a guiding framework for literature search, screening, and analysis. The overall research process was iterative and crosschecked by the authors.

3.1. Literature search

We compiled the pool of literature for review through multiple rounds of literature searches and screenings, with the final search performed in May 2024. To generate relevant and comprehensive results, we conducted the literature search across five databases and one search engine, i.e., Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCOhost, Taylor & Francis Online, ERIC, and Google Scholar, all of which are widely used in educational research. The following query terms were used for topic searches: 1) "ESP teacher*" AND transition; 2) "English for specific purposes teacher*" AND transition; 3) "EAP teacher*" AND transition; 4) "English for academic purposes teacher*" AND transition; 5) "novice ESP teacher*"; 6) "novice EAP teacher*"; 7) "emerging ESP teacher*"; 8) "emerging EAP teacher*"; 9) "beginning ESP teacher*"; 10) "beginning EAP teacher*"; 11) "new ESP teacher*"; 12) "new EAP teacher*"; 13) "from EGP to ESP"; 14) "from EGP to EAP". The asterisk was used as a wildcard. These searches yielded a total of 2,827 hits for screening.

3.2. Literature screening and selection

As illustrated in Figure 1, after removing 452 duplicates, 2,383 texts remained for screening. During the first round of screening, we carefully screened the titles and abstracts of these articles based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) the publication is written in English; (2) the study focuses on (transitioning/novice) ESP/EAP teachers; (3) the article reports an empirical study. This process resulted in the exclusion of 2,267 records, leaving 116 articles for full-text screening. During the second round of screening, we eliminated studies for one or more of the following reasons: (1) full-text being inaccessible, or being conference papers or presentation slides; (2) focusing on pre-service or pre-tertiary ESP/EAP teachers; (3) focusing on novice ESP/EAP teachers with no EGP experience (thus no report on transition); (4) focusing on content teachers. After removing 79 records, 37 articles qualified for this systematic review. These 37 articles were published across 23 journals (22 peer-reviewed, 8 SSCI-indexed, and 17 Scopus-indexed), including specialized ESP/EAP journals (e.g., *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *ESP Today*) and education journals (e.g., *Teaching and Teacher*

Education, TESOL Quarterly, Frontiers in Psychology). Regional journals (e.g., *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*) were also included.
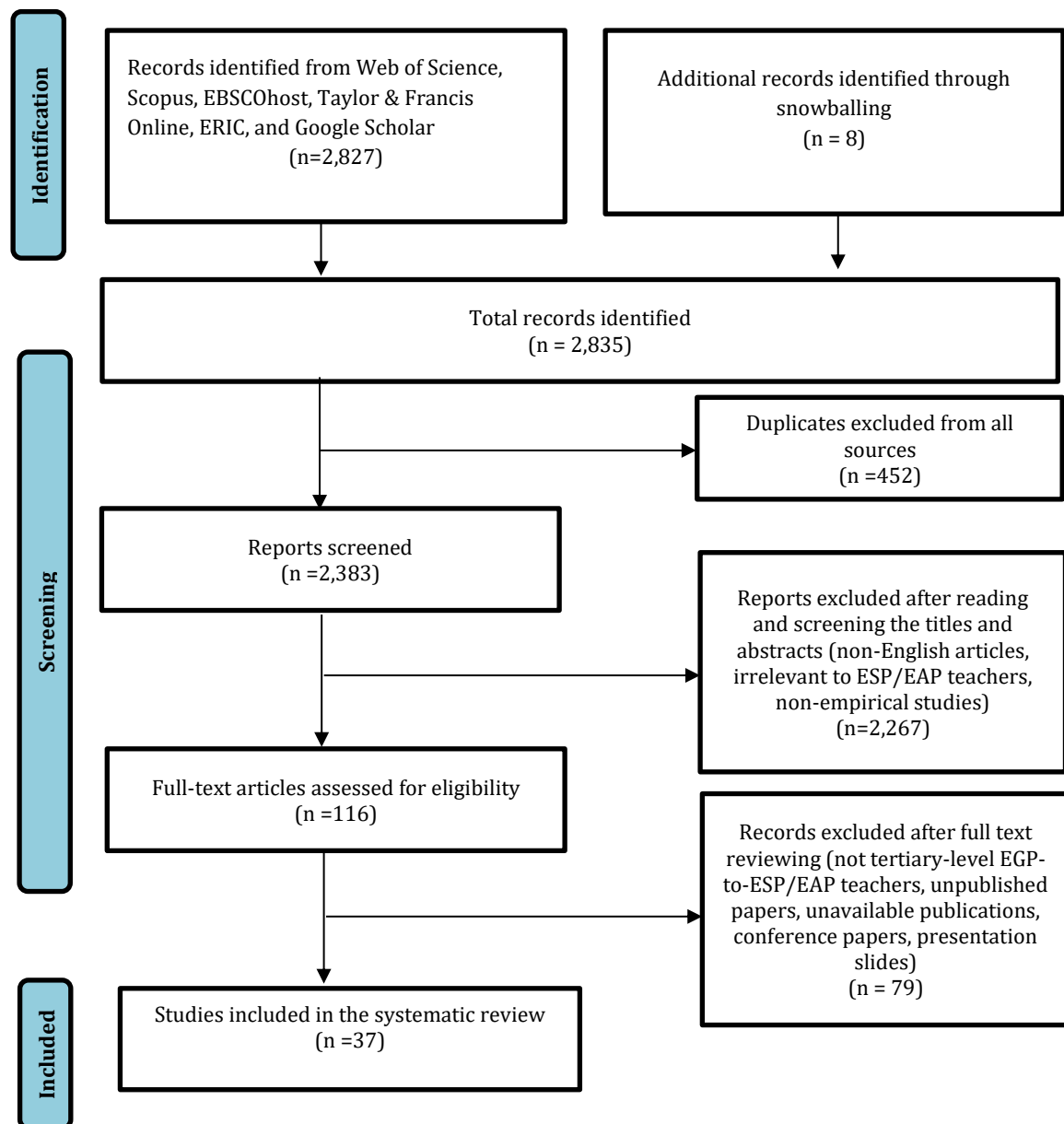
Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart on the selection process

3.3. Literature coding and analysis

The empirical evidence from the 37 qualified articles served as the raw data. We conducted an iterative process of data extraction and analysis aligned with our research questions. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the focal literature, we extracted basic information from these selected articles in terms of research foci, contexts, ESP/EAP courses delivered, target students, participants, and research methods using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Next, the collection of the focal literature was imported into NVivo 12 for thematic analysis. Our data analysis followed Thomas et al.'s (2017) thematic synthesis for conducting systematic literature reviews: coding text and developing descriptive themes. Table 1 presents the alignment of our research questions, codes, and themes. Guided by our research questions, two top-level organizational codes – 'challenges' (subsuming 'solutions') and 'PD' – were created to structure the coding process. In the first stage of coding, each text was inductively coded to generate initial data-driven codes related to 'challenges' and 'PD'. Many in vivo codes, e.g., teacher participants' expressions of their emotions, were used to preserve the original meanings conveyed in the texts. In the second stage of coding, these initial codes were synthesized and sorted into themes and subthemes under the organizational codes. To ensure analytical coherence, 'solutions' were mapped to their corresponding 'challenges', creating paired challenge-solution connections.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ORGANIZATIONAL CODES	THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

RQ1: What challenges did English teachers confront while transitioning from teaching EGP to teaching ESP/EAP and what solutions were practiced or proposed to tackle these challenges?	Challenges	• Emotional challenges (subsuming solutions)
		• Challenges in ESP/EAP-related knowledge
		  - Lacking content knowledge
		  - Lacking pedagogical content knowledge
		  (both subsuming solutions)
		• Challenges with developing course materials (subsuming solutions)
		• Challenges regarding students (subsuming solutions)
		• Challenges in collaborating with content teachers (subsuming solutions)
		• Challenges in research practice (subsuming solutions)

RQ2: How did the transitioning ESP/EAP teachers engage in PD?	PD	• Catalysts for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher learning • Forms of EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher learning • Avenues for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' PD • Peer learning and community of practice

Table 1. Alignment of research questions, codes and themes

The following section will present the findings on transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' challenges (subsuming solutions) and PD, citing all 37 texts from the focal literature.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. An overview of the focal literature

The selected 37 texts in our focal literature include 30 journal articles, 3 doctoral dissertations, 2 master's theses, 1 book, and 1 book chapter. The geographic contexts of these 37 studies, comprising 17 on EGP-to-ESP teachers and 20 on EGP-to-EAP teachers, are summarized in Table 2. Whilst their geographic locations cover countries across Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, they are unevenly distributed. China (23) overwhelmingly outnumbers the other countries, including the UK (4), Iran (2), Estonia (1), Indonesia (1), Lithuania (1), Pakistan (1), South Korea (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Türkiye (1), and Vietnam (1).

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COUNTRY	NO.	ARTICLES ON EGP-TO-ESP TEACHERS	ARTICLES ON EGP-TO-EAP TEACHERS
China	23	Gao (2021), Jiang (2017), Jiang (2022), Jiang & Zhang (2021), Jiang et al. (2018), Li (2022), Pei & Milner (2016), Tao & Gao (2017), Tao & Gao (2018)	Bao et al. (2024), Bi (2020), Gao & Cui (2021a), Gao & Cui (2022a), Gao & Cui (2022b), Gao et al. (2022), Han et al. (2021), Li (2020), Li & Ma (2020), Li & Wang (2018), Li & Wang (2020), Li et al. (2020), Li et al. (2021), Yu (2015)
UK	4		Alexander (2012), Campion (2016), Elsted (2012), Martin (2014)
Iran	2	Estaji & Nazari (2015), Meihami & Krajka (2023)	
Estonia	1	Meristo & López Arias (2020)	
Indonesia	1	Suherman (2024)	
Lithuania	1		Kuzborska (2011)
Pakistan	1	Abdulaziz et al. (2012)	
South Korea	1		Kobylinski & Prasad (2018)
Saudi Arabia	1	Alsolami (2014)	
Türkiye	1	Bayram & Canaran (2020)	
Vietnam	1	Nguyen (2017)	
Total		17	20

Table 2. Geographic distribution of the focal literature

This body of literature spans from 2011 to 2024 in the publication time, with 10 papers published during 2011-2016 and 27 published during 2017-2024. This represents a notable expansion from Ding and Bruce's (2017) review, which analyzed seven articles on TESOL-to-EAP teachers up to 2016. The growing research interest in EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers is particularly evident in China (see the 23 papers in Table 2), where a top-down curriculum reform from EGP to ESP/EAP pedagogy has been enacted since 2013 (Li & Wang, 2018).

These 37 articles show that EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' transition experience diverged in nature based on the institutional contexts they are situated in, the courses they deliver, and the students they instruct. In the UK context, the ESP/EAP courses tended to be pre-sessional/foundation courses provided for international students to reach the target level of English proficiency for undergraduate/postgraduate studies; ESP/EAP practitioners were mostly native or near-native English teachers possessing qualifications such as CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) and DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults). In contrast, in countries where English is a foreign language (EFL), such as China, ESP/EAP teachers were generally EFL speakers endeavoring to survive the EGP-to-ESP/EAP paradigm shift, with a background predominantly in linguistics, literature, and translation. The courses they taught were diverse, e.g., Academic Writing, Business English, Legal English, and Medical English, targeting undergraduate or postgraduate students.

Qualitative research dominates in this body of focal literature. Case study and narrative inquiry are prominently featured. The interview method was used in 31 studies, with 12 relying on it exclusively. Additionally, 10 studies employed questionnaire, mostly in combination with interviews, and 10 studies utilized classroom observation as a research method.

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4.2. Challenges confronting EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers

Our findings reveal that challenge is a recurrent theme characterizing the transitioning ESP/EAP teachers. These challenges primarily concerned their emotions, ESP/EAP-related knowledge, course materials, students, collaboration with content teachers, and research practice. Correspondingly, various solutions were either practiced or proposed to address these challenges.

4.2.1. Emotional challenges

Most EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers featured in the focal literature reported varying degrees of emotional challenges. The linguistic expressions delineating their sentiments include "resistance", "hesitation", "uncertainty", "confusion", "stress", "pressure", "frustration", "anxiety", "self-doubt", "insecurity", "struggle", "demotivation", "uneasiness", "challenging", "exhausting", "bewildered", "miserable",

"painful", "nerve-wrecking", "in the dark", "in an abyss", "baked and burned out", "thrown in at the deep end", "on the verge of collapse", etc. (Abdulaziz et al., 2012; Bi, 2020; Campion, 2016; Gao, 2021; Gao & Cui, 2021a; Gao et al., 2022; Jiang, 2022; Jiang & Zhang, 2021; Martin, 2014; Nguyen, 2017).

In Martin's (2014) study of four British EGP-to-EAP teachers, three felt insecure at the outset because of the "incredibly intensive" three-month EAP course, the "very steep learning curve" and the demanding students with "very high expectations" (pp. 296-297). Their insecurity was mitigated by supportive colleagues and a conducive teaching environment, eventually disappearing as they developed a new sense of purpose as EAP teachers and found EAP teaching more rewarding than EGP teaching (Martin, 2014). Elsted (2012) also documented that British transitioning EAP teachers perceived the informal support from more experienced teachers as "very reassuring" (p. 27).

Chinese EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers reported experiencing stress, anxiety, loneliness, helplessness, and self-doubt during their transition (Bi, 2020; Gao, 2021; Gao & Cui, 2021a, 2022a, 2022b). Bi (2020) found that EGP-to-EAP teachers addressed these challenges by reshaping their identities (i.e., becoming an open-minded learner and a caring teacher), collaborating with colleagues, and utilizing previous EGP pedagogies. Gao and Cui (2021a, 2022a, 2022b) described how a transitioning EAP teacher leader negotiated her tensions by becoming a hardworking learner exploring available teaching resources and leveraging the collective efforts of their EAP 'reform community' through weekly lesson preparation meetings to develop an extensive EAP repertoire for her teaching. Her successful trial teaching and students' favorable feedback further alleviated her negative emotions.

4.2.2. Challenges in ESP/EAP-related knowledge

Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers were found to face challenges in content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).

4.2.2.1. Lacking content knowledge

Lacking content (subject or specialist) knowledge was repeatedly reported as one of the greatest challenges for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers (e.g., Alsolami, 2014; Bi, 2020; Gao, 2021; Gao & Cui, 2022b; Han et al., 2021; Jiang, 2022; Li, 2020; Meihami & Krajka, 2023; Nguyen, 2017). Alsolami (2014), Estaji and Nazari (2015), and Suherman (2024) reported that insufficient field/subject knowledge was identified by the EGP teachers in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Indonesia as the most significant barrier preventing them from becoming ESP practitioners.

Insufficient content knowledge caused EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' emotional struggles (Gao & Cui, 2021a; Jiang, 2022), hindered their reading of discipline-specific materials (Kuzborska, 2011), undermined their teaching effectiveness

(Jiang et al., 2018), hampered their PCK development (Han et al., 2021), impeded their cooperation with the content teachers (Kuzborska, 2011), and made it difficult for them to develop students' higher order thinking skills (Bayram & Canaran, 2020).

The resolutions implemented or proposed to tackle the challenge included collaborating with content teachers or ESP/EAP colleagues, communicating with students, consulting reference materials (e.g., books and journals), drawing on previous teaching experience, participating in discipline-specific courses/training, pursuing graduate degrees, obtaining qualifications in ESP/EAP teaching, gaining institutional support, and acquiring work experience in corporations (Alsolami, 2014, Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Campion, 2016; Gao, 2021; Jiang et al., 2018; Martin, 2014; Pei & Milner, 2016).

Collaboration with subject specialists, ESP/EAP colleagues, and students was perceived as a primary solution (Alsolami, 2014; Bayram & Canaran, 2020). For instance, Jiang (2022) mentioned that two Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers employed a collaborative approach in their ESP teaching by involving content teachers to plan lessons, offer materials, and provide consultancy, and by encouraging students to select teaching materials and share their disciplinary subject knowledge. Additionally, Gao and Cui (2022a) profiled a transitioning EAP teacher who resorted to her EAP 'reform community' of EGP-to-EAP teachers, where they conducted collective lesson planning weekly to facilitate their learning in EAP teaching and textbook compilation.

Individual efforts for developing content knowledge included participating in ESP-related training, reading articles and books, pursuing academic degrees in target disciplines, and gaining industry experience (Gao, 2021; Suherman, 2024). In Gao's (2021) report, an EGP-to-ESP teacher pursued a master's degree in accounting and gained work experience in a renowned accounting firm to develop content knowledge and prepare herself to be a qualified ESP teacher.

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At the institutional level, EGP-to-ESP teachers requested institutional policy support for interdisciplinary collaboration to address their insufficient content knowledge. It was proposed that such support could take the forms of workshops run by content teachers or opportunities for ESP teachers to hold regular meetings with content teachers (Jiang, 2017; Jiang et al., 2018).

4.2.2.2. Lacking pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

Teachers making EGP-to-ESP/EAP transition also struggled with PCK (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Han et al., 2021; Jiang, 2022; Jiang et al., 2018; Kuzborska, 2011). They were unconfident in preparing an ESP/EAP syllabus, designing teaching materials, using various teaching methods, arranging learning activities, combining academic language and study skills, integrating language and subject knowledge, guiding students' self-evaluation, fostering student autonomy, and developing critical thinking skills (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Jiang, 2022; Martin, 2014; Meihami & Krajka, 2023; Tao & Gao, 2017).

Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers were found to be pedagogically under-prepared for teaching ESP/EAP. Kuzborska (2011) revealed that the Lithuanian EGP-to-EAP teachers only focused on students' vocabulary learning, with little attention to academic reading, writing or speaking skills. Bao et al. (2024) reported that a Chinese EGP-to-EAP teacher initially implemented the same language-driven instruction she used in EGP teaching, which led to students' dissatisfaction. Jiang (2022) found that a Chinese ESP teacher employed the 'translating and paraphrasing' method in her first semester of medical English teaching.

The avenues proposed or practiced for developing PCK included formal training, informal learning, reflective teaching, support from colleagues, and institutional support (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Han et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2018; Meihami & Krajka, 2023). In particular, informal learning played a crucial role in developing transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' PCK. Han et al. (2021) reported that Chinese EGP-to-EAP teachers developed their PCK based on previous EGP teaching experience and peer learning, e.g., communicating with experienced EAP teachers and observing their classes. Reflective teaching emerged as another effective strategy, with Iranian ESP teachers reflecting on their teaching practices and creating profiles of problems to find effective solutions (Meihami & Krajka, 2023). Additionally, institutional policy support was requested by Chinese EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers to facilitate opportunities for peer learning (e.g., observing experienced teachers' class) and collaboration between ESP teachers and content teachers (Jiang et al., 2018; Li & Ma, 2020).

4.2.3. Challenges with developing course materials

Lack of teaching materials was identified as another major barrier to transitioning ESP/EAP teachers (Alsolami, 2014; Kuzborska, 2011; Martin, 2014; Pei & Milner, 2016; Suherman, 2024). Kuzborska's (2011) study of eight Lithuanian EGP-to-EAP teachers' decision-making for designing reading materials found that they all relied on their preferred textbooks. Additionally, Bayram and Canaran (2020), examining 12 EGP-to-ESP practitioners in Türkiye, reported teachers' complaints of limited ESP textbooks relevant to their students. The existing materials were observed by the Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers in Pei and Milner's (2016) study as either overly specialized, hard to access, or outdated. Thus, transitioning ESP/EAP teachers had to create their teaching materials by themselves (Bi, 2020; Nguyen, 2017), which posed a major challenge due to their lack of content knowledge, expertise, time, training, and support (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Gao & Cui, 2022b; Kuzborska, 2011). They were found to rely on their intuitions in selecting teaching materials (Alexander, 2012), with students' interests and needs rarely considered (Kuzborska, 2011).

A few solutions were noted to address the challenge of insufficient ESP/EAP materials. Kuzborska (2011) argued that textbooks offering clear instructional frameworks and teacher guidance should be provided for EAP teachers, allowing

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them to concentrate on delivering quality teaching. Nonetheless, a transitioning ESP teacher, as noted by Bayram and Canaran (2020), observed that even textbooks from well-known publishers require alterations to meet students' diverse needs, which necessitates suggestions from content teachers. One instance of transitioning EAP teachers compiling an EAP textbook through collective efforts of an EAP community was documented by Gao and Cui (2022b) and Gao et al. (2022). Additionally, transitioning EAP teachers in the studies by Li and Ma (2020) and Li et al. (2020) utilized journal articles from students' disciplines as the primary teaching materials. Li et al. (2020) mentioned one teacher showing students how to compile a corpus of journal papers and conduct searches in the corpus.

4.2.4. Challenges regarding students

EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers were also reported to face student-related challenges, primarily in four aspects: needs assessment (Jiang et al., 2018; Martin, 2014), student motivation (Abdulaziz et al., 2012; Gao, 2021), mixed-disciplines background (Li & Ma, 2020; Meristo & López Arias, 2020), and heterogeneous or low language proficiency (Kobylinski & Prasad, 2018; Li, 2020; Yu, 2015). Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers found it challenging to identify the needs of diverse students (particularly from multiple disciplines) (Gao et al., 2022; Martin, 2014; Nguyen, 2017). Abdulaziz et al. (2012), studying 30 transitioning ESP teachers in Pakistan, reported that 80% of the ESP teachers complained about their students' lack of motivation.

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Students' low language proficiency could also be a problem (Gao et al., 2022; Kobylinski & Prasad, 2018; Li et al., 2021). Li et al. (2021) noted that the Chinese EGP-to-EAP teachers perceived their students' inadequate English proficiency as a challenge in implementing EAP pedagogy. Some ESP/EAP teachers even experienced burnout (Li et al., 2021) and concluded that the ESP/EAP pedagogy was not suitable for their students (Gao et al., 2022; Kobylinski & Prasad, 2018; Li et al., 2021).

To address students' heterogeneous backgrounds, Kuzborska (2011) and Li et al. (2020) suggested that EAP teachers should target all students rather than some students during topic selection and task design. To enhance student motivation, ESP practitioners in Abdulaziz et al.'s (2012) study worked for effective lesson planning, designed diverse teaching activities, personalized student consultations, and increased practice opportunities.

4.2.5. Challenges in collaborating with content teachers

Whilst collaboration with content teachers was recognized as a key solution to some of the aforementioned challenges (Alsolami, 2014; Bayram & Canaran, 2020), many EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers encountered difficulties in attaining such collaboration (Kuzborska, 2011; Li & Ma, 2020; Nguyen, 2017). Bayram and Canaran (2020)

highlighted that none of the 12 investigated ESP practitioners in Türkiye had any experience cooperating with content teachers, nor did they believe that they could collaborate with content experts though they yearned for such partnership. Similarly, the 20 Chinese EGP-to-EAP teachers in Li and Ma's (2020) study also reported little collaboration with content teachers. The impeding factors identified for the lack of such collaboration included: content teachers being unavailable, inaccessible, and unwilling to cooperate with English teachers (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Li & Ma, 2020); EAP teachers' lack of subject knowledge (Kuzborska, 2011); and the lack of an institutional tradition of interdisciplinary collaboration and pedagogical training (Jiang et al., 2018).

Thus despite the necessity of language-content collaboration, only a few cases of collaboration were reported in the selected studies. At a basic level, Kuzborska (2011) described an EGP-to-EAP teacher who requested articles from content teachers to use as teaching materials and incorporated them into a textbook. More in-depth collaboration was exemplified by a transitioning ESP teacher in Jiang's (2017) study, who attended EMI courses, and consulted EMI teachers on students' learning needs. More comprehensive collaboration with content teachers was implemented by two ESP teachers in Jiang's (2022) study, who requested materials and sought advice from content teachers and involved the latter in course design.

Researchers also highlighted the role of institutional support for language-content collaboration. Bayram and Canaran (2020) proposed that PD programs should facilitate opportunities for ESP teachers and content teachers to exchange ideas, and a special interest group can be established for these teachers to collaborate in designing the course content. Likewise, Jiang et al. (2018) reported that some EGP-to-ESP teachers requested institutional policy support for regular consultation meetings with content teachers.

4.2.6. Challenges in research practice

Undertaking ESP/EAP research was recognized as a significant pathway for effectively implementing ESP/EAP pedagogy and fostering PD during the EGP-to-ESP/EAP transition (Li & Wang, 2018; Li et al., 2021). EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' publication experience was considered conducive to a smoother transition (Li & Wang, 2020; Li et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017). Conversely, a lack of publication experience was perceived as a disadvantage in EAP teaching (Li & Ma, 2020; Li & Wang, 2018).

EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers encountered numerous obstacles in research practice (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Jiang et al., 2018; Li, 2022; Tao & Gao, 2017). While some transitioning ESP/EAP teachers noted a personal desire or institutional requirement to conduct ESP/EAP research (Li, 2022; Li & Ma, 2020), Tao and Gao (2017) reported that those with a strong commitment to professional identity were more likely to dedicate efforts to ESP research. Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers could lack motivation to conduct research, due to inadequate research training, lack

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of time or interest, insufficient knowledge and resources, limited identity commitment, institutional marginalization of ESP/EAP research, and the absence of a supportive research culture (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Jiang et al., 2018; Li & Ma, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2017). Tao and Gao (2017) reported that the marginalization of ESP research in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at a Chinese university left transitioning ESP teachers feeling 'embarrassed' to undertake ESP research.

The focal literature offers limited practical solutions to address these research-related challenges, with only a few proposals highlighted. The Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers in Jiang et al.'s (2018) study expressed the need for financial support to sponsor and motivate them to conduct research. Similarly, Tao and Gao (2017) proposed that senior management should support teachers in researching ESP curriculum to maintain their identity commitment.

4.3. EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' professional development

A handful of studies in our focal literature addressed issues related to the PD of transitioning ESP/EAP teachers, including their perceptions of PD (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Li, 2022), academic writing instruction and PD (Li & Ma, 2020), agency in PD (Tao & Gao, 2017), and transformative learning (Gao, 2021). Notably, most of these studies were conducted within the Chinese context, where the paradigm shift from EGP to ESP/EAP curriculum, along with its associated challenges, has necessitated teacher learning to facilitate successful transition and PD (Jiang & Zhang, 2021; Li & Ma, 2020). This section illustrates the four themes identified in our focal literature on how transitioning ESP/EAP teachers engaged in PD: the catalysts for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher learning, the forms this learning takes, the avenues for their PD, and the role of peer learning and community of practice.

4.3.1. Catalysts for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher learning

The self-empowerment and learning of transitioning ESP/EAP teachers were triggered by their emotional tensions and evolving beliefs stemming from the gap between their EGP background and the new demands of ESP/EAP teaching (Bao et al., 2024; Jiang & Zhang, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017). Jiang and Zhang (2021), in their study of the learning and identity change of 12 Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers, found that their learning was "initially triggered by the changes in their ontological and epistemological beliefs about teaching" (p. 280). Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' negative emotional experiences further contributed to their identity change from qualified/experienced EGP teachers to struggling, but motivated and open-minded, learners (Bi, 2020; Gao, 2021; Jiang & Zhang, 2021). These teachers exercised their agency by engaging in continuous learning to adapt to their new roles (Gao, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017).

4.3.2. Forms of EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher learning

The learning trajectories of transitioning ESP teachers were diverse, individualized, and non-linear, shaped by their previous learning and work experiences, as well as their institutional contexts (Gao, 2021; Gao & Cui, 2021a; Tao & Gao, 2017). Tao and Gao's (2017) study of eight Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers highlighted the individualized ways in which teachers engaged in professional learning. Teachers with high language proficiency sought to acquire content knowledge in business and law by pursuing master's degrees, reading materials, or studying overseas; teachers with prior industry work experience leveraged their corporate resources to develop practical knowledge; and one teacher without a degree in English enhanced his language expertise by studying abroad (Tao & Gao, 2017).

Likewise, Gao's (2021) research on five Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers' transformative learning trajectories revealed diverse routes followed by these teachers. These include pursuing master's or doctoral studies, participating in overseas visiting scholarships, gaining work experience, and engaging in self-directed learning. Such trajectories were shaped by "their gender, age, EGP and ESP teaching experience, education background, attitude to ESP curriculum reform, emotion, and the departmental and institutional context" (Gao, 2021, p. 120). Additionally, Bao et al.'s (2024) action research found that a transitioning EAP teacher's learning was informed by her past, present, and imagined selves.

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4.3.3. Avenues for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' professional development

Pursuing a masters' or doctoral degree was identified as a valuable pathway for transitioning ESP/EAP teachers to acquire the theoretical foundation and knowledge needed for ESP/EAP teaching (Campion, 2016; Gao, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017). For instance, Gao (2021) documented how one transitioning ESP teacher enrolled in a doctoral program to facilitate his learning. The academic journey enabled him to learn theories related to ESP pedagogy and second language education, attend relevant workshops, and publish ESP research. Such experience equipped him with a repertoire and confidence in ESP instruction and helped him achieve cognitive and emotional self-efficacy. Beyond doctoral degrees, several EGP-to-ESP teachers pursued master's programs pertinent to their students' disciplines, e.g., law, business, and accounting, to develop their expertise and understanding of content knowledge, thereby strengthening their capabilities and confidence in ESP teaching (Gao, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017, 2018).

Workplace experience provided transitioning ESP teachers with up-to-date knowledge and first-hand information about target industries, which served as a major source for developing teaching materials, compiling textbooks, and informing classroom teaching (Gao, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017, 2018). Among the eight transitioning ESP teachers featured in Tao and Gao (2017), three viewed workplace-based experience/university-company partnerships as their primary means of

learning. Similarly, an EGP-to-ESP teacher in Gao's (2021) study noted that working in a leading accounting firm not only allowed her to draw upon her finance and accounting knowledge in teaching, but also deepened her understanding of what talents are needed in this industry.

Transitioning ESP teachers also enrolled in visiting scholar programs or overseas study programs, which enabled them to attend ESP/EAP or discipline-specific courses while gaining exposure to different teaching and academic cultures (Gao, 2021; Li & Ma, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2017, 2018). Li and Ma (2020) profiled ten transitioning EAP teachers' learning during overseas visits that informed their subsequent EAP teaching and research practices.

Formal training was a frequently recommended but seldom realized pathway for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teacher development. Transitioning ESP teachers expressed the need for pre- and in-service courses to enhance their ESP teaching skills (Bayram & Canaran, 2020), with university-based training considered a cost-effective option (Li, 2022). In Gao's (2021) study of five Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers' transformative learning, two participated in ESP conferences and training sessions, including national symposiums and workshops on ESP/EAP curriculum design, teaching skills, materials development, and assessment. Similarly, EGP-to-EAP teachers in Li and Ma's (2020) study attended EAP conferences to stay informed about the latest research in the field. Another notable instance is reported by Li et al. (2020), who described two transitioning EAP practitioners' teaching practice after completing a PD program, through which they acquired EAP pedagogical knowledge by observing an expert EAP instructor's teaching.

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Self-directed learning was also identified as a crucial avenue for transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' PD (Gao, 2021; Gao & Cui, 2022a; Tao & Gao, 2017). In Tao and Gao's (2017) study of eight Chinese EGP-to-ESP teachers, two teachers developed their content knowledge in law and business through voluntary reading. Likewise, one of the five EGP-to-ESP teachers featured by Gao (2021) successfully navigated transition by earning multiple ESP teaching credentials, implementing innovative teaching methods (e.g., Five Minutes Research Presentation and Production-Oriented Approach), and participating in an ESP community of practice on WeChat (a Chinese social media platform).

4.3.4. Peer learning and community of practice

The role of peer learning and community of practice in transitioning ESP/EAP teacher development was underscored by both EGP-to-ESP/EAP practitioners and researchers (Bi, 2020; Gao & Cui, 2022a, 2022b; Gao et al., 2022; Li, 2022). Bi (2020) and Han et al. (2021) found that peer learning, particularly through activities such as class observations and communication with experienced colleagues, helped transitioning EAP teachers to develop PCK and content knowledge. Additionally, Gao et al. (2022) highlighted that community of practice was an effective tool for an EAP teacher leader to acquire EAP knowledge for teaching and reconcile identity

tensions through weekly lesson preparation meetings. Likewise, Bi (2020) and Gao (2021) reported that transitioning ESP/EAP teachers participated in online ESP/EAP teacher communities to learn EAP pedagogy, exchange their learning, and share publication experiences, thereby facilitating their teaching practice and PD.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper synthesized 37 empirical studies on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers and identified six strands of challenges (i.e., concerning emotions, ESP/EAP-related knowledge, course materials, students, collaboration with content teachers, and research practice), along with their respective solutions. These challenges prompted teachers to seek diverse and individualized avenues for PD, including pursuing self-directed learning or advanced academic degrees, engaging in workplace-based learning, and participating in visiting scholar programs or overseas study programs.

5.1. EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' challenges and solutions

Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers in the focal literature frequently expressed negative emotions, reflecting their struggles with engaging in ESP/EAP pedagogy and navigating their PD, and highlighting their urgent need for support (Nejadghanbar et al., 2025). Our findings suggest that supportive colleagues and teaching environments, heightened responsibilities as ESP/EAP teachers, reshaped identities as open-minded learners, successful teaching, and positive student feedback can all help to address emotional tensions. These findings point to specific recommendations for ESP/EAP stakeholders: institutions can organize meetings or workshops for teachers to express, reflect on, and analyze their emotions; pre-service and in-service ESP/EAP training programs need to address the issue of how to manage emotions to enhance teaching (Gao & Cui, 2021b).

Lacking content knowledge was perceived as a common and significant barrier to EGP-to-ESP/EAP transition, with several studies in our focal literature identifying it as the greatest challenge (e.g., Alsolami, 2014; Estaji & Nazari, 2015; Pei & Milner, 2016). This aligns with Ding and Bruce's (2017) findings, which identified the need for additional knowledge as the most prominent theme in TESOL-to-EAP transition literature. However, transitioning ESP/EAP teachers may tend to overestimate the impact of content knowledge on their ESP/EAP teaching. As Ferguson (1997) pointed out, ESP teachers need specialized knowledge rather than specialist (content) knowledge, though the latter is desirable. It is therefore recommended that EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers develop a balanced perception of the role of content knowledge while developing their knowledge base through collaborating with

content teachers or students, consulting books and materials, participating in courses/training, pursuing graduate degrees, and gaining work experience.

Insufficient PCK was another visible challenge for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers. Some teachers expressed uncertainty regarding which teaching methodologies to use (e.g., Bi, 2020; Meihami & Krajka, 2023), indicating a lack of training in ESP/EAP pedagogy. While project-based learning, communicative approach, and content-based instruction were noted in our focal literature (Han et al., 2021; Pei & Milner, 2016), widely recognized ESP/EAP pedagogies such as genre approach and corpus approach were rarely featured, with genre-based pedagogy reported primarily by Li et al. (2020). Genre pedagogy, as a pathway to EAP and ESP teachers' specialized knowledge development and teacher development framework (Cheng, 2015), should be a key component of ESP/EAP teacher training. Additionally, corpus approach (Breeze, 2015; Flowerdew, 2009; Marín-Pérez & Aguado Jiménez, 2024) and AI-assisted EAP pedagogy (Fathi & Rahimi, 2024) should also be included in ESP/EAP teacher education.

The challenge of textbook and material inadequacies also confronts transitioning ESP/EAP teachers. While Kuzborska (2011) suggested that textbooks with clear frameworks and teacher guidance should be provided, the problem might be that there is no one-size-fits-all textbook for students from heterogeneous backgrounds. Compiling textbooks, as undertaken by transitioning EAP teachers in Gao et al.'s (2022) report, is demanding and time-consuming. A noticeable resolution is to use journal articles from students' disciplines as teaching materials in combination with the corpus method (Gao, 2021; Li & Ma, 2020; Li et al., 2020). Transitioning ESP/EAP teachers need to be introduced to the use of corpora in ESP/EAP teaching (e.g., Flowerdew, 2009) for developing teaching materials and facilitating students' ''individualized learning'' (Costley & Flowerdew, 2017, p. 5).

The challenges associated with students mainly pertain to their needs assessment, low motivation, heterogeneous disciplinary backgrounds, and inadequate language proficiency. Although these issues posed significant challenges to EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers, the focal literature offered limited solutions. Future research and PD programs should be dedicated to equipping teachers with strategies for conducting effective needs assessments, developing engaging materials, and implementing differentiated instruction that addresses the diverse academic and linguistic needs of students.

Collaboration with content teachers was a well-recognized yet often unaddressed challenge for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers (Li & Cargill, 2019b). While our findings reported instances of involving content teachers in material provision, pedagogical consultation, and lesson planning, the details of these collaborations were largely absent. Therefore, introducing scholarship on successful examples of collaboration between ESP/EAP teachers and content teachers, including team teaching (e.g., Jaidev & Chan, 2018), could provide valuable references for transitioning ESP/EAP teachers.

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Another challenge confronting EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers is engaging with research practice, despite the fact that a key role of an ESP/EAP teacher is being a researcher (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Yet little empirical research on transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' research practice seems to have been conducted. This finding echoes Du et al.'s (2022) report that highlighted a stark contrast between a limited focus on ESP/EAP teachers' engagement with research on the one hand and the calls for them to conduct research to inform their teaching on the other (Ding & Bruce, 2017). The gap would need to be mended in the cause of supporting transitioning ESP/EAP teachers to develop into practitioner-researchers. Several strands of support can be considered in this undertaking: (1) PD programs to include sessions on how to engage in ESP/EAP research; (2) institutions and stakeholders to provide support for teachers to attend training programs and conduct ESP/EAP research; (3) ESP/EAP researchers to collaborate with transitioning practitioners to conduct teaching-based research.

5.2. EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' professional development

Our findings indicate that EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' PD has been under-represented in the current literature, with most existing studies primarily conducted in the Chinese context. This limited representation aligns with previous research (Ding & Bruce, 2017; Ding & Campion, 2016) that commented on the paucity of literature on EAP teacher development and a marginal interest in the education and development of EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers. These findings underscore the need for more empirical studies and training programs on the PD of transitioning ESP/EAP teachers.

The scant literature on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' PD, as featured in our review, reveals the individualized and multi-faceted nature of EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' PD, driven by both internal and external factors. The emotional challenges and changing beliefs served as catalysts for transitioning ESP/EAP teachers' learning, echoing Golombek and Doran's (2014) framework that integrates emotion, cognition, and activity in conceptualizing language teachers' PD. It is suggested that ESP/EAP PD initiatives should harness teachers' emotions to promote their PD.

Our review found that the individualized and diverse PD pathways for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers included master's/doctoral degree education, workplace-based learning, visiting scholar programs or overseas study programs, formal training, and self-directed learning; yet while effective and desirable, these opportunities were not always accessible. This gap highlights two pressing needs: more research is needed to examine how EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers navigate their PD while teaching, and PD programs tailored to the needs of local ESP/EAP teachers should be developed, as what teachers hope to seek from PD are concrete and practical ideas directly applicable to their everyday classroom practice (Guskey, 2002).

Peer learning in a community of practice was found to be effective in addressing EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers' challenges and enhancing their PD (Bi, 2020; Gao et al., 2022; Han et al., 2021). Particularly, classroom teaching observation is a vital method for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers to learn from their experienced peers. Indeed, it has been pointed out that observing the practice of experienced ESP/EAP specialists enables teacher participants to understand how to teach ESP/EAP courses, develop teaching materials, acquire ESP/EAP knowledge, and learn ESP/EAP pedagogies (Basturkmen, 2019; Li & Cargill, 2019a; Li et al., 2020).

Our findings revealed a visible lack of formal training for EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers, despite a significant need for formal training in ESP/EAP pedagogy, needs assessment, materials development, research practice, and emotion regulation (e.g., Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Li & Ma, 2020). This critical necessity for transitioning ESP/EAP teacher education (Basturkmen, 2019) calls for immediate attention from training program developers, institutional administrators, and policymakers, with the six challenges confronting these teachers and the corresponding potential solutions as revealed in our review taken into consideration.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Through a synthesis of relevant literature on EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers, in this study we identified six strands of challenges, i.e., challenges pertaining to emotions, ESP/EAP-related knowledge, course materials, students, collaboration with content teachers, and research practice, and surveyed accompanying solutions. We also showed that EGP-to-ESP/EAP teachers sought various individualized avenues for PD, including pursuing master's/doctoral degrees, engaging in self-directed and workplace-based learning, and participating in visiting scholar programs or overseas study programs.

Although focusing on transitioning ESP/EAP teachers, our study also has implications for established ESP/EAP practitioners, who often encounter similar challenges to transitioning ESP/EAP teachers due to shared socio-political contexts, institutional status, and EGP backgrounds (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019). Research on experienced ESP/EAP teachers remains notably scarce (Ding & Bruce, 2017, 2022), which may be unsurprising given that ESP/EAP practitioners have not, somewhat ironically, enjoyed a central place in the EAP literature (Ding & Campion, 2016). It is hoped that our findings will offer pedagogical insights for both transitioning and experienced ESP/EAP teachers, inform teacher development programs, and guide institutional stakeholders on how to better support ESP/EAP teachers.

Two limitations of our study are worth noting. First, by focusing on English-medium publications, our study did not consider publications in other languages. Second, our focus on published empirical articles led to the exclusion of conceptual articles that could provide additional insights. Our study highlights several

directions for future research. Future studies should report more practical solutions to ESP/EAP teachers' challenges, particularly in the realms of ESP/EAP pedagogy, collaboration with content teachers, and research practice. Additionally, longitudinal studies need to be conducted to understand the trajectories of ESP/EAP teachers' professional development.

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