

Researcher

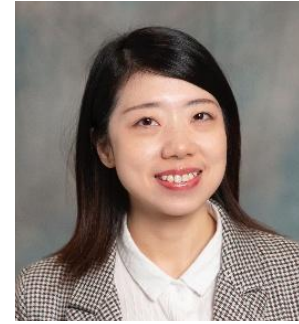
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Title of Project

Understanding and Constructing the ESP Knowledge Base: A
Study of Language Teachers in Chinese Higher Education

Research Supervisor

Prof. Maggie Kubanyiova
University of Leeds, UK

**TIRF Research Topics Investigated**

English for Specific Purposes
Language Teacher Education

Supported by

Cambridge

Bio

Xiaojia Lyu is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Leeds, UK. Her scholarly interests include English for Specific Purposes, language teacher education, teacher knowledge, AI-assisted language teaching, and World Englishes. She has research experience in education and public policy and has presented at international conferences. Her doctoral research investigates how ESP teachers in Chinese higher education construct and develop their professional knowledge.

Project Summary

This study investigates how teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Chinese higher education understand, construct, and develop their professional knowledge over time. As ESP expands in response to globalization and shifting workforce demands, teachers are increasingly expected to integrate language instruction with discipline-specific knowledge, often without sufficient training or institutional support. Despite this, little is known about how ESP teachers themselves make sense of the knowledge required for their practice. Adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach, this research explores how ESP teachers across different institutional contexts in Guangdong Province construct their knowledge base and navigate professional challenges. Data will be collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up discussions with teachers from a range of universities, including research-intensive, teaching-oriented, and private institutions. This multi-phase design enables an in-depth examination of both individual experiences and contextual influences.

The study aims to generate a grounded, context-sensitive understanding of ESP teacher knowledge as a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by institutional conditions, disciplinary demands, and professional trajectories. The findings are expected to contribute to language teacher education by informing more contextually relevant professional development practices. They will also provide insights



The International Research Foundation
for English Language Education

for policymakers and institutions seeking to improve the effectiveness of ESP provision in higher education.