Exploring the English Language Needs of EAP Students of Humanities and Social Sciences in Iran: A Triangulated Approach

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Abstract

Given the fact that few studies have investigated the English language needs of EAP students in Iran, the present study was an attempt to analyze the needs of Iranian EAP learners of Humanities and Social Sciences. To this end, 114 EAP learners at different educational levels (BA, MA, and Ph.D.) and with different English proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) were asked to provide their responses to a questionnaire. Moreover, ten EAP learners and eight EAP instructors were asked to write narratives about their experiences in EAP courses. Their narratives were then analyzed based on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach. The results revealed that the EAP courses did not pay the deserved attention to writing, speaking, and listening skills, while the coverage of the sub-skills (grammar and vocabulary) was successful. Moreover, it was revealed that the EAP textbooks were insufficient in terms of the inclusion of language skills, community-specific cultural issues and conventions, and the topical knowledge. The analysis of the EAP learners' needs also showed that not all interaction types happened in the EAP courses. Furthermore, the analysis of the narratives of EAP learners and EAP instructors indicated that the EAP curriculum, EAP textbooks and also EAP assessment should include the four language skills, provide a communicative venue for EAP learners to practice their disciplinary issues, and design communicative materials. It can be concluded that the current EAP curriculum needs revision to fulfill the EAP learners' present and target situation needs.

INTRODUCTION

According to Anthony (2015) "English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching that targets the current and/or future academic or occupational needs of learners, [and] focuses on the language, skills, discourses, and genres required to address these needs…" (p. 2). Thus, the main goal of ESP, following Anthony, is to help learners fulfill their general and specific needs; this assistance will be through instruction.

The emergence of ESP dates back to the 1950s when the development in science, technology, and business turned into the highlighted purpose of many countries all around the world. At that time, English was considered as the world's lingua franca (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018) to facilitate communication among people of different nationalities and with different languages. Later, when the inquiries for which people tried to communicate became more specific, and the communications among people became more need-driven, ESP and EAP found their way to become the reason and motive of some practitioners to conduct studies regarding ESP and EAP needs analysis. Accordingly, a guiding principle became widespread among the English language educationists, which tried to tailor the needs and demands of language learners of different disciplines to make them competent in communicating for specific purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018). Such a needs analysis procedure is part of what is called English for academic purposes (EAP) as a sub-section of ESP.

The focus of EAP is to help the students of higher education to perform their academic tasks, including research and communication (Charles, 2013). However, when talking about EAP, it should be clearly stated that even though in the non-native English contexts, English is used in higher education, for those whose English language is their native language, it is used in the secondary school for many reasons, such as reading. Thus, EAP, like ESP, follows needs analysis procedures to design and tailor the best approaches and materials for EAP learners. Given such a similarity in ESP and EAP, one can refer to Belcher's (2009, p. 3) statement which says "ESP specialists accept the responsibility for finding out what their learners will likely need (and want) to be able to read, write, speak, and comprehend as listeners to achieve their goals." According to what Belcher states, it can be stated that ESP or EAP has an inseparable part called "needs

analysis" or sometimes "needs assessment," which helps the field to design and tailor the best approaches and materials based on the needs of the students. Therefore, needs analysis in EAP and ESP is an important arena of research. By scrutinizing the world-leading journals in the field of ESP and EAP, such as *English for Specific Purposes Journal* and *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, it will be revealed that many of the research studies have been devoted to needs analysis of EAP and ESP students around the world.

The English language has an international role leading the speakers of different languages to communicate using this language. This is also true about scientific communication, which happens among scholars of different disciplines in the world. In Iran, there is a long time since the English language has been instructed in EAP and ESP courses, yet this instruction is limited to the university level (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002). However, based on the studies done (e.g., Jodairi, 2005; Soleimani, 2005), these programs have not been successful in providing disciplinary competence in the learners to help them communicate different concepts and notions of their disciplines through the English language. By reviewing the previous ESP and EAP studies in Iranian context, it can be found out that the main reasons for the instruction of EAP and ESP courses are teaching reading and translation (Alimohammadi, 2003; Atai, & Shoja, 2011; Jodairi, 2005; Malmir & Bagheri, 2019; Soleimani, 2005;). Focusing on reading and translation is because of the fact that Grammar-Translation method is still the prevalent way of teaching EAP in Iran (Atai, 2002; Eslami, Eslami-Rasekh, & Quiroz, 2007). Thus, EAP programs seem to be insufficient in terms of methodology and materials. One reason for such inefficacy in EAP programs can be the lack of needs analysis research (Atai & Nazari, 2011; Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016) to obtain the target situation, present situation, and language needs of the EAP learners. It is believed that doing needs analysis research has a critical role in EAP course design (Basturkmen, 2013). When considering the humanities and social sciences, the situation is even harsher. The point is the conducted needs analyses have not paid attention to the differences among different disciplines, including different majors, different educational levels, etc. To this end, the present study aimed at describing and analyzing the needs of EAP students of humanities and social sciences in Iran.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs Analysis in EAP

When talking about needs analysis, one can think of it as a process. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 121), needs analysis is "the process of establishing the what and how of a course." It means that needs analysis deals with a deep process of understanding the desires and wants of L2 learners who have different goals to learn English. Moreover, needs analysis can be regarded as an appropriate tool to recognize the learners' language needs based on the contexts (Long, 2005; Weddel & Duzer, 1997). The key term, here, in the context that is influential when the needs of learners are investigated. Accordingly, as pointed out by Flowerdew (2013), it can be stated that if the context in which and for which the learners want to learn English will be ignored, the obtained needs will not be the exact mirror of what should be followed in the process of EAP and ESP instruction. Furthermore, the fact that needs analysis is a process and a context-oriented phenomenon is emphasized by Brown (1995) in that needs analysis is a set of practices involving the data gathering and data analysis regarding the necessary elements which should be included in the curricula to address those needs. Furthermore, Nunan (1994, p. 54) describes needs analysis as "a set of procedures for specifying the parameters of a course of study. Such parameters include the criteria and rationale for grouping learners, the selection and sequencing of course content, methodology, course length, and intensity and duration." Moreover, Hyland (2006, p. 74) defines needs analysis as

> the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to course design: it is the means of establishing the how and what of a course. It is a continuous process since we modify our teaching as we come to learn more about our students, and in this way, it actually shades into evaluation – the means of establishing the effectiveness of a course.

By scrutinizing the definitions provided by the scholars, it can be stated that needs analysis, as a procedural process of identifying the language and context needs of the learners, should be followed through models and frameworks in order to obtain reliable and valid results. Some of

the models of needs analysis are target situation analysis, present situation analysis, Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model, and Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) model of needs analysis which will be presented in the following sections.

Target Situation Analysis

Target situation analysis refers to the contexts in which the learners have to realistically use the L2 they are learning. It is similar to the English as a second language (ESL) context in that the learners have different opportunities to make use of the L2 they have learned before. According to Robinson (1991), the target situation analysis focuses on what the needs of the learners will be at the end of the language course. Li (2014, p. 1870) states that "the target situation includes the language application information, communicative skills, and the cognition of the teaching objectives of the learners, working institutions and societies." This means that the target situation model of needs analysis has an overall view of the needs of the learners. In this regard, this model is in a similar vein to the one proposed by Munby (1978), namely communication needs processor. Munby's model emphasizes communication variables, such as topics, participants, and media. To summarize, the target situation analysis model of needs analysis deals with the target communicative needs of the learners.

Present Situation Analysis

The present situation analysis focuses on the present needs of the learners. According to Li (2014), present situation analysis is a way to address the gap between the present needs of the learners and the target ones. That said, according to Robinson (1991), present situation analysis focusses on the proficiency of the learners at the start of the program to address the needs in a step-wise manner. The learners' needs are obtained in this model through the information about the learners themselves and language teacher organizations. It can be stated that present situation analysis is similar to learner-centered needs analysis in that both of them emphasize the current status of the learners regarding different aspects of L2 learning. Finally, it should be noted that when the present situation model of needs analysis is concerned, learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, autonomous,

etc. will be considered as important issues (Li, 2014) to bridge what the EAP learners need at present with, simultaneously, what they should be prepared for their future real needs.

Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) Model

The needs analysis model proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) concentrates on a learning-centered approach toward needs analysis, meaning that the emphasis of the model is on the learning aspects(s) of the ESP and EAP learners. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divide the model into two dichotomies, encompassing target needs and learning needs. The three main concepts related to target needs are necessities, lacks, and wants. Li (2014) states that necessities are determined by what is demanded by the target situations. Addressing these necessary issues will help learners to use language effectively in the target situations. Moreover, lacks are the unknown issues existing between the necessities and the current proficiency. It can be stated that these lacks are the objective needs of the learners, which should be addressed through the curriculum and syllabus. Finally, wants are the other part of the target situation needs, which are about the subjective needs of the learners. These subjective needs are difficult to be perceived by the teachers of the courses or even curriculum designers, thus curriculum designers need to let the curriculum open for the educational agility of the teachers to obtain these needs. The second dichotomy of the learning-centered approach model of needs analysis proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) is the learning needs, including "learners' motivation of learning the language, the way they prefer to learn, the available resources, the time and place the course will take place and the learners' personal information" (Li, 2014, p. 1871). Addressing these needs in the EAP learning context is of utmost importance and should be in line with the target situation needs.

Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) Model of Needs Analysis

Another model of EAP and ESP needs analysis is the one proposed by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). The model was first proposed for the needs analysis of Business English courses. This model has different aspects, such as personal information about the learners, language

information about the target situation, learners' lacks, learners' needs from the course, language learning needs, and professional information about learners. Each of these aspects refers to a specific need associated with ESP and EAP learning. While, for instance, professional information about learners is about the learners' needs related to the target situation issues and objective needs, the personal information about the learners is about their background and their previous experiences. That said, the cultural background and learners' attitudes are regarded as important in obtaining the needs of the EAP and ESP learners. These needs are the correspondence of the subjective needs of the learners. Language learning needs are related to the methods and approaches needed to teach in ESP and EAP contexts. Obtaining these needs is very important since they let curriculum designers know how to teach the ESP and EAP concepts to suit the learners' needs. Based on this model, other needs, such as the learners' lacks should be addressed meticulously in order to establish a successful EAP and ESP program.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the needs of the students of the main majors of humanities and social sciences. Hence, the EAP learners' majors, educational levels, and general English proficiency levels were taken into consideration. The following research questions were then formulated:

1. What are the needs of EAP learners of humanities and social sciences from their perspectives and the EAP instructors' perspectives?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the needs of the EAP learners majoring in humanities and those majoring in social sciences?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences between the needs of the EAP learners at different educational levels, including BA, MA, and Ph.D.?
4. Are there any statistically significant differences between the needs of the EAP learners at different English proficiency levels, including elementary, intermediate, and advanced?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Settings

A total number of 114 EAP learners from different majors of humanities and social sciences were selected based on convenience sampling. From the total, 51 participants were students of humanities, including law, geography, history, accounting, Persian literature, and philosophy, and 63 of them were the students of different majors of social sciences, including educational psychology, sociology, economics, and management. These participants were selected from two state universities, namely Allameh Tabataba'i University and Shiraz University. Forty-eight of the participants were Ph.D. students, 40 were MA students, and 26 were BA students. Furthermore, the students' general English proficiency level was identified through self-uttered reports. Based on the reports, 71 students considered their general proficiency level as the elementary, 36 students claimed intermediate as their current general proficiency level, and, seven students asserted that their general English proficiency level was advanced at the time of conducting this study. To obtain reliable responses about the general English proficiency level of the participants, they were asked to state why they thought they were grouped under elementary, intermediate, or advanced. It was then found out that 95% of the participants' asserted levels were based on the proficiency levels English language institutes had already identified. The other 5% declared that they had taken part in English proficiency tests either at their university or at language institutes. On top of this, the students were asked whether or not they had passed a course in EAP. The responses obtained to this inquiry showed that not only all of the participants had passed a course in general English at their university, but also they passed or were passing a course in EAP at the time of doing this study.

Moreover, eight university instructors who were teaching EAP courses also participated in this study. These instructors hold a Ph.D. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and were teaching English for academic purposes. They had 3 to 10 years of EAP instruction experience. These EAP instructors were asked to write their narratives of the experiences they had in the EAP courses. The reason was to compare the EAP learners' perspectives with those of EAP instructors' regarding the

identified EAP learners' needs. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the participants in this study (EAP learners only).

Table 1: Background information about the participants

Discipline	Proficiency level	No. of Participants	Educational level	No. of Participants
Humanities	Elementary	35	BA	14
	Intermediate	13	MA	15
	Advanced	3	PhD	22
Social sciences	Elementary	36	BA	12
	Intermediate	23	MA	25
	Advanced	4	PhD	26
Total		114		114

Instrumentation

EAP Needs Analysis Questionnaire

To address the main purpose of the current study which was to analyze the EAP needs of the students majoring in humanities and social sciences, a multidimensional questionnaire analyzing the EAP learners' needs regarding language skills, language sub-skills, EAP materials, EAP assessment, educational EAP environment, and EAP learners' perception of their needs was developed. It is worth noting that there was also an open-ended question asking the respondents to mention whatever they considered important about running the EAP courses. Moreover, the main themes of the questionnaire were obtained through several sources. First of all, we have reviewed the related literature about EAP, and ESP needs analysis and obtained the main constructs, which can be influential in this regard. Then, we asked several EAP and ESP experts to prioritize the main themes. Furthermore, we went through the needs analysis models which have already discussed to direct the themes of the questionnaire in line to the target, present, learning-, and learner-centered needs. Based on the obtained results, we concluded that the questionnaire had to address six main issues including language skills, language sub-skills, EAP materials, EAP assessment, educational EAP environment, and EAP learners' perception of their needs. The questionnaire was in the form of a five-point Likert scale which was scored from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). However, it should be

stated that in some of the statements, 1 means (never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (always).

To validate the questionnaire, after developing different parts, the same EAP and ESP experts were asked to raise their opinions about the questionnaire and the necessary corrections were made. Moreover, the questionnaire was piloted once with 45 students in the humanities and social sciences for the matter of obtaining its overall and componential reliability. Conducting different Cronbach's Alphas, the overall reliability index was α=.72. Moreover, the componential Cronbach's Alpha was α=.72 for language skills, α=.78 for language sub-skills, α=.8 for EAP materials, α=.71 for EAP assessment, and α=.73 for educational EAP environment. The results of Cronbach's Alphas, both the overall and the componential ones, showed acceptable level of reliability. Consequently, the questionnaire was administrated to 114 students of humanities and social sciences as the participants of the main study.

Narratives Authored by the EAP Learners and EAP Instructors

Qualitizing the research studies which only use the questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection is considered as a very important issue (Dornyei, 2007) due to methodological issues that the questionnaires have in collecting valid and reliable data. To that end, the narrative inquiry was used in this study to collect qualitative data about the EAP learners' needs. Given that, the narratives authored by ten students who had already responded to the questionnaire were gathered. Moreover, to analyze the perspectives of the EAP instructors about the EAP learners' needs, the narratives authored by eight EAP instructors who were instructing EAP courses were also collected.

Narrative inquiry relies on the assumption that one's storytelling of his/her experiences will lead researchers to figure out the comprehensive details about individuals' experiences. According to De Fina (2015), there are two types of narrative inquiry, including biographical and interactionally oriented approaches. While the former, the biographically oriented approach, is "based on the premises that the process of identity building has as its objective the production of a coherent self and that the ability to create that coherence afforded by narrative has itself a positive effect on self-identity" (Freeman, 2015; as cited De Fina, 2015, p. 352), the latter, the

interactionally oriented approach considers self-development as a process with different interactions between the narrator and narrative analyst. It is highly important to note that the term identity construction here means how the individuals engage in a practice and imagine different aspects of an issue. It was believed that by asking the participants to write down their narratives of their experience during the EAP courses, they would provide the researchers with invaluable points about the needs they had in the past, or even would have in the future. That said since there were no interactions with the participants, or better to say no treatment was applied in the study, the participants were asked to write their biographical narratives about their experiences of the EAP courses that they participated in.

Data Analysis Procedure

In the current study, both types of quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used. In the first phase of the data analysis, the responses provided by the participants to the questionnaire items were analyzed using SPSS 24. The responses were analyzed in accordance with the attributes, such as the participants' disciplines and educational levels. The narratives, both the ones authored by the EAP instructors and those authored by EAP learners, were analyzed using a systematic approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). To obtain the main themes asserted by the participants who wrote their narratives, three coding levels of the systematic approach, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were followed. In the open coding, the major categories were identified in order to be broken into subcategories in the axial coding. Finally, the main themes were obtained in the selective coding based on the propositions and hypotheses. Table 2 indicates an example of the narrative analysis based on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach.

Table 2: An example of narrative analysis based on a systematic approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

Example 1	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
... during our EAP course, we were just instructed to translate, and translate, and translate ... I am not able to write my research abstract in English, let alone writing research in English ...	• Not paying attention to language skills • Teachers' one way to run the class	• Language skills and subskills • EAP teaching approaches, methods, and techniques	• EAP students need more instructions on language skills through related approaches

As can be seen in Table 2, this EAP student thinks that he needs the writing skill to be able to have research communication in his major. Moreover, through his narratives, he talks about his never-ending translating sessions, which indicates that he is not happy with the course. Furthermore, implicitly, this part of the narrative elucidates that the EAP instructor did not implement an appropriate approach to the instruction of EAP in the class.

RESULTS

The EAP Learners Needs: Responses to the Questionnaire

To answer the research questions of the present study and to obtain the overall EAP learners needs, the results of the EAP learners' needs analysis were categorized based on the learners' disciplines (either humanities or social sciences) educational levels (BA, MA, or Ph.D.), and language proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced). Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the responses provided by the EAP learners of humanities and social sciences about how the language skills are addressed in EAP courses. As can be seen, the mean scores of the two disciplines are very close to each other, showing that the needs of the EAP students of the two majors are the same in this regard. Table 3 also indicates that language skills, i.e., writing, speaking, and listening should be paid more attention compared with reading skill.

Table 3: EAP learners' responses to how skills are addressed in EAP courses: descriptive statistics

Skills	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std.
Listening skill	1	Paying attention to listening skill in EAP	Humanities	51	2.22	0.76
			Social science	63	2.21	0.74
	2	Paying attention to different listening materials related to EAP	Humanities	51	2.20	0.75
			Social sciences	63	2.22	0.75
	3	Paying attention to listening techniques to foster listening	Humanities	51	2.61	1.02
			Social sciences	63	2.60	1.01
	4	Paying attention to different listening practices	Humanities	51	2.39	1.02
			Social sciences	63	2.41	1.03
	5	Integrating listening with other skills	Humanities	51	2.39	1.02
			Social sciences	63	2.41	1.03
Speaking skill	6	Paying attention to speaking skill in EAP	Humanities	51	3.00	0.63
			Social sciences	63	3.00	0.62
	7	Paying attention to different speaking materials related to EAP	Humanities	51	2.80	0.98
			Social sciences	63	2.81	0.96
	8	Paying attention to speaking techniques to foster speaking	Humanities	51	2.22	0.99
			Social sciences	63	2.21	0.99
	9	Paying attention to different speaking practices	Humanities	51	2.59	1.00
			Social sciences	63	2.51	0.91
	10	Integrating speaking with other skills	Humanities	51	2.41	1.20
			Social sciences	63	2.40	1.20
Writing skill	11	Paying attention to writing skill in EAP	Humanities	51	2.41	1.20
			Social sciences	63	2.40	1.20
	12	Paying attention to different writing materials related to EAP	Humanities	51	2.20	1.17
			Social sciences	63	2.21	1.17
	13	Paying attention to writing techniques to foster writing	Humanities	51	2.39	1.02
			Social sciences	63	2.41	1.01
	14	Paying attention to different writing practices	Humanities	51	2.80	1.33
			Social sciences	63	2.79	1.31
	15	Integrating writing with other skills	Humanities	51	1.80	0.75
			Social sciences	63	1.79	0.74
Reading skill	16	Paying attention to reading skill in EAP	Humanities	51	3.76	0.50
			Social sciences	63	3.95	0.50
	17	Paying attention to different reading materials related to EAP	Humanities	51	4.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	3.90	0.50
	18	Paying attention to reading techniques to foster reading	Humanities	51	3.00	1.10
			Social sciences	63	4.02	1.08
	19	Paying attention to different reading practices	Humanities	51	3.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	3.40	0.49
	20	Integrating reading with other skills	Humanities	51	3.00	0.63
			Social sciences	63	3.02	0.63

The EAP learners' responses were also investigated regarding the two language sub-skills, including grammar and vocabulary. Table 4

indicates the results of the responses provided by the EAP learners. Table 4 shows that, overall, the EAP learners in both disciplines believed grammar and vocabulary were highly (mean score around 3.80) addressed in the EAP courses in terms of the time allocated to teaching grammar, grammatical practices, translating grammatical structure, finding specific grammatical points in the texts, teaching collocations, and addressing synonyms and antonyms. However, situational grammar is not paid due attention in their EAP courses (mean score around = 2.60). Situational grammar is conducive to situational communication, which is an inseparable part of disciplinary communication.

Table 4: EAP learners' responses to how sub-skills are addressed in EAP courses: Descriptive statistics

Sub-Skills	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std.
Sub-skills (Grammar and Vocabulary)	21	Paying attention to teach grammar	Humanities	51	3.00	0.63
			Social sciences	63	3.02	0.63
	22	Paying attention to teach situational grammar	Humanities	51	2.61	0.49
			Social sciences	63	2.59	0.50
	23	Paying very much time to teach grammar	Humanities	51	3.80	0.98
			Social sciences	63	3.93	0.98
	24	Doing different grammatical practices	Humanities	51	4.61	0.80
			Social sciences	63	3.72	0.79
	25	Translating grammatical structure	Humanities	51	3.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	3.65	0.40
	26	Focusing on scanning grammatical structures in the texts	Humanities	51	3.70	0.40
			Social sciences	63	3.91	0.41
	27	The way new vocabularies are taught	Humanities	51	3.00	.051
			Social sciences	63	3.00	.062
	28	Teaching disciplinary vocabulary	Humanities	51	3.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	3.38	0.49
	29	Teaching collocations	Humanities	51	3.00	0.89
			Social sciences	63	2.98	0.91
	30	Paying attention to the synonyms, antonyms, etc.	Humanities	51	3.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	3.38	0.49

The EAP learners were also asked about the EAP materials covered in their EAP courses. The responses provided by the EAP learners are

shown in Table 5. As can be seen, the respondents had repeated their responses regarding the inclusion of language skills in the EAP courses in that they believed that the EAP textbooks, as the main sources of EAP courses, did not include listening, speaking, and writing materials (overall mean score around = 2.2). However, they thought that the EAP textbooks pay the deserved attention to the reading skill. On top of this, the EAP learners asserted that the EAP textbooks did not pay attention to cultural issues (L1, L2, and international cultures). Finally, it was revealed that the EAP learners did not think that the EAP textbooks train them for international disciplinary communication (overall mean score around = 2.3).

Table 5: EAP learners' responses about EAP materials in EAP courses: Descriptive statistics

	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std. D.
EAP Materials	31	To what extent the listening materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	1.82	0.99
			Social sciences	63	1.76	0.98
	32	To what extent the speaking materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	1.82	0.77
			Social sciences	63	1.78	0.75
	33	To what extent the writing materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	2.78	0.76
			Social sciences	63	2.79	0.74
	34	To what extent the reading materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	3.59	0.80
			Social sciences	63	3.60	0.79
	35	To what extent the grammatical materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	3.00	1.10
			Social sciences	63	2.97	1.09
	36	To what extent the lexical materials used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	3.78	0.76
			Social sciences	63	3.79	0.74
	37	To what extent the cultural related materials (L1) used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	2.22	0.76
			Social sciences	63	2.21	0.74
	38	To what extent the cultural related materials (L2) used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	2.78	0.76
			Social sciences	63	2.78	0.75
	39	To what extent the cultural related materials (international) used in your textbooks?	Humanities	51	2.98	0.65
			Social sciences	63	3.00	0.62
	40	To what extent your EAP textbooks help you to have international communication in your discipline? (Conference, research writing)	Humanities	51	2.00	0.21
			Social sciences	63	2.00	0.16
	41	To what extent your EAP textbooks help you to have communication in the real world?	Humanities	51	2.98	0.91
			Social sciences	63	3.02	0.89

In another part of the questionnaire, the EAP learners' assessment needs were investigated. To that end, it was investigated how EAP courses assess language skills, language sub-skills, translation, and topical knowledge. Table 6 indicates that based on the responses provided by the EAP learners to the items, to a great extent, none of the language skills expect for the reading skill, was assessed in the EAP courses. Moreover, it can be seen that the language sub-skills, including grammar and vocabulary, are assessed in the EAP exams. Translation from Persian to English and vice versa, moreover, has the highest mean score (about 4.20), while assessing international communicative competence (the ability to communicate in international contexts through English) using the English language is rather low ($M = 2$). The EAP learners also declared that sometimes the topical knowledge of their majors was assessed in the EAP exams.

Table 6: EAP learners' responses about EAP assessment in EAP courses: Descriptive statistics

	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std. D.
EAP assessment	42	To what extent listening is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	2.01	1.50
			Social sciences	63	2.09	1.53
	43	To what extent speaking is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	2.22	1.17
			Social sciences	63	2.19	1.19
	44	To what extent writing is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	1.57	0.83
			Social sciences	63	1.62	0.79
	45	To what extent reading is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	4.20	1.33
			Social sciences	63	4.16	1.38
	46	To what extent grammar is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	4.00	1.10
			Social sciences	63	3.94	1.13
	47	To what extent vocabulary is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	3.78	0.42
			Social sciences	63	3.81	0.40
	48	To what extent translation is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	4.18	0.77
			Social sciences	63	4.21	0.74
	49	To what extent your competence to use language to communicate internationally is assessed?	Humanities	51	2.09	0.80
			Social sciences	63	2.00	0.81
	50	To what extent topical knowledge is assessed in EAP exams?	Humanities	51	2.39	0.80
			Social sciences	63	2.43	0.80

Furthermore, the EAP learners' responses about the educational EAP environments were examined through the questionnaire. The reason behind this section of the questionnaire was to inform the researchers of the types of interactions that happened in the EAP classes, the EAP teachers' use of materials other than the textbooks, and the use of technology in the classroom. Table 7 displays that the interaction types used in the EAP classrooms were mostly student-teacher interactions ($M = 2.80$), while the student-student and student-student-teacher interactions are rather low in the EAP classes. Moreover, Table 7 demonstrated that technologies are rarely used in the EAP classes ($M = 2.15$). However, when considering EAP teachers' use of materials other than the textbooks and topical knowledge in the EAP classrooms, it was shown that, based on the EAP learners' responses, sometimes the EAP teachers did so in their EAP classes.

Table 7: EAP learners' responses about EAP educational environment: Descriptive statistics

	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std. D.
Educational EAP environment	51	How is the student-teacher interaction in EAP classes?	Humanities	51	2.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	2.79	0.41
	52	How is the student-student interaction in EAP classes?	Humanities	51	1.80	0.75
			Social sciences	63	1.50	0.74
	53	How is the student-student-teacher interaction in EAP classes?	Humanities	51	2.00	0.68
			Social sciences	63	2.30	0.53
	54	How is the disciplinary knowledge of the EAP teacher?	Humanities	51	3.20	0.40
			Social sciences	63	3.19	0.40
	55	Does the teacher use other materials rather than the textbook?	Humanities	51	2.61	0.49
			Social sciences	63	2.62	0.49
	56	To what extent the teacher makes a connection between textbook concepts and the real world?	Humanities	51	3.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	3.41	0.50
	57	To what extent new technologies are used in the EAP classrooms?	Humanities	51	2.01	1.02
			Social sciences	63	2.17	1.06

Finally, the EAP learners' perception of their needs was investigated to see how they thought their EAP courses should be. The main goal of this section was to investigate why EAP learners need to participate in EAP courses. As Table 8 indicates, the EAP learners thought that they needed to develop all language skills in order to be able to read, write, listen, and

speak about the topical issues in their discipline (with an overall mean score higher than 4). They believed that the EAP courses should enable them to conduct studies and write research papers in their disciplines, earn a scholarship, and find a job.

Table 8: EAP learners' responses about their EAP needs: Descriptive statistics

	No. Q.	Questions	Discipline	N	Mean	Std. D.
EAP learners' perception of their needs	58	I need to learn EAP for reading primary sources.	Humanities	51	4.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	4.81	0.40
	59	I need to learn EAP for listening to primary sources.	Humanities	51	4.61	0.80
			Social sciences	63	4.62	0.79
	60	I need to learn EAP for writing academic papers.	Humanities	51	4.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	4.81	0.40
	61	I need to learn EAP for presenting at a conference, etc.	Humanities	51	4.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	4.81	0.40
	62	I need to learn EAP for communicating with researchers all around the world.	Humanities	51	4.80	0.40
			Social sciences	63	4.81	0.40
	63	I need to learn EAP to understand what is new in my discipline.	Humanities	51	5.00	0.35
			Social sciences	63	5.00	0.44
	64	I need to learn EAP for earning a scholarship.	Humanities	51	5.00	0.49
			Social sciences	63	5.00	0.36
	65	I need to learn EAP for taking part in IELTS and TOEFL, etc.	Humanities	51	4.39	0.49
			Social sciences	63	4.41	0.50
	66	I need to learn EAP for finding a job	Humanities	51	4.02	1.10
			Social sciences	63	3.94	1.13
	67	I need to learn EAP for enhancing my topical knowledge.	Humanities	51	4.61	0.49
			Social sciences	63	4.60	0.49

As it was stated earlier, one of the purposes of this study was to investigate whether or not the EAP needs of the students of humanities and social sciences are different. Given that and due to the frequency-based nature of the gathered data, a Mann-Whitney U was run. As can be seen in Table 9, there is no statistically significant difference between the English language needs of the EAP learners majoring in humanities and social sciences ($p > .05$) with regard to the six main themes of the study, including language skills, language sub-skills, EAP materials, EAP assessment, educational EAP environment, and EAP learners' perception of their needs.

Table 9: Investigating whether or not EAP learners' need in humanities and social sciences are different: Inferential statistics

Needs	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Language skills	1592.50	3628	-.086	.91
Language sub-skills	1606.00	2927	.000	.94
EAP materials	1584.50	2912	-.149	.87
EAP assessment	1581.50	2907	-.166	.74
EAP learners' perception of their needs	1586.00	3600	-.134	.69
educational EAP environment	1573.50	3596	-.158	.862

More importantly, it was investigated whether the needs of the EAP learners across different proficiency levels and different educational levels were different or not. To address these issues, two sets of Kruskal-Wallis Tests were run. As Table 10 indicates, there is no statistically significant difference between the English language needs of the EAP learners across different educational levels, including BA, MA, and Ph.D. ($p > .05$).

Table 10: Kruskal-Wallis Test results for the differences in EAP needs based on their educational levels

EAP Needs	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Language skills	.114	2	.939
Language sub-skills	.417	2	.835
EAP materials	.340	2	.831
EAP assessment	.124	2	.941
Learners' perception of their needs	.060	2	.971
Educational EAP environment	.376	2	.842

Kruskal-Wallis Test was also run in order to see the probable statistically significant differences between the EAP learners' needs across different language proficiency levels. As Table 11 shows, there is no statistically significant difference in the EAP needs of the EAP learners across different language proficiency levels ($p > .05$).

Table 11: Kruskal-Wallis Test results for the differences in EAP needs based on their language proficiency levels

EAP Needs	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Language skills	.677	2	.71
Language sub-skills	.047	2	.97
EAP materials	.904	2	.63
EAP assessment	.235	2	.88
Learners' perception of their needs	.885	2	.64
Educational EAP environment	.196	2	.90

Analysis of EAP Learners' Narratives

As it was stated earlier in this study, 10 EAP learners were asked to write some narratives of their experiences in the EAP classes. The main purpose of doing so was to elicit the needs of the EAP learners qualitatively. The narratives authored by these learners were then analyzed based on the systematic approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). As a result, four main themes were identified: teaching language skills are unbalanced, not paying attention to the jargon of global disciplinary communication, not instructing how to use language in academic situations, addressing the topical knowledge in the narratives.

The first theme was the fact that in the EAP courses, there was no balance in teaching the four skills. This led to EAP learners' inability to make use of language in their disciplines. In the following section, the extracts from two narratives show this theme.

Extract 1
   …I remember that I wanted to write a letter to the professor of my major who lives abroad, but I was not able to do so. The thing was that I know many vocabularies, but I was not able to put them together …
Extract 2
   …all I can remember about my EAP classes is a never-ending translation from English to Persian …. I cannot even speak a word about my major, but I am able to translate any texts like a professional translator …

Through the analysis of the narratives provided by the EAP learners, it came to be that most of these learners had the desire to communicate in their disciplines with the people of their field all around the world. They

believed that even though the EAP courses sought to make them competent in doing interactions, they were not successful in this regard. Through the course of analysis, it was understood from the narratives that the EAP courses failed to familiarize the EAP learners with the discourse of their disciplines. Hence, although some of the EAP learners believed that their EAP level of proficiency was advanced, they did not think they could run a meaningful communication in their disciplines. Extracts 3 and 4 show the related examples.

Extract 3
> … I believe in my speaking, reading, listening, and writing; however, the problem is something else. I know many specific and general words, and I can make sentences with them, but I do not know why I cannot identify the situation in which I speak …

Extract 4
> …EAP courses do not help us to be able to participate in different contexts… each context in our field needs its vocabularies, idioms [he wants to say discourse, but he does not know it] …

The analysis of the narratives written by the EAP learners disclosed that they thought the EAP courses needed to be a resemblance of what they wanted in the future. In other words, the EAP learners need to present their papers in international conferences, for example; therefore, they need to practice in a similar context before they do so in a real conference. Moreover, they need to publish their papers in international journals, so they need to practice their research writing under the supervision of their instructors. Extract 5 and 6 are some related examples.

Extract 5
> …I think the EAP courses need to have role plays on different academic affairs such as research writing, paper presentation, …

Extract 6
> …once one of my paper abstracts has been accepted to be presented at an English conference, but I did not attend the conference since I was afraid of not being able to present it … I wish there was a context in which I practiced for that …

Finally, the analysis of the narratives indicated that EAP learners thought that the EAP courses needed to take into account the topical knowledge of the discipline and that the EAP teachers should have the necessary expertise in the target subject matter (Extracts 7 & 8).

Extract 7
…sometime our EAP classes are the same as our general classes in that no trace of any topical issue is discussed in the class …
Extract 8
… if we know English well, and we be able to talk and write and read and listen, it is not enough since we need to do all those things about the subjects of our majors. Consequently, the EAP course should have specific topics as its core…

Analysis of the EAP Teachers' Narratives

To analyze the EAP learners' needs from the perspective of the EAP teachers, eight university instructors who were involved in instructing EAP courses in diffident majors of humanities and social sciences were requested to write their biographical narratives about their experience of EAP instruction and context. After thematic analysis, three main themes were extracted: paying attention to the four language skills, preparing communicatively based EAP materials, and allocating more time to EAP courses.

Through the analysis of narratives produced by the EAP instructors, it can be deciphered that they believed that the EAP learners need to develop their skills for academic purposes. By academic purposes, EAP instructors meant different academic venues, such as participating in a conference, symposiums or writing a research manuscript. It can be mentioned that, by academic purposes, one can refer to the community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which each EAP learner is involved based on his/her discipline. Extracts 9 and 10 are examples of EAP instructors' narratives.

Extract 9
…the EAP policy makers need to know that the EAP courses are not for developing students' general English, but it is to help them be able to join

the global trends of their discipline … one of my students wanted to write research, and he begged me to teach something in this regard, instead of the syllabus of the department …

Extract 10

… I think that the language skills should be taught by the EAP instructors in a way that prepares EAP learners to be able to use the skills for the specific purposes …

Communicative language teaching and learning is now the mainstream of language pedagogy, which assumes that L2 learners need to be able to use language to communicate. One of the English language needs of the EAP learners referred to in EAP instructors' narratives was preparing communicatively based EAP materials. Through the analysis of EAP instructors' narratives, it was revealed that EAP materials in the EAP courses are not communicative. Thus, communicative materials might be recognized as lacks for EAP learners in the instructors' view. Extract 11 and 12 show two examples in this regard.

Excerpt 11

… when our textbooks are just for reading skill, how I can teach my students to communicate in their disciplines …

Excerpt 12

The EAP learners need to be able to communicate through the English language and in their discipline … one of the ways to develop communicative abilities is to have communicative-based EAP textbooks …

The EAP instructors also asserted that the EAP learners need to be instructed more on EAP courses to develop their communicative abilities. In their narratives, the instructors declared that the current time allocated to EAP instruction is not sufficient. They also stated that expecting EAP learners to meet their English language needs during one semester and to join the target community of practice is not fair. Therefore, more time should be allocated to EAP courses and programs. Extracts 13 and 14 are examples of the instructors' view in this regard.

Extract 13

> … EAP course is just for one semester, and during the semester many of the sessions are red days … it is not possible to address many points during this short time …

Extract 14

> Last semester I tried to change my teaching methodology in my EAP classes to make it more communicative based, but I could not do so. The reason was that I could not cover the imposed syllabus, so I turned back the previous syllabus ….

DISCUSSION

This study was an attempt to analyze the needs of the EAP learners of humanities and social sciences at different educational levels (BA, MA, and Ph.D.) and with different English language proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced). Based on the findings, it was observed that the language skills development of the EAP learners (Table 3) was among the important needs of the EAP learners. The results also indicated that EAP courses were successful in addressing the language sub-skills, i.e., grammar and vocabulary (Table 4). However, it was revealed that the EAP materials were not suitable as far as EAP textbooks as the main EAP materials are concerned. Among the reasons why the textbooks were not suitable was the inadequacy of the inclusion of language skills, scientific-cultural issues, and topical knowledge (Table 5) in the EAP textbooks. Moreover, the findings showed that in the process of EAP assessment all language skills are not taken into consideration and that it is the reading skill which is the most highlighted skill in the exams (Table 6). The analysis of the EAP learners' needs also showed that not all interaction types, that is, student-teacher and student-student-teacher, occurred in EAP courses (Table 7). Furthermore, the analysis of the narratives authored by the EAP learners and EAP instructors indicated that EAP courses need to pay more attention to the teaching of language skills, providing a communicative venue for EAP learners to practice their disciplinary issues, and preparing communicative materials. The results of the current study are in line with the findings of Esmaeili (2016), Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), Esfandiari (2015), Khany and Tarlani-Aliabadi (2016), and Malmir and Bagheri (2019) regarding the EAP learners' needs. However, the results of this study did

not show any statistically significant difference when the EAP learners' disciplines (humanities or social sciences), educational levels, and language proficiency levels were also considered (Table 9, 10, and 11).

The findings of the present study showed that the EAP learners of humanities and social sciences need more instruction on language skills with more attention to writing, speaking, and listening. The importance of the inclusion of the four skills in the EAP courses across different disciplines is not a new result obtained just in this study; this issue has already been announced by the previous studies (e.g. Atai & Khazaee, 2014; Atai & Shoja, 2011; Khanjani, 2005; Shahini & Riazi, 2001). However, the important point which distinguishes the results of the current study from those obtained by the previous studies is the skill types. Previous studies showed that the reading skill was the most important need for EAP learners; however, through the obtained results of the present study, one can see that, now, writing and speaking and also listening are all important skills for EAP students to master. One explanation for such differences can be the fact that currently, academic interactions are among the most important purposes for university students. Academic interactions can happen through participating in scientific conferences or writing research papers, both of which require university students to have a good command of writing, speaking and listening beside the reading skill.

The results of the current study also indicated that the EAP materials are not in line with EAP learners' needs, that is, EAP textbooks' main focus is on the reading skill. This is in line with the results of the study by Atai and Nazari (2011) in that translating the words and sentences was considered as the most important skill for EAP learners. As stated before, since the reading skill used to be considered the most important skill in EAP programs, textbook designers have tried to include it in EAP textbooks. However, as Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) state, EAP textbooks are not in a way to address the needs of the EAP learners even when the reading topics are addressed. As it was revealed through the narratives authored by the EAP instructors and learners, EAP courses need to include more communicatively based materials. That said, the EAP textbooks need to address EAP learners' communicative competence in a way that they will be able to conduct disciplinary communications. One way to design

communicatively based EAP textbooks is to integrate the discourse of a specific discipline with communicative skills.

The findings of the study regarding EAP assessment showed that the reading skill along with the translation skill was frequently used in EAP exams. However, it was mentioned that EAP courses need to address all language skills as well as the communicative competence of the EAP learners. As for the interaction types, it was observed that there are not many interaction opportunities among the students and their teachers. This can be due to the lack of communicatively based EAP materials.

It is important to discuss the results of the current study which showed there were no statistically significant differences among the needs of the EAP learners with different educational levels and at different proficiency levels. Such results are at odds to some extent with those of Esfandiari (2015) and Shahini and Riazi (2001). One can state that during the current years, there was not an appropriate educational decision regarding teaching EAP at the universities. Given that, the problems and issues of EAP learners will be the same among different proficiency levels. For instance, the inability to developing communicative skills is an issue for BA intermediate students while, at the same time, it is an issue for Ph.D. intermediate students in the humanities and social sciences.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A number of conclusions can be drawn out of this study. First, the quantitative results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire indicated that the EAP courses need to pay more attention to writing, speaking, and listening skills as well as to address the community-specific social and cultural conventions through a communicative approach. Second, the qualitative themes obtained through the analysis of EAP learners' narratives proved the quantitative results. Besides, the analysis of EAP instructors' narratives indicated that in the instructors' point of view, all language skills are addressed communicatively to develop the EAP learners' ability to participate in real-life academic interactions. Thus, it can be concluded that EAP learners and instructors were of the same opinion regarding communicative needs.

One main conclusion over the results of the current study is that because of the changes in the needs of EAP learners, reconsideration of the

EAP curriculum of the country seems necessary. The universities, all around the world and in Iran, are on the transition from first and second generation to the third and fourth generation (Wissema, 2009), which requires new educational changes at many levels, including curriculum and materials development and teacher education. Moreover, once the only skill which was important for the EAP learners was reading, but it is now important for them to be competent in all language skills. Consequently, it is important to allocate much time to EAP courses compared to the previous decade. In this respect, the researchers believe that the EAP policy-makers and curriculum designers need to revisit the EAP programs with regard to the current conditions and needs.

Another conclusion is the inadequacy of the EAP materials in terms of the inclusion of the four language skills, and EAP textbooks, in particular, to help EAP learners be proficient EAP users. As Esfandiari (2015) mentioned, EAP textbook developers should "design relevant tasks to tap into the knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and translation" (p. 55). As Esfandiari (2015) reported, there is a program in process in SAMT (the center in Iran responsible for developing university textbooks) which tries to address the development of some strategies in the reading skill of the EAP learners. However, the researchers highly recommend that the language strategies should be addressed for all language skills if the EAP practitioners want an EAP program to be a successful one. The EAP policy-makers need to reconsider the EAP curriculum to develop the EAP learners' communicative competence to use English as an international language. To do so, the EAP policy-makers should focus on developing the EAP learners' language skills by communicatively based materials.

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