

Replacing EGP by ESP at Iranian Universities: Student and Faculty Perceptions

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Abstract

This paper reports the opinions and attitudes of university students and English instructors toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and ESP-related issues. In this study, a modified version of a questionnaire by Tsao (2011) was employed as the framework and as the only data collection instrument of enquiry. The results of this study revealed that: (1) students in general favor ESP more than English for general purposes (EGP) while teachers, in contrast, are more reserved about the idea of replacing general English education with ESP. (2) Although both faculty and students recognize the importance of ESP, neither considers students' English proficiency up to the level needed to cope with the ESP course requirements. The two parties alike agree that students need to have a satisfactory grounding in basic English skills before they advance to ESP learning. (3) Both parties agree that although ESP courses should differ from EGP in their objectives, materials and approaches, they should still focus on the training of language skills while integrating specialized terms and discipline content into the course. (4) While both parties agree that ESP instructors should possess English-teaching competency and subject content knowledge, there is a difference of opinions about whether English should be the only medium of instruction, to which the students give stronger support than the teachers. (5) Both parties are concerned over the potential problems facing ESP, including shortage of qualified teachers, limited hours of instruction, lack of opportunities to apply English in daily life and the workplace, and the possibility of ESP courses being limited to the learning of specific lexicon and the translation of content-specific texts. Based on the findings, this paper provided some pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: perceptions, attitudes, EGP, ESP

INTRODUCTION

Due to the globalization of trade and economic, and the continuing increase of international communication in various fields, especially in countries where English is

taught as a foreign language, the demand for English is growing (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). As English is increasingly accepted as the lingua franca in different areas of profession, most English learners would like to learn the language specifically in their particular fields. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in this regard believe that "As English became the accepted international language of technology and commerce it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language" (p.6). This is why many universities in Iran, in response to the great demand for English in academic, vocational, and professional contexts, are offering ESP courses. Doing so, they attempt to meet the global trend in addition to meeting students' future career needs. Therefore, these demands and requirements have recently resulted in the expansion of one aspect of English language learning, namely the learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Any ESP course, within this approach, should follow a strategy of predetermined objectives which are set based on a needs analysis with the aim of identifying the reason for which students are requiring the foreign language. This strategy in turn, especially, helps to determine what accurately it is that students have to achieve through the learning of that language (Richards, 2001; Robinson, 1991; Chen, 2006).

The demand for ESP has also led some higher education authorities and administrators in Iran to claim that ESP should replace EGP. In fact, English for General Purposes (EGP) -the long-existing practice of English language teaching in Iranian universities- has become the mainstream of college English education. The rationale behind their claim is presumably that EGP could be utilized as the basic language learning to be studied before college, but it is not proper for college level students. According to these people, college English is required to be more advanced and specialized, and match students' majors of study, particularly in technological universities where students are trained to perform on-the-job. Accordingly, one can find that the current English course is more related to General English needs than technical requirements and, therefore, more removed from the students' needs. This indicates that designing a course for those students is an urgent need.

Students' overall English proficiency is generally believed to be an indicator of the success or failure of English education. English is, therefore, a required course for the university students in Iran. All B.A and B.Sc. students, except English majors, pass a course of three credits in general English, which according to Ghonsooly and Pishghadam (2007) does not seem to be much useful and interesting for students. Unfortunately, many of the students relying only on English courses presented at the universities, are not well-prepared for the specific English course - usually a two-credit ESP course- in their field of study and do not develop the ability to communicate effectively in English. Those who decide to continue their studies and take the M.A. or M.Sc. entrance exams are nearly unable to take the English part of the test, based on the current English courses presented in the universities. Zohrabi (2005), in this regard, complains that there are obvious shortcomings in the General English courses in Iran due to which most of the university students are unable to comprehend specialist texts.

Since the merit of EGP has been questioned, a shift from EGP to the more focused and career-oriented ESP seems worth an attempt.

In addition, the learners' present deficiency in English which is mostly related to the EGP methodology, needs to be discovered so as to direct the learners into appropriate training programs. Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) refers to learners' wants; that is, what the learner feels he or she wants. Learners' wants are determined by their own perceptions. In other words, the learner might have some background knowledge of their needs. Therefore, needs are determined by learners in LSA (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). However, identification of the needs calls for a systematic way namely the needs analysis/assessment that was introduced into language teaching through the ESP movement. The investigation of the students and faculty perceptions about ESP is an important element of the need analysis which seems a priority before replacing EGP by ESP at Iranian universities. Thus, analyzing the students and faculty perception is necessary to make a conclusion, and possibly, determine if English for Specific Purposes has the required elements to operate. Thus, this study was undertaken to investigate how English faculty and students perceive ESP courses in an EFL setting. This was done by taking technological university students in Iran as a case of investigation, to compare and contrast teacher-student perceptions while obtaining answers to the following questions:

1. What are the EFL students' attitudes towards the replacement of EGP by ESP?
2. What are the EFL teachers' attitudes towards the idea of EGP replaced by ESP in Iran?
3. Is there any significant difference between students' and teachers' attitudes towards replacement of EGP by ESP?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Even though the perceptions and attitude of the teachers and students to detect the most beneficial course is of utmost importance, the role which textbooks as the major educational materials play should not be over looked. In this regard, Dahmardeh (2010) based on an explanatory case study revealed that there are many inconsistencies between the learners' needs and the textbooks that are available for learning and teaching the English language even though a few of them are reliable. Also, it was emphasized that the current EGP textbooks are not designed based on any curriculum at all and the national curriculum has been recently developed.

Regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of ESP courses, Shen (2009) investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of ESP courses and found that students' low English language competence and ESP teachers' experiences were the factors affecting the effectiveness of ESP courses. In approaching the subject of ESP courses and student and faculty perception, it is evident from the related research that there is sometimes a lack of consistency in how ESP is evaluated. Given this it is not surprising that there could also be a lack of congruence found between the perceptions of faculty or students regarding the nature and facilitation of ESP courses.

Tsao, Wei, and Fang (2008) reported on a survey study of 354 students and 23 instructors in a selected technological university in Taiwan about their opinions and attitudes toward English for Specific Purposes and ESP-related issues. The instrument used for the survey was a self-made questionnaire based on literature review and a pilot test. The results of this study revealed that students in general favor ESP more than EGP (English for general purposes) while teachers, in contrast, are more reserved about the idea of replacing general English education with ESP.

Tsao (2011) carried out a study which surveyed 351 students' and 23 university instructors' attitudes toward ESP. The results showed that teachers and students had different views about the effectiveness of an ESP course. Students considered their needs, their learning capacity, and their learning motivation as the top-ranking factors. In contrast, the teachers emphasized the importance of the course itself, placing teaching materials and methods as the top concerns, and course objectives and student needs the second.

With regard to the significance of faculty and students' perceptions about the replacement of EGP by ESP as investigated in many studies including Tsao (2008, 2011), it seems that Iranian ESP context calls for an investigation into the perceptions of Iranian university students and faculty members. This study is a response to such a call.

METHOD

Participants

Two groups of participants were involved in this study, students and teachers, to seek their perceptions regarding the replacement of EGP by ESP.

Student Participants

The targeted student population in this study was the students who studied in the academic year 2013-2014 in Isfahan University, Iran. There were 120 engineering university students who were chosen based on stratified sampling -a sampling technique in which the entire population is divided into groups and a random sample of these groups is selected to make sure that the sample is representative of the larger population under study (Gall, Borg & Gall, 2003).

Teacher Participants

The second group involved 15 English teachers who were teaching English to the engineering students for at least three years. The teachers' perceptions were collected through a questionnaire. The purpose of the teacher questionnaire was to collect quantitative data concerning teachers' teaching experience, feedback practice as well as their perceptions and views regarding the current EGP courses and whether they should be replaced with ESP courses.

Materials and Instruments

In this study, a questionnaire was used as the data collection instruments of enquiry. A modified version of a questionnaire by Tsao (2011) was employed as the framework for this study. Since the mentioned questionnaire was utilized for the students of Fooyin University- a technological university in Taiwan- it was necessary to change the general format and some questions based on the requirements of Iranian context.

Thus, a pilot survey was conducted on 15 students and 5 English teachers before it was edited into the present format, which consists of three sections: three questions on the subjects' background information; 21 questions that probe into the subjects' attitudes toward ESP instruction, with responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", and one multiple-choice question concerning the most important factors for the success of ESP. The 21 questions in part two were further broken down into four sub-sections, with 6 questions inquiring about how students and faculty view ESP as compared with EGP, 7 about whether students are ready for ESP instruction, 4 about what is required of ESP courses, and the last 4 about the potential problems facing ESP. To make sure that students understand the items in the questionnaire, and to eliminate ambiguity, students' native language (Persian) was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire turned out to be 0.83, indicating that the scale measured responses with satisfactory internal consistency and accuracy. Finally, it was concluded that all the questions except one were reliable and valid and that based on the results of the pilot study the questionnaire could be replicated in our country. Thus, 20 chosen items were administered to the participants of both groups of students and teachers in line with other parts of the questionnaire.

Procedures

The teachers' questionnaires were given to them in person. A total of 17 questionnaires were distributed, and 15 returned. The survey to the students was also administered by the researchers. In order to make sure that students understand the items in the questionnaire, and to eliminate ambiguity, students' native language (Persian) was used. They had enough time to answer slowly, deliberately and honestly to the questions. Once they finished answering the questionnaires, they were requested to check their responses for incompleteness or missing answers. The researchers gathered the prints of the students after about half an hour, and the questionnaires of the teachers after a week.

RESULTS

To answer the research questions, both students' perceptions and teachers' perceptions were coded and analyzed. As the first step, the first six items of the questionnaire were first scrutinized to seek the answers for the three main questions of the study. There were also four other sections which addressed different issues based on the gathered information from the faculty and students' ideas and answers to the questionnaire regarding ESP.

What are the EFL students' attitudes towards the replacement of EGP by ESP?

Based on the results, compared to EGP, ESP is obviously more appealing for the students according to Table 1. As can be seen from this table, 81.66 percentage of the whole population (including those who agreed and strongly agreed) agreed with changing EGP with ESP. Actually, they agreed with a respectively high level of assurance. Regarding other respondents, as much as 7.49% of them were found to be in disagreement position towards replacing EGP with ESP, the sum of which was even less than that of respondents who were unsure (10.83%).

Table 1. ESP vs. EGP (N=120 for Students)

Participants	Responses on a Likert Scale								Mean		
	1= Strongly Disagree		2= Disagree		3= neutral		4= Agree			5= Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
1. ESP should replace EGP to become the core of English teaching at vocational universities.	S	5 4.16	4 3.33	13 10.83	34 28.33	64 53.33				4.23	
2. Compared with EGP, ESP has more specific goals.	S	11 9.16	17 14.16	15 12.50	21 17.50	56 46.66				3.78	
3. Tailor-made ESP courses should be offered to students of various majors.	S	18 15.00	24 20.00	36 30.00	23 19.16	19 15.83				2.95	
4. ESP courses help enhance students' employment competitiveness.	S	8 6.66	12 10.00	28 23.33	41 34.16	31 25.83				3.69	
5. ESP is more effective than EGP in improving students' learning efficacy.	S	16 13.33	15 12.50	33 27.50	28 23.33	28 23.33				3.30	
6. ESP is more effective than EGP in increasing students' learning motivation.	S	7 5.83	29 24.16	28 23.33	20 16.66	36 30.00				3.73	

*p< .05 Responses on the Likert scale: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=unsure, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, S = students; F=frequency, M=mean

Regarding the second item of the questionnaire, the students also showed that they think ESP has more specific goals compared with EGP. As it has been shown in table 4.1, as much as 64.16 % (including those who agreed and strongly agreed) of respondents found ESP to be more specific than EGP while the same percentage for respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed was amounted to 23.32%. 15 out of the total 120 students were not sure about the matter.

The third item of the questionnaire was the only point to which the answers of the students were different. When they were presented with the statement "tailor-made ESP courses should be offered to students of various majors", just 34.99% of the respondent strongly agreed or agreed while 30.00% were unsure and the other 35.00% remaining respondents disagreed (including those who agreed and strongly agreed). This difference in the respondents' ideas toward item 3 could be attributed to their lack of knowledge about different types of ESP courses and whether ESP courses were successful in other similar situations. Thus, the students were mostly dubious in answering this item.

The total number of the student respondent who agreed or strongly agreed with item 4 was 72 amounting to 59.99 % of the total respondent. Then in the second place comes the unsure answers (23.33%). The third place is for disagreed students (16.66%). It means that most of the students believe that ESP courses enhance students' employment competitiveness. This item also revealed one of the expectations they like ESP to bring for them which is helping them in gaining the knowledge for their future job skills. This can be regarded as one of the factors motivating them to put high level of importance to ESP courses compared to EGP.

In responses to the fifth item, nearly most of respondents understood that ESP is more effective than EGP (46.66%), few of the whole respondents had a negative idea towards the statement (25.8%). The percentage of students who were dubious towards this item amounted to (27.5%).

Students' ideas regarding ESP is more effective than EGP in increasing students' learning motivation are investigated in item 6. Although based on the results to this item, the number of students who believed that ESP is more effective was less than half of the whole respondents (46.66%), the percentage of the respondents who had a negative idea was not also very high (29.99%). That means that they believe that ESP and motivation go hand in hand in improving the students' learning potentials.

Therefore, the results gained based on the answers of the student participants to items 1-6 were expressive of the fact that they have a good idea towards the nature of ESP, this leads to the fact that they approve the educational implications of ESP for their future success. Based on the findings depicted through Table1, it can be said that Iranian university EFL students do not view ESP as the same as EGP, since throughout the items of the questionnaire ESP proved to be different than EGP from students' view point. All in all, students of this study were mostly proponents of ESP in that they thought it has a positive impact on different aspects of EFL learning.

What are the EFL teachers' attitudes towards the idea of EGP replaced by ESP in Iran?

Taking an overall look at the results obtained from the answers of teachers, one can understand that these responses mostly support the notion of ESP and put more

emphasis on it in comparison with EGP courses. This was in line regarding the findings from the students' perception towards ESP.

Table 2. ESP vs. EGP (N=15 for Teachers)

Item no.	Participants	Responses on a Likert Scale										Mean
		1		2		3		4		5		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1.	T	2	13.33	2	13.33	3	20.00	5	33.33	3	20.00	3.33
2.	T	--	--	--	--	1	6.66	2	13.33	12	80.00	4.73
3.	T	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	20.00	12	80.00	4.80
4.	T	--	--	--	--	1	6.66	4	26.66	10	66.66	4.53
5.	T	--	--	--	--	1	6.66	5	33.33	9	60.00	4.46
6.	T	--	--	1	6.66	--	--	5	33.33	9	60.00	4.40

Responses on the Likert scale: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=unsure, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree; T = teachers, F=frequency, M=mean

In responses to item 1, most of the respondents including those who agreed and strongly agreed (53.33%), understood that ESP should replace EGP to become the core of English teaching at vocational universities. Even though the results represented a high rate of agreement, the percentage of respondents who disagreed and who were dubious about this item was not low. There were four out of fifteen teachers (26.66%) who disagreed and three others who were unsure about this item (20.00%).

Regarding the second and third items of the questionnaire, the teachers also showed that they think ESP has more specific goals compared with EGP and that "tailor-made ESP courses should be offered to students of various majors". As it has been shown in table 4.2, all but one respondent (including those who agreed and strongly agreed) found ESP to agree while just one of them was unsure about the second item.

The same story happened for the answers obtained from the teachers to item 4. The total number of the teacher respondent who agreed or strongly agreed with item 4 was 14 amounting to 93.03 % of the total respondents. The only difference was that one of them was unsure about the matter. It means that nearly all of the teachers believe that ESP courses enhance students' employment competitiveness.

The fifth and the sixth items of the questionnaire sought the ideas of the respondents to whether or not ESP is more effective than EGP in improving students' learning efficacy and motivation. In responses to these items, nearly all of respondents understood that ESP is more effective than EGP (93.33%), leaving out one respondent who was dubious and the other who had a negative idea towards these statements.

According to Table 2, the gained results based on the answers of the teacher participants to items 1-6 were again expressive of the fact that they have a good idea towards the nature of ESP, this leads to the fact that they approve the educational implications of ESP for the future success of their students. Thus, it can be said that Iranian university EFL teachers, in response to the second question, do not view ESP as

the same as EGP since throughout the items of the questionnaire ESP was positively confirmed from teachers' view point.

Is there any significant difference between students' and teachers' attitudes towards replacement of EGP by ESP?

With respect to the descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean) shown in Tables 1 and 2, it was first concluded that both parties regarded ESP as different from EGP and they put more emphases on ESP courses for different mentioned reasons. But the findings of the study should be tested more precisely to answer the third question. To do so, independent samples t-tests were run on the obtained data from teachers and students. The results of the independent samples t-tests are presented in Table 3. The observed t-value of these tests can be seen as the last column of the category and the level of significance was set at 0.05.

Based on the results, compared with EGP, ESP is obviously more appealing for both the students and the faculty according to Table 3. Both parties are quite consistent in their responses to items 2, 4, 5, and 6 of the questionnaire (observed t values are 1.24, 0.85, 0.82, and 0.74 respectively, none reaching the significant level of $p < 0.05$). More participants agreed than disagreed that ESP is superior to EGP in such aspects as having more specific goals, being more effective in promoting students' learning motivation, learning efficacy, and employment competitiveness. Although the participants of the two groups were congruent regarding their perceptions towards ESP, significant differences between the two parties were found in items 1 and 3. Regarding item 1, when asked whether ESP should replace EGP to become the mainstream of university English education, there was not a high level of agreement between the two parties.

Table 3. ESP vs. EGP (N=120 for Ss; 15 for Ts)

		Responses on a Likert Scale					Mean	t
		1	2	3	4	5		
		F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		
1. ESP should replace EGP to become the core of English teaching at vocational universities.	S	5 4.16	4 3.33	13 10.83	34 28.33	64 53.33	4.23	2.96*
	T	2 13.33	2 13.33	3 20.00	5 33.33	3 20.00	3.33	
2. Compared with EGP, ESP has more specific goals.	S	11 9.16	17 14.16	15 12.5	21 17.5	56 46.66	3.78	1.24
	T	-- --	-- --	1 6.66	2 13.33	12 80.00	4.73	
3. Tailor-made ESP courses should be offered to students of various majors.	S	18 15.00	24 20.00	36 30.00	23 19.16	19 15.83	2.95	2.83*
	T	-- --	-- --	-- --	3 20.00	12 80.00	4.80	

4. ESP courses help enhance students' employment competitiveness.	S	8 6.66	12 10.00	28 23.33	41 34.16	31 25.83	3.69	0.85
	T	-- --	-- --	1 6.66	4 26.66	10 66.66	4.53	
5. ESP is more effective than EGP in improving students' learning efficacy.	S	16 13.33	15 12.5	33 27.5	28 23.33	28 23.33	3.30	0.82
	T	-- --	-- --	1 6.66	5 33.33	9 60.00	4.46	
6. ESP is more effective than EGP in increasing students' learning motivation.	S	7 5.83	29 24.16	28 23.33	20 16.66	36 30.00	3.73	0.74
	T	-- --	1 6.66	-- --	5 33.33	9 60.00	4.4	

While the students agreed with a respectively high level of assurance (81.66 %, including those who agreed and strongly agreed), the percentage of the teacher respondents was 53.33%. There were also fewer students who disagreed (7.49%) in comparison with those teachers who disagreed (26.66%). The result, with a significant difference (observed $t=2.96$ $p<.05$), implies that students in general favor ESP more than EGP while teachers hold a much more dubious attitude toward ESP becoming the core of English teaching at the tertiary level (20.00%). A possible explanation for this discrepancy of opinions between the two parties is that students are not satisfied with the existing EGP instruction and hope for a change, while teachers either consider EGP a foundation for ESP or do not think such a substitution would definitely lead to a better result.

However, the significant discrepancy of opinions in item 3 depicts a different story (observed $t=2.83$ $p<.05$). The means of 2.95 for students and 4.80 for teachers suggest that although both agree that tailor made ESP courses should be offered to meet the needs of different departments, students are much unsure than teachers. To put it in a nutshell, the teachers in contrast to the students, advocate ESP instruction to the extent of substituting it for EGP. This difference, as mentioned before, may also be attributed to the lack of knowledge of the students about the real benefits of ESP courses compared to the experienced EFL teachers.

Besides the above mentioned issues, the study in hand following the framework adapted from Tsao (2011) tried to find plausible answers to the following matters in the context of Iran.

Are Technological University Students Ready for ESP?

As can be seen in Table4, neither the students nor the teachers have confidence in students' readiness for ESP instruction. The students consider themselves not competent enough to handle ESP learning, and the teachers feel exactly the same ($M=3.34$ and 3.13 respectively in item 10. The reasons lie in the students' lack of adequate fundamental English ability and lack of sufficient vocabulary, about which the

teachers are even more affirmative than the students. As for the difficulty of ESP learning, there exists an agreement of opinions between the two parties. Teachers generally thought that “ESP is harder and more challenging than EGP”, most of the students were the same regarding their responses.

Table 4. Are students ready for ESP (N=120 for Ss; 15 for Ts)

	Participants	Responses on a Likert Scale					Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
		F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
7. Students are very weak in English foundation.	S	8 6.66	16 13.33	28 23.33	16 13.33	52 43.33	3.73
	T	-- --	1 6.66	1 6.66	4 26.66	9 60.00	4.4
8. Students are very weak in English vocabulary.	S	4 3.33	12 10	41 34.16	23 19.16	40 33.33	3.69
	T	1 6.66	-- --	1 6.66	4 26.66	9 60.00	4.33
9. With little English vocabulary, I don't think I (students) can learn ESP well.	S	8 6.66	21 17.5	15 12.5	32 26.66	40 33.33	3.25
	T	5 33.33	1 6.66	1 6.66	5 33.33	3 20.00	3.00
10. My English (students) ability is not good enough to handle ESP course requirements.	S	27 22.5	13 10.83	12 10.00	28 23.33	40 33.33	3.34
	T	3 20	4 26.66	-- --	4 26.66	4 26.66	3.13
11. Students need to have a satisfactory grounding in Basic English skills before they advance to ESP learning.	S	4 3.33	20 16.66	33 27.5	31 25.83	32 26.66	3.55
	T	2 13.33	2 13.33	2 13.33	1 6.66	8 53.33	3.53
12. ESP learning is harder and more demanding than EGP learning.	S	4 3.33	22 18.33	12 10.00	37 30.83	39 32.50	3.55
	T	3 20.00	3 20.00	-- --	2 13.33	7 46.66	3.46

Although 10.00% of the students were indecisive, as much as 63.33 agreed and the remaining disagreed. Indeed, it is not easy to decide which is harder, because ESP and EGP are equally difficult to master for most students in Iran.

What Is Required of ESP Instruction?

Most of the respondents from the two groups (46.66% of the students and 66.66% of the teachers), according to Table5, agreed that ESP teaching should focus on language training while integrating terminology and discipline content into the course to meet the learners' specific needs. The majority of either group also support the statement

that ESP should differ from EGP in its objectives, teaching materials, and teaching approaches. According to the statistics, 46.66% of the student respondents agreed on the use of English as the only medium of instruction, while only 26.66% of the surveyed teachers did.

For item 15, the great majority of the respondents from both groups agree that ESP instructors should possess both English-teaching competency and subject content knowledge. Apparently, many teachers (46.66%) would resort to bilingual teaching or even speak more Persian than English in the ESP classroom. The reasons is that most of the English teachers in Iran think that the students' English ability is too inadequate to benefit from an "English-only" instruction, as observed by the researchers of this study.

Table 5. What is required of ESP instruction (N=120 for Ss; 15 for Ts)

	Participants	Responses on a Likert Scale					Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
		F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
13. The focus of ESP teaching should be placed on language training, while integrating specialized content into the course.	S	16 13.33	23 19.16	25 20.83	24 20.00	32 26.66	3.29
	T	-- --	3 20.00	2 13.33	3 20.00	7 46.66	3.93
14. English should be the only medium of instruction for ESP courses.	S	11 9.16	9 7.50	44 36.66	36 30.00	20 16.66	3.39
	T	2 13.33	5 33.33	4 26.66	1 6.66	3 20.00	2.66
15. ESP instructors should possess both English-teaching competency and content-specific knowledge.	S	8 6.66	16 13.33	20 16.66	37 30.83	39 32.50	3.69
	T	1 6.66	-- --	2 13.33	-- --	12 80.00	4.46
16. ESP should differ from EGP in its goal, teaching material, and approach.	S	19 15.63	17 14.16	12 10.00	20 16.66	52 43.33	3.57
	T	-- --	-- --	3 20.00	1 6.66	11 73.33	4.33

What Are the Potential Problems Facing ESP?

As displayed in Table 6, an overwhelming majority of the students and the teachers alike agree that limited hours of instruction and lack of opportunities to apply English will diminish the effects of ESP instruction, although the teachers feel much more strongly than the students in both cases. The two parties also generally agree that lack of qualified teachers is an urgent problem of ESP (item 20). When asked if ESP courses

are likely to become limited to the learning of specific lexicon and the translation of content-specific texts, over half of the participants from the two groups (62.49% of the students and 53.33% of the teachers) gave positive responses, a result making the future of ESP rather pessimistic. In summary, unless the problems affecting the development of ESP education are addressed, little can be expected of the future of ESP.

Table 6. Potential problems of ESP courses (N=120 for Ss; 15 for Ts)

	Participants	Responses on a Likert Scale					Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
		F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
17. Lack of opportunities to use English in daily life or the workplace will debilitate the effects of ESP instruction.	S	9 7.50	25 20.83	8 6.66	32 26.66	48 40.00	3.55
	T	1 6.66	-- --	3 20.00	2 13.33	9 60.00	4.20
18. ESP courses are likely to become the teaching of specific lexicon and the translation of specialized texts.	S	4 3.33	8 6.66	33 27.50	35 29.16	40 33.33	3.70
	T	1 6.66	-- --	6 40.00	-- --	8 53.33	3.93
19. Limited hours of instruction may weaken the effects of ESP instruction.	S	8 6.66	20 16.66	20 16.66	35 29.16	37 30.83	3.60
	T	-- --	-- --	4 26.66	2 13.33	9 60.00	4.33
20. Shortage of qualified teachers is a potential problem for ESP.	S	9 7.50	11 9.16	27 22.50	29 24.16	44 36.66	3.73
	T	-- --	-- --	1 6.66	2 13.33	13 86.66	4.86

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above findings of the study are in line with some previous research, for instance Tsao (2011) and Tsao, Wei, and Fang (2008), in which there was consistency regarding the responses of teachers and students. As a conclusion and with regard to the main points that have been previously mentioned, it is important to notice that ESP is a strong movement which has imposed its influence all over the world, but still there are many things to do for its future development. This perspective of expansion presupposes that there must be a constant improvement of better or suitable programs and courses, of effective teaching, and of serious analysis of students' needs.

First, if we consider the students, we can see that they express an urging demand of English with varied forms. For these students, learning English is strictly for a utilitarian objective. In addition, the third and fourth year engineering students are the suitable example of students who have experienced the whole process of English training with all its positive and negative implications. They are aware enough to formulate and to

justify this demand of English. We can notice that dissatisfaction of EGP courses has been expressed by most of these students.

In order to allow the English language gain the specific status it has today, the ESP teacher must be aware of his or her own role in the teaching-learning process. This is why he or she should actively take the opinions and ideas of the students into consideration. If the comments and suggestions of the technological students are seriously taken into account, they may help improve ESP teaching/learning in our country.

This study is limited in several respects. First, its participants (students and teachers) were drawn from the same university, i.e. Esfahan state university, and therefore its results may not be generalized well to other educational settings or other population with different backgrounds. Future research involving a larger sample across the nation would help validate the findings of this study. Another limitation of this study concerns its methodological design -only a questionnaire survey was adopted to collect research data. Other types of survey instruments, such as individual or focus group interviews, should be included in further studies to obtain more in-depth information pertaining to the issues researched. Finally, the list of items in the questionnaire of this study is by no means adequate and complete; it is subject to further confirmation and modification through more empirical studies.

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