

Iranian English Major vs. Subject-matter ESP Teachers' Beliefs and Instructional Practices in ESP Classes: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: Since the advent of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), plenty of controversial issues have been raised in the academic circles all over the world. As we know, one controversial aspects of ESP domain deals with the significant role of the teacher variable. In the present study, the investigators intended to compare and contrast Iranian English major ESP instructors with their subject-matter counterparts in terms of their beliefs and classroom practices in ESP classes. A total of 423 Iranian English major (ELT) and subject-matter ESP teachers participated in the study. The results revealed that theoretically a large and wide gap exists between English major and subject-matter ESP teachers while practically this difference is very slight.

Key words: ESP, Classroom activities, Teachers' beliefs

Introduction

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (TESP) has been considered a separate undertaking from English language teaching. Dudley-Evans and ST John (1998) coined the term "practitioner" for ESP teachers since, they believe, many pivotal roles such as course designers, materials developers, researchers, evaluators, and classroom teachers should be taken on by an ESP instructor. Bell (1981) believes that every language teaching program comprises three stages of input, process, and output; therefore, it is essential for an ESP teacher to have several roles which require both content and formal schema knowledge in a particular field of science.

Since its infancy, many controversial issues have been raised to maintain whether the EFL teacher or the subject-matter in the field has the right to teach an ESP course. Some argue that ESP teachers are expected to have sufficient knowledge in content areas as well and be able to elicit knowledge from students. Generally, ELT teachers are linguistically superior over content or subject matter ESP teachers, but they may not be efficiently equipped with specific background knowledge of their learners' specialist academic disciplines. Moreover, there are other scholars who claim that ESP teaching is part and parcel of an English language teacher's career and that it is therefore their responsibility to design or teach such courses. However, we cannot neglect the fact that ESP teaching should focus on procedures appropriate for learners whose main goal is learning English for a purpose other than just learning the language system itself. Therefore, it is believed that for some basic aspects of its teaching, ESP has developed its own specific methodology and its research draws on research from various disciplines in addition to applied linguistics-- this may be the key feature which clearly characterizes ESP.

Undoubtedly, the recent development in nations' political, cultural, social, athletic, business, touristic, and economic ties as well as the recent increase in ESP publications (textbooks or papers), conference presentations, professional and academic gatherings, invited lectures, and on-line workshops highlight the fact that ESP has gained a significant place not only among academic circles but also it has gained the shape of a "New Industry" in the 21st century. Unfortunately, ESP programs in Iranian academic settings do not seem to sufficiently help the students acquire the kind of knowledge and skill they need whether inside or outside the class. Lack of sufficient ability to utilize their ESP knowledge efficiently, to communicate with their foreign counterparts, to participate in international

conferences, or to utilize ESP for target situations all manifest the inappropriateness of ESP instruction in Iranian academic circles. In other words, despite the amount of time and energy spent, the learners fail to achieve the desired goals in ESP classes in Iran. This might be the output of a number of influential factors such as poor methodology, needs analysis, materials, curriculum, goal settings, beliefs and attitudes, policy making, and so forth.

Despite the fact that materials and methodology are extremely important in any instructional program, it seems that the focal point in the teaching context is the teacher variable. Much has been said in the literature about the concept of authenticity in ESP programs, i.e. authentic texts, tasks, tests, or authentic materials, but, we believe, another type of authenticity has to be seriously taken into account and that is the "individual authenticity"- the reliable and competent ESP teacher. Most of us would assume that teachers are well qualified, dedicated, and willing to implement all the findings of research in the field, because they are simply "teachers" but little attention has been paid to the real and influential role of the ESP instructors in Iran. The scope of the present study is not focused on evaluating "the ESP instructors", rather it aims at investigating any uniformity among Iranian ESP instructors in terms of their beliefs and methods of ESP instruction in their classes. To achieve such a goal the following questions were formulated:

1. Is there any significant difference between the pedagogical beliefs of Iranian English major and subject matter ESP teachers about ESP?
2. Is there any significant difference between the instructional practices of Iranian English major and subject matter ESP teachers?
3. What factors were mostly influential in shaping ESP beliefs among these instructors?

Participants

A population of 423 Iranian ESP teachers was selected to respond to a questionnaire which determined their personal beliefs as well as instructional practices in ESP classes. Geographically speaking, the respondents were from western, central, and northern provinces of Iran. The general profiles of these ESP instructors are shown in the following table: These ESP teachers are either TEFL or non-TEFL majors with university degrees of MA/Ms or Ph.D.

Table 1: General Profiles of the Participants of the Study

General Profile	Index	Frequency
Age range	20-30 years	5%
	31-40 years	80.4%
	41-50 years	13.2%
	51-60 years	1.4%
Sex	Male	83.7%
	Female	16.3%
Degree	MA/Msc.	82%
	PhD	18%
Field	English major	37.11%

	Non-English major	62.89%
ESP teaching experience	0-5 years	73.3%
	6-10 years	23.2%
	11-15 years	3.5%
Satisfaction with ESP teaching	Little	3.3%
	Average	83.5%
	Much	13.2%
Familiarity with English	Field	37.1%
	Studying Abroad	3.5%
	English classes	5.2%
	Self study	54.1%

Instrumentation

The instrument selected as measure in this study included a Survey Questionnaire. It targets close-ended sections that require teachers to respond to statements on a five point Likert scale. Firstly, it attempted to identify the beliefs ESP teachers have regarding ESP and its role in language learning and teaching in Iranian academic settings. Secondly, the questionnaire aimed to obtain information about teachers' reported classroom practices regarding the teaching of ESP courses.

Results

The first part of the second section of the questionnaire dealt with investigating the frequency of classroom activities carried out in Iranian ESP classes. To do this, we followed Farhady (2007). The results of ESP needs analysis project by Farhady (2007) revealed the most quoted real academic tasks included: general and technical listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities, note-taking, internet search, reading graphs and summarizing, translating, writing paper, submitting proposals, presenting papers in conferences, writing reports, writing CVs, writing research reports, and giving and receiving feedbacks from each other. Therefore, 16 highlighted classroom activities were chosen and given to a total of 423 Iranian ESP teachers. A 5-point-scale ranging from always (5 points) to never (1 point) was used to determine the frequency of 16 highlighted classroom activities in the ESP classes. The following table reveals the descriptive as well as inferential statistics for implementing instructional activities by Iranian ELT and subject-matter ESP teachers.

Table 2: Iranian English Major vs Subject-Matter ESP Teachers' Classroom Practices

Classroom Activity	Field	Frequency					Chi-Square Test Results
		never	seldom	sometimes	often	always	
1.Explaining technical words in Persian	ELT	0	1	9	93	54	.000
	S.M	1	1	3	68	193	
2. Explaining grammar	ELT	49	101	7	0	0	.314
	S.M	69	187	10	0	0	

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3. Translating ESP texts into Persian	ELT	0	0	1	23	133	.680
	S.M	0	0	2	27	234	
4. Doing reading comprehension exercises	ELT	0	2	20	102	33	.133
	S.M	3	1	29	207	26	
5. Asking and answering questions in English	ELT	50	89	7	9	2	.000
	S.M	217	46	3	0	0	
6. Classroom presentations in English	ELT	132	21	4	0	0	.065
	S.M	209	57	0	0	0	
7. Note-taking from classroom lectures	ELT	108	49	10	0	0	.113
	S.M	196	67	3	0	0	
8. Writing classroom reports in English	ELT	127	29	1	0	0	.125
	S.M	195	68	3	0	0	
9. Providing chances for students' classroom discussions in English	ELT	38	86	32	1	0	.000
	S.M	171	92	3	0	0	
10. Listening to audio files	ELT	41	53	40	23	0	.000
	S.M	177	84	5	0	0	
11. Developing study skills activities	ELT	7	44	83	20	3	.000
	S.M	102	72	92	0	0	
12. Summarizing textbooks or pamphlets in English	ELT	102	51	4	0	0	.381
	S.M	181	82	3	0	0	
13. Answering essay type quizzes in English	ELT	30	40	51	36	0	.000
	S.M	74	178	13	1	0	
14. Writing letters or articles in English	ELT	120	22	15	0	0	.090
	S.M	217	36	13	0	0	
15. Watching films or other video files	ELT	52	71	26	8	0	.000
	S.M	161	100	5	0	0	
16. Conducting collaborative and cooperative activities in the classroom	ELT	43	90	18	4	2	.062
	S.M	64	197	5	0	0	

The results of Chi-square test indicate that there are statistically significant differences between ELT and subject-matter ESP instructors in terms of 7 classroom activities while no significant difference between the two groups is reported concerning the rest 9 classroom activities ($p < .05$). Now let's look at each activity in brief.

With regard to determining the frequency of the first classroom activity, explaining technical words in Persian, the results indicated that 34% of the ELT instructors and 72.5% of the non-ELT teachers “always” did such a kind of activity in their ESP classes. About 59% of the English majors claimed that they “often” do the first activity in their classes while 25.6% of subject matter ESP teachers followed the same trend. The Chi-square results indicate that since the Sig. value of .000 is smaller than .05, we can conclude that the proportion of English major ESP teachers who explain technical words in Persian is significantly different from those non-English majors. Moreover, subject-matter ESP tend to use more Persian equivalents in describing technical words.

Majority of the instructors in both groups claimed that they “seldom” explained grammar to the ESP students. This approximately approves the fact that grammar is overlooked in most ESP classes. The Chi-square results indicate a value of 0.314 which is higher than the alpha value of 0.05. So, it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference between the two groups in terms of teaching grammar to ESP students.

The third activity, translating the ESP texts into Persian, favored the common consensus of both groups. Among ESP instructors, 84.7% of the English majors as well as 87.6% of the subject-matter teachers “always” translate the ESP texts into Persian. The Chi-square test outputs reveal no differences between the two groups as well. This strongly supports the fact that Iranian ELT or subject-matter ESP teachers have always viewed translation as the safest and most dominant classroom activity which seemed to meet the immediate needs of the ESP students. However, the poor English background of Iranian ESP students might have proliferated the application of translation in ESP classes. Naturally, the outputs of Table 1 show that English major instructors as well as their non-ELT counterparts predominantly “often” do class activity 4, i.e. doing reading comprehension exercises. So, it seems reading comprehension has favored considerable superiority among language skills in Iranian ESP classes. The value of 0.133, which is larger than 0.05, testifies the fact that there is no significant difference between ELT and non-ELT instructors in doing reading comprehension activities.

Among non-English major ESP teachers, 81.6% claimed that they “never” practice classroom activity 5 while only 31.8% of the ELT instructors overlooked the application of “asking and answering questions in English” in their classes. The Chi-square results indicate a significance difference between the two groups in implementing classroom activity five. This signifies the fact that there is little interest among subject-matter ESP teachers to make use of verbal interactions as the facilitators of learning in their classes. However, we conservatively propose that this might have also been rooted in insufficient general English proficiency of subject-matter teachers as well.

Classroom activity 6 deals with ESP students’ classroom presentations in English. The majority of English and non-English ESP instructors clearly stated that they “never” implement such a task in their classes. The inferential statistics approves the fact that there is no significant difference between these two groups of teachers in implementing such activity in ESP classrooms. The teachers were asked to determine the frequency of students’ note taking from ESP classroom lectures. It seems that since few or no lecture may be presented in Iranian ESP classrooms, students are not accustomed to such an activity.

Writing classroom reports in English comprised the eighth activity. The results of descriptive statistics show that 80.9% of the ELT instructors as well as 74.4% of their non-ELT counterparts “never” ask their students to write classroom reports in English whereas only 0.6% of the English majors and 1.1% of the subject matter ESP teachers claim that they “sometimes” ask their students to write classroom reports in English. The Chi-square results reveal that there is not any significant difference between both groups. Providing opportunities for students to hold classroom discussions in English comprise classroom activity 9. More than 64% of the non-English major ESP instructors “never” favored the application of such a task while the same frequency was reported by only 24% of the ELT instructors. This gap may extensively be due to instructors’ fields of study and interests. The Chi-square results reveal that there is a significant difference between these two groups in terms of doing classroom activity 9.

The ESP teachers were asked to determine the frequency of activity 10 which dealt with listening activities of the students in ESP classrooms. The story of activity 9 is repeated here. Only 26% of the ELT teachers claimed that they “never” do listening comprehension tasks in their ESP classes while this was strictly true for 66.5% of the subject matter teachers. Table 1 proves our claim by showing the significant difference between ELT and non-ELT instructors.

With regard to determining the frequency of study skill activities in ESP classes, majority of non-ELT teachers (38.3%) “never” assigned study skills activities while approximately 53% of the English majors claimed that they “sometimes” utilize them in their classes. The Chi-square test results show the significant difference between the two groups.

The ESP instructors claimed that they predominantly “never” use summarizing texts or articles in English in their ESP classrooms. That’s why writing is the most neglected and sacrificed skill among language skills in Iranian academic settings. The value of 0.381 strongly approves the fact that there is not any significant difference between ELT and non-ELT instructors in implementing classroom activity 12.

The frequencies of classroom activity 13, answering to essay type classroom quizzes, are shown in Table 1.

Subject matter ESP teachers maintained that they “seldom” have their students answer essay type classroom quizzes in English while the majority of ELT instructors “sometimes” made use of such an activity in their classes. The inferential statistics testifies that there is a significant difference between the English and non-English major ESP teachers.

The ESP instructors were supposed to determine the frequency of classroom activity 14 which dealt with students’ article or letter writing in their specific fields. Over 76% of the ELT teachers as well as 81% of the subject matter ESP instructors “never” utilized such an activity in their classrooms. This is mainly due to the fact that the whole objectives of ESP programs have not been clearly specified for our teachers. The value of 0.09 evidentially approves our claim that there is not any significant difference between the two groups in terms of implementing this classroom activity.

The responses of the ESP teachers in terms of specifying the frequency of activity 15, watching films or video programs in specific fields, are presented in Table 2. The outcomes reveal that more than 60% of the subject matter instructors “never” made use of technological aids in their ESP classrooms while only 33% of the ELT teachers did the same. The Chi-square test results show that there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding the manipulation of video aids. Majority of the instructors in both groups reported that they “seldom” make use of students’ cooperative activities in conducting their ESP classes, activity 16. This might be due to lack of sufficient time or insufficiencies in establishing student-centered atmosphere in ESP classes. The inferential statistics show that there is no significant difference between ELT and non-ELT instructors in implementing such an activity in ESP environments.

As noted earlier, the second part of the second section of the questionnaire deals with identifying Iranian teachers’ beliefs about ESP and methods of instruction. Since it was too much difficult to include a large number of widespread beliefs in a very limited pool, the researcher decided to merely focus on some common and highlighted beliefs. Therefore, based on the present literature (Basturkmen, 2006; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Robinson, 1991; Strevens, 1988) and the outcomes of the EAP needs analysis project carried out by Farhady (2007), we specified 21 types of pedagogical beliefs on ESP domain. Three underlying constructs namely teaching ESP, students’ needs, and beliefs about students’ practice were explored for the aforementioned beliefs.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for ESP Teachers’ Beliefs about the First Factor

Item	Field	Frequency					Chi-Square Test Results
		S A	A	N	D	S D	
1. content teaching	ELT	83	60	10	3	1	.000

	Non-ELT	204	41	16	4	1	
2.content familiar	ELT	9	62	71	8	7	.000
	Non-ELT	2	3	201	38	22	
3.sufficient English for others	ELT	120	32	5	0	0	.000
	Non-ELT	157	83	34	1	1	
4. content problems	ELT	1	3	10	51	92	.000
	Non-ELT	177	67	17	4	1	
5.technical word matching	ELT	85	54	12	5	1	.143
	Non-ELT	160	80	24	1	1	
6.non-English teacher better	ELT	0	0	0	0	157	.000
	Non-ELT	188	60	13	4	1	
7.multidiscipline	ELT	0	47	82	15	13	.000
	Non-ELT	0	7	189	35	35	
8.Persian language	ELT	97	55	4	1	0	.333
	Non-ELT	166	74	24	1	1	
9.language application	ELT	0	71	27	58	1	.000
	Non-ELT	2	26	69	167	2	
10.performting needs analysis	ELT	89	55	11	2	0	.000
	Non-ELT	6	52	203	5	0	

As Table 3 shows, the difference between English major and subject matter ESP teachers is not significant in terms of the items 5 and 8. In other words, both groups had consensus on applying Persian as the medium language in Iranian ESP classes. Moreover, matching technical words with their Persian equivalents received the general agreement of both groups. The rest ten items demonstrate the significant difference between two traditions.

The following table generally shows the frequency of ELT and non-ELT instructors' beliefs about the items which constituted factor 2, ESP teachers' beliefs about students' practices. The table also reveals the summarized inferential statistics to highlight the differences between these two groups.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for ESP Teachers' Beliefs about the Second Factor

Item	Field	Frequency/Percentage					Chi-Square Test Results
		S A	A	N	D	S D	
1. utw	ELT	3.8%	24.8%	15.9%	43.3%	12.1%	.000
	Non-ELT	0%	1.1%	6%	75.5%	17.3%	
2. future needs	ELT	14.6 %	36.9%	47.1%	1.3%	0%	.000
	Non-ELT	4.5 %	16.9 %	76.7%	1.9%	0%	
3. lg evaluation	ELT	25.5%	31.2%	42%	1.3%	0%	.000
	Non-ELT	2.3%	16.9 %	78.9 %	1.9 %	0%	
4. developing lg activities	ELT	1.9 %	14%	57.3 %	26.8 %	0%	.001
	Non-ELT	2.3 %	16.9 %	71.8 %	9 %	0%	
5. study skills	ELT	1.3 %	27.4%	61.1 %	10.2%	0%	.476
	Non-ELT	2.3%	19.5%	69.5%	8.6%	0%	

The results of Table 4 clearly show the significant differences between the beliefs of English major and non-English major ESP teachers in terms of the first four items. As it can be seen from the table, except one item, the respondents predominantly had “neutral” beliefs about the proposed ideas. This may be a reflection of conservatism among ESP teachers who did not take the risk of frankly stating their ideas. With regard to the last item which focused on developing study skills activities among students in ESP classes, the Chi-square test did not show any statistically significant difference between both groups.

The following table generally shows the frequency of ELT and non-ELT instructors' beliefs about the items which constituted factor 3, beliefs about students' language needs. The table also reveals the summarized inferential statistics to highlight the differences between these two groups.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for ESP Teachers' Beliefs about the Third Factor

Item	Field	Frequency/Percentage					Chi-Square Test Results
		S A	A	N	D	S D	
1. translation	ELT	54.1%	38.9%	2.5%	1.9%	2.5%	.052
	Non-ELT	63.5%	30.1%	4.5%	1.5%	0.4%	
2. independent speaking	ELT	0.6 %	0.6%	23.6%	31.2%	43.2%	.001
	Non-ELT	0.8 %	0 %	22.2%	6.4%	70.7%	
3. no listening speaking	ELT	0%	37.6%	24.2 %	34.4%	3.8 %	.000
	Non-	0.4%	64.7%	34.6 %	0.4 %	0%	

	ELT						
4. grammar	ELT	6.4 %	12.7%	56.7 %	24.2 %	0%	.000
	Non-ELT	5.3%	19.9 %	72.9 %	1.9 %	0%	
5. languageskills	ELT	1.9 %	35%	58 %	5.11%	0%	.000
	Non-ELT	2.3%	16.9%	72.2%	8.6%	0%	
6. memorizing words	ELT	54.8 %	38.2 %	5.1 %	1.3 %	0.6 %	.077
	Non-ELT	68%	24.1 %	6 %	1.5%	0.4 %	

Table 5 represents the ESP teachers' beliefs about the third factor, students' language needs in ESP classes. There was not any statistically significant difference between ELT and non-ELT instructors in terms of the first and the last items (the Sig. value are 0.52 & 0.77 respectively). The first item emphasizes the utilization of "translation" as the foundation of ESP classroom activities. This is mainly seen through the frequency of considerable positive attitudes of both groups. Moreover, majority of both groups strongly agreed on the memorization of technical words as a necessary practice in ESP classes. No congruence was seen between English major and non-English major ESP instructors in terms of language skills such as listening- speaking activities and grammar teaching.

The outcomes clearly show the gap between the two traditions. However, it is difficult to strongly claim that the main reason for such a difference lies on insufficient ESP knowledge of the non-ELT group.

In order to determine factors that affect teachers' decisions, the teachers were presented with a list of eight factors and asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 3, how important each of these factors were to them personally in deciding how to view ESP and the type of activities to use. Their responses to this question are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Factors Influencing ELT and non-ELT Teachers' Beliefs about ESP

Factor	Level of importance	Percentage	
		ELT	non-ELT
1. ESP teaching experience	Not important	57.3%	47.4%
	Fairly important	27.4%	32%
	Very Important	15.3%	20.3%
2. Feedback from students	Not important	41.4%	37.3%
	Fairly important	33.8%	18.8%
	Very Important	24.8%	7.5%
3. Dominant educational system	Not important	8.9%	15%
	Fairly important	6.4%	13.2%
	Very Important	84.7%	71.8%
4. The current ESP textbooks	Not important	14%	7.5%
	Fairly important	28.7%	23.3%
	Very Important	57.3%	69.2%
5. Teacher's personal information about ESP	Not important	25.5%	52.6%
	Fairly important	35%	20.3%
	Very Important	39.5%	27.1%
6. Studying journal articles in ESP field	Not important	87.3%	71.8%
	Fairly important	6.4%	25.9%
	Very Important	6.4%	2.3%
7. The way other ESP	Not important	49%	36.5%

instructors operate	Fairly important	32.5%	40.2%
	Very Important	18.5%	23.3%
8. Carrying out research projects in the field	Not important	62.4%	65.1%
	Fairly important	20.4%	25.9%
	Very Important	17.2%	9%

Since the results of in Table 6 show, “the dominant educational system in Iranian academic circles”, “the current ESP materials and textbooks”, and “ELT instructors’ personal information about ESP” were the main influential factors which helped the formation of ESP beliefs and methods of instruction among the ELT instructors. “Carrying out research projects in ESP field” and “studying journal articles about ESP”, factors 8 and 6 respectively, have received the last priority among English major instructors. This seems that ESP is still an intact field in Iranian academic circles. However, few research projects and/or dissertations have triggered ESP.

Non-English major ESP instructors were asked to determine the most influential factors which shaped their beliefs about ESP and its methods of instruction. The results also reveal that “the current ESP materials and textbooks”, “the dominant educational system in Iranian academic circles”, and “the way other ESP instructors operate” gained much priority among non-ELT instructors in shaping their beliefs about ESP. The first two factors mentioned by non-ELT instructors were similar to those highlighted by their ELT counterparts. This might reflect a kind of commonality among ESP teachers in terms of influential factors. But the third factor which focused our attention is somehow deliberative. It seems that non-ELT instructors follow the ways and patterns their fellow colleagues do in ESP classes. It is not clear whether these styles and patters follow any specific and logical principle in ESP field.

Conclusions

The first aim of the present study was to determine whether there was any meaningful difference between the beliefs of Iranian English major and subject matter ESP instructors about ESP courses and methods of classroom instructions. The results of the present study strongly highlight considerable difference between the beliefs of ELT instructors and their non-ELT counterparts. The main causes of such a gap lie in the fact that the non-ELT instructors may not be aware of integrating language and content instruction, since there is limited attention to language needs in the preparation of content teachers, and limited attention to either the specific discourse of academic disciplines or to the practical concerns of needs analysis, text adaptation, curriculum development, or collaborative teaching in most language teacher training programs (Crandall, 1998).

The overriding belief of the 423 teachers who participated in this study was that “translation” is a pivotal component of the language classroom. This appeared to be a “resilient or core belief” (Clark & Peterson, 1986) that the teachers shared and showed that teachers generally favor translation. However, both groups had consensus on some items such as “application of Persian language as a medium in ESP classes”, “technical word matching with their Persian equivalents”, “the emphasis on applying study skills”, and “memorizing English words”. Moreover, the study aimed at finding out whether there is any significant difference between classroom practices of ELT and non-ELT instructors. The outcomes extracted from 423 ESP teachers revealed that ELT and content teachers differed greatly in frequency of doing a number of classroom activities such as “explaining technical words in students’ mother tongue”, “providing the students with speaking opportunities”, “listening to audio files”, “watching films”, and “asking students to answer essay type questions in classroom quizzes”. The main reason for such a gap is insufficient knowledge or familiarity of non-ELT instructors with applying and integrating language skills in ESP classes. Language learning and content of subject matter could be brought together because a foreign language is most successfully acquired when learners are engaged in its meaningful and purposeful use. The integration of language and content involves the incorporation of content material into language classes. Content can provide a motivational and cognitive basis for language learning since it is interesting and of some value to the learner (Brewster, 1999). ESP programs are content-based, task-based, interactive programs which provide cooperative learning. Small groups of students work together to accomplish meaningful tasks in this approach to L2 learning so both cognitive and socio-cultural processes are at work together (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Some believe in reading as the only skill to be developed: some others, however, take the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) into account, dividing them into micro- and macro-skills. An initial and continuing focus in ESP has been on the skill of reading. This

was for practical and international reasons, for example, many contexts throughout the world required the ability to read English passages. However, subsequent research and practice have taken the other three skills into account. For example, listening is crucial for lecture comprehension in English for Specific Purposes contexts, and speaking is considered important in English for Business Purposes as well as in ESP. Finally, writing is thought of as a necessary skill for non-native students in academic contexts.

The results also highlighted no statistically significant difference between English and non-English major ESP teachers in terms of the frequency of doing a number of classroom activities such as “grammar teaching”, “translation”, “reading comprehension activities”, “classroom lectures in English by students”, “note-taking activities”, “writing classroom reports in English”, “developing study skills”, “summarizing text-books or articles in English”, “writing essays or letters in students’ specific fields”, and “cooperative activities by the students”. Cooperative Learning (CL) is the most widely used approach to ESP teaching because it is potentially beneficial for second language learners in a number of ways especially when performed through content. First of all, CL can provide more opportunities for L2 interaction and improve L2 proficiency (Swain, 2001). It can also help students draw on their first language (L1) while developing L2 skills (Cohen, 1986). But none of them was seriously taken into account by Iranian ELT and non-ELT instructors in ESP classes.

The ESP instructors were asked to determine the influential factors responsible for shaping their beliefs about ESP and its method(s) of instruction. Among the suggested influential factors, ELT instructors referred to “Iran’s educational system”, “the present ESP textbooks”, and “teachers’ personal information about ESP” as the most effective factors for shaping their beliefs. The non-ELT tradition, on the other hand, reported “the present ESP text-books”, “Iran’s educational system”, and “the way other ESP instructors operate” respectively determined the formation of such beliefs among them. Since ESP has been an ever-growing branch of EFL instruction in Iranian academic settings in the last three decades, there has been a great deal of improvement in curriculum development in this field. Presently, ESP courses form a remarkable part of the curriculums for almost all academic disciplines at university level. Since its infancy, materials development has seriously been the focus of interest and attention in the ESP domain. Specifically, the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology has undertaken the responsibility of compiling ESP academic textbooks since 1980s. Meeting the learners’ needs and enhancing the students’ level of interest and motivation were two main factors which led the authorities of the Ministry to take the proliferation policy of publishing more than 230 ESP textbooks so far. However, the textbooks follow a rigid distribution of instructional exercises and activities for all academic disciplines with the emphasis on practicing microlinguistic aspects of reading skill. Therefore, it seems natural for us to see that both traditions select factors such as “current educational system in Iran” and “available text-books” as the dominant reasons for shaping ESP beliefs. The ELT and non-ELT groups only differed in terms of the third determining factor. English major instructors heavily determined “their relevant knowledge about ESP” as the third priority in shaping their beliefs about ESP and its method(s) of instruction while non-ELT group reported that “the way other ESP instructors operate in the field” constituted the third factor. Since non-ELT instructors predominantly did not have any prior and formal training in language science, they did believe that the way other ESP teachers operate has become a “model” for them in conducting ESP courses.

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