

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE IRANIAN UNIVERSITIES’
ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC ACADEMIC PURPOSES (ESAP)
COURSES: THE CASE OF THE ESAP COURSES FOR
ENGINEERING STUDENTS OF THE AZARBAIJAN SHAHID
MADANI UNIVERSITY**

Mahsa Zoghi-pour

M.A student of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University
Phone: +989141188436, E-Mail: mahsazoghi-pour@ymail.com

Abstract. *As one of the major strands of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses play a significant role in equipping university students with the necessary competence to handle the academic discourse. On account of the effects that the specific knowledge of English language, its macro- and micro-skills have on the students’ post-graduate studies and future job, this study was conducted to critically evaluate the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses of the Iranian Universities. For this reason, the ESAP courses of the power electrical, mechanical and civil engineering of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University were selected and through classroom observations, interviewing the instructors, questionnaires for students and evaluating the text-books, useful information about strengths and weaknesses of these courses was revealed. It is hoped that the implications and suggestions offered in this study will be helpful to ameliorate the EAP status of the Iranian Universities.*

Key words: *ELT, ESP, EAP, EGAP, ESAP, language, skills, macro-skills, micro-skills, evaluation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As a global language, English has been the major medium of communication for all sorts of interactions occurring in academic, scientific, social, political and commercial domains. In this circumstance, English language plays a very important and sensitive role in the sense that the chance of success of people involved in each of the mentioned domains is crucially tied to the knowledge of English language and its skills. For instance, exchanging information, sharing ideas and thoughts, sending emails, trading, negotiating, pursuing academic studies, referring to different sources and writing papers are all possible due to the application of the knowledge of language, specific skills and strategies.

As a consequence of these factors, English language learning has become as a mandatory requirement by many people; each day increasing number of learners enrolling in English language schools, taking intensive courses in English language and even their preference for one-to-one courses (private tuition) are redolent of this fact.

All these courses are roughly designed to develop the general knowledge and skills of language that in spite of being the integral part of the language proficiency, can never cater to the specific needs of the people studying and working in specific disciplines or domains.

In this situation, with the presence of the people with specific learning needs and deficiency of the general English language courses in aiding them, “a demand is generated for courses which would equip particular learners with the necessary skills to carry out particular tasks in English” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 144).

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), after the end of the second world war in 1945, the status of the English language as the international language of technology and commerce, a revolution in linguistics in which the attention was shifted to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication and a focus on the learner by emphasizing the central importance of the learners, their needs and interest were the three major reasons that in 1960s contributed to the emergence of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in which all decisions as to content and method tailored based on the learners’ reason for learning and specific needs.

Being as one of the major strands of ESP, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) refers to “any English teaching that relates to a study purpose” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p.34). Entering universities, students are unfamiliar with macro-skills as note-taking, academic writing, lecture listening, referring to different sources and papers and micro-skills as skimming, scanning, predicting, guessing the meaning of unknown words, understanding and interpreting figure and so on.

To clarify the point, they need to use and deal with their knowledge of language in a new way that in case of being incompetent of gaining this competence, their academic education, post-graduate studies and even their job opportunities will be negatively overshadowed.

To efficiently equip students with the academic competence, EAP has been divided into two types; English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) that “refers to the teaching of the skills and language that are common to all disciplines” (Dudley-Evans & Waters, 1998, p. 41), and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) which “refers to the teaching of the features that distinguish one discipline from others.” (p.41).

As mentioned previously, EAP courses “exist to satisfy a particular educational need” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 152). In this circumstance, evaluation is the best tool which can show “how well the course is actually fulfilling the need” (152). Evaluating different aspects of the course, instructors and stakeholders are provided with useful feedback on the efficiency of their teaching methodology, course materials, classroom etc. in the case of the ESP courses, the concept of evaluation is more important due to the fact that these courses should be focused directly on the learners’ needs, should not waste time and money and should be ‘successful in imparting learning’ (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 9).

In spite of being significant, to the best of researcher’s knowledge, apart from a few cases (Hayati, 2008; Yaghoubi Nezhad, Atarodi, Khalili, 2013), EAP courses in Iran have been less exposed to evaluation. Addressing this gap, this study critically evaluates Iranian Universities’ ESAP courses and as the case of the study the ESAP courses for power electrical, mechanical and civil engineering students of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University are evaluated. To cover a wider picture, involving both instructors and learners, through researcher-made questionnaire for students, interviewing the ESAP instructors, observing ESAP classrooms and evaluating the materials in-use, these courses are evaluated.

The aim of this study was to reveal the extent to which ESAP courses satisfy the academic demands placed on the students, exploring the following research questions;

1. Can these courses meet the specific needs of the EAP students?
2. Can these courses finally develop the necessary competence for students to handle the academic discourse?

This paper is an attempt to shed light on the strengths and drawbacks of the ESAP courses, some suggestions also will be offered to overcome the shortcomings and improve the efficiency of these courses.

It is hoped that the findings of this paper will be helpful and applied to the future plans of the EAP instructors, syllabus and material designers in order to reform and improve the status of the EAP and particularly ESAP courses in Iran.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

ESP in general and EAP in particular has been the center of attention of researchers from several dimensions; register analysis (Swales, 1988, Farrell, 1990), rhetorical and discourse analysis (Lackstrom, Selinker & Trimble, 1973; Salager-Meyer, 1994; 2015; Samraj, 2008), study skills analysis (Dhieb-Henia, 2003; Zhu, 2004), analysis of learning needs (Munby, 1978; Edwards, 2000; Moslemi, 2011) are the major realms that have contributed a lot to the development of EAP.

Since EAP courses “exist to satisfy a particular educational need” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 152), evaluation is the best tool which can show “how well the course is actually fulfilling the need” (152), that is to say, all the language courses should be evaluated both during its lifetime and at the end.

To the best of researcher’s knowledge apart from a few cases, EAP courses in Iran have been less exposed to evaluation and those studies, which have done this, have not evaluated all the dimensions and aspects of the courses; for instance, Yaghoubi Nezhad, Atarodi and Khalili (2013) have compared two different ESP textbooks; English for Students of Mechanical Engineering (SAMT) publication and English in Mechanical Engineering (Oxford University Press). Vosoughi, Davoodi Sharifabad and Raftari (2013) have also analyzed an EAP book sample from SAMT publication for the students of medicine and have concluded that these books in spite of focusing on reading, have forgotten the micro-skills and cannot meet the students’ needs.

Addressing this gap, the present study critically evaluates Iranian Universities’ ESAP courses and as the case of the study the ESAP courses for power electrical, mechanical and civil engineering students of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University are evaluated through questionnaire, interviews, class observation and text-book analysis.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were 60 Iranian, male and female university students; including students of power electrical engineering (N= 20), mechanical engineering (N=20), and civil engineering (N=20). These students with an age range of 21 to 24 were all students of the mentioned disciplines in Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University and they all have attended the ESAP courses for their discipline. They were randomly chosen to fill in a researcher-made questionnaire.

The faculty members of the Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, as the ESAP instructors of the mentioned courses (N= 3) were interviewed by the researcher, respecting to the preference of these instructors, their names are not mentioned in the following study.

Also one session of the ESAP courses of each of the mentioned disciplines was observed by the researcher and the text-books used in these courses were evaluated later.

3.2. Instruments

In order to collect data, the following instruments were used:

3.2.1. A questionnaire for students; composed of three parts: first part including three independent questions, second part including 12 Likert-scale questions about the abilities and skills that learners ought to gain during and after the ESAP course and the third part including 15 items about the instructor's methodology. (See Appendix 1).

This questionnaire was intended to be filled in by the aforementioned EAP students. It was designed by the researcher based on the 'Questionnaire of Reading Comprehension Strategies' used in the study of Barman (2013), students questionnaire of Rahman (2004), teachers' questionnaire of Rahman (2004) and English for specific and academic purposes sources as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998).

Once this questionnaire was designed and adapted by the researcher, in terms of validity and other issues, it was checked and confirmed by Dr. F. Salahshoor, the faculty member of the English language department of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University.

3.2.2. The following textbooks, which were used in the observed classrooms, were closely studied and evaluated:

- English for Students of Power Electronics, Control Amp, Communication 3, by M. Haghani and K. Zain, 1385 (2005), SAMT publication.
- English for Students of Mechanical Engineering Fluid Thermal Approach, by J. Jalilpour, 1394 (2015), SAMT publication.
- The pamphlet of English for the Students of Civil Engineering, by Ab. Setayesh.

3.3. Procedure

Due to the crucially important role of the ESAP courses in equipping students to handle the academic discourse, post-graduate studies and even their future job, it was intended to critically evaluate Iranian Universities' ESAP courses.

To conduct this research, ESAP courses of the engineering faculty of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University were selected; The ESAP courses of power electrical, mechanical and civil engineering were the cases under the study in this research.

As students' point of views are important to know in the evaluation, the first step to carry out this research was designing a questionnaire for students who were attending the chosen ESAP courses. This questionnaire was intended to reveal information about the abilities and skills that students ought to gain through these courses and the teaching methodology of their instructor.

Before distributing this questionnaire, it was decided to closely observe some sessions of the selected ESAP courses. After getting permission from the related ESAP instructors and coordinating with them, one session of the ESAP classroom of power electrical engineering was observed.

The following week one session of the ESAP classroom of civil engineering was observed, and two days later one session of the ESAP classroom of mechanical engineering was also observed. (See Table 4), unfortunately, because of the limited time and more importantly, because of some instructors' unwillingness to allow their classes to be observed, only one session of each of the ESAP courses could be observed.

After observing these classes, the ESAP instructors of the observed courses were interviewed by the researcher for about 10-15 minutes, these interviews revealed information about the instructors' point of views towards EAP, their approach and methodology, syllabus, plans etc.

As the next step of the research, the students' questionnaire, which had been designed at first stage by the researcher and then checked and confirmed by Dr. Salahshoor in terms of its validity and other issues, was ready to be distributed among students. To do so, 20 students majoring in power electrical engineering, 20 students majoring in mechanical engineering and 20 students majoring in civil engineering were randomly selected out of the students of the chosen and observed ESAP courses.

Totally, the phase of questionnaires distribution, being filled in by students and their collection took 12 days, the act of studying the questionnaires, their measurement and analysis was left to the final stage.

To continue the evaluation, the stated textbooks, which were used in the observed classes, were carefully studied and evaluated by the researcher in terms of the content, method, exercises, involved macro and micro-skills, language, strategies, validity, authenticity etc., and a report was prepared. (See Table 5).

Finally, to complete the research, the students' questionnaires were carefully studied and scrutinized and in order to be used more precisely along with the other collected data in data analysis stage, the results were measured and reported in percentages

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 The first three questions of the Students' questionnaire

Do you think what the major focus and aim of the ESAP courses is?	<i>Developing English language skills</i>	<i>Merely acquaintance with the vocabularies of our discipline</i>	<i>Acquaintance with the specific vocabularies of their discipline and mastering skills of reading scientific articles</i>	
	15%	55%	30%	
The major focus of this course is on which of the language skills?	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Writing</i>
	93.33%	1.60%	5%	0%
After I passed this course,	<i>I have forgotten the vocabularies but I have learnt reading skills and strategies of scientific articles</i>	<i>The ability and skills to read and analyze scientific articles were not taught and I have forgotten the vocabularies which had been presented during the course</i>	<i>I remember the presented vocabularies but still have problems dealing with articles</i>	
	28.33%	55.00%	18%	

Concerning the major focus of the ESAP courses, most of the students (55%) regarded the aim of these courses as *merely acquaintance with the specific vocabularies of their discipline*. This is a thought-provoking issue because only 30% of the students considered the aim of their courses as *acquaintance with the specific vocabularies of their discipline and mastering skills of reading scientific articles*.

As stated before, one of the important aims of these courses is preparing students to handle with the academic discourse; gain the ability and skill to read and interpret scientific articles, writing reports, taking notes etc. but as Table 1 presents none of them were taken into account.

According to Table 1, 93.33% of students considered the major aim of these courses as developing the reading skills. Focusing on reading skill is a justified issue especially in Iran which is an EFL country but the complete ignorance of other skills is not accepted since the university students may need these skills in the future.

The considerable and at the same time harmful drawback is the complete neglect of writing skill. EAP students definitely need to learn how to prepare reports, write articles, take notes, and write summaries but as Table 1 presents it is 0%. This fact seems to be the essence of the problems that students encounter both in B.S and more importantly in post-graduate studies. These students even did not know the structure of a report and were completely unfamiliar with the organization and composition of the articles.

Table 2 Liker-scale part of the Students' questionnaire

No.	QUESTIONS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	To what extent the content of your ESAP course is related to your major?	0.00%	3.33%	13%	27%	57%
2	Do you read the texts before class?	3.33%	30%	42%	5%	10%
3	Can you read the text quickly to get the gist of it and its main idea? (Skimming)	11.66%	38.33%	25%	18%	6.66%
4	Can you guess the meaning of the unknown words by the use of the context?	0.00%	46.66%	33%	13%	6.66%
5	Can you predict the subsequent parts of the text while reading?	6.66%	48.33%	22%	18%	3.33%
6	Can you draw inferences from the text?	8.33%	28.33%	48%	12%	3.33%
7	Can you read and understand the text in details?	8.33%	16.66%	47%	20%	8.33%
8	Can you search the text for particular pieces of information and extract them? (Scanning)	5.00%	52%	30%	10%	3.33%
9	Can you recognize and analyze the structures of the sentences and their relations with each other?	8.33%	23%	45%	18.33%	5.00%
10	Can you interpret figures, graphs and charts?	3.00%	6.00%	13%	47%	31%
11	Can you recognize the organization of the whole text?	5.00%	15%	55%	15%	10%
12	Can you answer the comprehension questions in English?	3.33%	4.00%	6.00%	69%	18%

Almost all the EFL learners are familiar with strategies as skimming, scanning, inferring information etc. but according to Table 2, in case of EAP students it is extremely surprising that they are not able to use these strategies effectively, it is evident that failure in the application of these micro-skills will have negative influences.

EAP students should be able to use the context in order to guess the meaning of the unknown words, and it is bothering and tiresome for them to look each word up in the dictionary. Unfortunately relying on the poor translation of the instructors and using mobile dictionaries have made learners unable to use this strategy.

EAP students in case of being unable to draw inferences from the texts, will be also unable to comprehend it completely and without making inferences the act of note-taking and extracting information will be difficult and ineffective.

Table 3. Students' Answers to the Items Regarding the ESAP Instructors' Teaching Methodology.

No. Items	Yes, Always	Sometimes	No, Never
1 At the beginning of the semester our instruction has taught us the necessary techniques and strategies and during the course emphasizes on using them.	8.33%	36.66%	55%
2 Our instructor encourages students to participate in reading the text and raising questions.	35%	58%	24%
3 Our instructor has taught us how quickly get the gist of the text; skimming.	10%	25%	65%
4 Our instructor has taught us how to quickly find specific information like dates, names etc. scanning.	3.33%	35%	61%
5 Our instructor emphasizes on using our discipline's specific dictionary.	23.33%	25%	51.66%
6 Our instructor has taught us how prepare reports, note-taking and summary writing.	11.66%	28.33%	60%
7 The content of our materials is closely related to our major.	60%	33.33%	6.66%
8 Our instructor has taught us how to guess the meaning of the unknown words by the use of the context.	11.66%	56.66%	36.77%
9 We learn those words that are necessary and useful for our post graduate studies.	58%	33.33%	8.33%
10 Our instructor explains the whole structure of the text and the organization of the sentences, this helps us to understand how to write scientific articles.	18.33%	43.33%	38.33%
11 Our motivation to read scientific articles in English language has increased.	18.33%	35%	46.66%
12 Our instructor explains all the students' questions even that is the case out of the classroom.	51.6%	38.33%	10%
13 Our instructor is the only person who reads the text and just translates the text word by word.	18.33%	53.33%	28.33%
14 The nature of the texts is not important for our instructor, he only encourages us to memorize specific vocabularies.	11.6%	51.66%	36.66%
15 The problems that we had in reading and understanding scientific articles are not solved and this will overshadow our future studies and job in a negative way.	61.66%	26.66%	11.66%

As Table 3 shows, Students' explicit dissatisfaction and lack of the needed skills and strategies are evident; explicitly they claimed that reading strategies and skills (micro-skills) and the ability to analyze the articles have not been taught.

Classroom Observations:

According to the ESAP sessions which were observed, the following common features are noticeable:

Table 4 Common features of the observed Sessions of the Power Electrical, mechanical and civil engineering ESAP courses.

Teacher-fronted classrooms	Not enough opportunity to raise questions
Farsi instruction	Teacher is not sensitive to know learners' feedback
Grammar-translation method	Teacher does not evaluates the learners
Not Oral communication	Not Teaching and employing reading skills and strategies
Writing skill, writing exercises are almost ignored	Not Active students
Translation word by word	insufficient time
Teachers' poor pronunciation	crowded classroom
Teacher or students reads the passage	Not Usage of the disciplinary specific dictionaries
Comprehension exercises are dominant	Not enough Classroom equipment
Not Live classroom atmosphere	-----

According to the information which was gathered by the researcher through the interview sessions with the ESAP instructors of the observed courses, it was revealed that ESAP instructors who were the subject-specific instructors used ready-made syllables, which were prepared by the organization, and in most cases did not modify those syllables and textbooks. They were not aware of the importance of target situation and needs analysis, did not train how to prepare reports, take notes and inferring information from articles and translation in instruction was regarded important by them.

The evaluated textbooks and the pamphlet are ready-made books provided by the Organization for Research and Composing University Textbook in Humanities (SAMT), the content of the passages was related to the discipline and authentic. Presentation of the grammatical rules and vocabularies was poor and not interesting and grammatical points were not suitable for the EAP students. Grammar-translation method was dominant in these books. The passages were topic based and texts were rich in terms of vocabularies, which were useful, but just were presented and except a few general exercises, no specific tasks were planned to reinforce them.

As other books of this publication, there were comprehension, true/false, multiple choice and fill in blanks questions; more suitable for general English language courses. Not specific tasks were planned to train and reinforce the necessary micro-skills and strategies.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As stated before, this research was conducted to critically evaluate the ESAP courses in Iranian universities and explored to what extent these courses can meet the specific needs of the students? Do they really prepare students to handle the academic discourse, post-graduate studies and future job?

ESAP courses for the power electrical, mechanical and civil engineering students of the Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University were the cases of this study. As elaborated before, through a 31 item questionnaire for the students (N= 60), interviewing faculty members as the instructors of these courses (N=3), observing classrooms (N=3) and evaluating the text books and materials used in these courses (N=3), valuable results have been yielded.

University students in Iran are supposed to pass a three-credit general English language course and then a two-credit ESAP course.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) presented the whole language learning and teaching on a continuum that runs from general English courses to very specific courses.

Table 5 Language learning and teaching continuum according to Dudley Evans and St. John.

General				Specific
Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5
English for Beginners	Intermediate to advance EGP courses with a focus on a particular skills	EGAP/EGBP courses based on common core language and skills not related to specific discipline or profession	Courses for broad disciplinary or professional areas (e.g. Report writing for Scientists and Engineers, Medical English, Legal English, Negotiating skills for Business English)	1)An academic support course related to a particular academic Course. 2)One-to-one work with business people

ESAP courses fall in Position 4, it means that students' knowledge of language should be upper-intermediate to advance level. In Iran when students enter universities, their language proficiency is often below the intermediate. First they attend a general English language course and then they enter the ESAP course. The general English language course is not adequate to prepare the students for the ESAP course; usually crowded classrooms hold by the instructors of the English language department who are not skilled enough and only focusing on reading passages with general topics.

This course cannot cater to the general needs of the students, so their knowledge does not increase and become suitable to enter the ESAP course. As this study showed, most of the students' language knowledge (70%) was intermediate when beginning ESAP course, only 16.66% of them were advanced. On account of this, Iranian students' general language proficiency is not suitable to enter ESAP course.

Before ESAP courses, students should participate in EGAP courses to become familiar with the skills common to all disciplines = Position 3, but this position is absent and the next English language course is that of the ESAP one.

Through the collected data, it is recognized that because of students' poor general language knowledge and because EGAP and ESAP are not discriminated in Iranian universities and due to the other factors which will be discussed later, ESAP courses suffer from serious drawbacks and because of these, definitely it won't be successful in developing the necessary competence for students.

Based on the analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire that students filled in and the ESAP sessions observed by the researcher, it is revealed that these courses are only ESAP in terms of the content of the materials and its disciplinary-specific vocabularies.

In the first place, the instructors were all subject teachers whose English language is better as they have studied abroad or have got one of the English language degrees, in spite of this most of them had very poor pronunciations and knowledge of language. Having observed their teaching and classroom and then interviewing them, it was revealed that they are a little familiar with micro-skills and strategies necessary for EAP students. Because of this, their role is trivialized by them and as observed in the classroom they are almost neglected. The answers of the students in the questionnaire also support this fact.

Among macro skills focus on reading is to some extent acceptable because Iran is an EFL country and English language is not the medium of instruction so university students in B.S and particular in post graduate studies will need English for reading and referring to different original sources, scientific articles, writing reports, papers, and dissertation. Based on the analysis of their needs mainly they will be involved with reading and writing skills. But in our universities as the data revealed writing skill is neglected even EAP students are not able to recognize the structure of a paragraph and write a paragraph let alone write a paper or simple report. Learners also may need oral skills to give presentations in English in international conferences, they should be able to understand lectures and take notes but unfortunately they have been neglected and trivialized.

As one of the ESAP instructors mentioned in his interview, the limitations as time, budget and crowded classrooms do not let further attempts to train ESAP students. (Personal Communication).

As we know, for the EAP students effective reading is only possible and interesting when they are familiar with the necessary micro skills as skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning of the unknown words by the context, inferring information, paraphrasing, summary writing, preparing reports, note taking etc. The Persian translation, comprehension exercises of the textbook and vocabulary memorizations, which are the only things done for developing reading skill in ESAP classrooms, will not pave the way for gaining the needed academic competence. Due to these factors, our EAP students even after passing ESAP courses have lots of problems with reading simple passages let alone reading specific ones.

The instruction in these courses are not learner-based anymore, needs analysis is something that instructors are unfamiliar with, and the purpose of the reading as Dudley Evans and St. John mentioned is "Text As a Linguistic Object (TALO)" rather than "Text As a Vehicle of Information (TAVI)". (96).

On account of this fact, our EAP students encounter lots of difficulties in composing papers and even using scientific sources. When it came to the exercises of the texts books, a few comprehension exercises, true/false and filling in blanks questions were answered by the instructor or a few students. The exercises which only emphasize on comprehension questions, choosing appropriate word and word translation can never help EAP students to develop the necessary academic literacy. Except midterm exam and final exam, students were not evaluated by the instructor. The instructors were not sensitive to the students' feedback

about the efficiency of their classrooms, teaching methodology etc. mutually students were not provided with feedback about their learning.

According to the information which was yielded and discussed in this study, it is concluded that to a great extent the ESAP courses in Iran may not serve the EAP students' interests and needs.

The materials should be revised mainly in terms of the tasks and exercises, also instructors have to reconsider their methodologies and change their focus from traditional and grammar-translation approach to more learner-based approaches.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), for ESP courses the "necessities" of the students which are what they have to know to function effectively in the target situation, "lacks" which refers to the gap between the learners' existing proficiency and target proficiency, and "wants" which are what the learners feel need, (64) should be the first things to think about in designing EAP course. As the data revealed, students necessities, lacks and wants were not the point of departure of the evaluated courses, as a result the gaps still remain between the needed academic competence or literacy and students' present knowledge, unsuitable methods, books, exercises, not skilled instructors were the major the reasons that show us these courses are not successful in equipping students with the necessary academic literacy, besides, lack of enough time, crowded classrooms and one-size-fits-all books have demotivated and dissatisfied EAP students.

In this study based on the information revealed through the evaluation, it is highly suggested that the department of each discipline is better to plan the ESAP courses in collaboration with the department of the English language or through cooperation of language and subject-specific instructors.

As the three-credit general English language course is not effective, it is recommended that there should be general English language programs at universities; using this opportunity, students' level of general English proficiency (GEP) is improved and proper for entering EGAP and ESAP. Also in our context, the notion of EGAP and ESAP should be discriminated and EGAP courses should be planned for students before ESAP.

Although this evaluation study has revealed the shortcomings and gaps of the ESAP courses in Iran, prescribing any proposal and suggestions without carrying out researches will not be that much practical. Academic literacy is to some extent clear to researchers but for improving the ESAP status, it is highly suggested that further research is necessary to analyze the needs of the EAP students of specific groups in order to define what is the needed academic competence or literacy for them. And issues like the suitable methods, textbooks types, exercises, evaluation and assessing methods should be explored. Also the issue of appropriateness of language teacher or subject-specific-teacher is another thing needed to be investigated.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be applicable for syllabus-designers, material providers, ESP practitioners and mainly EAP instructors. The implications of this research and the information which was revealed and analyzed through evaluation along with the offered suggestions are hoped to make changes in the current status of the EAP courses in Iran.

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APPENDIX 1

A Critical Evaluation of the Iranian Universities' EAP (ESAP) Courses for Engineering Students

Dear students,

The following study evaluates the Iranian universities' EAP courses for engineering students. The purpose of this study is to see whether these courses are successful in developing the necessary English language skills and academic literacy that students need in their post-graduate studies and future job.

Population: Engineering Students of Iranian Universities.

Sample: The Engineering Faculty of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

**This questionnaire will be used only in data collection procedure of the following study.*

Name and surname: (optional):		Major:
Your English language proficiency level:		
Beginner <input type="checkbox"/>	Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced <input type="checkbox"/>

1. Do you think what the major focus and aim of the ESAP courses is?

Developing English language skills *merely acquaintance with the vocabularies of our discipline* *acquaintance with the specific vocabularies of their discipline and mastering skills of reading scientific articles*

2. The major focus of this course is on which of the following language skills?

Reading *Listening* *speaking* *Writing*

3. After I passed this course,

I have forgotten the vocabularies but I have learnt reading skills and strategies of scientific articles

The ability and skills to read and analyze scientific articles were not taught and I have forgotten the vocabularies which had been presented during the course

I remember the presented vocabularies but still have problems dealing with articles

No.	Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	To what extent the content of your ESAP course is related to your major?					
2	Do you read the texts before class?					
3	Can you read the text quickly to get the gist of it and its main idea? (Skimming)					
4	Can you guess the meaning of the unknown words by the use of the context?					
5	Can you predict the subsequent parts of the text while reading?					
6	Can you draw inferences from the text?					
7	Can you read and understand the text in details?					
8	Can you search the text for particular pieces of information and extract them? (Scanning)					
9	Can you recognize and analyze the structures of the sentences and their relations with each other?					
10	Can you interpret figures, graphs and charts?					
11	Can you recognize the organization of the whole text?					
12	Can you answer the comprehension questions in English?					

Part 2:

No.	Items	Yes, Always	Sometimes	No, Never
1	At the beginning of the semester our instructor has taught us the necessary techniques and strategies and during the course emphasizes on using them.			
2	Our instructor encourages students to participate in reading the text and raising questions.			
3	Our instructor has taught us how quickly get the gist of the text; skimming.			
4	Our instructor has taught us how to quickly find specific information like dates, names etc. scanning.			
5	Our instructor emphasizes on using our discipline's specific dictionary.			
6	Our instructor has taught us how prepare reports, note-taking and summary writing.			
7	The content of our materials is closely related to our major.			
8	Our instructor has taught us how to guess the meaning of the unknown words by the use of the context.			
9	We learn those words that are necessary and useful for our post graduate studies.			
10	Our instructor explains the whole structure of the text and the organization of the sentences, this helps us to understand how to write scientific articles.			
11	Our motivation to read scientific articles in English language has increased.			
12	Our instructor explains all the students' questions even that is the case out of the classroom.			
13	Our instructor is the only person who reads the text and just translates the text word by word.			
14	The nature of the texts is not important for our instructor, he only encourages us to memorize specific vocabularies.			
15	The problems that we had in reading and understanding scientific articles are not solved and this will overshadow our future studies and job in a negative way.			