The Study of the Inconsistency between ESP and General English Course Syllabi for the Persian Literature Major

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Abstract—In recent practices on ESP materials development the overt interrelation between applied linguistics and ESP has been simply neglected through the widespread ignorance of prior consultation with ELT veterans in the field. This trend has resulted in educational perplexity for both instructors and students who are the core consumers of the ambiguously designed ESP output. Although there has been strong emphasis on the significant application of prior needs analysis and on the goal-oriented personality of ESP materials (Robinson, 1991; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), still insufficient attention has been drawn to these factors in Iranian ESP course book development. This ambiguity in ESP course materials has been partly due to the mismatch between the prerequisite General English course content practiced prior to ESP courses. Therefore, the present research project aimed at exploring the mentioned inconsistency for Persian Literature major in Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e Rey branch. To this end, the employed research design entailed mixed Method which included two phases namely; qualitative (interview, questionnaire survey and observations) and quantitative (frequency analysis and application of Pearson Chi Square).

Index Terms—ESP, materials development, applied linguistics, general English, ELT

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to widely ignored significance of the correlation between applied linguistics and ESP in Iranian academic context, great numbers of obstacles have been created for both instructors and students -as the target population in developing materials for ESP courses at universities. Although the preliminary stage to develop materials for any courses such as ESP is deployment of a comprehensive and appropriate needs analysis process in accordance with the educational objectives of various fields, still vivid traces of the problems in connection with teaching ESP can be observed. This deficiency can be mainly the consequence of the inconsistency between general English syllabus content instructed at universities (as prerequisite to ESP courses) and ESP course book contents in different fields. To this end, the researchers in the present project have tried to study such an inconsistency in Persian Literature major's ESP course materials.

Nowadays, English language has been considered as the medium for scientific and scholarly communication in the modern world of technology. Therefore, teaching English in general and teaching ESP in particular has found major priority in the academic world.

In countries like Iran the only place where students are provided with the opportunity to be exposed to technical English relevant to their prospect specialty is university. In other words, one of the current educational policies in Islamic Azad University has been the obligation for taking 5 credits of prerequisite general English courses for all the students of the various majors before attending the ESP courses. Therefore, it is expected to observe a close relationship between curriculum developers, Heads of English and other specific faculties, ESP instructors, Course book authors and syllabus designers. However, it often seems that there is an inconsistency in this regard. Thus, there is a real need for comprehensive supervision, study and analysis of the current status of the teaching trends and its impact of the efficient ESP learning outcome. In order to improve the efficiency of all the educational attempts in the regard.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research in the filed of ESP returns to 1960s.Since then, different approaches toward the issues concerning teaching English have emerged. For instance, Hutchinson and Waters (1987), see ESP as an approach rather than a product, by which they mean that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. They suggest that "the foundation of ESP is the simple question: why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?" The answer to this question relates to the learners, the language required and the learning context, and thus establishes the primacy of need in ESP.

Later on, Robinson (1991) refers to the significance of needs analysis and goal-oriented feature of ESP courses. In all the available literature reviews, four main factors have drawn the attention of scholars; instructor, course materials, needs analysis and assessment (Duddley Evans & Maggie Jo ST John, 2005). Considering the fact that in our country, Iran, among all the aforementioned factors, course materials are the mere source for the student's connection to the ESP courses. Thus, in the researches carried out over materials development, particularly, ESP course books the emphasis on needs analysis, appropriate text selection, designing applicable and appealing tasks, integrating four language skills in connection with the specific ESP course (Mumby, 1978; Hutchinson & waters, 1979, 1980, 1981).

Unfortunately, in Iran, there is an obvious ignorance concerning the relationship between ESP and applied linguistic experts. Thus the materials and course books are developed without any attention to prerequisite background of teaching English in general and teaching ESP in particular. This trend has perpetuated instructors and students. And consequently has downgraded the educational efficacy of ESP course. In this research project, it has been attempted to propose educational and administrative solutions to Islamic Azad University's policy makers, curriculum developer and syllabus designers. This has taken place through the application of needs analysis and considering the learners' general English proficiency level.

III. METHOD

Situation analysis: ESP for students of Persian Literature

In the present study, the researchers explored the current status of the ESP course for students of Persian Literature in Islamic Azad University Shar-e- rey branch in Tehran. As a result, they could figure out that the course contents and materials were rather outdated, confined, culturally irrelevant and inconsistent with the needs of the BA students of Persian Literature on the one hand and the internationally expected qualifications for specialists in the filed of Persian Literature.

Research questions

Present study was carried out to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any consistency between Persian Literature ESP course syllabus and the officially announced syllabus by ministry of science?

2. Is there any consistency between Persian Literature ESP course syllabus and prerequisite General English course contents?

Procedure

To conduct the present study, mixed Method research design was adopted with the main focus on qualitative and quantitative research procedures in order. The study will be concluded with a critical analysis of the Persian Literature ESP Course Content. The following figure depicts the whole research procedure:
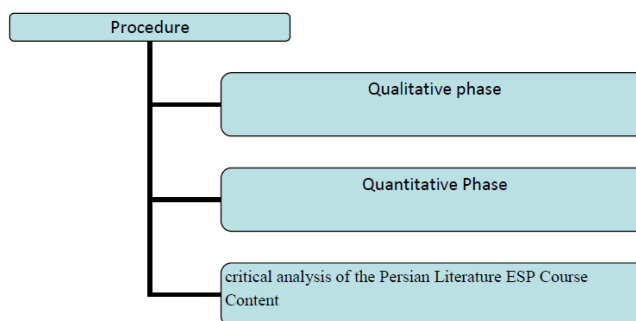
Participants

In this study, total number of 5 instructors was randomly selected from Persian Literature major to carry out the interview phase.

Then, based on the findings of the interview phase a questionnaire was devised and distributed among 250 Persian Literature ESP Students.

Finally, 5 instructors from Persian literature ESP courses were selected and their classes were observed.

Instrument

The instruments employed in the present study were interview questions, questionnaires, classroom observation checklists, course book content analysis checklist (Duddley Evans & Maggie Jo ST John , 2005).

Data Collection

Since the data collection in this study is influenced by mixed method research design, the following phases elaborate on the procedure.

Qualitative phase

In this phase the required data is collected through triangulation procedure as indicated in the picture below.
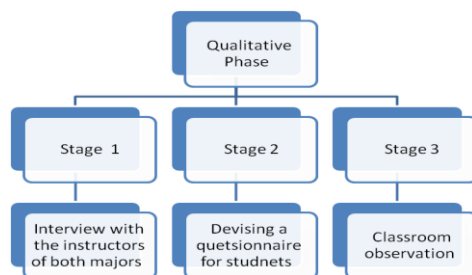
Semi-structure Interview

At the first stage of qualitative data collection, 5 Persian Literature instructors were randomly selected to attend a semi-structured interview. At this stage, the instructors were requested to provide the interviewer with information concerning the current status of the educational sources and materials for Persian literature ESP courses, the impact of these materials on the ESP students' learning and their overall evaluation of the status quo.

Questionnaire

According to the collected date and data coding in the previous stage a questionnaire was devised to carry out a survey on 250 Persian Literature ESP about the content of their ESP course materials, their individual learning rate in the class, the relevance of the material with modern literature, the attraction of the material, level of interaction created among the students due to the course material content.

Observation

At this stage, in order to evaluate the veracity of the statement on the two previous stages, the ESP classes of 5 instructors were observed (6 sessions per class). To do so, an observation checklist was devised based on the interview data coding and the result of the questionnaire surveys.

Quantitative phase

At this phase a Frequency Analysis was run on SPSS to generalize the findings of the questionnaire survey at the previous phase. To this end the responses of 250 Persian Literature ESP students to the questionnaires were measured. The results of this analysis are depicted below:

TABLE1.
QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESULTS

Persian Literature Students' responses to the questionnaire	Frequencies
1.I think the volume of the Persian Literature ESP course material is too much .	73%
2.I think the Persian Literature ESP materials are not up-to date. Moreover, the typing face and publication I not of high quality.	100%
3.I think I don't have a chance to learn inside the classroom.	90%
4.I think the number of tasks inside the Persian Literature ESP course content in too many.	74%
5. I prefer to work on activities in the form of test types.	100%
6. I think my Persian Literature ESP instructors' information is less than that of the Persian literature ESP course content.	80%
7. I think the grammar points are rarely reviewed and considered in the Persian Literature ESP class.	60%
8. I think our Persian Literature ESP instructor is an specialist in our field.	86%
9. I prefer multiple choice tests for the final exam.	78%
10. I think our Persian literature ESP instructors rarely give us the opportunity to participate in class activities.	84%
11. I think the Persian Literature ESP course content differs from General English and pre university English course contents.	89%
12. I think in Persian Literature ESP classes, the new vocabulary is instructed through translation to Persian.	100%

Critical material Analysis

At this phase initially the factual details of the course material instructed in Persian Literature ESP classes in Islamic Azad University Shahr-e- rey branch. The following table illustrates the description:

TABLE2.
FACTUAL DETAILS OF PERSIAN LITERATURE ESP COURSE BOOK

Factual Details
Title : Types of Poetry in English Literature
Authors: Manouchehr Haghighi
Price: Unknown
Publisher : unknown   ISBN: unknown   number of Pages : 100
Components: SB/TB/WB/Tests/ Cassettes/Video/CALL/ Other: None
Level: Advanced
Length: units: 8   Hours: 32 hours in one semester , 2 hours per week
Target Skills: English Poetry Comprehension
Target Learners: Students of English Literature (BA level)
Target Teachers : English Literature instructors

As it is depicted in table 2, the main pieces of information are missing and thus, the copy does not qualify the book to be selected for primary evaluation. However, the purpose of this research project was to elaborate on such deficiencies and refer to threats and the ignored opportunities.

Secondly, to develop a checklist to evaluate the target course book in the present study, the researchers adopted the ESP course book Evaluation checklist devised by (Dudley-Evans. T. & St. John M.J., 2005)and then to facilitate the evaluation process they attempted to reply to the evaluation questions proposed by Sheldon (1988). The reason to select these questions has been their comprehensive focus on the criteria mentioned by Dudley-Evans. T. & St. John M.J., (2005). Below you can find the detailed elaboration on Sheldon's (1988) questions.

• **Rationale:** In order to evaluate the underlying rationale of the target course book the assessor needs to study the availability of the pre-requisite needs analysis. In other words, this criterion can figure out whether the course book spells out its underlying rationale for the target users.

• **Availability:** The course book assessor needs to check whether the copies of the course book are easily obtainable and available. Moreover, he should investigate whether there are any responsive authorities (publisher's representatives) to provide users with further queries.

• **User definition:** The course book assessor needs to observe on the availability of the required specifications concerning the age range, culture, assumed background، learners' (users')entry/exit language levels, probable learning preferences, specialist knowledge (incase of ESP) for both instructor and learners (users) and educational expectations of the target users.

• **Graphics/ Layout:** The course book assessor should evaluate the layout and Graphics to realize whether the art work and graphics are appropriately designed and printed or whether they are enough appealing and colorful for the target users of the course book.

• **Accessibility:** The course book assessor should study the organization of the content material. In other words, to examines whether it differentiates the expected target progress and the progress already made. In addition, he should figure out whether the materials facilitate self study. He should also examine whether the course book includes any guidelines for the learners to explore the content.

• **Linkage:** By focusing on this criterion, the assessor can explore the extent to which the units and tasks are associated in terms of theme, situation, topic, pattern of skill development, or grammatical/lexical 'progression'. Furthermore, he can realize whether the nature of such association has been clarified through placing input texts and supporting tasks in close proximity. Finally, he will evaluate the level of the content coherence inside the book (internal coherence) and with other books in a series (external coherence).

• **Selection/grading:** Through this criterion, the assessor with evaluate how sufficient the presentation of the material in the content is. He will explore whether the introduction, practice and recycling of new linguistic items seems to be adequate for the target students?

• **Physical characteristics:** The assessor explores whether the course book leave enough space for note taking to facilitate both instructors and learners' note taking procedure?

• **Appropriacy:** The assessor will study how appropriate the content material is for the target course, if the level of the maturity and language has been considered? And if the language is tuned at the right conceptual level (particularly for ESP learners)?

• **Authenticity:** The assessor will evaluate the content authenticity.

• **Sufficiency:** Is the course book itself sufficient to be selected as the core and sole source in the class or there is a real need to prepare and support the course book with supplementary materials.

• **Cultural bias**: Is the content biased toward specific nation, culture, religion and society? How well have the target learners' expectations concerning the content, methodology and format been accommodated? How appropriate is the author's sense of humor? How appropriate the religious and social environments have been considered?

• **Educational validity:** This criterion evaluates the extent to which the content of the course book is inline with the concerns of the target board of Education.

• **Stimulus/practice/revision:** Through this criterion the assessor will explore the extent to which the course material encourages learners' interaction and promotes effective consolidation and how easily the material is retainable and remembered. Finally, he will ensure whether there are any achievement test, progress tests and self-check activities available for the instructors?

• **Flexibility:** Through this criterion the assessor will evaluate the probable practical constrains the instructors may encounter including the availability audio-visual equipment, visual aids, classroom environment, and time management.

• **Guidance:** Through this criterion the assessor will focus on the availability of teachers' Guide accompanying a course book. In other words, it evaluates the efficiency and sufficiency of the instructions stated as teachers' guide i.e. how explicit and effective the guidance is provided for the target instructor users. In addition, it will study whether the course book has presented any pieces of advice to the instructors concerning the type of possible supplementary materials they can provide or the type of various instructional techniques they can employ to teach the content. Moreover, the criterion will inspect the availability of typescripts, answer keys, 'technical notes' (in the case of ESP textbooks), glossary index, structural/functional inventories, and lesson summaries in the possibly accompanying teachers' guide.

• **Overall value for money:** Through this criterion the assessor will evaluate whether the selected course book can be prepared in a reasonable price, is user friendly, efficiently applicable in the target teaching context in terms of time, money and labor.

TABLE3.
ESP COURSE BOOK EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Factor	1st rater	2nd rater
Rationale	**2**	2
Availability	1	1
User Definition	1	1
Lay out/ Graphics	1	2
Accessibility	1	1
Linkage	1	1
Selection/ Grading	4	4
Physical characteristics	2	1
Appropriacy	1	1
Authenticity	1	1
Sufficiency	1	1
Cultural bias	1	2
Educational Validity	**2**	2
Stimulus/ Practice/ Revision	1	1
Flexibility	1	1
Guidance	1	2
Overall Value for Money	1	1
Key - Poor: ✦ fair : ✦✦ good: ✦✦✦ excellent : ✦✦✦✦		

In the present study via the application of mixed method research design(qualitative-quantitative) and proceeding through with the adoption of collected data triangulation (devising and carrying out a questionnaire survey on ESP students of Persian literature, Interview with the veteran instructors of Persian literature and TEFL majors, conducting series of classroom observations for Persian literature ESP instructors) and in accordance with standard indices of course book materials development and its association with general English and ESP education the three aforementioned research questions were addressed. According to the indices presented in L. E. Sheldon (1988) the critically reviewed Persian Literature ESP course content didn't contain the underlying rationale of the author to provide a clear road map for both learners and the ESP instructor. In addition, although the copied of the content material were available to all the students, it was rather illegible to the instructors and learners and it didn't carry sufficient space for them to leave notes. Moreover, the copes were authentic and followed British Literature culture and characteristics. Thus, it was culture-bound and irrelevant to Persian Literature. The copies did not entail a teacher's guide as well. Therefore, the Persian ESP instructors didn't have the opportunity to learn how they can deal with the tasks and the content material.

IV. Concluding Remarks and Proposed Solutions

One of the main purposes of Teaching ESP in Iranian Universities is training and promoting technical reading comprehension skills in English in order to instruct ESP learners how to deal with technical contexts relevant to their major. Meanwhile, one of the fundamental prerequisites in this regard is the deployment of appropriate learner needs analysis procedure to evaluate their general English level, their actual need concerning ESP after graduation before enrolling for the courses.

Thus, with regard to such consideration, the researchers in the present study came across a great deficiency and a gap in teaching ESP in general and teaching ESP to students of Persian Literature in particular. In other words, the absence of appropriate consultation opportunities with TEFL materials development experts and veteran instructors in syllabus design, materials selection, development and finally deployment has led to ample problems and deficiencies.

Although in Iranian context , generally ,there are TEFL materials development experts who are rather qualified and eligible to plan, develop, analyze and asses the educational content for teaching English to both general English and ESP students, their presence have been underestimated and/or completely ignored by the expert authorities in other majors. In fact, it is a simplistic view to consider technical knowledge of a specific filed as the adequate qualification for decision making in this critical condition which has embraced inefficient outcome for ESP education in Iran.

In other words, the imperfect selected course content and inefficient designed syllabus for ESP courses in general and Persian literature ESP course in particular has created a chaotic instructional atmosphere which is a real threat for the involved academic society

As a result, the researchers in the present study after exploring the gap and deficiencies proposed the following solutions to help the academic society to revise their perspectives in order to gain more satisfactory results.

1. The ESP course book developers and syllabus designer are highly recommended to hold brainstorming and consultation meetings with TEFL veterans in order to organize coordinate and harmonize their vision and mission, their strategies and target plans.

In this way they will be able to have homogenized techniques in preliminary recognition procedures, needs analysis, materials selection, grading and development and even on instructional techniques and assessment strategies.

2. The ESP instructors are strongly recommended to evaluate the ESP students' proficiency level before deciding on the course syllabus. This can be carried out by instructors at the very first session of every ESP course in the form of

oral or written tests. In this way the instructor would be able to tune their instructional techniques and materials in accordance with the students' level.

3. The ESP instructors are recommended to correctly put emphasize on the importance of teaching translation techniques and principles along with reading comprehension skills to ESP learners. Thus, the ESP instructors are required to be trained in this regard. This is particularly important since the instructors are only experts in the target major rather than qualified English instructor and they merely employ their personal translation and learning techniques as learners in their ESP classes as instructors.

4. In developing ESP materials typing, structure and international standards (ACTFL & ELTS) should be taken into consideration.

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