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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CONTRASTIVE STUDY BETWEEN EFL TEACHERS AND FIELD SPECIALISTS IN TEACHING ESP COURSES FROM THE STUDENTS' VIEW POINT.

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Abstract

As a controversial subject, it has always been a matter of concern for educational analysts to find out which one of the EFL or specialists-in-the-field teachers might cause the students of the ESP courses meet their needs. The researchers tried to find out the level of students' satisfaction through these two different classes taught by EFL or specialists-in-the-field teachers. Therefore, a student rating was conducted. One-hundred and sixty-seven participants who were studying in different majors in different universities, took a four-point Likert Scale questionnaire that included 30 items related to the teacher's knowledge and abilities, functions, and methods and techniques performed in the class. The analysis outcome showed that EFL teachers could enjoy more votes than specialists-in-the-field teachers in conveying a more influential ESP teaching environment that lead to some classroom implications.

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Introduction:-

It is for a long while that the importance of English for specific purposes has been proven and the insights to a more qualified course design has been magnified through different researches and studies for most of EFL and specialists-in-the-field teachers. This paper argues that which one of these two teachers are more aware of the demands should be met during the passage of these courses with the help of an ELT or a specialists-in-the-field teacher. Idealistically put, it has always been a goal to develop the students' language competency as well as the life-long learning process of the ESP courses. As far as the English language became a lingua franca internationally as a language of profession, the students hope to overcome their basic academic needs in English language as a second or foreign language in each specific context they are involved with through these courses (Heydar & Delvand, 2015).

In this regard, teachers play a significant role in the learners' academic achievement and in fact, students outcome is fully related to the quality of teaching and the amount of learning that have taken place in the classroom environment (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs & Robinson, 2004; Lasley II, Siedentop & Yinger, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). As Howatt (1984) pinpoints, this teaching process is counted as an essential and creative way of transmitting the use of that specific course in both foreign or second language. This article considers the needs of the students of many specific fields to see which one has been more successful meanwhile to shed light on the way of EFL and specialists-in-the-field teachers for a more effective teaching.

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As far as the studies show, ESP's concentration is on the needs of those specific learners of each major who aim to learn the international language of the science they are through academically. In fact, the term ESP and its functions tend to take some points into careful consideration such as educational contexts so called the learning setting as well as learners and teachers variables (Howatt, 1984). The nature of the language to be taught is focused as well. One of the traditional obsessions towards this controversial topic or let's say this dilemma is that it was thought that the EFL teachers lack the adequate mastery of the subject matter to be taught. Although, this assumption has been disapproved via the feedback elicited from so many students as samples of other researches around the world in EFL classes for whom the teacher could even develop the satisfaction of the students in this cases (Mohammed, 2012).

As Dudley-Evans and John (1998) put the role of an ESP teacher into a deep account, not only the ESP practitioner is in charge of teaching but also he or she is a good course designer and an authentic-material developer related to that scientific field; therefore, he or she must be a researcher to have adequate proficiency needed to convey the information to the student properly and at last but not the least he or she must be an evaluator of the students to elicit the outcome appropriately (Pouyan, 2012). Based on theoretical backgrounds which exist in the literature, the researchers attempted to elicit more points of views toward their EFL or specialists-in-the-field teachers teaching ESP course. The students' feedback through teachers' knowledge, attitude and functions of the classes especially the method and techniques were deeply interpreted via the questionnaire items.

Generally, the teacher factor was the central point in this study; and the question of who is more qualified to teach ESP courses has created a dispute between EFL teachers and specialists-in-the-field in Iran too. EFL teachers in Iran believe that the goal of teaching the ESP course is to teach English, not the subject matter; therefore, ESP teaching is part of their job. However, Specialists in the field insist on this view that EFL teachers do not possess enough knowledge about the subject area, so they cannot convey the ideas. However, it is worth mentioning that ESP teachers should be experts in the language and language teaching, and are not required master fully the specialized subject knowledge (Rajabi, Kiany, & Maftoon, 2011).

2. Literature Review

Today, English for specific purposes (ESP) is one of the major activities and academic area of studies around the world. It is defined to meet specific needs of the learners and makes use of activities of the discipline it serves. It is an area of study involving education, training and practice. As mentioned above, ESP is taught in many universities of the world. Many professional associations of teachers of English (TESOL, IATEFL) have ESP sections. Much attention is related to the area of ESP and course design. It is necessary to say that ESP teaching has much in common with English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL or ESL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). English for specific purposes (ESP), should not be confused with specialized English, it is a part of teaching English language including Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, English for medical professionals, English for waiters, English for tourism, English for Art Purposes, and so on. Therefore, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an exciting movement and a clear established area of study in English language education since it opens up rich opportunities for English teachers and researchers in new professional domains.

According to some of the previously published research projects, a large number of teachers and instructors in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) sometimes find themselves teaching a course without having any content knowledge or scientific background in the area of study which they are going to teach. Gonzalez and St. Louis (2002) show that teachers can learn specific and technical knowledge of any discipline by self-instruction. Teachers of ESP always tries to find some effective factors in language learning, and new approaches to introduce practical uses of EFL in the classroom. On the other hand, some of the learners' hate learning English; and in some cases, they are not interested in speaking foreign language. Their goal is just to pass the final exams and going to the next phases of education. Learners' likes or dislikes to learn English as a foreign language need to be investigated in others research projects.

Bojovic (2006) argues that specialists-in-the-field teachers are not specialists in teaching English, their subject is English for the profession but not the profession in English. Teaching ESP is a separate activity, thus the ESP practitioner and the general English teacher are not the same. In this regard, Rajabi et al (2011) contrasted EFL or specialists-in-the-field teachers teaching ESP. For this reason, a total number of 423 Iranian English major (ELT) and specialists-in-the-field teachers participated in this research project. The study revealed considerable difference between the beliefs of ELT teachers and their non-ELT counterparts. In fact, the non-ELT teachers may not be aware of complicated features of languages, 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. The results of the research strongly highlighted that theoretically a large gap existed between English major and specialists-in-the-field teachers while practically this difference was very slight.

A study was conducted by Maleki (2008) to find an answer to these questions: who can teach ESP better: the EFL teacher or the specialists-in-the-field teacher? And who should teach ESP courses? The students were randomly selected and divided into two equal groups from Iranian medical sciences university. Their teachers also were a EFL teacher and a specialists-in-the-field teacher. In equal situations, the results of the research project revealed that EFL teachers can reach to the course goals better than specialists-in-the-field teacher teachers. Due to the mentioned point, they strongly recommend that ESP courses should be taught by EFL teachers rather than specialists-in-the-field teachers.

Sherkatolabbasi (2012) intended to compare three kinds of ESP teachers in different ESP contexts at several Iranian universities. This study was run through distributing a 101-item questionnaire for teachers and an 83-item one for students, each one was checked through a pilot study and with a high reliability, among the participants. The outcomes concerning these contexts revealed that the context of content teachers is less effective than ESP teachers and ESP teachers at Language Departments were mostly satisfied with their courses. This research project suggests that if ESP courses are offered by ESP teachers of Language Departments in each faculty, the problems and shortcomings could be removed.

In other research project conducted by Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), they aimed to investigate the foreign language learning needs of undergraduate medical sciences students studying in faculties of nursing and midwifery in Iran. After data collection and extensive qualitative and statistical analysis, the results of the research project showed that most of the students recognized their need to master the foreign language before their specialized courses. Almost, over one-third of the students expressed their dissatisfaction with the number of students in each class, with the methods of teaching, the method of evaluation, and the amount of foreign language culture taught in the class. On the other hand, the ESP teacher (specialists-in-the-field) responses showed total dissatisfaction with their students' language proficiency. Finally, it was inferred that the proficiency level of the teachers and their specific knowledge of the any academic fields were two of the reasons for the dissatisfaction.

The present study which was a descriptive one, was conducted to explore the question of whose teaching satisfies the students more and who is more qualified to teach ESP courses, EFL teachers or the specialists-in-the field, from the learners' point of view.

The following questions guided this study:

1. How satisfactorily and effectively do the EFL teachers and the subject-matter teachers teach an ESP course from the students' point of view considering teachers' knowledge and ability, function, and methods and techniques used?
2. Is there any significant difference between the rate of satisfaction for ESP students taught by the EFL teachers and the rate for those taught by the subject-matter teachers?
3. Is there any significant difference between the rate of satisfaction for ESP students taught by the EFL teachers and the rate for those taught by the subject-matter teachers in two different contexts; Ardabil and Tehran universities?

Method:-

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 167 female and male Iranian graduate or university students studying in different majors at universities of Ardabil and Tehran. The participants were selected at random. They were taking or took their ESP courses as a required course as a part of their B.A., B. S., M.A. M.S. or Ph.D. programs. They are required to pass one 2-credit ESP courses depending on their majors. It takes one semester with two hours a week to complete and they are usually taught by the specialists in the field or sometimes by EFL teachers. The participants in this study were divided into two groups; each group consisted of different students studying in different majors. Eighty students were attending ESP courses taught by EFL teachers' classes and the rest were attending at ESP courses taught by the specialists in the field teachers.

3.2. Instruments

A 30-item questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument in order to investigate the students' views about their ESP teachers and their teaching procedures. At first, some questionnaires were adopted, some items were selected and modified, and some other items were deleted. The questionnaire was translated into Farsi, so that every

student could understand the items clearly. The items in one of the original questionnaires were in question form. In order to make it easier to understand, the items changed into statements. The questionnaire was based on a four-point Likert Scale. Each option was given a numerical value from one to four. Generally, the items in the questionnaire consisted of three different parts, i.e. items related to the teachers' knowledge and abilities, function, and methods and techniques which they use in the classroom to teach the ESP courses. Since these questions were adopted from Swandee's (1995) and two other questionnaires which were modified regarding successful ESP teachers' characteristics, therefore; Cronbach's alpha for the reliability of this new questionnaire was calculated at 0.91, which is regarded as an acceptable index. Since the questionnaire consisted of three different categories, the reliability of these categories was also calculated separately, the Cronbach's Alpha values for three categories were 0.71, 0.79, and 0.83 respectively. The online version of this questionnaire was also designed to collect data online.

3.3. Data Collection

This study was a questionnaire-based survey which was conducted to find out how participants in the study think satisfactorily their ESP teachers teach the courses. In order to elicit the students' genuine attitudes toward their ESP teacher's teaching method, the participants were assured that their answers were to be used in a research project and their identities would be kept confidential. The students were asked to write their major and their ESP teacher's field of study. One-hundred and sixty-seven participants were randomly selected. The ESP courses of eighty students had been taught by EFL teachers and the others by specialists in the field. Eighty-eight questionnaires were distributed to the participants studying in Ardabil universities, and seventy-nine questionnaires were distributed in universities of Tehran. Some of these data were collected online by the online version of questionnaire designed by a researcher of this research article.

3.4. Data Analysis Method

In analyzing the survey data, the rating took the form of Likert Scales. Rating Scales were numerically coded as 1 (for strongly disagree), 2 (for disagree), 3 (for agree), and 4 (strongly agree), depending on the content and nature of each item on the questionnaire. Then the data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis via the SPSS package.

Results:-

4.1. T-test results for students' satisfaction with ESP teachers' knowledge and ability, functions, methods, and techniques

In order to analyze data, at first, Levene Statistic Test was used to make the data homogenous and then for exploring the students' rate of satisfaction in the two groups on the basis of the teachers' knowledge and abilities, functions and methods and techniques, several independent-samples t- tests were conducted.

4.1.1 T-test results for students' satisfaction with ESP teachers' knowledge and ability

The first part of the questions on the questionnaire which was 7 items dealt with the teachers' knowledge and abilities. As the table 2 shows, it can be said with 95% of certainty that in both conditions of equal variances, there was statistically significant difference in students' degree of satisfaction with the EFL teacher and specialists -in-the-field teachers regarding all items in this part ($t= 2.113$, $p = .036$). The comparison of students' satisfaction regarding the category of teacher's knowledge and ability through t-test showed that mean differences for EFL and specialists-in-the-field teachers were significant ($M=1.23$). In other terms, EFL teachers benefited more knowledge and ability than specialists-in-the-field teachers.

Table 1:- Descriptive statistics and Independent-Samples t-test results for students' satisfaction with the ESP teachers' Knowledge and abilities

	ELT Teacher or Non-ELT Teacher		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	1 ELT	2 NON-ELT				
Teacher's knowledge and attitude	1 ELT		80	21.69	3.675	.411
	2 NON-ELT		87	20.45	3.684	.416

Table 2:- Results of t-test and Levene statistic test for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ knowledge and ability

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teacher's knowledge and attitude	Equal variances assumed	.534	.466	2.113	165	.036	1.239	.586	.081	2.397
	Equal variances not assumed			2.118	164.860	.036	1.239	.585	.084	2.394

(p>0.05, 2-tailed)

4.1.2. T-tests results for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ functions

The second part of the questionnaire included 9 items related to the teachers’ function in the classroom. The results in Table 4 indicated with 95% of certainty, and in the condition of equal variances, a statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding participant’s satisfaction of teachers’ function (t=2.060, p = 0.041). The mean difference also showed a main effect (M=1.582). In other words, EFL teachers functioned better than specialists-in-the-field teachers did.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and Independent-Samples t-tests results for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ functions

	ELT Teacher or Non-ELT Teacher		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	1 ELT	2 NON-ELT				
Method and Technique	1 ELT		80	40.46	7.690	.860
	2 NON-ELT		87	37.26	6.921	.742

Table 4. Results of t-test and Levene statistic test for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ functions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teacher's function	Equal variances assumed	.000	.992	2.060	165	.041	1.582	.768	.065	3.099
	Equal variances not assumed			2.058	163.183	.041	1.582	.769	.064	3.100

(p>0.05, 2-tailed)

4.1.3. T-tests results for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ methods and techniques

In this part, the questionnaire included 14 items related to the methods and techniques used in classroom by EFL and specialists-in-the-field teachers. As indicated by Table 6 below, the students’ level of satisfaction in related items obtained by t-test revealed with 95% of certainty, and in the condition of equal variances, a statistically significant difference (t =2.829, p = 0.005) and the mean differences was significant too (M=3.198). In other words, EFL teachers employed more useful methods and techniques than specialists-in-the-field teachers.

Table 5:- Descriptive statistics and Independent-Samples t-tests results for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ methods and techniques

	ELT Teacher or Non-ELT Teacher		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	1 ELT	2 NON-ELT				
Teacher's function	1 ELT		80	26.95	5.014	.561
	2 NON-ELT		87	25.37	4.909	.526

Table 6:- Results of t-test and Levene statistic test for students’ satisfaction with the ESP teachers’ methods and techniques

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Method and Technique	Equal variances assumed	1.562	.213	2.829	165	.005	3.198	1.131	.966	5.431
	Equal variances not assumed			2.816	159.314	.005	3.198	1.136	.955	5.441

(p>0.05, 2-tailed)

4.2. Overall Satisfaction with the ESP Teachers

In addition to the mean scores of each item, the total mean scores of the two groups were computed and compared through t-test analysis. The descriptive statistics and t-test results for the two groups are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7:- Descriptive statistics for students’ overall satisfaction with the ESP teachers

	City	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ELT Teacher or Non-ELT Teacher	1 Ardebil	88	1.53	.502	.053
	2 Tehran	79	1.51	.503	.057

Table 8:- Independent-Samples T-Test for students’ level of satisfaction and the ESP teachers

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ques	Equal variances assumed	.130	.718	2.694	165	.008	6.01954	2.23465	1.60735	10.43173
	Equal variances not assumed			2.689	162.491	.008	6.01954	2.23842	1.59940	10.43968

(p>0.05, 2-tailed)

As presented in Table 8, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between two groups, and the mean scores difference between the two groups was high. The mean score of group of EFL teacher (M = 89.10) was higher than that of group of specialist-in-the-field (M = 83.08). The results revealed that the level of the students’ satisfaction with the EFL teacher was higher than that with the specialist-in-the-field (Table 7).

4.3. Comparing T-test results for students’ satisfaction with EFL and ESP teachers in two different cities

In other data analysis, in order to compare the students’ rate of satisfaction with EFL and specialists -in-the-field teachers teaching ESP course in two different cities, an independent- samples t-tests were conducted. The results in Table 10 revealed no statistically significant differences (t= .357, p = .722). The mean difference between the two cities was not significant too (Table 9).

Table 9. Descriptive statistics and Independent-Samples t-tests results for students’ satisfaction with EFL and ESP teachers in two different cities

Table 10:-Results of t-test and Levene statistic test for students' satisfaction with EFL and ESP teachers in two different cities

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ELT Teacher or Non-ELT Teacher	Equal variances assumed	.330	.567	.357	165	.722	.028	.078	-.126	.182
	Equal variances not assumed			.356	162.974	.722	.028	.078	-.126	.182

(p>0.05, 2-tailed)

4.4. Comparing two-way ANOVAs results for students' Satisfaction with ESP Teachers' knowledge and ability, functions, and methods and technique in two different cities

In order to analyze three categories related to the ESP teachers' knowledge and ability, functions, and methods and technique in two different cities separately, three two-way ANOVAs were run on the data obtained for these categories. As presented in Table 11, the results showed there were no statistically significant differences for the first and second categories ($p = 0.173$, $p = 0.286$). However, the third categories showed that there was a statistically significant difference between two cities ($p = .022$).

Table 11:- Two-way ANOVA results for students' Satisfaction with ESP Teachers' knowledge and ability, functions, and methods and technique in two different cities

	Source	SS	df	MS	F-Value	Sig.
Knowledge and ability	Class * city	26.86	1	26.86	1.876	.173
Function	Class * city	28.20	1	28.20	1.144	.286
Methods and technique	Class * city	276.26	1	276.26	5.327	.022

Conclusion:-

The findings of this study confirms the previous findings that ESP students feel more satisfaction with the EFL teacher than with the specialist-in-the-field teacher considering the knowledge and ability that they possess, the function that they fulfill, and the methods and techniques which they employ (Ahmadi, 2007; Maleki, 2006; Rajabi, Kiany, & Maftoon, 2011; Sadeghi, 2005). According to the participant's ideas in different universities in various fields passing ESP courses, EFL teachers benefited more knowledge and ability than the specialist-in-the-field teachers, and this hopefully indicate that the EFL teachers are much more qualified than specialist-in-the-field teachers.

EFL teachers also functioned better than ESP teachers. Dudley-Evans (1997) was convinced earlier than us that ESP teachers must be trained how to learn from and with their learners, as the EFL teachers engage with students which end to a much better lesson-planned function (Dudley- Evans, 1997). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) correctly state that ESP teachers are not prepared well for the new environment which they step into it and they are required to take strong steps to improve their situation in this context of teaching.

According to ESP students, undoubtedly EFL teachers employed more useful methods and techniques than the specialist-in-the-field teachers. The researchers concluded that the knowledgeable language teachers who teach ESP courses applying appropriate techniques, analyzing students' needs, increase the satisfaction of the learners significantly.

The findings also confirm Savas' (2009) view that generally, the EFL teacher teach the ESP course better than the specialist-in-the-field, because Functional Academic Literacy (FAL) is a required skill for an ESP teacher and acquisition of FAL involves acquiring the discourse of science; therefore, since the EFL teachers of ESP has already

acquired sufficient control over the target language, they can acquire the FAL more effectively than the specialist-in-the-field teachers. Those specialists-in the-field interested in teaching ESP English should attain all the necessary requirements if they want to be successful in teaching ESP course. Also, a cooperation between the two groups of ESP teachers can provide a better condition for a more qualified instruction of ESP.

To put it in nutshell, the comparative investigation of an EFL and non- EFL teachers underlined through the literature clarify that though there are some common suggestions for both the teachers in their classes, still the ELT teachers have a number of responsibilities which make their work more demanding. As compared to non- EFL teachers, EFL instructors in ESP course have to show more flexibility in their approaches because of ever-changing teaching circumstances in their classroom. Both EFL and non- EFL teachers should be skillful and trained to fertilize their results in their fields. But it can safely be assumed that EFL teachers in ESP class must be given special training in the required skills like need analysis and material designing to enable them to meet the specific needs of their students. Also, it was tangible that what EFL teachers considered in class was authentic way of teaching foreign language skill using academic syllabus to pave the way of learners to meet their needs academically, and keen them to boost their English knowledge not only for university course to pass, but also, they understood how to study main articles well in order to be good at their technical vocabularies related to their own fields of study. Also, they were realized that they ought to get familiar with all skills to be master. Generally, the EFL instructor while performing the traditional role like a non-EFL instructor has to become a material designer, a facilitator and researcher simultaneously. The variety of their roles needs to be highly revealed in the practices carried out in their classes for the achievement of their teaching goals.

Classroom implications

Going through the process of research, the researchers faced some implications to be considered by the ESP teachers as classroom managers who build an authentic learning context for the students of different professional fields. As it was mentioned before there were some factors included in the questionnaire items to be elicited as feedbacks and some points were extracted such as: teacher knowledge, which is fundamentally important for the students to enjoy a knowledgeable instructor during their course. In this regard a teacher of any type an EFL or specialist-in-the-field, must fulfill this issue academically and professionally. The next factor is teacher's attitude which has got a great influence in motivating the students during the term. It is worth mentioning that according to this study, the attitude of the teachers influenced the satisfaction of the students which is an aim for any teacher to make sure about this side of the outcome too.

The last but for sure not the least area is teacher's function, method and techniques which according to the analysis, it was shown that the ELT teachers overcame this district of their authority much better than the ESP teachers whose only prior point was being educated in that specific field. All and all it is worth considering that all said above are to be applied as a precious approach which hopefully satisfies the needs of the learners.

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