

## Iranian EFL Instructors' Perceptions toward ESP Courses

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to examine Iranian EFL instructors' perceptions of ESP courses in different aspects such as instructional issues and working environments. This study also aimed at determining if there were significant differences in instructors' perceptions of instructional issues according to their gender. To this end, 12 instructors, which were selected randomly from different universities in Isfahan, participated in this study. A questionnaire containing 32 different items was designed by the researchers and was given to the participants. The rating scale was based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results revealed that instructors' knowledge of ESP should be strengthened specially in the field of communicative teaching methods. The results also revealed that there were no significant differences in instructors' perceptions based on gender. This study has implications for ESP curriculum designing and development in Iran and can help Iranian EFL instructors in different ways toward ESP courses.

**Keywords:** ESP courses, Iranian instructors, ESP curriculum designing

### Introduction

The globalization and technological development have made English language an essential tool for international communication. It is estimated that more than one billion people are currently learning English worldwide and the number of people learning English has been increasing (Beare, 2012). ESP began to emerge in the late 1960s in the oil-rich countries where the demand for learning English was growing because of massive commerce trading in commodities (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). ESP can be simply described either as the teaching of English for any specified purposes such as vocational and professional purposes, or as the teaching of English used in academic studies (Anthony, 1997). ESP has become significantly important since there is an increased learning need of vocational and occupational purposes around the world. An enriched ESP course may include a number of factors that should be based on, but are not limited

to, (1) learner needs, (2) goal direction, (3) utilitarian purposes, (4) discipline-related content, (5) language skills, (6) instructional contexts, and (7) learners' and teachers' characteristics (Baghban & Ambigapathy, 2011). Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) pointed out that one of the main issues of ESP syllabi is the selection of teaching materials (i.e., whether authentic materials or non-authentic materials should be used in ESP courses). Authentic materials, as defined by Mishan (2005, p. 1), are the texts created for genuine communicative purposes which are applied to "everything from the original appearance of a text to perception and validation by the text user, and which has been further complicated by the advent of texts and interactions occurring on information and communications technologies." In addition, there are problems that teachers have faced in teaching in ESP programs, especially in the countries where English is not spoken as a native language.

### Research Questions

This study was an attempt to find answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Iranian EFL instructors perceive instructional issues and school working environments when teaching ESP courses?

RQ2: Are there significant differences in Iranian EFL instructors' perceptions of instructional issues according to their gender?

### Significance of This Study

Findings of this study are expected to offer school administrators at the target universities a clearer picture of various aspects of ESP programs to better respond to teacher concerns for program improvement. The results may also shed light on the program transformability so that school administrators can pay closer attention to ESP issues and teaching quality and make appropriate adjustments for better instructional quality and academic success. Zohrabi (2010) indicated that a great amount of money, resources, time, and energy have been spent on ESP courses but their ultimate outcomes are less than satisfactory. Students' goals, proficiency levels, and needs should be taken into account since "it is a mistake to expose students to ESP while they still lag far