ESP Instructors' Viewpoint towards Learners' Needs: The Case of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at addressing ESP instructors' perspectives towards ESP learners' needs at Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences (KUMS). That is, we sought to investigate whether or not the learners' needs in ESP classes are met satisfactorily. Using census rather than sampling, a total number of 10 ESP instructors were selected as the participants. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant individually. The results obtained from the interviews yielded 13 dominant themes. It was revealed that instructor-oriented themes were mainly concerned with perceived/felt needs, subject specialists/language instructors, a-priori/negotiated syllabus, team teaching/solitary teaching, instructors as suppressors of needs, receptive/productive skills, transmissive/transformative instructors, and positive/negative reinforcement. However, students' unheard voices in material selection, sense of belonging to the class, students' ratings of instruction and heterogenous/homogenous class groupings were mainly associated with student-oriented themes. Finally, content gradation was found to be associated with coursebook/material-oriented theme. Each of the recognized themes played either a facilitating or hindering role in making learners' needs met. Henceforth, delving into the role of such themes in ESP classes would open new insights into the instructors' viewpoints towards their leaners' needs. The frequency of the retrieved themes was a sign of commonality and generalizability among the majority of instructors; however, the indirect and unidimensional analysis of learners' needs could be remedied by inspecting the learners' actual needs through their own perspectives in future studies

KEYWORDS: Needs analysis; English for specific purposes; Instructors' perspectives; Learners' needs; Course evaluation; Thematic analysis (TA)

1. Introduction

Learners are pivotal components in actualizing classroom objectives; however, they seem to be marginalized by the authorities who make value judgments about them. Atai and Hejazi (2019) introduced students as one of the "key stakeholder groups" (p.

280). Needs analysis is both the preliminary stage and basis on which a researcher can track his venue. Such a concept "has featured prominently in the literature of language teaching since the 1980s." (Masuhara, 1998, p. 238).

Emerging in the late 1960s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as an umbrella term or a whole entity, shelters a variety of particulars including, English for Academic purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) or English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), English for Business Purposes (EBP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Fitness Purposes (EFP), English for Psychological Purposes (EPP) and a number of other subcategories each relating to a particular domain.

Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences (KUMS), a well-known public university in Sanandaj, forms the context of the present study. It offers up-to-date programs in five main faculties including, faculty of dentistry, faculty of health, faculty of nursing and midwifery, faculty of paramedical sciences, and faculty of medicine. The students take a two-credit course on General English during the primary semesters, then usually during the 3rd and 4th semesters, they are offered either two or four ESP courses (depending on the field of study).

The main problem which sets the ground for posing the research questions is to see whether or not the students' needs as one of the most significant pedagogic factors turns out to be a met or an unmet desire. The insufficient number of works eliciting ESP instructors' viewpoints towards learners' needs may be partly compensated by studies like the present one. The significance of the study is that by conducting course evaluation we take a middle position between curriculum evaluation (the broad scop) and textbook evaluation (the narrow scope). Making the instructors conscious about learners' needs can help them find the appropriate route for "instructional design" (Li, 2018, p. 4).

This study seeks to answer the following research questions.

Main Questions: Inspecting ESP instructors' viewpoints towards the learners' needs in the current status of offered ESP courses at KUMS, what themes are recognized as significant?

Sub-Question 1: What themes are instructor-oriented in the evaluated ESP course/s?

Sub-Question 2: What themes are student-oriented in the evaluated ESP course/s?

Sub-Question 3: What themes are coursebook/material-oriented in the evaluated ESP course/s?

2. Literature Review

ESP is the umbrella term which entails needs analysis as one of its components. Although the international literature by Hatam and Shafiei, 2012; Aliakbari and Boghayeri, 2014; Lesiak-Bielawska, 2014; Zafarghandi et al. 2017; Çelik, 2018; Halim et al. 2022; Elmechta, 2023 confirmed the conduction of ESP course in different disciplines, the following works elucidate teaching ESP in Iranian universities of medical sciences. Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) investigated foreign language learning needs of undergraduate nursing and midwifery students in Iran. They inferred that the studied ESP course does not fully prepare the students to embark on their studies. Examining the (ESP) needs of Iranian paramedical students, Akbari (2014) verified the participants' dissatisfaction with the number of current ESP courses for Bachelor of Arts (BA) students. Besides, Nezakatgoo and Behzadpoor (2017) explored the major challenges of teaching ESP in medical universities in Iran. They classified the challenges into institutional challenges, learner-related challenges, and teacher-related challenges. Sattarpour and Khalili (2019) outlined pronunciation, technical and general vocabulary knowledge, and the use of bilingual dictionaries as important target needs by the learners. Hosseini and Shokrpour (2019) attempted to identify the motivating factors affecting Iranian medical ESP learners. Khalili and Tahririan (2023) probed for the status of ESP in medical schools. They reported inappropriate materials, weak motivation and heterogeneous classes as the most dominant challenges.

Reviewing the related literature revealed three types of perspective investigation including the students' themselves, the instructors, or a triangulation of stakeholders' perspectives, among which the second one retrieved the least studies. Hereby, the studies by Fatehi et al., 2022; Khalili and Tahririan 2020; Mahdavi Zafarghandi et al., 2014; Nasiri and Khojasteh 2024; Sojoodizadeh et al., 2020; Zohrabi and Khalili, 2024 concentrated on learners' own perspectives towards their own needs. While, studies by Atai and Hejazi, 2019; Farahian and Rajabi, 2022; Mahmoodi et al., 2023; Nazari and Zaroori, 2021; Soodmand Afshar and Ahmadi, 2020; concentrated on a triangulation of perspectives in investigating learners' needs. Unlike the already offered literature, the study by Rajabi and Farahian (2021) strived to determine the status of ESP courses for the students of nursing from only the instructors' perspectives.

The review indicated insufficient number of works eliciting merely instructors' perspectives as knowledgeable stakeholders. Thus, such a lack could be partly compensated for by the present study which exclusively takes their viewpoints into account.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

As a measure to assess the adequacy of needs analysis for ESP students, the instructors' viewpoints were assessed via interviews during the second academic semester of 2023-2024 at KUMS. The following offers a more detailed description on participant selection, instrumentation, and procedure in which the study was conducted.

3.2. Participants and sample size: Census rather than sample

The participants included all ESP instructors of KUMS. We intended to ask all of the study population to participate in the research. Therefore, there was no need to determine a sample rather census was used. Consequently, the type of sampling produced a "census-matched sample" (Ruiz and Bell, 2021, p. 1084). Male and female ESP instructors constituted %70 and %30 of the total participants respectively. The demographic information provided by the participants is documented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Participants (Coded)	Specialty	Degree	Employment Status	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	School	Duration(minute)
Male Dentistry 1	Periodontology specialist	Ph.D.	Faculty member	34	male	2	dentistry	11:21
Male Dentistry 2	Restorative Dentistry Specialist	PhD	Faculty member	36	male	2	dentistry	16:32
Male Dentistry 3	endodontist	PhD	Faculty member	37	male	7	dentistry	14:13
Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4	English language teaching	PhD	Faculty member	47	male	12	medicine	15:58
Male Medicine 5	Medical education	PhD	Faculty member	53	Male	21	medicine	33.54
Male Health 6	Health Education & Promotion	PhD	Faculty member	43	male	6	health	12:50
Male Health 7	Environmental health	PhD	Faculty Member	48	male	12	health	18:46
Female Health 8	Health Education & Promotion	PhD	Faculty Member	60	Female	20	health	30:16
Male Nursing 9	Nursing education	PhD	Faculty member	40	male	6	nursing	16:33
Female Medicine 10	Nuclear medicine specialist	PhD	Faculty member	39	female	3	medicine	17:34

3.3. Instrumentation

The present study begins with semi-structured interviews with ESP instructors. Petrescu et al. (2017) noted that in such a data elicitation technique, the movement and transition is from "unstructured interviews" towards structured "template questions, asked in a specific order" (p.38). The already framed questions are better to be referred to as interview guide (Appendix A), in that they are not going to be asked in a rigidly predetermined order. They are almost flexible with each interviewee.

3.4. Procedure

Data collection began during the second academic semester of 1402-1403. The pilot study with one of the most knowledgeable ESP instructors was followed by four subsequent rounds of interviews. 11 potential interviewees were called and told that the interviews would not last more than 30-35 minutes. However, since one of the interviewees was on a long job leave, 10 interviews were successfully conducted. The whole interview sessions were audio recorded on the interviewer's cell phone. The rounds were categorized based on the timespan they were conducted in and their sequence led to the development of the final framework for themes. Furthermore, one cannot deny the significance of the formal language or the mother tongue used in a variety of domains specially surveys. Jacobsen (2022) confirmed that "a mismatch between the mother tongue and survey language increases the likelihood of item nonresponse" (p.466). Here, in order to avoid any possible inconveniences caused by the enumerated mismatch, all the face-to-face interviews were conducted in Persian (Appendix B).

3.5. Data collection and data analysis

Semi-structured interview was employed as the data collection technique; whereas, Thematic Analysis (TA), a method to identify themes in qualitative studies, was adopted to conduct data analysis. Although procedures for using TA as a qualitative technique began in the 1990s, it was Braun and Clarke's (2006) landmark paper in which "TA as a 'named and claimed' method has gained hugely in popularity and has entered the qualitative canon as a recognizable and reputable method of analysis" (Terry et al. 2017, p.18). Furthermore, they outlined the following six phases to conduct TA (p.23).

Phase 1: Familiarization

In order to get familiar with the data, the audio recorded interviews were played several times. The more we listened, the higher our curiosity went to get mastery over the dataset. After getting engaged with the dataset, the researchers felt the need to move towards a clearer path to extract some codes.

Phase 2: Generating Codes

We have already made several abstract and casual codes. Table 2 reports initial coding. Later on, we decided to remove some codes that were generated from only a very limited number of responses. Terry et al. (2017) described such themes as "thin" (p.31). They added that "The purpose of coding is to find the 'evidence' for the themes" (p. 19).

Phase 3 and 4: Constructing Themes and Reviewing Potential Themes

The already described phases paved the ground for constructing themes. Coding was not only employed to reduce data, but also as a process to organize the retrieved data (Terry et al., 2017).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

In this phase, we bounded ourselves to offer definitions for the new terminologies and concepts which conveyed the themes. Two changes were made to the initial draft on themes. As mentioned earlier, thin ones were removed and some changes were made to the naming of some themes to make them more representative.

Phase 6: Final Report

This section partly equates with the discussion. The final report "should contain sufficient evidence of themes in form of demonstrated data extracts" (Majumdar, 2022, p.210). Henceforth, as the main building block in the analysis, explicit data extracts were provided and evaluated.

4. Results

Several themes were identified and labeled. The primary draft and finalized list of themes are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Table 2. Primary draft on themes

Rank	Theme	Categorizations	
1	Material	Pamphlet	Book
2	Book	Instructors' own book	Published by others
3	Number of instructors	One instructor	Team teaching/collaborative teaching
4	They have a head of department	Yes	No
5	Content gradation	Is considered	Is not considered
6	Which skills are taught, learnt or emphasized more	Receptive	Productive
7	A syllabus is decided	A priori	Negotiated
8	Students' class groupings	Homogenous	Heterogenous
9	ESP instructors act based on…	Perceived needs (needs of learners perceived by others)	Felt needs (needs of learners felt by themselves)
10	University's solution for weaker students	None	some

11	How weakness affects students' general performance	Less engagement	Desire/aspire to be engaged more
12	Who should teach ESP?	Subject specialists	Language instructors
13	The distance between instructors and students is longer when a class is taught by a…	Subject specialists	Language instructors
14	Friendly and dialogic interaction occurs more conveniently when the students are taught by	Subject specialists	Language instructors
15	What are the consequences of students' inability to express their criticisms freely in the class?	Lack of feeling engaged	Suppressed needs
16	The force exercised by the instructors to engage students is	Usually, constructive	Usually, destructive
17	The general condition of ESP classes is	Instructor-centered	Student-centered
18	Replacement exam/language proficiency screening test	Administered	Not Administered
19	The obligatory ESP Courses are considered as	Transitory without any other significance than the scores they get	Courses the students have understood their significance in job and education venue
20	The need to learn language is felt more during	General courses	Specialized courses
21	Students' status	Marginalized	Centralized
22	Types of Instructors	Transmissive	Transformative
23	Students' ratings of instruction	Are important for teachers	Are not important for teachers
24	Reinforcement	Positive	Negative
25	Undergraduate Programs	Continuous undergraduate students	Non-continuous undergraduate students

Table 3. Finalized themes

	Theme	Frequency
Instructor-Oriented	Team Teaching/ Solitary teaching	5
	Subject Specialist/ Language Instructor	9
	Perceived Needs/Felt Needs	11
	Instructors as Suppressors of Needs	3
	Syllabus Design (a priori /negotiated)	5
	Transmissive/ Transformative instructors	1
	Positive/Negative Reinforcement	1
	Receptive/Productive Skills	2
Total		37
Student-Oriented	Students' unheard voices in material selection	16
	Sense of Belonging and Engagement	8
	Students' Ratings of Instruction	5
	Heterogenous/Homogenous Classroom Groupings	3
Total		32
Coursebook/Material-Oriented	Content Gradation	3
All the Extractions		72

Inspecting the instructors' viewpoints towards leaners' needs, Table 2 yielded 72 themes. However, the research questions tended to be more specified by separating the orientations of themes. The frequency of the occurrence of themes in each domain determines the order they are discussed in the next section. In terms of the results for the first research question on instructor-oriented themes, types of needs (perceived needs/felt needs), types of instructors (Subject specialist/Language Instructor), types of teaching (team teaching/ solitary teaching), types of syllabus design (a priori /negotiated), instructors as suppressors of needs, receptive/productive skills, transmissive/transformative instructors and positive/negative reinforcement were retrieved. In terms of the results for the second research question on student-oriented themes, students' unheard voices in material selection, sense of belonging and engagement, students' ratings of instruction and heterogenous/homogenous classroom groupings were retrieved. In terms of the results for the third research question on coursebook-oriented themes, only one theme associating with content gradation was recognized.

Since the learners' needs were identified through the viewpoints of instructors the number of instructor-oriented themes was higher in comparison with the ones recognized as student-oriented. We would like to name the already recognized

themes as pedagogic instruments though which teaching will either partly or fully facilitate or hinder making learners' needs met. Discussion of the recognized themes is presented in the next section.

5. Discussion

The following is a discussion for the identified instructor-oriented, student-oriented and coursebook-oriented themes, respectively. The order in which they are discussed is based on the frequency of their occurrence.

5.1. Instructor-oriented themes

5.1.1. Perceived needs/felt needs

Regarding the concepts of perceived needs and the felt needs, the instructors elaborated on the following points.

Actually, I myself have not considered the learners' needs from their own perspectives. I have taught what I had found to be probably useful for them both linguistically and scientifically. (*Male Dentistry 3*)

We teach and assess all the students similarly. We cannot considerably take individual differences into account. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

We cannot meet individual needs; however, I appreciate those who are highly motivated. (*Male Medicine 5*)

The students are viewed collectively. That is, the duration of classes is not enough and the volume of the material which is supposed to be taught is high. (*Male Health 6*)

There are about 120 students in an ESP class. Thus, it is not possible to take the students' needs into account individually. (*Female Medicine 10*)

The material I give the students is somehow different from the educational curriculum. I act based on my own experiences. (*Male Health 7*)

Based on our experience, the ability we have in understanding what the students need, and the philosophy of pragmatism which emphasizes practical usefulness, we try to make the best out of the limited available time. (*Male Nursing 9*)

He added that, what is effective in deciding what to teach is the occupational experience of instructors (*Male Nursing 9*).

One of the interviewees maintained that freshmen students are not knowledgeable enough about ESP courses; therefore, they cannot recognize their needs clearly.

It is not appropriate to enquire about students' needs while they are still studying their second and third semesters. (*Female Medicine 10*)

She added that,

A student in the second semester of education does not have much vision on the clinical period. (*Female Medicine 10*)

Contrary to our study, Salehi et al. (2015) considered perceived needs analysis in medical ESP classes as an unrealistic identification of learners' needs.

5.1.2. Subject specialist/language instructor

The following is an attempt to evaluate the priority of teaching ESP courses by subject specialist. Language teachers can find themselves weak where they are trying to answer questions about subject matter which is not their specialism (Vakilidousta & Rahmani, 2023, p. 12).

In my opinion, whoever teaches ESP must certainly have a background knowledge in medical sciences. (*Male Medicine 5*)

He added that:

when we teach, we have some scenarios in our mind, which will cause sense of humor which will help in tackling boredom in the classroom. And our teaching becomes more authentic. (*Male Medicine 5*)

Thus, it is a good idea to flavor teaching with scenarios and real-life experiences.

One more point has to be clarified here;

Although language instructors may do their best to be equipped with additional content information, lack of content experiences will cause them failure. That is, they do not have reflection which causes integration. (*Male Medicine 5*)

A subject specialist is better to teach ESP. For example, I know what exactly the phrase "perceived barrier" means. However, a language instructor may offer an abstract translation. (*Female Health 8*)

The way a subject specialist translates texts is more tangible.

ESP should be taught by subject specialists. For instance, the term "treatment" has different meanings in different contexts. If a vet uses it, it means "timar", if a physician uses it, it means "darman", and for us it means "tasfieh". (*Male Health 7*)

There are some instructional scaffolding techniques that will be actualized better via subject specialists rather than language instructors.

The instructors should have worked in different wards, they should be familiar with technical terms. (*Male Nursing 9*)

This way, the subject specialist becomes a comprehensive package of knowledge. He added that:

Subject specialists can employ hundreds of resources which emanate from their experiences. (*Male Nursing 9*)

A language instructor is usually fed one dimensionally; whereas, a subject specialist is fed from a variety of sources.

Reading numbers and chemical formulae in English cannot be easily done by a language instructor. (*Male Health 7*)

One of the interviewees alluded to a nice point. She said that:

Whenever I teach general English, I tell my students that you may start talking in English and I may fall behind. However, in teaching ESP; for example, when we are teaching cardio, we should be engaged and understand it wholeheartedly. Otherwise, the teaching will become mere translation, what we actually do not seek to do in an ESP class. (*Female Medicine 10*)

Likewise, the studies by Estaji and Nazari 2015; Ferguson, 1997; and Master, 2005 supported the ideology that subject specialists are the right person to teach ESP.

5.1.3.   Syllabus design (A priori/negotiated syllabus)

A negotiated syllabus according to Boomer et al. (1992) demonstrates "a shared detailed understanding between teacher and students of what is going on, what needs to be done, and how it will be done" (p. 287). The following seeks to address instructors' approach towards syllabus design in their ESP courses.

Whatever is relevant to me is introduced in the first session. They will be told that this is the textbook for this semester and these chapters will be covered throughout the semester. (*Male Dentistry 3*)

The lesson plan is determined a priori. It is given to the educational affairs department at the beginning of the semester and it is given to the class representative by the person in charge of the educational affairs. (*Male Dentistry 1*)

Although the students may be active during the session, they are passive recipients of syllabi.

We usually upload this information on the website. When the lesson plan is uploaded, there is no space for flexibility. (*Male Medicine and Paramedical Sciences 4*)

The book *Medical Terminology* is introduced to the students at the beginning and I let them know that some predetermined chapters will be taught. (*Male Medicine 5*)

Before the beginning of the semester, we are required to upload the syllabus on HamAva Website. (*Female Health 8*)

The syllabi are decided a priori and there is not a dialogic atmosphere between the students and the instructors. Unlike the current instructors, the study by Ennis and Prior 2020; Peyvandi et al. 2021; and Sewell, 2005 advocated the necessity to employ negotiated syllabus in ESP classes to bring about positive effects.

5.1.4.   Team teaching/solitry teaching

By tam teaching, this study does not mean a collaboration between subject specialist and language instructor. In fact, it means classes with more than one subject specialist, each teaching a very specialized domain in the field. Baeten and Simons (2014) defined team teaching as the collaboration between two or more instructors "in the planning, delivery, and/or evaluation of a

course" (p.95). Aliakbari and Valizadeh (2023) indicated that "adequate empirical team-teaching projects in Iran offers a fruitful opportunity to examine the feasibility of team teaching to address the pending needs of learners" (p. 2). Thus, delving into the issue of team teaching is helpful in addressing the needs of learners via the transition recently observed at the studied dentistry school.

> The fourth ESP module in dentistry curriculum is taught by five or almost six instructors, by almost all the specialties available in the school. Instructors from different specialties including gum, tooth root, surgery, etc. each taught one or two sessions. (*Male Dentistry School 2*)

The very fact that each subject is taught by a specialist is highly appreciated. Alluding to Dieker and Murawski (2003), Walsh (2020) introduced the concept of "'closed-door syndrome' where teachers work in isolation, making coordination and communication with other teachers difficult" (p. 692). However, team teaching helps the instructors to keep in touch and go beyond their solitary-instructed and isolated classes.

> When two instructors teach the same course, one can find two different characteristics and methods. If the students cannot satisfactorily take advantage of one instructor, it could be compensated by having an alternative one. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical School 4*)

Although the majority of the interviewees enumerated on advantages realized by subject specialists, there were few ones pinpointing some challenges.

> One of the interviewees referred to a disadvantage caused by team teaching. She confirmed that:

> The difference in pronunciations uttered by different instructors may be confusing for the students. Although a variety of pronunciations are correct, the students are not used to hearing that variation. (*Female Health 8*)

The very nature of fragmented teaching may deprive the students from holding a holistic view towards their course but a piece-by-piece interwoven entity that may affect the way they perceive the general quality of the class. Gerhard and Rocha Filho (2012), (as cited in Santos et al. (2017) postulated that "knowledge is separated into relatively compartmented contents even in the context of a given discipline, and the contents are presented in a dissociated and disconnected fashion" (p. 72). Through this overspecialized manner of teaching, fragmented content areas are presented. Furthermore, the students have to adapt themselves to a variety of class conditions. They need to play as different types of learners based on the teaching environment and the priorities of instructors. The opportunity to be formatively assessed by each instructor is not satisfactorily provided in that one or two sessions are not long enough to both teach and assess the students in.

> In a solitarily teaching class, the instructor claimed that:

> The students read the texts; their problems are solved. Then, they will be fed with what they need for the next session. (*Male Medicine 5*)

Solitary teaching makes the fluid transition between sessions easier. That is to say, a class led by one instructor would be more coherent. Contrary to such assertions, the studies by Ahmadishokouh et al. (2024) and Apandi and Abdul Rahim (2020) supported the significance of team teaching.

5.1.5. *Instructors as suppressors of needs*

One of the interviewees asserted that the instructors may cause the suppression of needs themselves by:

> Not answering the students' questions, being indifferent towards them, not being accessible, not holding enough sessions, not being punctual, being irresponsible, lack of accountability, causing the students question their professional identity, being illiterate in the specialized domain, not having content organization, attending the classes without preparation, lack of an appropriate pronunciation and lack of mastery to the specialized language. (*Male Medicine 5*)

> He added that

> The more motivated the students become, the higher their natural satisfaction goes. (*Male Medicine 5*)

> Therefore, demotivating the students will become a suppressing factor in meeting learners' needs.

> I do not let my students ask me the meaning of the new words. I suppress my students in this case. They should not think of me as a dictionary. (*Female Health 8*)

Accordingly, the instructors can play contradictory roles. They are not always pedagogic facilitators. Sometimes, they become needs suppressors themselves. In contrast to our study, Górska-Poręcka (2013) confirmed the ESP instructors to be both facilitators and mediator of student learning.

5.1.6. Receptive/productive skills

We seek to investigate whether the focus of the ESP courses is on receptive skills or the productive ones.

> We particularly seek to improve reading skills in students so that they can read articles in English. (*Male Dentistry 2*)

> Translation skills and reading comprehension in specialized texts are reinforced. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

> Likewise, Costeleanu (2017) highlighted the priority of reading in ESP classes.

5.1.7. Transmissive of transformative instructors

"Transformational (transformative) learning theory" was first introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1978 (Gravett, 2004, p. 260). The trend among most instructors is to move from being transmissive to transformative. The former ones are merely transferring what they have already received from their previous experiences, whereas the latter group is more dynamic. Parry (2008) argued that "Transmissive educational processes tend to result in surface learning". However, in a transformative model, the interactants, here the instructors are "more discriminating, open and reflective" (p.39). It is an active model of teaching.

> I had two teachers, Mr. Armand and Mr. Toorani who inspired me a lot ... I entirely loved their teaching and transmit their methods fully in my classes. (*Male Health 7*)

> In contrast with the above justification, Safari (2017) emphasized the privileges of being transformative.

5.1.8. Positive/negative reinforcement

A limited number of interviewees referred to the outcome of the way the students were assessed. Skinner (1971) postulated that "when a bit of behavior is followed by a certain kind of consequence, it is more likely to occur again, and a consequence having this effect is called a reinforcer" (p. 27). Hence, providing the students with feedback is required to make them understand that they are given consideration in the class.

> The students will be rated based on class questionings. The way they answer the questions, leads to either positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement on different occasions. (*Male Medicine 5*)

> The instructors should not merely take advantage of one of these two approaches. In line with the above declaration, Wahab et al. (2013) elucidated that "positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement" are the cornerstones in classroom management that should be treated as a continuum (p.62).

5.2. Student-oriented themes

5.2.1. Students' unheard voices

Zohrabi (2011) argued that "the main material which is used in undergraduate courses in Iranian universities is the coursebook" (p. 214). However, the instructors in the school of Dentistry pinpointed the lack of a certain coursebook to be taught**.**

> From the beginning of teaching ESP courses, I myself have selected the efficient material in domains including implant, endo, and prosthese**s**. (*Male Dentistry 3*)

> The shortage of a coursebook deprives the class and its components from motivation and stimulation. Thus, when motivation is removed from a class, the propelling force to learn and to be engaged will be undervalued.

> Another interviewee referred to the fragmented nature of coursebooks written by non-native writers. She claimed that "Such books are not coherent, and interesting. In fact, they are abstract" (*Female Health 8*).

> The ESP instructors choose the material themselves. (*Male Dentistry 3*)

> The following extractions reveal instructors' justification for not having involved students in material selection.

> Since the students often seek to pass the courses with the least difficulty, I usually, based on some policies do not involve the students' opinions considerably in such issues. (*Male Dentistry 3*)

> Supporting the already extracted quotations, other interviewees suggested that:

> In the field of medicine, we cannot base the coursebook selection on the student's opinion…. the students cannot choose the references but they can only make some suggestions. (*Female Medicine 10*)

The ESP instructors themselves can be the pioneers in making any required changes…since the students begin taking ESP courses in the second and third academic semesters, they are not yet considerably knowledgeable about the ESP material. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

Another interviewee claimed that:

I myself teach *Medical Terminology*. I do a needs analysis based on their specialized field of study, the academic level they are in, and the subjects and syllabuses that are included in their curriculum. (*Male Medicine 5*)

It seems that the school of medicine does not have much problem with the coursebook. They all said that they teach *Medical Terminology* by Cohen. They agree to follow what is prescribed to be taught as the course book.

By connecting the available material with what we supposed to be beneficial for the students later, we can greatly meet the students' educational needs. (*Male Nursing 9*)

The instructor is still the dominant figure in selecting the material

Four of the chapters from medical terminology are common for all the students then I almost choose four chapters based on their field and academic level. (*Male Medicine 5*)

At first, I used to teach a book titled *Public Health*. Whereas, after a while, I found its texts to be difficult for the students. Therefore, I decided to use different texts that were more appropriate and relevant for the students of public health. (*Male Health 6*)

The students usually do not have any suggestions for the sources. However, regarding teaching methods, they can express their opinions. (*Female Health 8*)

The ESP instructors act based on their common sense and what they think will work better. The following extractions support this assertion.

In order to teach the third and the fourth ESP courses, I personally, look for an article or a specialized text on the internet. (*Male Dentistry 2*)

The students usually do not have a say in selecting the material. (*Male Health 6*)

The students usually want to have simple material. They are assigned some exercises each session…I build the frame myself. (*Male Health 7*)

A dialogic interaction does not seem to exist in material selection. The finding closely correlated with what Ahmadi and Hasani (2018) reported about the instructors as the "sole leading factor" who marginalize students.

5.2.2. *Students' sense of belonging and engagement*

ESP courses are highly associated with learners' future occupation if they are going to be hired in a job relevant to their field of study. Thus, this bond is supposed to help them increase their sense of belonging and engagement during the course. However, there are usually some barriers.

Actually, since the ESP courses are somehow difficult for the students, they usually do not show a good interaction with them… engagement is not observed remarkably. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

Regarding the sense of belonging, one of the participants alluded to a significant difference which existed between the students of continuous and non-continuous undergraduate degrees

Our students are of two types, they are either continuous or non-continuous undergraduate students. The latter group, usually does not express its needs. (*Male Health 6*)

The average age group of non-continuous undergraduate students is between 30-40. They are almost employed. They only seek to get a degree and get promoted in their workplace. (*Female Health 8*)

Therefore, the non-continuous group do not feel much belonged.

Making the students informed about the significance of ESP courses can be helpful in increasing their sense of belonging.

I always tell my students that learning English is the golden key, not only for the course itself but also for the next educational levels they will study in. (*Female Health 8*)

The majority of students view ESP courses as transitory courses that they only want to pass successfully. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

We can make the students hopeful by letting them know that these courses will finally contribute to the construction of your professional identity, professional competency as well as professional authenticity. (*Male Medicine 5*)

Enumerating on the concept of belongingness as one of "the most powerful human drives", Maslow (1970), (as cited in Finley (2018) identified belongingness as one of five major needs" (p. 37-38). This way, the impossibility to meet such a psychological need, may be taken as a sign of needs ignorance for learners. However, contrary to our finding, Mačianskienė and Bijeikienė (2018) revealed fostering signs of learners' belonging and engagement in ESP classes.

5.2.3. *Students' rating of instructors*

Students' ratings of instruction provide unique evaluations of the quality of class and teaching. The students of KUMS rate their instructors before they know their final scores.

The scores provided by students' ratings of instruction are available at Education Development Center (EDC). (*Male Medicine 4*)

Other interviewees considered the results of such ratings as an unreliable criterion to judge teaching effectiveness.

Students' ratings of instruction are not valid. It is just a formality. (*Male Health 7*)

One of the interviewees trivialized the significance of the systematically conducted ratings of instruction.

I myself rely on what I receive as feedback from the students orally. This is important for me. Much more important than what I get as a score via systematic ratings. (*Female Health 8*)

One of the interviewees designated the type of relationship between instructors and learners as a factor in the process of receiving honest evaluation.

If the students trust their instructors, they can express their views honestly. (*Female Medicine 10*)

Unlike the disagreement presented by the interviewed instructors towards the validity of such ratings, McKeachie (1979) referred to students' ratings of instruction as the most valid source of data collected to assess teaching effectiveness.

5.2.4. *Heterogenous/homogenous class groupings*

"Heterogeneous classes provide difficulties in focusing who the target learner is." That is, if the instructor focuses on "slow learners," their "fast counterparts" will be bored and if the instructor seeks to spend more time with the fast learners, their slow counterparts will be demotivated (Gustinai, 2019, p. 302).

Teaching students with mixed-abilities conveys some advantages and disadvantages at the same time. However, the interviewees largely emphasized the bad side of the coin.

Heterogeneity is high among the students. The university cannot do anything in this case. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

Some of the students are really weak, passive and unmotivated. Such problems could somehow be traced back to teaching methods and education they had been exposed to in school. A replacement exam may be a good solution. (*Male Medicine 5*)

Although the following interviewee referred to a kind of replacement assessment, it was still not enough. Through this approach, the instructor can get a general assessment to select the materials that will suit the majority of students but not all of them.

As for the first session, I myself bring a text to the class. I ask the students to read it. This way I assess the students' language level. (*Male Health 6*)

In accordance with our findings, Bouklikha Graia (2023) demonstrated the challenging nature of teaching in heterogenous classrooms.

5.3. Coursebook-oriented themes

5.3.1. *Course content gradation*

Altay (2012) introduced linear and cyclical types of gradation. He added that linearly graded courses are "mostly suitable for the learners who learn the target language for the first time without a past learning experience or knowledge" (p.133). However,

here, the students have already been acquainted with English both during school years and in their academic general English courses. Accordingly, ESP courses are not their first points of departure.

Regarding ESP courses we cannot easily categorize and grade the contents for their simplicity and difficulty. (*Male Medicine & Paramedical Sciences 4*)

In order to do content gradation, I select texts that include simple words, words that are relevant to public health. The students have seen such words more frequently. For example, we have some courses on epidemiology in which many words such as "shiou", and "borouz" are familiar to the students. (*Male Health 6*)

The frequency or intertextual reoccurrence and familiarity level of students are significant criteria in determining simplicity and difficulty of terms. In fact, we don't have content gradation in *Medical Terminology*. All of the chapters follow a predetermined design. They each include a case presentation. (*Female Medicine 10*)

The findings confirm that linear gradation of course content is not employed extensively. Equally, the study by Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011) approved the lack of a logical order from simple to difficult in some studied ESP textbooks.

To sum it up, instructor-oriented themes revealed that regarding the perceived type of needs analysis, the instructors' own beliefs and values were almost overgeneralized to the students, which may cause an unreliable needs analysis. Comparing the teaching provided by subject specialists with those provided by the language instructors, one can conclude that the former is more natural and authentic; while lack of subject knowledge makes the latter artificial and not engaging. Scenarios a subject specialist has in mind can be transmitted to the students and enable them to identify with the examples better. This way, instruction facilitates learning. Subject specialists evaluated themselves as the right person who should teach ESP. Language instructors are given no green light to be admitted among the cohort of ESP instructors.

The majority of the interviewees reported an apriori type of syllabus. They argued that almost everything is predetermined and the learners have to follow what is prescribed. In this manner, the learners' needs were somehow ignored and marginalized. Lack of a unified pronunciation, lack of enough time and opportunity to be formatively assessed, fragmented teaching sessions, and disassociated fashion of teaching were reported as the challenges caused by team teaching. In addition, lack of the existence of any person occupying the position of the head of department in four schools would decrease unity. Making each instructor free to decide about everything, may cause chaos. A few numbers of instructors referred to the possibility that the instructors may cause the suppression of learners' needs themselves. They outlined several ways through which learners' needs could be suppressed. Among the four main skills in language learning, reading as a subtype of receptive skills was designated supreme significance. Only one of the interviewees pinpointed the concept of being transmissive; however, he did not evaluate its pros and cons. Such a theme seemed significant but was not fully manipulated. Positive and negative reinforcement were two dominant components that the instructors must be informed about.

Student-oriented themes revealed that lack of sense of belonging will demotivate the students from making their voices heard. Although the coursebooks are part of the sources from which the learners are fed, they are not themselves involved in selecting what fits them better. It is a manifestation for the well-known maxim asserting "nothing about us without us". Furthermore, being non-continuous undergraduate students rather than continuous and lack of motivation were reported as the key factors in inhibiting students from feeling belonged to the classes. Although students' ratings of instruction have been planned to be considered as a criterion in assessing learners' needs, it was not observed notably by the instructors. The instructors were not taking it as a touchstone to assess their success in teaching. Regarding the homogenous/heterogenous class groupings, the instructors were not provided with either enough time or equipment to consider the learners' needs particularly. It seemed that leaners with special needs may not benefit distinctly from such courses.

Finally, coursebook-oriented themes revealed that the learners and instructors usually move back and forth among the concepts over and over. Thus, content categorization rather than content gradation is a norm based on which the structure of ESP course has been developed. Familiarizing the learners with the essentials does not mean teaching simple concepts first. Thus, in the context of ESP courses, linearity does not mean moving from simple to difficult. Flexibility, circularity and interconnectedness of concepts altogether make a compensation for the shortcomings of a rigid linear content gradation.

6. Conclusion

When addressing the ESP instructors' viewpoints towards learners' needs, the majority agreed upon the claim that students' needs were not considerably taken into account; however, a few participants referred to some glimmers of light actualized by localized changes they made in their classes. The majority of the themes were categorized into two groups; however, we did not mean that they should be considered bipolarly or as a matter of black and white. In fact, we need to consider a middle status.

Lack of a systematic and coherent needs analysis was a challenge in the already discussed ESP courses. None of the instructors have formally and systematically inspected the students' needs in their ESP classes. The learners themselves were either not knowledgeable about their needs or they were not given the opportunity to express their personally experienced needs. Therefore, lack of a direct way to inspect learners' needs through their own perceptions will distort the reality and cause untrue or

partial needs analysis. We would like to name the already recognized themes as pedagogic instruments though which teaching will either partly or fully facilitate or hinder making learners' needs met. The majority of instructors held positive attitudes towards their own teaching strategies. They were almost satisfied with their teaching. However, the other side of the coin, which is inspecting their teaching efficacy through the students' viewpoints may reveal contradictory facts.

Overall, a triangulation of perspective would reveal more reliable and authentic information about the students' needs. The scope of a single study is not that vast to encompass all the required concerning points about a single issue. In fact, A systematic review on learners needs at medical universities would be helpful. Each study, by presenting the results for a specifically discussed issue can complete a part of the puzzle. Thus, putting them together would present a comprehensive guide for the ESP instructors to widen their viewpoints towards learners' needs and move in the correct way to satisfy their already ignored and marginalized but significant needs.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix A

Interview Questions Used as the Guide

1) Do you find ESP courses offered at KUMS satisfactory enough to help the students achieve their pedagogic needs?

2) If no, what types of needs are neglected among ESP students?

3) Are the students truly involved in decision makings with regard to their syllabus design, textbook selection, and types of assessments?

4) If not appropriately, in which domain/s the students can make themselves heard harder?

5) Are the general contexts of the ESP courses democratic and friendly for the students?

6) If it is possible to make some changes in the educational procedures who is the dominant harbinger of changes?

7)   Can you guess if the ESP students prefer the current status of the ESP courses to be ended, amended, or continued as they are?

8)   Who is a better choice to teach ESP courses? Is it a language instructor or a content instructor?

8.2. Appendix B

سوالات مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته

۱)   آیا از نظر شما دروس زبان تخصصی ای که در دانشگاه ارائه میشوند در کمک به دانشجویان برای دستیابی به اهداف آموزشی شان رضایت بخش هستند؟

۲)   در غیر اینصورت، چه نوع نیازهایی در دانشجویان بیشتر نادیده گرفته میشوند؟

۳)   آیا از دیدگاه دانشجویان در تصمیم گیریهای مربوط به طراحی برنامه درسی، انتخاب کتاب درسی و نوع ارزیابی تکوینی و پایانی در نظر گرفته میشود؟

٤)   در غیر اینصورت، در چه زمینه/هایی دانشجویان با سختی بیشتری میتوانند نظر خود را اعلام کنند؟

٥)   آیا فضای کلی کلاسهای زبان تخصصی فضایی صمیمانه و گفتگویی است؟

٦)   در صورت امکان ایجاد تغییرات در پروسه های آموزشی، چه کسی در این زمینه پیشگام و تصمیم گیرنده است؟

۷)   به نظر شما دانشجویانی که دروس زبان تخصصی را پاس کرده اند چه نظری در رابطه با کیفیت کلی آن ها دارند؟ آیا بطور کلی خواستار عدم استفاده بیشتر از روشهای موجود هستند، میخواهند اصلاحاتی انجام شود یا به همین روالی که بوده ادامه پیدا کند؟

۸)   به نظر شما بهتر است چه کسی زبان تخصصی را تدریس کند؟ فردی که زبان انگلیسی رشته تحصیلی اکادمیک او بوده و در واقع استاد زبان است؟ یا فردی که استاد محتوا و مطالب تخصصی است؟