EAP Teacher Cognition: A Qualitative Study of Iranian In-Service EAP Teachers' Cognitions[1]

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Abstract

Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) requires specific qualifications on the part of teachers for which reconstruction of cognitions on EAP is a prerequisite. Previous studies have largely taken the quality of teachers' EAP cognitions for granted and few studies, if any, have sought to examine in-service teachers' tacitly-held cognitions on EAP. This study aimed to examine in-service teachers' cognitions on key EAP issues including EAP goals, distinction between EAP and English for General Purposes (EGP), and EAP teacher qualifications as well as roles. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and life-history narratives from nine EAP practitioners at a state university in Iran. Results showed that the teachers' cognitions were mainly incongruent with the EAP principles. A close relationship was also found among individual teachers' cognitions on different key issues. It is concluded that despite their past practical experience, in-service EAP teachers' cognitions might be limited

and in need of reconstruction. The findings may promise some implications for EAP teacher education and research.

1. Introduction

English for academic purposes (EAP), as a distinct area of English language teaching (ELT) requires teachers to assume distinctive status, identities and responsibilities (Campion, 2016; Hyland, 2006). The literature echoes multidimensional expertise, skills and abilities (see e.g., Dressen-Hammouda, 2013; Hall, 2013) and the insufficiency of "ELT qualifications" for the successful fulfilment of EAP roles (Campion, 2016, p. 62). Accordingly, the EAP practitioner needs to make "transition", from general English to EAP (p. 59). The case is complicated in Iran because, firstly, a solid majority of Iranian EAP teachers are subject-specific instructors (Author, 2002a) with no experience of language teaching and sometimes with no successful language learning experiences; secondly, there is no systematic EAP teacher education (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014); and thirdly, teacher education in Iranian context is basically transmission oriented (Atai, 2006).

Developing a clear understanding of the profession is key to practitioners' transition to EAP teachers. Insufficient research in EAP teacher and teacher education (Hamp-Lyons, 2011), especially in Iran, along with the challenges mentioned above, has deprived EAP teachers from developing a sound understanding of their profession and roles. This problem, not only causes new teachers as "outsiders" to fail "to understand how to enter the profession", but also prohibits in-service EAP practitioners to have a "practical understanding of what is required to teach EAP" (Campion, 2016, p. 60).

Very recently, interest in the study of EAP in Iran has increased mainly in the form of program evaluation and needs analysis projects (e.g. Author, 2002a; Author et al., 2011; Hayati, 2008; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; & Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016) and teacher cognition (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014; Atai & Khazaee, 2014) all addressing the challenges of the EAP programs and aiming at improving EAP education through eliciting and considering the stakeholders' (e.g. EAP teachers, learners, syllabus designers and materials developers) view points for the future renewal of the curriculum. However, all these studies seem to have taken the quality of stakeholders' cognition for granted. In the absence of quality cognition, little contribution can be expected from including these stakeholders' voice in EAP programs since their opinions have been shaped within a limited and limiting framework of thought.

Due to the principle of specificity, and since EAP teachers come from two cognition-shaping contexts (ELT and content areas), their cognitions on EAP needs reconstruction. Arguing that in-service EAP teachers are still outsiders to

the profession as they have not undergone transition to EAP teachers and have not enhanced the quality of their cognitions, this paper addresses EAP teacher cognition focusing on its key issues. Unlike previous studies, it attempts to take the quality of teachers' cognition into consideration going beyond eliciting their likes and dislikes. Instead, it seeks to unravel the thinking behind their perceptions and "instructional practice[s]" (Wyatt & Borg, 2016, p. 238), and then, to consider as well as interpret them in relation to the current literature.

1.1. EAP in Iran

Having learned English for seven years –started from the junior high school, and for an additional year as freshmen –, Iranian undergraduate students are offered at most three EAP courses. Students, at the time of taking the course, are reported to be low in English proficiency (Hayati, 2008). They are exposed to materials (including those provided by the Center for Studying and Compiling University Books in Humanities –SAMT) relevant to their fields only through topically-related passages and discipline-specific words. More importantly, the materials are not informed by discourse, genre or corpus studies (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008). The majority of the practitioners are subject-specific instructors (Author et al., 2014). Reading comprehension, translation and vocabulary learning activities are especially used to equip students with the language and skills they need to "handle subject-specific textbooks in their later specialized courses" (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008, p. 277).

While the content teachers' insufficient language proficiency (Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016) and the ELT teachers' deficiency or absence of content knowledge have always been reported as the main problem of EAP education (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008), their lack of EAP qualifications and cognitions has escaped from the evaluators' attention. To put it in a nutshell, EAP in Iran is a reduced traditional EGP-like course relevant to learners and specific to target disciplines through discipline-specific topics and vocabulary items (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014). It is traditional as it is not research-informed by discourse, genre and corpus studies.

1.2. Second language teacher cognition

Second language teacher cognition, a recently recognized branch of applied linguistics, has established itself as a field of research (Barnard & Burns, 2012). Teacher cognition study is concerned with the "unobservable dimension of teaching-teacher mental lives" (Borg, 2009, p. 163), and encompasses what language teachers "think, know, believe, and do" (Borg, 2003, p. 8) and also their "attitudes, identities and emotions" (Borg, 2012, p. 11). That is, it seeks to understand and demonstrate "who" L2 teachers are, what they "know", "do" (Graves, 2009, p. 117), and "feel" (Golombek & Doran, 2014, p. 103). Studying teacher cognition is the key to understanding teacher mind and practice (Farrell, 2007), and the improvement of the quality of their professional development (Borg, 2009).

In the present study, we investigated what in-service EAP teachers think, know, believe and feel about the fundamental issues such as EAP goals, EAP teacher qualifications and roles, and distinctions between EAP and EGP.

2. Review of the Literature

In this section, a number of the major studies associated with the cognitions of EAP stakeholders will be reviewed with two purposes in mind: to provide evidence indicating the stakeholders' low-quality cognitions and to show that the quality of cognition has escaped from the researchers' attention. The problem with all these studies, except for Atai and Khazaee (2014) (see below) is that they take, more or less, the quality of the participants' cognitions on the principles, missions and roles of EAP for granted.

For the first purpose, we start with Atai (2002a) as one of the pioneering EAP studies. In evaluating EAP curriculum development, Atai describes it as incoherent. The reasons he mentions for this incoherency (e.g., independent working of stakeholders', disagreement between content and ELT departments, general statement of EAP goals, etc.) indicate lack of clear understanding among stakeholders (including EAP policy makers, syllabus designers, materials developers and teachers). Atai (2002b), himself, highlights EAP teachers' insufficient understanding of their own roles and of the principles governing EAP teaching. Soodmand Afshar and Movassagh (2016) evaluated an EAP program through the EAP stakeholders' viewpoints of needs and their satisfaction rate. As they reported, despite their low quality, the materials gained the satisfaction of half of the students. The researchers' conclusion that the textbooks confirm their background education culture suggests that the learners' cognitions have not been reconstructed around the principles and goals of EAP.

Needs analysis studies also provide evidence indicating the EAP teachers' and learners' limited cognitions. Atai and Nazari (2011) as well as Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) reported that teachers and students accuse each other (often blindly) as responsible for the failure of the EAP program. Besides, they show EAP is not viewed by the stakeholders as a professionalizing condition. For example, students learn EAP to use English sources to "handle subject-specific textbooks in their later specialized courses" (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008, p. 278–277).

EAP researchers have largely taken the quality of the stakeholders' cognitions for granted. In the study by Soodmand Afshar and Movassagh (2016) students' perceptions of needs, skills and materials were elicited taking their awareness about the EAP goals, principles and trends for granted. Through a right analysis, Khanny and Tarlani-Aliabadi (2016) explored power relations from the viewpoints of teachers and students. Overlooking the quality of the participants' cognitions, they suggested including teachers' and learners' voices in curriculum renewal. It seems that the researchers have not adapted the view to EAP which strongly focuses on disciplinary variation (see Hyland, 2006 & 2015) in interpreting EAP teacher qualifications. For example, Hayati (2008)

reduces teacher expertise to content, language and method of application be-lieving that "knowledgeable teachers are those familiar with the English lan-guage (form) ... and the technical information (content) ..." (p. 155). Similarly, Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) view teachers' problem in terms of the lack of content knowledge reducing content to topic familiarity.

Recently, Iranian researchers have addressed EAP teacher cognition. Atai and Fatahi-Majd (2014) investigating EAP teachers' cognitions and practices reported "considerable inconsistencies among the subject teachers compared with the ELT instructors as well as noticeable discrepancies across two groups of teachers with respect to their practices and cognitions in EAP reading com-prehension instruction" (p. 27). This study, though informative in examining EAP instruction, could have included many other key issues and principles to take the quality of teacher cognition into consideration. Atai and Khazaee (2014) comparing the cognitions and practices of content and ELT teachers reported that the content teachers were more consistent in their perceptions of pedagogical content knowledge and professional identities as they were more dedicated to the EAP profession in both their cognitions and practices. Attach-ing the problem of EAP instruction "to the mismatches between ELT and con-tent teachers' cognitions and practices' (p. 2), they suggested that "the quality of teacher cognition" need to be improved (p. 7).

The advantages of needs analysis, program evaluation and cognition studies are many, provided that the participants have clear understanding of EAP and its missions. Otherwise, their opinions would center on issues less central to EAP and can only be considered as a slight variation within the same thinking domain.

Very recently, Campion (2016) attached EAP challenges to the issues key to the quality of teachers' cognition (e.g., unclear understanding of what EAP is, its distinction from EGP, and the lack of clarity about Teaching English for Aca-demic Purposes (TEAP) qualifications, among others). However, EAP requires its own cognition reconstruction because of its goals as well as the principles of specificity and relevance, and since this reconstruction is likely to be influenced by the stakeholders' previous cognitions (content and ELT cognitions), taking their cognitions into consideration in EAP studies seems essential.

The program's failure, the stakeholders' dissatisfaction, the influence of teacher cognition on their performance, and the under-attended area of EAP teacher cognition convince us to address teachers' EAP cognitions. The study may contribute to EAP teacher cognition studies as it takes the quality of cogni-tion into consideration and is original in a number of ways: First, it constructs a clear argument about the study of EAP teacher cognition as to why researchers should go beyond eliciting teachers' likes, dislikes, and claimed beliefs. Accord-ingly, unlike the literature, it explores teachers' "tacitly held beliefs" (Farrell, 2007, p. 35); second, it is the first study which uses and integrates two data col-lection instruments of semi-structured interview and narrative inquiry; and finally, it promises practical implications for EAP teacher education.

Consequently, this study probes the following research questions:

1. What are the main features of in-service EAP teachers' cognitions on EAP goals and missions, distinctions between EAP and EGP, and EAP teacher qualifications and roles?

2. Are the cognitions of in-service EAP teachers qualified in line with the principles of EAP outlined in the literature?

3. Method

3.1. The context

This study is a part of a wider ongoing experiment, designed to explore teacher learning through employing an innovative in-service EAP teacher education course integrating Critical Friends Groups model (Johnson, 2009) and a new version of Critical Incidents model (Farrell, 2008) considering the realities of the local context of EAP teaching and teacher education. There were three phases of the study and data collection. The present study focuses on the pre-course phase which aimed to make the participating teachers' cognitions explicit prior to the implementation of the intervention.

The study was conducted at one of the major state universities of Iran (University of Iran, UOI). Pseudonym is used to keep confidentiality about the participants' identities and data. Ten thousands of students majoring in one hundred and ten fields of study and associated sub-branches pursue their (under)graduate academic degrees in this university. The faculty comprises more than three hundred and fifty fulltime instructors and a large number of part-time lecturers. Both groups of the teachers and the students are representatives of various ethnicities in Iran. The students of all subject areas have to take one (or more) EAP course(s). These courses are mostly offered by the content teachers.

3.2. Participants

Six ELT teachers and three content specialists were selected from a total of 40 EAP practitioners through a *priori* sampling (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon, 2015, p. 1783). "To maximize the range of perspectives investigated" (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 285) and to select individuals who were "information rich" (Patton, 2015, p. 264) we used *purposeful sampling* through adopting the *maximum variation strategy* (Patton, 2002). To remove the negative effects of contextual factors on teacher cognition, we drew on the EAP teachers from one context (i.e., UOI). A large number of the EAP teachers at the UOI, were initially interviewed to make sure about their experience of and interest in EAP teaching and willingness to participate in the program.

All teachers were native speakers of Farsi in the age range of 27 to 57, with different years of teaching experience in EAP and in their subject matter areas.

The ELT teachers were specialists in ELT, English Translation Studies, English Literature and Linguistics. All teachers, except one, were fulltime faculty members of UOI and all had at least one semester of EAP teaching experience. To keep variety, there was a notable variation in age, educational background, academic degree, academic rank, gender, and teaching experience (see Table 1).

Table 1.
A summary of the participants' background and subject-specific characteristics

Partici-pants	Age/ gender	Degree	Depart-part-ment	Gradua-tion	EGP pro-ficiency	EAP teach-ing experi-ence
Arya	Early 40 M	Ph.D. Asso. Prof.	Content	Abroad	Very Good	7 years
Majid	Late 50s M	Ph.D. Assist. Prof.	ELT	Iran	Excellent	17 years
Navid	Early 30s M	MA, Instructor	ELT	Iran	Excellent	2 years
Diba	Early 30s F.	MA, Instructor	ELT	Iran	Excellent	1 semester
Behdad	Mid 30s M	MA, Instructor	Content	Iran	Very Good	7 years
Fateh	Late 20s M	MA, Instructor	ELT	Iran	Excellent	1 year
Shayan	Early 30s M	MA, Instructor	ELT	Iran	Excellent	2 years
Hamoon	Early 50s M	MA, Instructor	Content	Iran	Good	5 years
Mehrab	Mid 30s M	MA, Instructor	ELT	Iran	Excellent	10 years

Note: M= Male; F= Female; Asso. Prof. = Associate Professor; Assist. Prof. = Assistant professor.

3.3. Instruments

The data featured in the present study are those collected through the semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiries- the genre of *life history* (Murray, 2009), in the pre-course phase of the main study.

3.3.1. Semi-structured interview

Drawing on the literature, two versions of semi-structured interviews (i.e., Farsi and English) were developed and then employed to investigate the participants' current understandings and cognitions. The interviews were conducted in the language more convenient to them in an interactive manner (Murray, 2009). There was no time limit for each individual case of interview.

Fifteen open-ended questions were included in the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Theoretically, we drew on the ideas of Hyland (2006, 2015) for developing the interview scheme. We adopted the English for Specific Academic Purposes approach to EAP (Hyland, 2006) which strongly focuses on disciplinary variation in terms of communicative needs and practices (Hyland, 2006, 2015). The main goal to be pursued is to help learners in the process of becoming members of their desired professional communities. Being necessarily research-based, ESAP requires practitioners to acquire EAP qualifications needed for the successful fulfillment of their roles in the process of putting disciplinary

specificity into practice. This approach makes use of discourse- and genre-oriented EAP instruction (Hyland & Shaw, 2016).

The relevance of questions was discussed with a group of experts in general and L2 teacher education. The questions explored the learners' ideas about the goals of EAP teaching, the principles of EAP, the distinction between EGP and EAP, their views of language in EAP, EAP teaching demands, the trends in EAP teaching, EAP materials, and EAP teacher roles, among others.

3.3.2. Life history narrative

Since teachers' own stories about their learning experiences can illustrate their "underlying insights and assumptions" (Bell, 2002, p. 208), we relied on *life history* to allow these "deeply hidden assumptions to surface" (Bell, 2002, p. 209). They were asked to narrate their learning experiences as language learners. These narratives included their emotions about and evaluations of their previous learning experiences, the ways they were taught, assessed, and evaluated. It also included their interpretations of the effectiveness of the materials, syllabuses, and teaching strategies to which they had been exposed. Actually, more important than getting the details of the concrete events was gaining access to "their understandings of these events" (Murray, 2009, p. 59).

For an easier and more purposeful data collection, a set of interview questions (see Appendix B) were developed on the issues related to "prime and prompt" the teacher-learners and also to make them clear about what information they should include in their stories (Murray, 2009, p. 49). We tried to be flexible enough to allow the participants to center on what were important to them. Narrative construction using interview questions were conducted in the form of "conversation" (Murray, 2009, p. 49).

3.4. Procedure

The wider study was conducted in winter 2015 and spring 2016. Data collection for the present study was completed during the first semester of the academic year of 2015-2016. It took about three weeks to conduct both semi-structured interviews and life-history narratives. Prior to the data collection, we obtained the English Departments' agreement and the participants' written informed consent. The research aims, procedures, and processes were initially explained to the teachers and they were assured of their anonymity. We first conducted the semi-structured interviews and then the narrative inquiry.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the researchers. The individual teacher's responses collected through narratives

were put together to configure unified stories. They were sent back to the participants to check their stories.

Since grounded theory was not the aim of the study, we adopted Fram's (2013, p. 1) method of Constant Comparative Analysis to analyze the data "outside of grounded theory". Accordingly, the data was first analyzed to identify all emerging themes and then the extracted themes were compared to the themes in the literature. From the literature we developed a theoretical framework with the main theme categories of EAP goals, the distinctions between EAP and EGP, and EAP teacher roles and qualifications. For the first cycle of data analysis we used *initial/open coding* and for the second cycle *focused coding* (Charmaz, 2006).

In addition to multiple data analysis, the use of an independent researcher's coding helped us ensure the precision of data analysis. In case there were incongruences or disagreements, we discussed and reached an agreement on codes and categories. Trustworthiness of data was also ensured using trans-instrument checking and member-check (Saldana, 2009).

4. Results

To produce an in-depth analysis, all data were carefully compared to other data in and across the data sets. The findings are reported to simultaneously meet the purposes of both research questions and in the sequence of the following themes: EAP missions and goals, distinctions between EAP and EGP, and EAP teacher qualifications as well as roles.

4.1. EAP missions and goals

Results showed that the participating teachers' understandings of the EAP goals did not agree with the very mission of EAP which is giving students the opportunity to professionalize into their desired communities through understanding and learning community-based communicative practices, discourse features, language uses and identities (Hyland, 2006 & 2015). They largely described the goals of EAP education as facilitating content learning, familiarizing learners with subject-specific words and concepts, improving students' comprehension abilities of subject-specific texts as well as enabling them to translate texts.

> **Example 1**
> ...students should gain familiarity with subject-specific words... In fact, they should be able to translate into English in their own subject areas, rewrite and write in English ... (Behdad)
>
> **Example 2**
> The goal of EAP is developing students' ability to translate from English to Persian and vice versa. (Majid)

Example 3
The main focus in English for academic purposes is the content knowledge, English is only a channel ... (Navid)

Alternatively, they focused on some general goals that are pursued by any student in any education such as helping learners to "employ in future the learned materials" (Hamoon).

Although Fateh and Diba provided some ideas on EAP goals which appeared to show that they were referring to the very mission of EAP education, they shared their colleagues' unclear understanding of EAP missions. Fateh's descriptions of EAP goals such as "making students familiar with the language of science" and enabling them to "introduce themselves to the scientific organizations", and also Diba's opinions such as "preparing students for discipline-specific communicative activities" appeared to show the adequacy of their knowledge of EAP missions. However, closer examining and comparing their opinions provided ample evidence indicating the incongruity of their understandings with the EAP missions. That is, along with a notable lack of clarity on EAP needs there was a lack of recognition of discipline-specific discourses and identities as well as research-oriented approaches to EAP.

Example 4
...to read some hot articles, good materials in English, for we, as Iranian people, some students, do not have enough materials translated in Persian. (Diba)

None of the teachers, except Arya, recognized disciplines as distinct discourse communities with their own languages and social actions. The teachers, predominantly, distinguished the languages of different subject areas through their technical vocabulary items.

Example 5
[EAP is dealing with] how to use general English for expressing concepts in that field. (Fateh)

Example 6
Hamoon: Social languages are the languages of groups and professions living in the society which are distinct by their specific vocabulary items.
....
Interviewer: ...can disciplinary departments like the Department of Information Science and Knowledge be a social group with its social language?
Hamoon: No.

There were clear evidences showing that they failed to acknowledge disciplinary identities and the role of EAP in helping learners acquire them.

Example 7
Interviewer: Does a person in a special profession or discipline have disciplinary identities?
Shayan: Yes, he has identity, he has to have identity, but I have <u>no idea of the relationship between disciplinary identity and EAP instruction.</u>

Example 8
Majid: Well the point is that language means identity.
Interviewer: Yeah.
.....
Majid: This cannot be true about EAP ... but EAP is not capable of giving individuals identities...

Their unfamiliarity with and not employing discourse- and genre-oriented EAP teaching was another indication of their limited view of EAP goals. Moreover, the teachers' understandings of the EAP materials and the criteria they used to select them are different from those key to the principles of specificity and relevance (see Section 4.3.4).

Arya was the only teacher whose opinions provided evidence indicating that his understanding of EAP goals went along with the very missions of EAP. He believed that EAP deals with "using language by insiders of a discipline for professional communication" and "learning professional activities of a discipline".

Example 9
[Students need to learn] how an article is written. How an article should be analyzed... where the introduction section should be placed and what you write in the introduction section. (Arya)

Recognizing disciplines as discourse communities with their own world views, language uses and identities, he focused on learning disciplinary identities. His practical employment of genre-oriented EAP instruction can be considered as another evidence of the congruency of his cognitions with EAP missions.

Example 10
Interviewer: ... suppose you are a specialist in fisheries and I am an expert in Persian literature...are our languages, i.e. Englishes, different?
Arya: Yes. They are totally different.
Interviewer: Why?
Arya: Because the words we use are different. We use them differently. The ways we use language to talk about this are different. Our world views are different, too.

Example 11
Take water for example. A specialist in fisheries views it in a particular way, an environmentalist views it differently and a language specialist [views it differently, too]. (Arya)

4.2. Distinctions between EAP and EGP

Results showed that the teachers' ideas about the distinction between EAP and EGP seemed more or less stereotypical. At times, their claimed beliefs said that EAP and EGP are and should be different (e.g., "narrowness" of EAP in terms of topic and subject specific terms by Fateh and Shayan), but actually they were not clear about the key differences. They predominantly tended to recognize the combination of language and subject matter in EAP as the main area of difference. Hamoon, Fateh, Diba and Navid, for example, viewed EAP teaching more demanding because both subject matter and language need to be taught and learnt.

> **Example 12**
> …definitely EAP teaching is much more demanding because you are not only besides mastering language are going to master so many concepts, so many technical words, jargons in that specific field of knowledge…(Fateh)

Unlike his colleagues, Arya understood EAP and EGP distinctions in terms of discourse. Discussing ELT teacher qualification, he stated:

> **Example 13**
> Because as an EGP teacher you view things from EGP point of view, [because of] your specialization, because you do not have this [new disciplinary] understanding… you cannot share this [disciplinary] understanding with your students. (Arya)

The missions of EAP are fundamentally distinct from EGP. Giving students' the opportunity to get information about subject matter in English and learn language together with subject matter were the prevalent ways through which our teachers distinguished EAP missions from those of EGP.

They appeared to understand EAP as a service activity aiming to "help non-English major students learn English" or to "assist students learn and explore their subjects in English" (Navid). That the difference lies in the existence of content knowledge supported with their notion of EAP teacher education which was wrongly supposed to work towards helping ELT teachers gain topic familiarity and content teachers improve their EGP.

Recognizing that EAP education is grounded in specific discourses of disciplines, Arya believed, EAP unlike EGP, "deals with the use of language to perform academic professional activities."

The other way our teachers tried to distinguish EAP from EGP was through selecting the kinds of expertise and qualifications EAP teachers need to have to successfully fulfill their roles. None of them, except for Arya, differentiated EAP teaching from that of EGP in terms of the roles and tasks the EAP teacher per-

forms. Instead, they differentiated the two branches only in terms of the EAP teacher's additional knowledge of subject matter.

> **Example 14**
> In my opinion there is no difference between the EAP and EGP teacher roles and tasks. (Behdad)

4.3. EAP Teacher qualifications and roles

Results indicated that the participating teachers understood the EAP teacher qualifications in terms of having subject-specific information and delivering it to the students rather than performing EAP-specific roles. They appeared to assume that the only thing ELT teachers need to learn is subject matter knowledge and what content specialists need to have is language proficiency.

> **Example 15**
> I don't think there is that much difference between the roles of [teachers in] these two fields. Most of the time the difference is related to the content of the materials which is going to be given. (Fateh)

They mainly took an either or stance towards the sufficiency of ELT or content teacher qualifications. Majid, Shayan, Mehrab, Navid and Diba (with a slight variation) took the sufficiency of ELT teachers well-aware of the content for granted. To Majid, for example, content specialization meant familiarity with subject-specific words and topically related texts and in Diba's view it referred to being specialists in content areas.

> **Example 16**
> Teachers from ELT department… they could be better teachers… they have the tool they want. They just need some sorts of information about that field... (Mehrab)
>
> **Example 17**
> For example, one of my colleagues believes that he or she is proficient enough in Islamic texts so he has content knowledge and also is an English teacher, he has no problem ... (Navid)

Contrarily, Behdad and Hamoon held that the qualifications of content teachers proficient in English and familiar with teaching methods were sufficient for EAP teaching.

> **Example 18**
> Content teachers are better… because they know the content... (Hamoon)

Fateh bound the sufficiency of the ELT or content teacher's qualifications to the content areas. He believed that the qualification of ELT teachers familiar with content areas would be sufficient if they wanted to teach EAP courses of humanities, but content teachers' qualification plus proficiency in English would be sufficient for teaching EAP in hard disciplines.

Example 19
...I think English teachers should take part in ESP in the field of humanities... (Fateh)

Despite recognizing the significance of discourse features in EAP teaching, Arya took the sensitivity of content instructors for granted. Accordingly, he suggested EAP teacher education focus on familiarizing EAP (content) teachers with language teaching methods.

4.3.1. Teachers as researchers

Our teachers either believed that being a researcher is not a necessary role for the EAP teacher or provided a general and even distorted ideas of teacher research.

Example 20
... if an EAP teacher <u>has enough time</u> he is better to search for different texts and effective teaching methods. (Behdad)

Example 21
Interviewer: ...In what senses the EAP teacher should be a researcher?...
Mehrab: EAP teacher, you know, I do not agree with "should" but "can" is better, they can be researchers.

The research areas the teachers identified for an EAP teacher were clearly general and irrelevant to the key themes of investigation in EAP education such as needs, discipline-based discourses, and language uses. The areas of research they identified included reading subject-specific texts to keep track of new information (Shayan, Fateh, Navid and Diba), searching for topically relevant and interesting texts (Behdad and Majid), studying subject-specific words and concepts (Fateh), assessing students' proficiencies (Diba, Majid), interests (Diba), or errors (Majid), and inquiring into general teaching problems (Mehrab and Shayan).

Example 22
Navid: ... teachers, including EAP ones, besides teaching should get themselves involved in research too...
Interviewer: ... to explore what?

> **Navid:** … to keep themselves updated… and to increase their knowledge and also to bring the knowledge into their classes.

Finally, Arya perceived EAP teachers' role as researchers more in terms of teachers' intuitive analysis of professional texts to be used in classroom instruction.

4.3.2. Teachers as needs analysts

The significance of EAP teachers' task of analyzing learner needs or at least considering the findings of the related research, has escaped from our teachers' attention. They were either un-cognizant of the EAP teacher role as needs analyst or reduced needs analysis to intuitive assessment of learners' proficiencies (Shayan, Majid, Navid and Mehrab) and/or students' knowledge of the content areas (Shayan). Besides, they reduced target situation needs to subject-specific words (Majid, Behhdad, Diba, Fateh) as well as content knowledge.

> **Example 23**
> To assess students' general English proficiency levels and even EAP mastery levels, and the priority is finding out students' knowledge of the content area in English... (Shayan)

> **Example 24**
> …I mean they are here to learn some new concepts in their specific fields of study... (Diba)

Despite the fact that Arya, unlike the other teachers, recognized the significance of learners' communicative needs, he did not point to the necessity for systematic investigation of students' needs and the demands of target disciplines.

4.3.3. Teachers as discourse analysts

As shown above, the participating teachers negligibly had any ideas of discourse and genre analysis or employed them in actual teaching practices. No sign was found in their opinions about considering the relevance of discourse and genre analysis in the EAP instruction. This was in line with their failure to see disciplines as distinct communities with their specific communicative behaviors and textual practices.

> **Example 25**
> **Interviewer:** Specific in terms of language, language use or content?...
> **Fateh:** Both of them but not the language because we have a jargon

> **Interviewer**: Specific language or specific jargon?
> **Fateh:** <u>Yes, specific terms and jargons.</u>

> **Example 26**
> … [because] students in EAP courses, they are not in the class to learn general English. They are there to learn something about law but in English. (Diba)

Arya, thought that analyzing texts, though not employing related frameworks, is required for teachers to get familiar with the structures of professional texts. Despite his occasional reference to text analysis he did not elaborate on teachers' roles as discourse analysts.

4.3.4. Teachers as materials developers

Results showed that our teachers predominantly viewed EAP teachers as materials users, selectors, and sometimes adaptors rather than materials developer or even evaluators. This is because they either thought that EAP teachers are not knowledgeable enough in subject areas to develop the materials or believed that materials development should not be included in the ability or duty of a teacher.

> **Example 27**
> **Fateh:** Most of the time I like ready-made materials.
> **Interviewer:** Would you please tell me the reasons?
> **Fateh:** Yes. Because, especially, in the fields other than humanities <u>I don't feel myself to be an expert in that subject to select the materials</u>…

The data showed that the teachers selected materials and used them with the criteria and for the purposes other than those key to EAP goals. Few evidences, if any, could be found to indicate that they sought to gear the teaching materials to the learners' communicative needs, target situation discourse demands, and the missions of EAP. The typical criteria and purposes included topical relevance and coverage of subject-specific issues (Majid, Shayan, and Behdad); a desire to have a role in materials use (Hamoon); native language samples (Navid); subject-specific concepts and information (Diba); and, responsiveness to learners' proficiency levels (Mehrab).

> **Example 28**
> I try to use selected sections of different prescribed EAP textbooks… the reason is that the individual textbooks may fail <u>to cover all the desired areas and topics</u>. (Majid)

> **Example 29**
> **Navid:** Prepared materials are better…
> **Interviewer**: Teacher [prepared materials]?

> **Navid:** Teacher no. Already-made…
> **Interviewer**: Ready-made textbooks?
> …
> **Navid:** Ready-made materials if prepared by native speakers and experts.

Arya, unlike the other teachers, thought that EAP teachers could be materials developers as well. He further believed that teachers should use materials representing the structures of professional texts.

5. Discussion

The results revealed by the study showed that the teachers' cognitions were mainly incongruent with the principles of the EAP profession. A detailed discussion of the findings with a special focus on the purpose of the second research question will be presented in this section.

5.1. EAP Goals

Students receiving education in their disciplines desire to enter target disciplinary communities, establishing themselves as members recognizable with valued identities (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). They want and need to see the world from the particular viewpoints of their disciplines. To meet this goal, they ought to understand and learn the ways knowledge is perceived, produced, and negotiated in their disciplinary communities (Hyland, 2016). Each discipline puts constraints on newcomers' socialization through conventionalized communicative practices and meaning making choices. The goal of EAP is to facilitate students' "disciplinary becoming" (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008, p. 234) and smooth the path for "their effective participation in academic communities" (Hyland & Shaw, 2016, p. 5). EAP education works towards this goal through "Draw[ing] on descriptions of language use and communication from the target communities of practice and disciplines" (Basturkmen, 2010, p. 12) to offer learners the privileged ways of "making meanings" (Hyland, 2015, p. 42).

The data showed that our teachers mainly misunderstood EAP goals. By perceiving EAP missions in terms of "preparing learners for study in English" (Hyland & Shaw, 2016, p. 1) they look down on EAP as a "low-status service activity" (p. 2) rather than an "independent academic field" (Hamp-Lyons, 2011, p. 93). Taking Hyland and Shaw's (2016, p. 2) idea that "the English we encounter and are expected to produce in academic settings differs in cognitively significant ways –by genre, by stage of writing and by discipline – from that which we find outside of the academy", our teachers, except for Arya, see the difference only in terms of content and subject specific words. Failing to fathom disciplines as academic discourse communities with their own world views, communicative practices and language uses, they are not unlikely to

have an insufficient grasp of disciplinary socialization demands, EAP missions and their own roles. As a result, they fail to see EAP offering a research-based pedagogy easing students' access to the privileged ways of being, making meanings, and constructing knowledge.

Looking at EAP in terms of the resources it offers, one can understand that the teachers expect only one or two resources to be offered by EAP including technical vocabulary items and subject matter. In contrast, EAP is to offer more key resources such as communication practices and conventions, meaning making choices, ways of knowledge construction and negotiation, and language uses. For this restricted view on the pedagogical potentials of EAP, they have no desire to consider EAP as an education in its own right. Moreover, they are convinced not to feel the need to "link pedagogy and research" (Hyland & Shaw, 2016, p. 3).

5.2. Distinctions between EAP and EGP

Disciplines are language using communities with their own ways of viewing and interpreting the world and communicative practices realized through their valued genres (Hyland, 2015). To prepare students for successful participation in the professional activities of their desired communities (Hyland, 2006), EAP practitioners' focus should be redirected to discipline-based "communicative practices... rather than specific aspects of language" (p. 397). One way to make this shift possible is to adopt a genre-oriented approach to EAP teaching which necessarily views genres as "recognizable kinds of social activity... rather than just arrangements of forms". Otherwise, specificity is reduced to the level of "specific aspects of language" (Hyland, 2007, p. 398). Studying genres with their analytical frameworks, but not as reading passages, makes strategic meaning making choices available for learners because, as Hyland (2015, p. 33) rightly states, in genres discourse "choices are narrowed down to the point where we don't have to decide on every option available". More importantly, learners will use the valued choices with assurance to effectively engage in textual practices as they are clear about communication purposes and the functions of the choices (Hyland, 2015).

Referring to the results, our teachers reduced specificity to technical vocabulary items and content knowledge. Developing a knowledge of vocabulary and content is necessary but not sufficient conditions for learners' successful functioning in new discourse communities. It was found that the EAP teachers were not well-aware of the significance of including genres in their instructional activities. They seem to evade involving themselves and their students in genre analysis and even considering the findings of related studies. Even if it happens to see an instance of a genre in their adapted or selected materials they are more likely to treat it as a reading extract providing subject-specific information. The epistemological stances, world views, discourse characteristics, rhetorical organizations, and discipline-based language uses are unlikely to be examined.

Since knowledge in academic context is communicated through both written and oral genres, exclusion of speech-based genres from the EAP programs has not been endorsed in the literature (Belcher, 2006; Hyland, 2016). However, the teachers' statements showed that they mainly exclude oral skills from their EAP courses. It is worth mentioning that even if in an EAP syllabus, reading and writing are predominantly preferred, the focus should be redirected from discreet skills coverage to true genres study. Genre study, describing and presenting discipline-specific language uses and discourse resources, can help practitioners to effectively ease novices' access to the preferred meaning making choices (Hyland, 2015).

EAP shares with other branches of ELT, especially EGP, the commitment to be cognizant of students' present situation needs including their current levels of language proficiency, but what sets off EAP from its sister branches is its focus on students' target needs (Belcher, 2009) including discipline-based communicative practices, language uses and demands (Hyland, 2006, p. 74). The findings showed that target situation needs have escaped from the attention of the participating teachers. The teachers seemed to define specific needs, more or less, in terms of language (i.e. words) and content rather than "communication" (Hyland, 2007, p. 397).

5.3. EAP teacher qualifications and roles

EAP requires a particular set of qualifications for the practitioners committed to "putting specificity into practice" (Hyland, 2006, p. 4). Practitioners' responsibility to understand students' target discourses, to be responsive to learners' needs, and to facilitate their "disciplinary becoming" (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008, p. 234), require them to fulfill the roles of researchers, syllabus designers, materials developers, collaborators and instructors (Belcher, 2006, 2009; Hall, 2013).

Being a researcher is inevitable for an effective practitioner (Belcher, 2009; Hyland, 2007). Above all, teachers have the task of exploring students' needs which is not easy as it necessitates performing other tasks such as conducting discourse analysis and collaborating with subject specialists and even students (Hall, 2013). To develop sufficient understanding of target discourses, teachers can largely make use of genre theory to analyze discipline-valued texts (Hüttner et al., 2009; Hyland, 2015) as well as ethnographic studies to have accurate descriptions of contextual language uses (Dressen-Hammouda, 2013; Hyland, 2007). As the results showed, the teachers were unfamiliar with discourse- and genre-oriented approaches to EAP instruction.

Mastery over content area is another qualification, the degree of which is not yet agreed upon (Belcher, 2009). However, there is a consensus that some degree of awareness of the subject area seems essential for the teacher to work as a "content area informed instructor" (Belcher, 2006, p. 135). Belcher (2006, 2009) and Hall (2013), to mention a few, believe that some familiarity with discipline-specific discourses and communicative events such as genres seems to

be entirely satisfactory. Unlike this prevalent notion in the literature, our teachers believed in the full integration of "content, language, and pedagogy" (Hall, 2013, p. 2).

In regard to the suitability of either ELT or content specialists for EAP teaching, literature seems to look with a favor on ELT teachers equipped with EAP teaching qualifications (e.g., Hyland, 2007; Hall, 2013). Belcher (2009, p. 13) makes it clear insisting that:

domain specialists in particular, because of the tacitness and automaticity of their expert knowledge of discourse practices, limited understanding of language and literacy acquisition, and perhaps too distant memories of being novices, may not be especially sensitive to newcomers' needs or knowledgeable about how to meet them.

Whereas practitioners' sensitivity to specifics of target discourses translated into their practices is all that matters, our teachers took the sufficiency of either ELT or content teacher qualifications for granted.

Collaboration with students and content specialists is both a quality for the EAP teacher and a necessary condition for successful EAP teaching (Belcher, 2009; Hyland, 2007; Hall, 2013). The participating teachers showed to see the issues of recruiting content and/or ELT teachers as an either or problem and had no idea about the collaboration between these two groups.

Specificity of disciplinary world views, communicative practices and language uses require practitioners to be research-informed materials developers, too (Hall, 2013; Hyland, 2007). EAP teachers need to rely on corpus-based discourse studies to develop, select or adapt needs-responsive materials. The teachers of this study showed that they were unlikely to be apt to considering the relevance of research findings to their selected or adapted materials.

It is evident from the results that our teachers are not well cognizant of and do not employ discourse- and genre-oriented approaches to their instructional activities. This way, they are less likely to adequately put specificity into practice. Needless to say that their cognitions and the approaches they adopt for their actual teaching practices, not informed by discourse and genre studies, make them fail to successfully fulfil their EAP roles.

6. Conclusion

We built on the arguments that research on EAP teacher cognition in general and in the Iranian context has taken the quality of teachers' cognitions for granted and that in-service EAP teachers might be still outsiders if they have not developed EAP-specific cognition. Following this line of thinking, this study sought to understand in-service teachers' cognitions probing their tacitly-held cults.

The results revealed that the teachers' cognitions on key issues were significantly incongruent with the principles of EAP. It also showed that there is an

agreement between individual teachers' cognitions on different issues. For examples, eight out of nine teachers whose understanding of EAP goals were incongruent with the principles of EAP education, showed that their cognitions on teachers' roles and qualifications were limited, too. The major contribution of this study is that it demonstrated that in-service teachers are still outsiders to the profession, though they may misguidedly assume they are successfully fulfilling their roles. Equally important, it indicated there is a significant gap in EAP teacher education research addressing teachers' cognition and its limitations.

The findings have implications for EAP practitioners, teacher educators and researchers. They may consider the specificity of EAP teacher qualifications as well as cognition in their professional activities and that successful transition to EAP teacher demands reconstruction of the EAP-specific cognition. EAP researchers, conducting needs/rights analyses, program evaluation as well as exploring the (in)congruence between teachers' cognitions and practices may need to take the quality of teachers' cognitions into consideration.

The study was limited by the methods of data collection and the sample size. Other data collection instruments such as classroom observations, focus group interviews, and document studies can provide further information. Studies with larger sample size made up of homogenous groups in terms of specialization and experience may shed more lights on the findings. Further studies are needed to gather data on EAP-specific cognitions from other stakeholders such as pre-service teachers, EAP teacher educators, syllabus designers and materials developers. Moreover, further research is required to study the processes of cognition reconstruction through involving teacher-learners in different learning opportunities.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview on In-service teachers' cognitions on EAP education

1. What are the major goals and missions of EAP instruction?
2. Is EAP different from EGP? How EAP teaching will be different from EGP teaching?
3. How is the EAP teacher different from the EGP teacher? (Their roles, expertise and identities).
4. What are the major demands for EAP teaching?
5. Who will be a better and more effective teacher, the content teacher or ELT teacher, why?
6. As an EAP teacher, what approach do you adopt to view language? (Do you view language as system, discourse or ideology), Please explain.
7. What do you think about each of the following concepts? Social languages; Professional identities; and, EAP Teacher as a researcher.
8. What type of materials do you prefer (ready-made or teacher developed materials, adapted or selected materials)? Why?
9. What are the first and foremost consideration(s) in EAP teaching?
10. Are you familiar with discourse-, genre-, and corpus-oriented approaches to EAP teaching? Which trends attract you more in EAP teaching?
11. What should be the role of an EAP teacher? (Language learning facilitator, content learning facilitator, both, or something else?)
12. Why should university students take EAP courses? Don't you think EGP courses will do better? Why?
13. Have you ever participated in an EAP teacher education course? Is it needed? Why?
14. How do you improve the knowledge, skills and qualifications you need for successful EAP teaching?
15. What do you think about teacher learning? How do you improve your professional development? What strategies and activities do you use?
16. What are the major problems of EAP instruction? What are the major problems of EAP instruction in Iranian academic context?

Appendix B

Interview questions used to prime the teachers to give as much information as possible in their narratives

1. What is your interpretation and evaluation of your prior experiences of language learning?
2. How do you evaluate your prior language teachers' ways of teaching?
3. Do you remember any teacher distinguishable from others? How were they different? How do you evaluate their teaching approaches and activities?
4. How do you evaluate your prior teachers' qualifications?
5. What type of materials did they use? How do you evaluate those materials?
6. How were you, as a language learner, treated by your teachers?
7. How do you evaluate your teachers' methods of assessment?
8. Did your teachers involve you in classroom decisions and activities?
9. Who influenced you most (positively or negatively) in your ways of being a teacher? Why?