International Journal of Research in English Education (IJREE)

Original Article **Published online: 20 March 2024.**

English Teachers' versus Content Teachers' Language Learning Beliefs and their Practices in English for Specific Academic Purpose Courses

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Received: 29 October 2023
Revision: 1 February 2024
Accepted: 23 February 2024
Published online: 20 March 2024

Abstract

This study endeavored to explore the beliefs that Iranian English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers held and scrutinize the extent to which their beliefs can correspond to their actual practices in EAP context. To these ends, a mixed method study was conducted in which 40 EAP teachers (20 English teachers & 20 subject-area teachers) teaching EAP courses in Universities of Medical Sciences in Iran participated in this nationwide study. The quantitative data gathered through a belief questionnaire was analyzed by SPSS software and the qualitative data collected through interview and observation of EAP courses was analyzed through content analysis. Analyses of the gathered data disclosed that the participants held different beliefs in terms of teaching strategies so that they did differently in their reading-based performances as well as the teaching and learning strategies. Besides, it was revealed that unlike subject-area teachers whose beliefs and performance were derived from their content-related concerns, English teachers' beliefs and performance were presided by the students' real needs, interest, and what is substantiated in the current literature. Within the EAP community of teachers and teacher educators, not only novice teachers who aim to enter into the EAP teaching mainstream can benefit from the findings, but also EAP teachers currently teaching such courses can gain the advantage of reflecting upon the beliefs and their actual practices. In addition, the findings may have implications for all EAP teachers to verbalize tacitly held beliefs, think consciously about them, and be aware of existing challenges and critical areas in EAP teaching.

Keywords: English for Specific Academic Purpose, Language Learning Beliefs, English teachers, Content teachers

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1. Introduction

The focus of attention in teacher education and research has immensely changed from studying teachers' observable behaviors towards teachers' cognition, knowledge and beliefs to probing into their instructional practices, pedagogical decisions, and reflections (Alexander, 2012; Borg, 2019). Research in language education has shifted to the cognitive aspect of teaching taking into account the crucial role of teachers' mental lives in their instructional choices as well as the distinction between what teachers do and what they know and believe (Borg, 2003).

As a component of teacher cognition (Ellis, 2012) and an area of teacher pedagogical subject-area knowledge (Andrews, 2003), teachers' language learning beliefs serve to constitute "culture of teaching", as Richards (1991) called it. Similarly, teachers' language learning beliefs outreached their knowledge in determining the way they define and organize instructional-learning tasks (Pajaras, 1992). Particularly teachers' beliefs model their actual performance and provide a basis for general classroom approach and decision making (Fotouhi & Soleimani, 2021; Karimi, Abdullahi, & Haghighi, 2014).

Research on teachers' beliefs abounds in teacher education literature with teachers in English as a foreign language and English as a second language contexts of language education (Farrel & Bennis, 2013). In spite of the surge of recommendations on teachers' beliefs in the two mentioned contexts, there seems to be a scarcity of the studies concerning teachers' beliefs in English for academic purpose (EAP) contexts (Atai, Babaii, & Lotfi Gaskaree, 2017). Particularly, the gap is extremely felt in different Asian countries that present EAP courses with either English or subject-area teachers, with little or no collaboration between them and their departments (Anthony, 2011). Further, the absence of systematic EAP teacher training courses (Alexander, 2012) may worsen the situation. Iranmehr, Atai, and Babaii (2018; as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2021) suggest that content departments lack criteria for the selection, training, and evaluation of EAP teachers. Alongside this, the numbers of EAP departments are insufficient and, where they do exist, they have a perceived lower status.

Context sensitivity of beliefs has been the focus of two lines of research, cultural and geographical dimensions (De Costa, 2011) and the instructional-learning contexts (Borg, 2011; List et al., 2018). Despite the advocates of the first trend (viz., cultural and geographical dimensions) that highlight the role of culture, especially local and social dimensions of instructional-learning context, supporters of the second trend stress the role of educational setting as a pivotal factor in shaping one's beliefs.

The coincidence of these recognized trends has given rise to the third trend that includes the context-bound nature of teachers' language learning beliefs pertaining to a specific context with its peculiarities, notions, and rhetoric shared by its members (Basturkman, 2012). The so-called trend has hosted a number of studies and probing the role a specific context has gained in mainstream studies in this regard (Navarro & Thornton, 2011). Teachers' instructional behaviors could be driven by their belief structure because beliefs provide a basis for teachers' actions (Borg, 2011). This new trend has shifted the attention from the one-size-fits-all nature of beliefs to that of contextual situated nature of beliefs or the appropriacy of any action in a given context (Johnson, 2009).

Horwitz (1987), a pioneer in studying teachers' and learners' beliefs, contended that cultural background and apriori learning experiences were two influential factors in shaping beliefs. Studies have so far focused on teachers in various geographical rather than discipline-specific settings. Given the premise that teachers with the same field of specialization have more in common than their choice of discipline (Trinder, 2013), what guides teachers' choice of discipline might have some bearing on their conception of purposes and the means through which learning took place. Moreover, in line with the call made by Pajaras (1992) that belief studies should be discipline-specific to a certain area to facilitate an understanding of teachers' cognitive lives, there seems a pressing need to gain insight into the language learning beliefs of EAP teachers' perspectives. This can be done in order to explore how EAP teachers with different fields of specialization perceive and approach language learning and teaching across different EAP contexts (Trinder, 2013).

2. Review of the Literature

Teachers enter classrooms with predetermined beliefs about teaching and learning that have an impact on their classroom practices. The connection between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices have been examined from different perspectives by many researchers. Teachers' beliefs have a greater effect than the teacher's knowledge on planning their lessons, on the types of decisions they adopt, and on classroom practice teachers' beliefs are affected by training courses, learning experiences, professional development, teaching experiences, and teaching practices. Amiryousefi (2015) asserted that what teachers do is identified by their beliefs. Teachers' beliefs about learning languages will have more impact on their class activities than a specific methodology they are told to follow. In order

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to have a deeper understanding of the specific changes in English language teaching, we need to study the impact of teachers' beliefs on their teaching practices (Atai, Babaii, & Taherkhani, 2017).

Teachers teach based on their theoretical beliefs. Teachers' experience as language learners, experience from teaching and education-based or research-based principles are reported as sources of teachers' beliefs. The inconsistency between belief and practices are related to various factors, including class density, time constrains, incompatibility of the assigned text-books, huge workload, and students' needs (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020). In a study by Mirzaie, Hemmati, and Kiasi (2018), teachers typically utilized decontextualized strategies more extensively than contextualized ones in their actual practices indicating that their tendencies are somehow towards traditional approaches in teaching vocabulary. In other words, teachers' instructional practices did not capture all their stated beliefs. It was also found that the implemented policies in English language schools which are greatly towards time economization might be a liable reason cheering teachers to deviate from their real beliefs (Mirzaie, Hemmati, & Kiasi, 2018).

Research indicates that instructors' beliefs and their practices were in line with one another but their actual practice was different from their self-perceived practices, it can be concluded that the instructors' beliefs and practices were not in line with each other (Mardali & Siyyar, 2019). In other words, sometimes, the way teachers thought of L2 teaching and learning (their theoretical beliefs) did not correspond with their teaching behavior and practices. It can be concluded that there are some factors as time, context serving as the main determinants of behavior which need to be taken into account. However, the may be some other factors in different contexts which need to be included in research. For instance, in a study conducted by Mardali and Siyyar (2019), it was revealed that novice and experienced teachers differed significantly in terms of their self-perceived beliefs total scores and experienced teachers had a significantly higher self-perceived beliefs than novice teachers. The results of this study concerning the observation of the factors more by experienced teachers in comparison with novice teachers can be justified in the light of self-efficacy. Comparing the ELT and the content teachers' cognitions, Atai and Khazaee (2014) came to the conclusion that the latter had more consistent conceptualizations about their pedagogical content knowledge and their professional identity.

It must be noted that cognition not only shapes teachers' practices, but also is shaped by their experiences. Consequently, it is assumed that a match between teachers' cognitions and their practices in the classroom is useful and must be encouraged (Farrell & Ives, 2015). In Iran, the national curriculum is silent regarding who should teach EAP and content teachers claim that they are qualified enough to teach EAP courses due to the fact that they know the content and the concepts underlying technical words and that most of them have spent sometimes abroad to continue their studies. They may also do so for financial reasons. They enter the EAP profession without a real background in English (Atai, Babaii, & Taherkhani, 2017) and without their competency being evaluated by English departments. Consequently, both language teachers and content teachers teach EAP courses with little or no cooperation between them (Taherkhani, 2019). Lack of collaboration between ELT instructors and content teachers in teaching discipline-based EAP courses has resulted in noticeable inconsistencies in the two groups' instructions (Soleimani & Alibabaee, 2018; Taherkhani, 2019). According to Sadeghi and Richards (2015), English courses at Iranian universities focus mostly on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension, with little attention paid to oral communication. Language teachers focus on reading, scaffolding as well as consciousness rating strategies while content teachers focus on translation at sentence level (Atai, Babaii, & Taherkhani, 2017) not translation strategies.

It was shown that 60% of EAP teachers at Iranian medical sciences universities are content teachers (Atai, Babaii, & Taherkhani, 2017). In most medical sciences universities, EAP teachers do work in language centers rather than English departments as these universities and the ministry of health, treatment and medical education do not acknowledge the key role of English and language teachers in English courses although it is claimed that students of medical and paramedical fields require English knowledge as a lingua franca to meet their specific academic and professional needs (Milosavljević, Vuletić, & Jovković, 2015).

The most important purpose of EAP courses at universities in Iran is "to fill in the gap between the students' general English competence and their ability to read authentic discipline-specific texts. But Iranian learners' reading comprehension performances at the end of the course were far below the minimum expected criterion of the study (Atai & Tahririan, 2003). This outcome may likely be due to the gap between EAP teachers' beliefs and real practices in EFL classrooms. Due to the limitations of the previous studies including their sample size (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014) and limited perspective (Atai, Babaii, & Taherkhani, 2017; Fotouhi & Soleimani, 2021), this study was intended to inquire into the beliefs that Iranian EAP teachers held and inspect the extent to which their beliefs can correspond to their actual practices in EAP contexts.

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The following research questions are central to this inquiry:

1. What are the similarities and differences in language learning beliefs of Iranian ELT teachers and content teachers teaching discipline-based EAP courses?
2. To what extent do ELT instructors' and content teachers' stated language learning beliefs correspond to their actual practices in teaching discipline-based EAP courses?

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

In this study, a mixed method was used in which a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the study were 40 EAP teachers (20 ELT teachers & 20 content teachers) teaching EAP courses in universities of medical sciences in four major cities of Iran i.e., Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (IUMS), Tehran (TUMS), Shiraz (SUMS) and Shahr-e-kord (SKUMS). As displayed in Table 1, EAP teachers, both content teachers (Cont. Ts) and ELT instructors (ELT Ts.) were from the faculties of Medicine and its sub-branches presenting EAP courses in the language center of the universities. All the participants (10 female, 10 male ELT Ts and 6 female, 14 male content Ts) were Iranian and native speakers of Farsi with Master's or Ph.D. degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) whose experiences of EAP teaching and age ranged from 2 to 25 and 25 to 65 years, respectively. Most content Ts had exposure to English contexts while spending their sabbatical leave abroad, yet they had no formal training in teaching English.

On the other hand, as compared with ELT Ts who were educated in TEFL with many years of presenting English for General Purpose (EGP) courses, content Ts taught EAP courses in addition to content-specific courses due to the EAP teaching recruitment mania among the Iranian content-specific specialists. It is noteworthy that from the beginning, unrelenting attempts were made for the sample of discipline-based EAP courses (EAP teachers, content of the courses, books, and class hours) to be a good representative of parallel courses with the only difference being the teachers' field of specializations, that is, being ELT or content teacher. According to the policies of the so-called language centers, to qualify for teaching in these courses, ELT teachers were screened based on their years of teaching experience and a demonstration test. Besides, the participants (EAP instructors) were selected from different parts of the country to have a good representative view of different universities nationwide.

Table 1. Teachers' demographic information

Teachers	Gender	Age	Degree	Years of ESP teaching	The ESP course taught: English for the Students of. . .	Teachers	Gender	Age	Degree	Years of ESP teaching	The ESP course taught: English for the Students of.
ELT 1	Female	30	MA	8	Occupational Health (IUM)	Cont. 1	Male	44	PhD	8	Professional Health (IUM)
ELT 2	Male	59	PhD	21	Medicine (IUM)	Cont.2	Male	50	PhD	25	Pharmacy (IUM)
ELT 3	Male	44	PhD	9	Environmental Health (IUM)	Cont.3	Male	47	PhD	21	Biotechnology(SUM)
ELT 4	Male	65	PhD	25	Radiology (IUM)	Cont.4	Female	42	PhD	11	Nursing (SKUM)
ELT 5	Female	32	PhD	10	Medicine (IUM)	Cont.5	Female	55	PhD	19	Medicine (SKUM)
ELT 6	Female	44	PhD	18	Midwifery (IUM)	Cont.6	Male	49	PhD	6	Professional Health (IUM)

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ELT 7	Female	48	MA	21	Nursing (IUM	Cont.7	Female	43	PhD	11	Medicine (SKUM)
ELT 8	Female	30	MA	4	Laboratory Sciences (IUM)	Cont.8	Male	60	PhD	16	Nursing (SKUM)
ELT 9	Male	35	MA	9	Physiotherapy (IUM)	Cont.9	Male	54	PhD	20	Medicine (TUM)
ELT 10	Male	49	MA	13	Dentistry (SUM)	Cont.10	Male	38	PhD	7	Nutrition Sciences (IUM)
ELT 11	Female	32	MA	6	Nursing (SUM)	Cont.11	Male	41	PhD	8	Environmental Health(IUM)
ELT 12	Male	36	PhD	8	Laboratory Sciences (SUM)	Cont.12	Female	47	PhD	5	Biotechnology(SUM)
ELT 13	Male	25	MA	2	Dentistry (IUM)	Cont.13	Male	43	PhD	9	Nutrition Sciences (IUM)
ELT 14	Male	58	PhD	15	Physiotherapy (TUM)	Cont.14	Male	52	PhD	10	Environmental Health(IUM)
ELT 15	Female	60	PhD	24	Medicine (SUM)	Cont.15	Male	60	PhD	17	Pharmacy (IUM)
ELT 16	Male	47	PhD	6	Environmental Health (IUM)	Cont.16	Male	46	PhD	11	Midwifery (TUM)
ELT 17	Female	51	PhD	19	Medicine (TUM)	Cont.17	Male	39	M.S	8	Technical Orthopedics (IUM)
ELT 18	Female	34	PhD	9	Dentistry (SUM)	Cont.18	Female	36	PhD	2	Midwifery (TUM)
ELT 19	Male	45	PhD	14	Biotechnology (TUM)	Cont.19	Male	59	PhD	25	Pharmacy (IUM)
ELT 20	Female	49	PhD	11	Midwifery (TUM)	Cont.20	Female	47	PhD	11	Midwifery (TUM)

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a language learning and teaching questionnaire, non-participants observations and semi-structured interviews. In order to observe and understand actual practices implemented by the EAP teachers in discipline-based EAP courses, as well as to be able to hint at the consistency between each teacher's reported beliefs and their actual practices, one of the researchers attended two complete sessions for each teacher, totaling 80 sessions which were observed and audio-recorded from the beginning of the semester irregularly to diminish the observer paradox effect (Lebov, 1970) and to let the class go on normally. Moreover, the audio records of each teacher were accompanied by careful field note-taking to have the same data from different sources. It is worth mentioning that for ethical considerations and to avoid any probable change in teachers' actual practices during observation with the presence of the researcher, an atmosphere of trust was established and the teachers were ensured about the anonymity of the data.

To explore the beliefs of ELT Ts and Cont. Ts about language learning/teaching in the EAP context, the beliefs about language learning inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1988) was employed due to its long record of use in similar belief studies (Peacock, 2001; Sadeghi & Abdi, 2015; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Wong, 2010). Thus, its wide use might contribute to the comparability of the findings with other similar studies. The questionnaire targets 23 close-ended statements about language learning comprising beliefs in four major areas of (a) beliefs about language learning aptitude, (b) beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, (c) beliefs about the nature of language learning, and (d) strategies about language learning. Teachers were required to respond to the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. The content validity of the questionnaire was approved based on the feedback received from a panel of EAP experts and researchers who also checked and revised the items to fit

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it to the context of Iranian EAP courses. While the reliability of the questionnaire had already been checked in the related literature (Lui, 2004; Mohammadi et al., 2015), the researchers in this study checked it for the population under the study. The results of using Cronbach's Alpha revealed satisfactory internal consistency of the scale (α= 0.74).

The main purpose of the interview was to make the participants revalidate the researcher's interpretation and reflection of their beliefs about language learning/teaching. Based on the areas and items of *Teachers' Beliefs Inventory* and observation reports of teachers' actual practices, some questions were carefully designed and organized in a semi-structured interview format to investigate the teachers' reasons for what they did during language teaching and learning. The appropriacy of the questions was checked by two experts in the field of ESP teacher education and research who were university professors with many years of experience in the field of ESP. The interview sessions lasted from 45 min to 1 hour and a quarter with an average of 55 min. All the interview sessions were run in Farsi to avoid any probable misunderstanding in terms of special jargons and terminology in content-specific subjects or applied linguistics and to comprehensively elicit their beliefs on the issues. During the interviews, the details of their actual practices and beliefs were discussed and recounted to them, and thus, they were asked for their possible reasons to explain the mismatches between their actual practices and reported beliefs.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study comprised of two phases. First, the quantitative data, collected through the questionnaire, were analyzed to yield frequencies and percentages for each category of beliefs. In the second phase, the data were supplemented by the qualitative data emerging from the observation and interview protocols which were transcribed and analyzed subsequently. For better reporting and understanding of percentages and frequencies, 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were merged and reported under disagree (D). The same was also done for 'strongly agree' and 'agree' (A) options. As to the qualitative phase of the study, the data emerged from the observations, and interviews were coded and subsequently subjected to content analysis. To ensure the reliability of the coding and labeling and to achieve consensus, the data were peer-checked by the other researcher. Further, the identified mismatches between their reported beliefs and observed actual practices were scrutinized.

4. Results

4.1 The Participants' Responses to the Questionnaire Items

4.1.1 Foreign Language Aptitude

In terms of the first section of language learning beliefs, ELT Ts. and Cont. Ts reported different views by rating each belief statement differently. Table 2 reports the beliefs two groups of teachers held about the foreign language aptitude encompassing the various aspects of one's potential for success in language learning.

Table 2. Descriptive and inferential statistics for ELT and Cont. Ts' responses to the foreign language aptitude

Items	Fields	Frequency (%)			Z	Asymp.sig .(2-tailed)
		D	N	A		P
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	Cont.	1(5%)	1(5%)	18(90%)	-.650	
	ELT	1(5%)	3(15%)	16(80%)		.516
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	Cont.	4(20%)	1(5%)	15(75%)	-1.456	.145
	ELT	1(5%)	1(5%)	18(90%)		
3. females are better than males at learning foreign languages.	Cont.	4(20%)	-	16(80%)	-.978	.328
	ELT	1(5%)	3(10%)	16(85%)		
4. People who are good at math or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	Cont.	6(30%)	4(20%)	10(50%)	-.709	.477
	ELT	4(20%)	4(20%)	12(60%)		
	Cont.	9(45%)	1(5%)	10(50%)	-2.746	.006

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5. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	ELT	2(10%)	8(10%)	10(80%)		
6. Iranian people are good at learning foreign languages.	Cont.	16(80%)	4(20%)	-	-.284	.776
	ELT	15(75%)	2(10%)	3(15%)		
7. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	Cont.	2(10%)	5(25%)	13(65%)	.469	.639
	ELT	1(5%)	6(30%)	13(65%)		
8. Iranian people think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	Cont.	1(10%)	4(30%)	15(60%)	-2.047	.041
	ELT	1(5%)	-	19(95%)		

As shown in Table 2, the findings revealed that beliefs with regard to aptitude favored the common consensus of the two groups of teachers. That is, the two groups of teachers represented similar beliefs in terms of age (90% vs. 80%), gender (80% vs. 85%), language aptitude (75% vs. 90%), and the nature of subject interest (50% vs. 60%). However, they disposed different views concerning the intelligence of bilinguals' potential in language learning ($Z=-2.746$, $p<0.05$) and the importance of speaking a language for Iranian people ($Z=.041$, $p<0.05$).

4.1.2 Difficulty of Language Learning

Table 3. Descriptive and inferential statistics for ELT and Cont. Ts' responses to the difficulty of language learning

Items	Field	Frequency (%)			Z	Asymp.sig.(2-tailed)
		D	N	A		P
9. It is easier to read and understand a language than to speak and write it.	Cont.	10(50%)	4(20%)	6(30%)	-2.868	.004
	ELT	2(10%)	6(30%)	12(60%)		
10. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	Cont.	4(20%)	4(20%)	12(60%)	-2.055	.040
	ELT	2(10%)	2(10%)	16(80%)		
11. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	Cont.	2(10%)	3(15%)	15(75%)	-2.721	.007
	ELT	16(80%)	1(5%)	3(15%)		
12. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	Cont.	6(30%)	3(15%)	11(55%)	-2.125	.034
	ELT	5(25%)	10(50%)	5(25%)		

With respect to the difficulty of language learning belief area in Table 3, the two groups varied in terms of the general difficulty of some languages over others (60% vs. 80%), the relative difficulty of language skills, (30% vs. 60%), and (75% vs. 15%), and finally, the easiness of language learning for bilinguals (55% vs. 15%). As was indicated in the observation, ELT Ts preferred an integrated approach to skills in their actual practices repertoire, in contrast to Cont Ts whose practices revolved around reading-only practices. The significant difference between the two groups of teachers in all belief items in this regard represented itself in the pre-activities they implemented before presenting the reading skill which had a direct link to their responses to the questionnaire. As indicated in observation and later probed in the interviews, ELT Ts were mostly in favor of linguistics and strategy-based pre-reading, pre-writing, and speaking activities (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014) around which students were provided with some warm-up and background activation practices, preparing students for the main tasks.

Conversely, Cont. Ts were only inclined to reading and practices which mostly echoed the activation of content-related knowledge gained through their content-specific courses to deal with the text, including discussion on the content-specific aspect of the text. In this regard, Cont. T3, for instance, asserted; "due to lack of time and not enough

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credit hours given to ESP courses, teachers are obliged to teach, test or channel their efforts to what students are most in need of (i.e., reading discipline-based texts in English) during their pursuit of academic studies."

4.1.3 Nature of Language Learning

Table 4. Descriptive and inferential statistics for ELT and Cont. Ts' responses to the nature of language learning

Items	Field	Frequency (%)				Asymp.sig.(2-tailed)
		D	N	A	Z	
13. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language.	Cont.	5(25%)	-	15(75%)	-1.034	.001
	ELT	9(45%)	6(30%)	5(25%)		
14. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	Cont.	-	6(30%)	14(70%)	-1.078	.002
	ELT	5(25%)	4(20%)	9(45%)		
15. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	Cont.	14(70%)	4(20%)	2(10%)	-1.064	.004
	ELT	2(10%)	4(20%)	6(70%)		
16. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic disciplines.	Cont.	8(40%)	4(20%)	8(40%)	-1.450	.147
	ELT	7(35%)	1(5%)	12(60%)		
17. Learning English is a matter of translating from Farsi.	Cont.	3(15%)	3(15%)	14(70%)	-2.979	.003
	ELT	15(75%)	4(20%)	1(5%)		

As is shown in Table 4, the two groups of teachers did not reach a consensus regarding the importance of having awareness of the foreign culture in learning a foreign language (75% vs. 25%; Z=.001, p<.05). In terms of the importance of vocabulary, they had significant differences as the majority of Cont. Ts (70%) agreed with vocabulary as the core of language learning whereas just (40%) of ELT Ts agreed (Z= -1.078; p< .05). Meanwhile, regarding the importance of grammar, they had different views as well (Z=-1.064; p< .05).

Interestingly, most of the ELT Ts (70%) coincided with the primacy of grammar in language learning while only (10%) of Cont. Ts agreed with the importance of grammar in language learning for EAP courses. The most considerable difference was reported for the last belief statement about language learning, *'learning English is a matter of translating from Farsi'*, despite Cont. Ts' agreement (70%) with the effectiveness of translation in language learning, ELT Ts (75%) disagreed (Z=-2.979; p< .05). However, the two groups of teachers reached to a consensus regarding the unique nature of language learning phenomenon as compared with other academic disciplines (40% vs. 35%), (Z=-1.450, p>.147).

4.1.4 Language Learning Strategies

Table 5. Descriptive and inferential statistics for ELT and Cont. Ts' responses to language learning strategies

Items	Field	D	N	A	Z	Asymp.sig.(2-tailed)
18. It's important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.	Cont.	10(50%)	5(25%)	5(25%)	-2.198	.028
	ELT	-	6(30%)	14(70%)		
19. You shouldn't say anything in the language until you can say it correctly.	Cont.	-	1(5%)	19(95%)	-.310	.820
	ELT	10(50%)	8(40%)	2(10%)		

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20. It is better to learn a foreign language in a foreign country.	Cont.	2(10%)	4(30%)	14(60%)	-.042	.986
	ELT	10(50%)	1(5%)	9(45%)		
21. It's ok for students to guess if they don't know a word in the foreign language.	Cont.	13(65%)	5(25%)	2(10%)	-.3.511	.000
	ELT	-	3(15%)	17(85%)		
22. It's important that students repeat and practice a lot.	Cont.	3(15%)	6(30%)	11(55%)	-.174	.883
	ELT	-	6(30%)	14(70%)		
23. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be difficult to get rid of them later on.	Cont.	1(5%)	6(30%)	13(65%)	-2.078	.038
	ELT	15(75%)	3(15%)	2(10%)		

According to Table 5, the two groups of teachers disagreed on the importance of excellent accent acquisition (Z= -2.198, P<.05). More noticeably, the major difference was in item 21(guessing strategy, Z= -.3.511, P<.05), where most of the ELT Ts (85%) agreed with the statement, but few Cont. Ts agreed (10%). That is, ELT Ts favored guessing when the students did not know words' meaning in accordance with what Grifts (2003) put forth that good language learners resort to guessing strategy and other features of context in order to keep going instead of merely looking up every new word encountered through the text and translating them literally. In addition, in terms of avoiding making mistakes for some consequences, they did not reach a consensus (5% vs. 75%) as the majority of ELT Ts disagreed, most of Cont. Ts agreed (Z=-2.078, P<.05).

5. Discussion

Concerning the first research question, our findings pointed to both similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers with differences outweighing the similarities. The findings were much in line with previous studies in the related literature (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009), and some of the recent research on EAP teachers' cognitions, beliefs and actual practices (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Atai & Fattahi-Majd, 2014; Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). In this study, it was found that there was not always a necessary correspondence between Cont Ts' and ELT Ts' stated beliefs and their actual instructional practices.

Generally, the two groups of teachers translated their beliefs into actual instructional practices differently which had a bearing on their different mental orientations and thought structures as was disclosed in the interview sessions. The two groups of teachers noticeably differed specifically with regard to checking new words, the importance of teaching different skills, reading practices and strategies, and the use of L1 (either in the form of translation or the medium of instruction).

Contrary to the perplexing and contradicting findings found in Cont. Ts' inconclusive responses to the questionnaire and their actual practices in observation, their interviews yielded a clear inclination toward mere checking the exact Persian equivalent of words' meaning through content glossaries. Almost all Cont. Ts abided by their previous teachers' practices in class and the constraints imposed by the administration. This point is reminiscent of Lortie's (1975) proposition that teachers are by all means followers of their teachers and mirrors of their long apprentice of observation.

However, when it comes to ELT Ts, they all checked new words' meanings in context while stressing the contextual clues and the frequency of words' variations and meaning in different disciplines and genres. They further gave a deeper understanding of the text by introducing EAP students to the rules of word formation and analyzed the words into prefixes, suffixes, and roots and asked how the words might relate to each other while focusing on the words that might block comprehension.

Indeed, from the observations and interviews, it was noticed that ELT Ts unanimously emphasized the constructive role of some practices in EAP classes. They include drawing on words' part of speech, structural clues, and analysis of the text structure, paragraph organization and text discourse markers not only for developing reading comprehension but also for raising students' awareness of discourse specificity and genre organization. Anthony (2011) highlighted the advantage of EAP teachers' great exposure to texts from varying disciplines and genres to develop EAP students' knowledge in this regard.

These findings further reinforce the assumption that more frequent use of some words in academic texts corresponds with EAP's distinctive approach to language teaching. This is mainly based on the exploration of specific language

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features and communicative skills such as discipline-based technical words and rhetorical structures of the target group. Further, ELT Ts generally tried to draw students' attention to the frequency of certain words, phrases and structures such as passive structures and generic terms as ELT3 contended:

Developing a repertoire of knowledge and awareness regarding rhetoric of their discipline-based genre might help students in higher academic endeavors since they are primarily useful for reading and vocabulary and later for academic writing and professional academic speaking skills.

Worth noting is the way through which words were pronounced by students in EAP classes that formed a major concern for ELT Ts based on what was observed and later probed in the interview. As was commented by ELT2:

Although recent literature emphasized communication and assigned a secondary role to pronunciation, the correct pronunciation of the words still featured a significant challenge for EAP students to deal with, considering the frequency and saliency of some words in their technical fields which a wrong pronunciation might lead to misunderstanding.

The findings indicated that while ELT instructors supported the idea of achieving excellent accent acquisition, they also believed that making mistakes is a sign of progress, in other words, an indicator of their level of language development.

In terms of using L1, especially translation practices, however, few ELT Ts compared to Cont. Ts believed that only translation could ensure success in language learning, given that translation could be one of the ways through which language learning might be achieved, not as the only technique. Besides, ELT Ts perceived it as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, a strong belief shared by almost all Cont. Ts. excessive focus on translation in ESAP classes by Cont Ts was also reported by Kaivanpanah et al. (2021) and their too much emphasis on technical vocabulary and translation (Atai et al., 2017).

Cont Ts' remarks in the interviews painted a clear picture of their induction with their studying abroad which shape their beliefs as in the case of the importance they assigned to the knowledge of culture to be able to speak the foreign language as they all noticeably referred to their years of exposure to the foreign culture. For instance, Cont.T3 referred to his years of studying abroad as an influential factor in shaping his cognitions and said:

Being in a foreign context and studying the courses in the native language have the most profound and advantageous impact on the implementation of practices in EAP courses.

Apparently, it could clearly account for their total agreement with the belief statement that having the knowledge of culture is a prerequisite for speaking a foreign language. On the contrary, ELT Ts perceived the contribution of culture as a secondary one, not the main one in speaking.

In terms of language skills and components, ELT Ts' responses to the interview questions pointed out that they attached equal importance to grammar, vocabulary and other language skills as compared with Cont Ts whose utmost attention was directed to reading for the sake of boosting their content-specific knowledge and technical vocabulary. One important factor which distinguished Cont. Ts practices from those of ELT instructors was the matter of content specificity or language primacy which had a bearing on the magnitude of sources shaping or influencing their beliefs about language learning. Besides, Cont. Ts' tendency toward highlighting content in their repertoire of practices emanates from the fact that since the language of most content-specific course books is English, equipping EAP students with reading skill and knowledge of vocabulary lead to better comprehension and subsequent performance in the given courses.

Another difference can be referred to the belief item 23 in which ELT Ts differed from their Cont. Ts' counterparts in letting or stopping learners make mistakes at the beginning of their language learning. That is, almost all ELT Ts rigorously claimed that expecting learners to be silent in order to be perfect to be allowed to speak in English is indeed a high stake game fraught with frustration and disappointment, as was disclosed in the interview. ELT3 stated:

Prompting perfect performance from the beginning might have its own drawbacks such as lack of confidence, boredom and demotivation.

Conversely, Cont. Ts believed that making mistakes is a threat to EAP learners' language learning. Regarding the second research question, the observations and interviews revealed that there are some factors determining the gap between the language teachers' and content teachers' self-perceived conceptions and their actual performance in the classroom. The findings indicated that the gap is wider in the former group which is in line with Atai and Khazaee (2014). It may be the result of the underlying factors in the context (Mardali & Siyyari, 2019). Language teachers are under the pressure of time to cover the predetermined syllabus by their language department/center (Mardali & Siyyari,

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2019). They have two-credit EAP courses and if they want to practice strategies, administer collaborative learning, follow skilled/task-based learning and teach them how learn how to learn, two hours a week is not enough at all. They have a large number of students in their classes, most of which are lower intermediate students. They are low motivated students and consider EAP courses as general courses and being of less importance compared to their specialized courses. So, if they have time to spend on studying, they would rather study their specialized courses. Language teachers find it hard to put into practice what they believe to be right since students resist doing homework and more practice outside classrooms. As there is no consistent methodologies and classroom policies among language teachers, students tend to attend the classes in which they find least difficulty and convenient conditions. They would like to be free from any responsibilities and from obeying any rules.

This is in line with the findings of Ostovar-Namaghi, Hosseini, and Iranmehr (2021) who stated that EAP learners are more concerned with how to pass the tests rather than have improved language skills. Therefore, it is not always the case that instructors' cognitions shape their classroom practices. They may theoretically agree with some recent methodologies but unexpectedly practice traditional ones in the classroom because of some intervening factors such as students' reaction (Movahhedi, Sarkeshikian, & Golshan, 2024). Additionally, it is the students' beliefs that shape their behavior. They come to the EAP classes with the presupposition that they need to read their academic texts in future and the sole thing to fulfill such a need is learning technical words and that they can find the meaning of these words by using they smartphones and learn the concepts behind them in their specialized courses.

Language teachers feel their professional identity has been threatened and try to defend it by beginning to deviate from their self-perceived beliefs in order to satisfy their students' desires and encounter less resistance on the part of students. With respect to assessment, language teachers have to take multiple choice exams rather than open-ended questions which is not in line with what they believe learning is and how it should be assessed. Comparing the ELT and the content teachers' cognitions, Atai and Khazaee (2014) also arrived at the conclusion that the latter had more consistent conceptualizations about their professional identity. Consequently, they had more autonomy which is a sense of control over different aspects of their teaching and more freedom to make decisions relevant to their educational settings.

Content teachers are members of specialized departments in medical universities. Their qualifications in EAP are not assessed by any authorities, but they have a good sense about their professional identity since educational authorities give them enough support to realize their cognitions in their classroom performances. Their students are more obedient as they know they should follow the classroom policies otherwise they face its consequences. Content teachers teach in a manner in which they have learned during their academic studies (grammar translation method) (Taherkhani, 2019) and assess their students according to how they teach. And students do not dare to object them. Content teachers focus on teaching content rather than learning strategies and students try to learn some knowledge which may be outdated two to three years later. Similarly, as far as teaching EAP vocabulary is concerned, ELT Ts focused on a more varied combination of aspects than Cont Ts did; Cont Ts just highlighted the meaning of the technical words (Fotouhi & Soleimani, 2021). Students also think that as Cont Ts also teach their specialized courses, they must do what these teachers say because these teachers are well aware of their educational and professional language needs.

These findings are in accordance with Muliyah and Aminatun (2020) as they also explored that the teacher's beliefs are not always realized in their classroom practices for a variety of potential reasons. The inconsistency between belief and practices can be related to various factors including class density, time constrains, incompatibility of the assigned text-books, huge workload, and students' needs.

6. Conclusion

Since the teachers' belief system is directly related to their practices, attitudes and decisions they make in the classroom, it is essential for all teacher educators to delve into this belief system and provide great insights to improve educational and teaching-education processes (Durán-Narváez et al., 2017). What was found in this study indicated that teachers vary in terms of the way they perceive and approach language learning across different contexts considering the fact that teachers' beliefs are situated, dynamic in nature (Wong, 2010) and to a large extent under the influence of their shared notions and experience in their content-specific community. Additionally, exploration of EAP teachers' beliefs in this study helps us arrive at a better understanding of their underlying thought processes.

The findings pointed to the fact that due to the content-specific knowledge versus linguistics knowledge trade-off which governs EAP courses and the corresponding department in charge of running them in Iran, it is of utmost importance to accommodate the two groups of teachers' needs and requirements. Correspondingly, due to EAP courses' accountability and highly specific nature, it is wise to reconcile the two camps to be supportive of each other when only through such cooperation Iranian community of EAP practitioners might see the fruit of their endeavor

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attempts. In short, the context-sensitive nature of discipline-based EAP courses and the particularity of teachers in charge of running the given courses warrant conducting in-depth teacher education courses and workshops to help teachers to unravel their beliefs and refine possible misbeliefs. The findings of this study may be relevant to the EAP context in Asia and other educational contexts as a catalyst to enable other teachers to reflect on their unexamined resistant beliefs and practices.

6.1 Implications

Within the EAP community of teachers and teacher educators, not only novice teachers who aim to enter into the EAP teaching mainstream can benefit from the findings, but also EAP teachers currently teaching such courses can gain the advantage of reflecting upon the beliefs and their actual practices. Besides, the findings may have implications for all EAP teachers to verbalize tacitly held beliefs, think consciously about them, and be aware of existing challenges and critical areas in EAP teaching.

Teacher educators and trainers may devise and plan courses through which teacher trainees become familiar with how their belief systems can possibly affect their practice in real classroom environments. teachers will gain more awareness, which will ultimately affect their practices positively. The more up-to-date they are about teaching and learning theories, the more they can familiarize L2 teachers with more modern theories. Inservice courses to keep teachers up-to-date, give teachers time do reflective teaching thinking about the way their teaching beliefs may interact with their teaching practice so as to be encouraged to become reflective practitioners.

This study can be replicated to find how other assets of EAP teachers might interrelate with their pedagogical decision-making, instructional practices and their deeply held beliefs and cognitions. Moreover, years of teaching (experience) and gender can be introduced as two determinants regarding the role they might play in shaping cognitions and beliefs teachers hold and in differentiating their actual instructional practices in return. Finally, a complete comparison of the beliefs EAP teachers held with those of EAP students to whom such discipline-based courses are presented might further illuminate the expectations of the two parties from each other.

Acknowledgement

The authors thank all the participants in this study.

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