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Iranian ESP Teachers and Students' Perceptions of Critical English for Academic Purposes

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ABSTRACT

Critical English for academic purposes (CEAP) has been an attempt to challenge the status quo in English for academic purposes (EAP) education. However, it has not received due attention in the literature. For the same reason, this study concentrated on how the Iranian EAP teachers and students perceived the three key CEAP modules of needs/right analysis, power, and dialogue/hope. As its secondary aim, this study also focused on how much the instructor practiced what they perceived of CEAP in their classrooms. For gathering the quantitative data, the main components of the CEAP framework formed the basis for the preparation and validation of a Likert-type questionnaire to measure the respondents' perceptions of CEAP. In order to complement the results of the questionnaire data on the perception of CEAP, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The results for the first research question showed that both participating groups' opinions of CEAP were quite similar. The discrepancy between teachers' questionnaire and interview data demonstrated that a praxis breakdown occurred as a result of an imbalance between the EAP teachers' knowledge and practice of CEAP in their classrooms. Additionally, the qualitative data analysis showed that there was little contact between ESP teachers and students while developing the EAP curricula and instructional strategies. Students were also viewed as obedient and passive actors, required to carry out the predetermined institutional requirements established by the departments or curriculum designers. The findings of this study have implications for ESP teachers and material developers.

Keywords: critical English for academic purposes, English for academic purposes, critical pedagogy, praxis

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1. Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) has always been a practical endeavor with a focus on identifying needs, producing teaching materials, and developing effective teaching methods (Guardado & Light, 2020). Courses in English for specific purposes are in high demand due to the rising number of prospective university students worldwide (Reid, 2001). The most important subset of ESP is English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which stresses the academic aspect of ESP (Anthony, 2018). It is noteworthy that EAP has begun to predominate due to the expanding effects of the internationalisation of higher education through English (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007) and its academic use in countries, where English is spoken as the first language or the medium of instruction (Hyland, 2006).

As a needs-driven activity, EAP involves sophisticated and multifaceted deconstruction of learner requirements in relation to academic abilities and competencies (Bruce, 2021). In the same vein, EAP focuses on the demands of academic target circumstances in English language training, rather than providing general instruction. Along the same vein, the language, skills, and genres suitable to the specific activities that learners must perform in academic English are the emphasis of EAP courses (Johns, 2013). Questioning these objectives of EAP, critical applied linguists have claimed that EAP is no longer a matter of sophisticated linguistic input or output, devoid of the human issues involved in trying to learn a foreign language, given the socio-political and cultural aspects of EAP (Rao, 2018). Instead, it is a part of language ability, social awareness, and change, which is rooted in the individual's personal, social, and political surroundings (Wachob, 2009).

In the same vein, Benesch (1999, 2001, 2009, 2013) inoculated critical pedagogy into EAP and introduced CEAP to reject the notion that academic conventions are indisputable logic and unchallengeable. According to Harwood and Hadley (2004), CEAP is a strategy that increases learners' awareness of normative discourses. As Guilherme (2012) put it, the main goal of CEAP is to produce empowered, agentive citizens rather than technically adept, passive subordinates, who will defend the existing quo. Hence, instead of being a plan to get pupils ready for testing, it is a method to encourage a shared quest of self-awareness and reality awareness.

Overall, the CEAP academics and practitioners are in favor of scrutinizing normative procedures and instructional materials in EAP settings and look at the students as dynamic agents who can address their real-world demands and

collaborate with their teachers to develop appropriate curricula. Although they agree that both students and instructors must act as directors within the framework, CEAP instructors agree that EAP students need assistance in achieving their objectives and goals (Benesch, 2001).

All the same, in spite of all studies done into EAP in Iran (e.g., Hashemi et al., 2011; Hayati, 2008; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Noori & Mazdayasna, 2015; Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016), the EAP researchers (e.g., Atai & Taherkhani, 2018) agree upon the inefficiency of the EAP courses regarding the ignorance of EAP Iranian students' needs and rights in EAP courses, and the lack of a learner-centered communicative method in teaching the EAP courses. Moreover, Kiany and Khayyamdar (2005) expressed their concerns over such problems as how EAP education engages students in dialogues over the aspects of their collegiate lives, how EAP teachers are watchful in reference to all voices in the classroom, how EAP professors accept and uncritically perpetuate the departments' externally imposed demands, and how student reactions and feedback affect the textbook selection and assessment tool design.

Additionally, an emerging and understudied research strand is the exploration of EAP instructors' cognitions in EFL situations (Atai & Taherkhani, 2018). Accordingly, the study of teacher cognition in EAP environments is a novel area that requires more in-depth research. In addition, it is important to examine teacher cognition in various educational situations considering the multifaceted responsibilities played by EAP teachers as well as the diversity of the educational backgrounds and areas of competence.

2. Literature Review

Benesch (1999, 2001, 2009, 2013) expounded on the concept of CEAP to show the restrictions of traditional EAP. Benesch (2001) regards the concept of EAP as supporting the ideology of pragmatism and proposes CEAP instead of "EAP's tradition of unconditionally accepting the findings of needs analysis" (p.38). In the same vein, Benesch (2013) identifies CEAP as a form of critical pedagogy that maintains the goal of assisting students in navigating academic discourses and disciplines while challenging the idea that academic conventions are inescapably logical and unassailable. It addresses the critical topics in education in EAP settings where students' voices and engagement in the issues associated to academics can be heard since it views students as active agents rather than novices. Similarly, Darder (2018) stated that CEAP is an outgrowth of critical pedagogy, aiming to inculcate criticality in students so they can challenge the ideologies and practices that form the cornerstones of educational systems and arrive at the emancipatory ideal of democratic schooling.

Accordingly, CEAP considers hope and dialogue as concepts that distinguish CEAP and EAP and views education as a struggle to develop human presence, not as a mere set of techniques for the fulfillment of institutional objectives. As put by Benesch (2001), needs analyses consider the world outside the ESL classroom and go beyond language classes to prepare students for future collegiate and workplace experiences. Moreover, Benesch (2001, p.102) claimed that EAP teachers and students can think about potential reactions to unfavorable settings, whether in a society or a classroom, using the theoretical technique of rights analysis to demonstrate change and resistance.

Furthermore, the proponents of CEAP have tried to consider the socio-political context of pedagogy in academic contexts. Hence, the ultimate instructional aim of CEAP is the development of students' critical literacy. For the same reason, it focuses on the academic practices that highlight the role of cultural contexts not the formal features of academic texts (Benesch, 2013). Hence, such pedagogy encourages students to reflect on their learning and pushes them to reevaluate long-held beliefs and presuppositions of the political and cultural structure of society (Bronner, 2017). Moreover, it fosters critical thinking, which views reality as in a state of flux rather than as a fixed object to fulfill the promises of transformational education (Benesch, 2009).

2.1. Critical English for Academic Purposes (CEAP)

Critical English for academic purposes (CEAP) has been proposed in response to traditional EAP at universities (Mortenson, 2022). Benesch (1999, 2001, 2009, 2013) elaborated on the idea of CEAP to highlight the limitations of the conventional EAP. Accordingly, CEAP dives into EAP-related concerns, where the voices of students and teachers, as stakeholders, can significantly change the state of education (Atai et al., 2018).

Initially, CEAP researchers looked at the students' identities in the classroom, dealt with questions of power, identified the effects of English classrooms, and contrasted ideologic and pragmatic approaches to English language teaching (Chun, 2019). The anti-essentialist paradigms that emerged from this phase aimed to emphasize the potential for EAP to be consistent with critical pedagogy (Mortenson, 2022). In the same vein, Darder (2018) believed that CEAP is a development of critical pedagogy, which strives to cultivate students' critical awareness so they can challenge the ideas and practices that serve as the foundation of educational systems and reach the liberating ideal of democratic schooling.

Following Freire and Freire (1994), who opined that education is a struggle to enhance human life, not a set of methods for achieving institutional objectives, Benesch (2001) has seen education as a battle to create human presence rather than a set of methods for achieving institutional goals. Needs and rights are the two main CEAP concepts to integrate necessities and resistance. Needs analysis is a method for gathering and evaluating data pertinent to course design. It controls how courses are designed and how they are taught (Hyland, 2006). In addition, similar to traditional EAP, CEAP depends on needs analysis to guide activities and homework, helping students achieve well in their classes. However, CEAP relies on needs analysis to prepare students for authentic experiences in the future (Benesch, 2013), not pressuring the students to meet the standards set by their institutions (e.g., Moslemi et al., 2011). Rights analysis is used to conceive a more active role for students in constructing the target scenario and to focus emphasis on the politics of education (Benesch, 2001). The goal of rights analysis is to figure out what is attainable, prudent, and advantageous for a specific set of students at any given time. It emphasizes concerns such as authority, control, involvement, and resistance that are rarely mentioned concerning target settings (Benesch, 2001).

According to Benesch (2013), CEAP aims to democratize societies by examining institutional power relations and including students in decisions that have an impact on their lives both inside and outside of the classroom. In other words, CEAP facilitates limit-acts (i.e., doing something to realize what comes beyond the obstacle) and reveals what happens as they are carried out, focusing on the use of power in classroom contexts rather than anticipating specific outcomes (Benesch, 2001). Moreover, the CEAP principle of hope refuses the opinion that the current circumstances are static, and students have to absolutely accept obligations if they are to succeed in their academic lives and in society as a whole. (Benesch, 2001). With regard to dialogue, Benesch (2013) also pointed out that any education that disregards the state of learners' lives and concentrates solely on knowledge transfer denies their humanity and refuses dialogue, which provides an opportunity for developing teachers' and students' human hood.

2.2. Empirical Studies

In the past two decades, many studies have been conducted on ESP, EAP, and critical EAP as well. Siu (2019) conducted a mixed-method qualitative case study with 48 students to look into the creativity, critical thinking, and literacy of the EAP teachers and students. The researcher found that they avoided the disempowering practice of copying academic texts into writing templates as they jointly developed an EAP course-integrated training and assessment task. Moreover, Sharndama et al. (2014) sought to determine the impact of academic

English on the development of language skills among learners. The findings demonstrated that, in contrast to general English, EAP has numerous consequences on learners' academic fields or courses of study.

Furthermore, a bulk of studies have been conducted in Iran, Atai et al. (2018) examined the cognitions of Iranian in-service EAP instructors regarding their roles as language teachers. The findings indicated that EAP teachers were merely researchers in terms of needs analysis. They also found that EAP instructors' emphasis on the significance of needs analysis appears to be restricted to teachers' illogical needs assessment since no indications of their use of systematic needs analysis activities could be discovered. That is, only EAP instructors understood its significance. Additionally, Atai and Taherkhani (2018) investigated the cognitive similarities and differences between language instructors and content instructors at Iranian medical sciences universities. The findings showed discrepancies between the two teacher groups.

Shahidipour and Tahririan (2017) made an effort to assess a recently created an EAP textbook from the perspectives of both teachers and students. The findings indicated that both groups were dissatisfied with the content of the material. Additionally, there was no discernible difference in their opinions regarding the ideals they envisaged for the EAP textbook in question. Rezaee and Kazempourian (2017) also sought to ascertain whether ESP teachers were aware of the future workplace needs of the students of electrical engineering in the future. Data were collected from 15 ESP teachers, 97 electrical engineering students, and 39 employers in this field. The findings showed that the teachers had a limited understanding of the future needs of the students of electrical engineering.

Moreover, Soodmand Afshar and Movassagh (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study to analyze language needs. The sample incorporated 831 BA students and 55 EAP teachers. The results revealed a large discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions of demands and their application in EAP courses. Khany and Tarlani-Alibadi (2016) studied the students' role in the EAP curriculum. The results showed that the students were perceived as helpless, passive recipients that were expected to meet predetermined institutional requirements established by departments or curriculum designers. Noori and Mazdayasna (2015) also sought to understand the institutional frameworks of the EAP classrooms in Iran in terms of power and search for opportunities for program change, student participation, and addressing stakeholders' requirements. They stated that, despite the abundance of publications on needs investigations, basic needs/rights analysis does not receive much attention in the EAP context.

Similarly, Iranian EAP instructors' cognitions and methods for teaching reading comprehension were examined by Atai and Fatahi-Majd (2014). In terms of both their actual teaching techniques and their cognitions of EAP reading comprehension, the results revealed significant discrepancies between language instructors and content teachers. In addition, Hashemi et al. (2011) looked into how Iranian undergraduate students and the faculty of physical education saw students' needs for English language instruction and the flaws in the standard textbook used in the ESP classes. According to the findings, English is regarded as significant by Iranian students and staff, and there is a disconnect between their perspectives.

Additionally, Iranian nursing and midwifery students' requirements for studying the English language at the undergraduate level were examined by Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008). According to mixed-methods data analyses, the majority of students felt that they needed to be able to speak and understand English before enrolling in their ESP classes because they would be using English-language resources to study their subject. A couple of the students expressed dissatisfaction with the evaluation procedure as well as the instructional design. Teachers also had issues with students' English proficiency. The authors draw the conclusion that the EAP program falls short in getting students ready for their studies because it pays insufficient attention to learning needs.

In view of the preceding literature review, this study aimed to unravel the Iranian EAP university teachers' and learners' perceptions of CEAP to get a better understanding of how their perceptions of CEAP are different and how ESP teachers' knowledge of CEAP is congruent with their practices in their classroom. To address these gaps, the following research questions were put forward:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between teachers' and students' perception of CEAP?

RQ2: Is there a gap between what the Iranian university teachers perceive of CEAP and what they practice?

3. Method

3.1. Design

To address the question of this study, a concurrent mixed-methods research design was devised (i.e., QUAN → QUAL) (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013). To that end, a quantitative phase was designed to explore the participants' perceptions of

and preferences for CEAP. Afterward, a qualitative phase (i.e., an interview) was run to complement the results of the previous stage (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.2. Participants

A sample of 30 Iranian EAP teachers and 30 EAP students of computer sciences and architecture, selected through convenience sampling technique from the Iranian state-run and private universities in Central Iran, took part in the quantitative phase of this study. The participating ESP teachers and students were requested to fill out a validated researcher-developed questionnaire on their perceptions of CEAP. The age range of the teachers was from 26 to 38 (M = 28.77, SD = 2.49), and that of the students from 19 to 32 (M = 20.77, SD = 2.49). It is significant to highlight that 17 of the EAP teachers specialized in English language teaching and the rest came from the disciplines of computer sciences and architecture.

The cases of the qualitative phase were 10 ESP teachers, who answered interview questions. The cases were selected through purposive sampling, which is a kind of criterion-based selection method in which some pre-determined criteria are set before the sampling procedure is run (Dörnyei, 2007). In this research, the criterion for selecting EAP teachers was the minimum three years of teaching experience in ESP teaching based on Tajeddin and Khodaverdi's (2011) criterion (i.e., low = 3< years, moderate = 3-5 years, and high = 5 > years of teaching experience). They were 10 male and female EAP teachers, who specialized in English language teaching. All of the participants were Iranian and native speakers of Farsi.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. The Questionnaire on the Perceptions of CEAP

Following an extensive literature review and interview data, the extracted themes were classified under the main components of the theoretical framework of CEAP and formed the basis for the preparation of a 24-item Likert-type questionnaire. The items measured the respondents' perceptions of CEAP. The content, wording, and format of the items were reviewed and confirmed by Sarah Benesch through personal correspondence on ResearchGate.

Moreover, after piloting this instrument, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run into the main data gathered from 354 respondents. It revealed that the questionnaire has three components as follows: needs/rights (items 1-11), power (items 12-16), and dialogue/hope (items 17-24). The data collected through this

study were analyzed to remove the cases that were univariate and/or multivariate outliers. The assumption of lack of any univariate outliers was probed by computing the standardized scores (z-scores) for items of the perception questionnaire. Any z score higher than +/- 3 indicates that the element of data is an outlier. An inspection of the data revealed that 35 cases whose standardized scores were higher than +/- 3 were dropped out.

The assumption of lack of multivariate outliers for the perception questionnaire was explored using Mahalanobis Distances (MD) whose maximum value was compared against the critical value of chi-square at .001 levels for 24 items (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Since the maximum MD of 80.14 was higher than the critical value of 51.17, the data were scrutinized for any multivariate outliers on perception. Therefore, 18 cases were removed from the data. The normality of the data was probed using skewness and kurtosis indices, which were found to be lower than +/- 2 (Bachman, 2005). Thus, it was concluded that the assumption of normality was retained. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the overall perception questionnaire was found to be 0.88, which is beyond the criterion of acceptability (i.e., 0.7).

Additionally, the model of perception questionnaire was validated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The final model included three components as found in the EFA phase. The absolute fit indices were as follows: non-significant results of chi-square (χ^2 (32) = 30.771, p = .529), the ratio of chi-square over the degree of freedom (i.e., 30.77 / 32 = .96) was smaller than 3, SRMR of .03 was lower than .10, the RMSEA of .000 was equal than .05. Its 90 % confidence intervals were [.000, .041], the PCLOSE of .98 was higher than .05, and GFI of .97 was higher than .90.

3.3.2. Interview Protocol

In order to complement the shortcomings of the quantitative data on the perception of CEAP, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The CEAP themes (i.e., needs/rights, power, and dialogue/hope) used for the questionnaire development formed the basis for the preparation of the main questions and prompts needed for the semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were questioned about their practices in their EAP classes with regard to academic goals, the choice of textbooks, the development of assessment instruments, teaching strategies, the technique of evaluation, and the educational aims of the course, activities, and assignments in the EAP classroom.

3.4. Procedure

Initially, the self-report questionnaire was distributed to the main participants of the quantitative phase. Then, the face-to-face interviews were run with 10 participants of the quantitative phase (i.e., 10 ESP instructors), using a semi-structured interview protocol to discover their perceptions of EAP and CEAP. Each interviewee was briefed on these concepts for five minutes at the beginning of each interview session to make sure that no misunderstanding occurs during the data collection. In order to keep the identity of the interviewees anonymous, care was taken not to reveal any details of their identities. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. After carefully considering each question, the answers were coded to find certain characteristics in the data that served as the foundation for recurring themes or meanings. The number of significant aspects that various respondents stated in their replies to the questions and were previously categorized as themes were used to identify the themes. Finally, after the recurrent themes were drawn and counted in the context of the pre-existing theoretical frameworks.

Finally, the questionnaire data were quantitatively examined using the Mann-Whitney U test. To investigate the first research question, the Mann-Whitney U test was run to quantitatively assess the questionnaire results. The interview data were analyzed using the procedure, suggested by Dörnyei (2007).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. The Difference between Teachers and Students' Perception of CEAP

The first objective underlying this study was to examine whether there were any significant differences between the Iranian university teachers and students' perceptions of CEAP. Initially, the data were scrutinized for any univariate and multivariate outliers. Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics for the EAP teacher's and students' questionnaire data.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Perception Items: EAP Teachers vs. Students

		Teacher	Student
items	I think the instructor should …	M (SD)	M (SD)
1	define the course objectives by considering students' academic needs.	3.37 (1.40)	3.97 (0.89)

2	take into account students' preferences for textbooks.	3.00 (1.28)	3.86 (0.91)
3	provide **an opportunity** for students to ask questions.	4.27 (1.14)	4.43 (0.72)
4	help students to define their own learning needs.	3.73 (1.17)	3.95 (1.17)
5	balance the materials with their proficiency level.	3.80 (1.37)	4.51 (0.73)
6	solicit students' opinions about the course during the term.	3.40 (1.24)	4.32 (0.78)
7	help students develop their critical thinking in the classroom.	3.23 (1.16)	4.16 (0.76)
8	apply students' suggestions about teaching and assessment during the term.	3.77 (1.43)	4.11 (0.87)
9	encourage students to be responsible for their own learning.	3.93 (1.04)	4.16 (0.89)
10	allow students to answer their peers' questions.	3.57 (1.40)	4.30 (0.84)
11	allow students to raise questions about the course.	3.33 (1.37)	3.70 (1.05)
12	permit students to express their expectations of the course.	3.70 (1.39)	4.14 (0.88)
13	change students' seating arrangement in class to allow student-student interaction.	3.03 (1.27)	3.08 (1.29)
14	allow students to express their dissatisfaction when they are not at ease in class.	3.50 (1.22)	4.05 (0.97)
15	play the role of facilitator more than the provider of information.	3.20 (1.18)	3.81 (1.05)
16	teach techniques to students to improve their life in and out of the classroom.	3.47 (1.43)	4.11 (0.93)
17	do not spend the whole class on institutional goals.	3.43 (1.13)	3.62 (1.16)
18	permit students to negotiate external demands from outside of the classroom.	3.50 (1.16)	3.46 (1.26)
19	assign activities that take into account students' feedback in the classroom.	3.30 (1.23)	3.68 (1.00)
20	consult students about the design of lesson plans in the classroom.	3.13 (1.07)	3.89 (1.02)

21	engage students to participate in teaching and learning processes.	3.93 (1.20)	4.00 (0.93)
22	ask students' purposes for studying English to match instruction to their aims.	3.23 (1.27)	3.95 (1.10)
23	help students to choose how to relate to course material in the EAP classroom.	3.63 (1.09)	3.92 (0.89)
24	encourage students to collaborate during the classroom.	4.00 (1.17)	3.84 (1.14)
Total		3.48 (0.90)	3.91 (0.46)

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores and standard deviations for all items responded by teachers are very close to those of the learners. It is noteworthy that all of the mean scores are above the average of the five-point Likert scale (i.e., $M = 3.00$), which suggests that the perceptions of both groups of respondents about the dimensions of CEAP (needs/rights, power, and dialogue/hope) were not minimal. At the same time, it is evident that the EAP students had higher means in all items than EAP teachers with the exception of item 22 (i.e., permit students to negotiate the external demands from outside of the classroom.) and 24 (i.e., encourage students to collaborate during the classroom.), albeit minimal. Moreover, as shown in the last line of Table 1, the overall mean score of the students ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.46$) is higher than that of the teachers ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.90$).

Before running the inferential statistic to address the first question of the study (i.e., Is there a statistically significant difference between the Iranian university teachers' and students' perception of CEAP?), the skewedness and kurtosis values for both groups were checked (Table 2).

Table 2

Data Normality

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewedness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Teachers	30	3.48	.90	-.57	.42	-.55	.83
Students	37	3.91	.46	-1.37	.38	3.67	.75
Valid N (listwise)	30						

Since the skewedness and kurtosis, indices for the student group (i.e., 1.37 and 3.67) were higher than +/- 1, and the ratio of skewedness statistic and standard error (i.e., 3.60) was not within the range of +/- 2, the first research question was addressed using Mann-Whitney U test. Table 3 displays the mean ranks for teachers and learners on perception.

Table 3

Mean Ranks on CEAP Perceptions by Group

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
teachers	30	32.05	961.50
learners	30	28.95	868.50
Total	60		

As shown in Table 3, the results indicated that the students with a mean rank of 28.95 had a higher mean rank than teachers with a mean rank of 32.95 on perception. Table 4 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Test: Perceptions by Group

	Pretest

Mann-Whitney U	403.50
Wilcoxon W	868.50
Z	-0.68
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.49

The results in Table 4 indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two groups' mean ranks on perception, $Z = -0.68$, $p > .05$. Therefore, the null-hypothesis of the first research question (i.e., There is not any statistically significant difference between the Iranian university teachers and students' perception of CEAP.) was supported.

4.1.2. The Analysis of the Teachers' Interview Data

The goal of the second research question was to determine whether there was a gap between the way Iranian university teachers perceive CEAP and the way they practice it. Therefore, the interviewees of the study were asked the following questions.

1. Have you ever attempted to consider your students' needs in the EAP classroom?

In response to the first interview question, seven EAP teachers answered that they did not consider students' needs because they thought that their students had low language proficiency and they were not aware of their own needs in the EAP classroom; therefore, they reported that they could identify the students' needs better than them. Moreover, two EAP instructors reported that the department decide what they should teach in their classroom:

Excerpt 1

Sara: In my first of my teaching, the university head of department told me that I should teach a particular book not what students need in the EAP classroom.

Excerpt 2

Ahmad: In the EAP classroom, materials were pre-defined by the head of the department. I, as an EAP instructor, had little freedom to select materials in my classroom. Class time was also limited so there was not enough time to consider students' needs.

Accordingly, it was revealed that the majority of the interviewees did not pay heed to the learner-centeredness of students' needs in spite of their responses to the items on students' role in the process of CEAP needs analysis (i.e., questionnaire items 1-6). In other words, the learning needs are determined by the teachers or their departments arbitrarily, which may disappoint or frustrate the students in classroom situations (see Jordan, 1993, as cited in Jordan, 2002). As a result, since they neither rely on learner needs nor encourage the students to query and form the instruction they received, the students may not perform well in their courses (Benesch, 2013).

2. Have you ever attempted to consider your students' rights in the EAP classroom?

In response to this question, nine EAP instructors stated that they did not consider students' rights and they did not allow them to ask any questions:

Excerpt 1

Ali: To me, students' rights are not important. Since university students' English language levels are different, I feel that students should not be given the freedom of action in the EAP classes.

Excerpt 2

Amir: Most of the class time is usually spent on covering the pre-defined syllabus. Therefore, there is not enough time to consider students' rights and questions.

The results indicated that most of the interviewees did not consider students' rights in their classes, and their priority was to meet department requirements instead of learners' right to question and think critically. This is completely against the EAP teachers' reported perception of the theoretical underpinnings of learner change and engagement (Benesch, 2013), which they reported via the questionnaire (i.e., items 7-11).

3. Do you ask your learners' suggestions if you want to choose the textbook or topic in your ESP class?

Unsurprisingly, nine of the EAP teachers reported that they did not ask their learners for selecting the textbooks or topics. They also stated that they themselves selected the book and topics because they believed that their learners

do not have any knowledge about them. Moreover, three EAP teachers reported that the department selected the books:

Excerpt 1

Ashraf: The answer of this question is no. I myself choose the textbooks and topics because my students do not know what book is authentic and what topic can meet their needs and goals.

Excerpt 2

Maryam: I think my students have a low language level. Therefore, they are not able to choose the textbook or topics. I introduce my chosen textbooks and topics in the first session of the EAP classroom.

Consequently, it seems that a primary goal of the majority of the EAP teachers was to improve the students' lexical knowledge and reading skill; ignoring students' expectations and dissatisfactions. This goes against their responses to the questionnaire items according to which students should be allowed to raise their voices (i.e., items 12-16). Hence, the students would consider themselves as the objects of their learning, not as the agents (Benesch, 2013).

4. Do you consider students' ideas about your teaching and evaluation methods?

It was found that nine EAP teacher interviewees did not ask about their students' opinions about teaching and evaluation methods:

Excerpt 1

Mina: Not at all, I do not ask students' opinions about teaching methods and evaluation methods. Because the only thing that let me teach to my students is my expert. Therefore, I know better than they do. I have more experience and knowledge in this area in compare to them.

Excerpt 2

Ali*:* At the beginning of each semester, department determines the method of teaching and evaluation, for example, we have a mid-term and final- exam and a specific class score in our faculty. Therefore, we do not consult our students about these.

The results showed that the EAP teachers followed the traditional methods in their classes and ignored the participation of students in pedagogical and curricular decision-making. Hence, it is evident that the teachers did not notice that students have any rights in curricular decision-making. In other words, their practices focused on the institutional requirements instead of student feedback, which runs counter against CEAP (i.e., items 17-21). This method of curriculum design runs counter against CEAP, which holds that the person who decides what should be covered in a course and how it will be taught and assessed has power over others (Benesch, 2013).

5. Have you ever engaged in conversation with your students or given them the opportunity to ask questions in the EAP classroom?

With regard to hope from the perspective of CEAP, seven EAP instructors responded that they interacted with your students and gave them the opportunity to ask questions as well as provide answers to queries posed by other students.

Expert1

Mohammad: As an ESP instructor, I frequently interacted with my students and provided them with the chance to ask questions. I also give them the option of responding to queries from their peers.

Expert 2

Shima: I believe that the students are unaware of their ability to pose challenging inquiries. The truth is that we do not raise our students to be critical thinkers.

The results demonstrated that most EAP teachers themselves are in favor of the concept of classroom discussion, concerning the Persian translation and interpretation of the texts, leaving no room for students' hope to link their learning to their aims (i.e., items 21-24). This supports Freire's (2020) contention that such instructional practices, which do not engage students in the EAP classroom, are unethical because they create submission and lack of hope.

Overall, the results of qualitative data analysis disclosed that there was a gap between what the Iranian university teachers perceive of CEAP and what they practice in their EAP pedagogy. In other words, it can be concluded that the EAP teachers had high perceptions of CEAP, but the majority of them did not implement it in practice, revealing a praxis in the context of EAP pedagogy.

4.2. Discussion

The purposes of this research were to inspect whether the EAP teachers were different from their students in their perceptions of CEAP and whether there existed any gaps in the EAP teachers' CEAP perceptions and practices. The results of the first question revealed that both participating groups were almost similar in their perceptions of CEAP. This finding is supported by Benesch (2013), who demonstrated that the students also tend to participate in CEAP pedagogy. Similarly, Atai et al. (2018) claimed the EAP students and teachers, as stakeholders, share voices to change the state of education.

The mixed-methods findings indicated that there is a gap between instructors' cognitions and practices. The EAP teachers theoretically concur with CEAP approaches, but it was unexpected to learn that they practiced traditional EAP in the classroom. This is in opposition to the fundamental ideas of Borg (2019), which asserts that instructors' cognitions shape their classroom practices. This finding is line with Atai (2006), who found inconsistencies between the EAP teachers' instruction and the curriculum after unearthing their perceptions and actions in the classroom. Similarly, Atai et al. (2018) showed that EAP instructors' attention to the needs analysis appears to be limited to teachers' erroneous needs assessments because there were no signs that they had engaged in systematic needs analysis efforts.

Furthermore, this finding that the majority of participating teacher interviewees failed to consider the principles of CEAP supports Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), who learnt that the needs, goals, and wishes of the students are not taken into account in Iran's existing EAP texts and contexts, Esfandiari (2015), who discovered that EAP teachers and students have different views of needs, Khany and Tarlani-Aliabadi (2008), who asserted that a disturbed relationship exists between academic institutions and their pupils in terms of power, and Mazdayasna and Tahririan's (2008), who claimed that Iran's existing ESP pedagogy fails to take students' needs, interests, and wishes into account, as well as Atai et al. (2018), who opined that there is no intention in the framework of Iranian universities to integrate a specific ideology in the EAP textbooks.

Moreover, this finding implies that the ESP teachers had the knowledge of CEAP but they did not apply them to their classes. In other words, the classroom techniques that they actually used did not align with their knowledge of critical pedagogy, which implies a praxis gap (Breunig, 2005). According to Waller et al. (2017), a praxis breakdown happens when there is an imbalance or conflict between the teacher's beliefs and actions in the classroom. To put it another way, they do not or cannot strike a balance between how they articulate their theories

and views and how they apply these concepts in their lessons (Waller et al., 2017). This finding is line with Xu (2012), who found a praxis breakdown in the ESOL teachers' imagined and practiced identities, and Kanno and Stuart (2011), who discovered a praxis gap in two teachers, who focused too much on their own instructional practices and what their students were learning.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The goals of this study were to examine how the Iranian ESP teachers and students perceive of CEAP principles and whether the former group practices their knowledge of CEAP in their ESP classrooms. The inference, which can be made based on the questionnaire and interview data analyses, is that there is inconsistency between the teachers' cognitions and practices. Additionally, a praxis breakdown has occurred because of an imbalance between the teachers' views and behaviors in the classroom.

Despite the fact that many teachers enter the field with the intention of assisting students, they frequently focus more on their own actions than those of the pupils. As a result, their perceived selves as teachers may not correspond to their actual selves (Waller et al., 2017). It is crucial that teachers be conscious of this cognition-action divide throughout their careers. Additionally, it can be concluded that the Iranian EAP programs may still revolve around the traditional academic practices, basing the educational goals, delivery methods, and evaluation criteria on departmental demands rather than allowing collaborative interaction between the EAP teachers and students. Hence, a swing from the old-style EAP programs to CEAP programs is highly recommended since CEAP is equipped with strategies to fight power relations and foster critical self-reflection. This integrative strategy for curriculum innovation and revision avoided a starting point that was too narrowly focused on student learning gaps or deficiencies (Helmer, 2013).

Taken together, ESP teachers are recommended to give up the preconceived notions about what the perfect lesson plan ought to be, besides being receptive to change that creates limitless opportunities for learning (Pennycook, 2012). As a result, they should reconsider the power dynamics in the EAP classroom, make choices regarding control and resistance, create the opportunity for participation in developing the curricula and teaching methods in the Iranian universities, and disrupt potentially damaging and repressive power relations by making apparent the complex relationships in a top-down educational setting.

Moreover, they should bear it to their mind that the success of ESP students in collegiate contexts and beyond depends on their ability to sustain and deepen

criticality for independence in research, persuasion, argumentation, and knowledge generation to establish connections across time, texts, and context (Mortenson, 2022). Furthermore, to progressively transition to CEAP in Iranian institutions, EAP teachers should also choose the textbooks, and exercises, and EAP materials based on the collegiate demands and interests of their students. As a further step toward transforming EAP pedagogy, material developers may also prepare CEAP-based resources, leaving more room for more dialogs and needs/rights analyses by ESP teachers and students. More research is also required to increase the awareness of ESP stakeholders and encourage them to pay close attention to the students' voices.

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