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Research Paper

# A Triangulated Approach toward the Needs Assessment for English Language Course of Iranian Undergraduate Students of Library and Information Science

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## Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of in-service librarians, EAP professors and Library and Information Science students about the English language needs to find why librarians cannot deliver appropriate English services. Through 60 semi-structured interviews, the researchers perceived the librarians, professors, and students' English needs. The results of the first phase led to development of a Library and Information Science needs questionnaire analysis, which was administered to 198 undergraduate students of Library and Information Science in universities located in Tehran to understand if the identified English needs were covered through the syllabus or not. The results of the interviews showed that librarians need such English skills as speaking, listening, reading and writing to be successful in their profession. Nonetheless, the data collected from the questionnaires revealed that practicing skills are totally neglected in the Library and Information Science syllabus. A proper syllabus should include the new concepts on specialized English and the sections intended for practicing the four skills such as offering library services in English, official letter writing, translation, note-taking, summary writing,

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working with the databases and searching the internet. Most students agreed completely to speak English in their classes, and they introduced not using the language skills as the most important reason for not getting satisfactory results in EAP classes.

**Keywords:** English for Academic Purposes, Library and Information Science, Librarians, Needs Analysis

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## 1. Introduction

There are many reasons for why everybody needs to learn English. English is a useful channel for communication in today's world (Kitao, 1996). It is the language of science and technology, diplomacy, computing, and tourism (Graddol, 1997). Professional articles are also published in English, and those which are made available in other languages often have English abstracts (Kitao, 1996). In general, "The global spread of English and its role as a lingua franca has created a great demand for learning English worldwide" (Vahdat, Anai Sarab, & Ghobadi, 2020, p. 111).

English is an essential language especially for the students graduating from college. Students of Library and Information Science (LIS) are not an exception. In recent years, librarians have felt the need for the English language more than before because the fast-developing world of science and technology uses the English language to introduce the latest improvements (Baniaghbal & Razavi Sadr, 2010). Librarians keep and disseminate knowledge. They organize information in a way that makes it accessible to others. To this end, they take advantage of new technologies (How to Become, 2006) in English. Therefore, knowing English has become a valuable assessment tool to choose a person as a librarian (Vetruha, 2005). Despite the multifaceted nature of Library and Information Science (LIS), it is an independent field. Moreover, because of its interdisciplinary nature, English is an integral part of library and information science. Many of its theoretical and

applied courses are presented in English. In other words, it is an English-based major. Hence, there is a close relationship between the English language and the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). What seems to be required is paying close attention to improving the teaching of English in LIS centers (Banieghbal & Razavi Sadr, 2010).

Gillett (2011) believed that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is the kind of language skills and related practices that students in higher education should possess for undertaking studies or work opportunities in English. Hence, the main purpose of EAP is to offer the students educational and disciplinary features.

Furthermore, need assessment or need analysis (NA) is an important part of designing any language course (Brindley, 1989; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Johns, 1991; Jordan, 1997; Munby, 1978; Robinson, 1991). Based on Hutchinson and Waters' model, two factors are very important in needs analysis, target needs and learning needs. In target needs three items should be considered: necessities, lacks and wants. Need analysis is defined as the activities involved in gathering information on students' needs. It is the primary step in planning all courses and books supposed to meet the learners' needs and purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Although ESP has been taught in universities of Iran for many years, this course has been less exposed to criticism and evaluation (Karimi, 2006). The findings of some studies including Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), Moslemi, Moinzadeh and Dabaghi (2011), and Akbari (2014) showed that most students are dissatisfied with the EAP courses.

Therefore, this study was conducted to explore LIS students and instructors' perceptions of English language necessities by using Hutchinson and Waters' model. In addition, the researchers assessed the syllabi offered by

the universities (Three state universities, namely *Allameh Tabataba'i University, the University of Tehran* and *Alzahra University* as well as four applied science universities, namely *Farhang va Honar branches 1, 7, 14, 47*). The third phase of this study deals with suggesting a new syllabus for the LIS students based on the findings of this research.

## **2. Literature Review**

Despite the importance of English for librarians, research on this topic has been relatively new and "there is not much literature on teaching English to librarians" (Fontanin, 2008, p.777). Banieghbal and Razavi Sadr (2010) conducted research on the content analysis of specialized English librarianship course. Based on the findings, strategies for developing better English texts had been suggested, including the greater use of Information Technology (IT) and Information Communication Technology (ICT). The greatest coverage of optional course of LIS as well as the inclusion of library literature in the English language, instead of words, is necessary for LIS students.

Soodmand Afshar and Movassagh (2016) investigated the problems in EAP Education in Iran in a large-scale study with 886 participants including students and teachers; two versions of the same LIS need analysis questionnaire were distributed among them. The results of the LIS need questionnaire analysis were compared with the syllabi, and finally, semi-structured interviews were also conducted. Having examined the results, they came to the conclusion that the needs perceived by syllabus designers, students and teachers were significantly different. But, for all of them reading was the important skill to be learned. They also reported insufficient sources, students' low level of general proficiency, materials, and the timing of English classes as the sources that might cause problem in EAP Education in Iran.

In another study, Zakerifard (2003) stated that the importance and the role of English in the field of LIS is more dominant. To achieve the scientific

literature and research, conferences and seminars, and access hundreds of articles and books and magazine articles that are published every year, we need to know a second language especially English. Speed-reading and quick access to the proper information are skills that librarians need to obtain. Being familiar with English can help reference librarians understand the different types of English resources to help clients get information. Zakerifard's findings showed that the low number of general and specific English courses, the inappropriate content of the English books, and not using the terminology of the field of library and information in the classes are the reasons for not getting satisfactory results. She believed English is needed for doing things like collection building, organization, and dissemination of information. Zakerifar suggested increasing the number of general and specialized English courses, using experienced professors in teaching English, using more LIS terminology in all classes, using English articles, altering the content of the English textbooks to match them with the needs of the students, keeping the students up to date, using the Internet and databases, making students use resources in English, and holding English classes regularly.

Although EAP and students and teachers' needs are important in Iranian curriculum, the importance of needs assessment is neglected in Iranian educational program. The results of studies on medical teachers and students regarding their perceptions of EAP showed that students were not satisfied with the EAP program and there was a significant mismatch between the students and their teachers regarding students' needs, but they had just one thing in common: both perceived reading comprehension as the most important language skill (Soodmand Afshar & Ahmadi, 2020).

Zand-Moghadam, Meihami, and Ghiasvand (2018) conducted an EAP needs analysis research on students of humanities and social sciences at different educational levels (BA, MA, & Ph.D.) and with different English

proficiency levels. The results revealed that EAP syllabus did not pay the deserved attention to four language skills; however, two sub-skills including grammar and vocabulary received enough attention. They also concluded that the EAP textbooks did not satisfy students' needs.

Noruzi and Alimohammadi (2007) measured the number of articles written by Iranian librarians and information professionals, which were published in international journals. They found that the number of papers written by them is small. They also concluded that there is a weak scientific collaboration between them and their international peers. They recommended Iranian librarians and professionals to write their articles in English to increase the rate of their contribution level. They also investigated the factors that caused this problem. Lack of English knowledge among library professionals especially in higher education levels was one of the important reasons for the small number of articles written by Iranian librarians and information professionals.

Abdollahi and Jowkar (2013) examined the status of information literacy skills among public librarians in Fars Province. One of the research questions investigated the status of public librarians' proficiency in English. The results showed that the public librarians have a low level of familiarity with the English language, as it had been confirmed as one of the barriers to accessing needed information in Tafreshi and Angouraj Taghavi' study in 2008 in the case of Tehran's public librarians. Given that, information literacy is one of the requirements of search, retrieval, and evaluation of information. Moreover, knowledge of languages is essential for transmission of information. It is recommended that librarians have adequate familiarity with the English language.

In the study by Soodmand Afshar and Ranjbar in 2021 used interviews, checklists of classroom observation with 27 language teachers and 23 content teachers from different fields of study as participants. They found that only a

few of them were assessment literate and that field of study, university degree and assessment training courses were very important for teachers' assessment literacy. Research also reported inconformity between teachers' beliefs and practices because of the many reasons that participants stated.

Mostafavi, Mohseni, and Abbasian (2021) believe that the result of a useful needs assessment can serve as a guideline for educational authorities. They conducted research regarding ESP for engineering students, to assess the usefulness of specialized English pedagogy in the academic context of Iran. Satisfaction, content authenticity, needs satisfaction and learner autonomy were three important domains from ESP instructors' and engineering students' viewpoints. Through 850 questioners distributed among 796 students and 54 ESP instructors, a descriptive analysis showed dissatisfaction of some learners with the learning goals, educational facilities, monitoring systems, and productive competence. The results pointed to different perception of the two groups regarding the authenticity of the instructional content and target needs.

Librarians need the English language for collection development when they want to choose special materials for a particular subject area. For obtaining English materials, it is necessary for acquisition that librarians negotiate with other librarians in other countries. As catalogers often deal with a variety of languages, knowing more than one language could be of benefit to them. For provision of a bibliographic description (title, author, edition, etc.), adequate knowledge of the language is required for accurate use of subject headings. In the reference section, to help users who may not be familiar with the native language, knowing the English language is necessary. Considering the reasons mentioned above, a librarian should be familiar with English (Vertuba, 2005). "University librarians and other senior professionals working in the libraries should be capable of doing the work by using HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and other languages" (Bhatt, 2011, p. 163). Although ESAP course

may be a vital part of the Iranian university syllabus, course developers have usually developed the programs based on intuition (Atai & Shoja, 2014). "Planning education for librarians depends on the accurate needs assessment studies" (Shahrzadi & Mojiri, 2011, p. 566).

In a study on EAP needs from the viewpoints of teachers and students, Ranjbar and Soodmand Afshar (2021) found that EAP is totally ignored in educational programs and teachers and students have different understandings of the English language teaching and this difference has negative effects on learning. Furthermore, they concluded that focusing on GTM method resulted in neglecting of communicative and Task-Based Language Teaching.

The above-mentioned research studies demonstrate the importance of the role of specialized English in the success of librarians. It also reveals the importance of needs analysis in designing proper syllabus for EAP courses of LIS students. Consequently, the present study sought to find students' needs based on a systematic needs analysis by defining standards for optimal levels of proficiency for in-service librarians and then measuring current levels of language proficiency. The differences between optimal and current levels showed the needs. To this end, the following research questions were proposed:

1. What are the target professional English language needs of graduate students of LIS?
2. To what extent does the English course designed for the undergraduate students of LIS satisfy their needs at the workplace?
3. What is the suggested syllabus for LIS students by considering the results of this study?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

This study investigated the opinions and perceptions of three main groups of participants: instructors, in-service librarians, and students. LIS students who had passed at least one of their EAP courses, in-service librarians, and

university instructors of EAP courses. The total number of participants was 230; 198 were students including 161 females and 37 males with their age ranging from 21 to 54; 22 were in-service librarians including 19 females and 3 males in the age range of 30 to 48 with Bachelor's and master's degrees; and 10 Ph.D. instructors including 7 females and 3 males in the age range of 33 to 57. It is worth noting that the researchers as a librarian visited many libraries and interviewed many librarians, students, and professors during almost nine years of experience. More specifically, the sample includes both male and female students of LIS. As for the students, all the senior undergraduate students who were studying LIS in three state universities, namely Allameh Tabataba'i University, the University of Tehran, and Alzahra University and four applied science universities, namely *Farhang va Honar* branches 1, 7, 14, 47 in Tehran took part in this study. Regarding instructors, Specialized English language teachers were interviewed. The in-service librarians were selected randomly from each group of libraries, namely Public Libraries, the National Library, School Libraries, Museum libraries, specialized libraries, university libraries, and librarians who worked at information services firms, etc. The demographic information related to in-service librarians including gender, age, and job experience (in years) and the name of the universities they graduated from were collected.

Most of the students at state universities were almost in their final year of education and were, therefore, in the same range of age. However, regarding the Applied Science universities, the age of participants varied. The number of females who participated in this study was more than the male ones.

Seven universities were selected for the study including three state universities, namely *Allameh Tabataba'i*, *Alzahra* University and the University of Tehran, which present LIS courses at the BA, MA and Ph.D

levels, and four Applied Science universities, namely *Farhang va Honar* branches 1, 7, 14, 47, which present LIS at two associate degree and MA levels.

## **3.2 Instrumentation**

### **3.2.1 Interview**

To collect data and gain a more profound comprehension of English for the LIS status, the researchers conducted three semi-structured interviews with in-service librarians, professors, and randomly selected students. The questions for the interview were developed by the researchers and to ensure content validity of the questions, the items were reexamined in terms of both language and content by three experts including an assistant professor, an associate professor and a professor of applied linguistics.

The first part of each interview dealt with demographic information including name, gender, specialty, university, and self-evaluated English proficiency. Years of work experience for in-service librarians, years of EAP teaching experience for professors, years of studying English outside high school or university for students were also addressed.

The second part sought the participants' opinions regarding the present status of (educational) English language needs of the students. The last part focused on the language tasks and skills that are to be emphasized in the workplace (occupational). Examples of the tasks mentioned above were internet searching, note taking, summary writing, translating, writing research papers, CV writing, and offering library services in English.

### **3.2.2 Syllabus Analysis**

The researchers used qualitative analysis to analyze the content of the books to provide a complete picture of the issue; in this kind of analysis there is no need to use inter/intra reliability. The syllabus offered by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology was thoroughly reviewed by the researchers and an expert team consisting of some content and language professors. The content

of the two-volume "English for the Students of Library and Information Science" book written by Baniaghbal (1999), published by SAMT, was thoroughly investigated. The results were compared with the new specialized English books, new subject matters, and some new texts that some professors preferred to use instead of the books mentioned. This two-volume book included 20 lessons. Each lesson was read and checked with the lists obtained from the need analysis phase containing their actual needs to understand if the content of the books would meet the needs of students, librarians, and professors teaching the respective courses. To this end, the researcher used the model suggested by Lawrence (2011) and the result of Baniaghbal and RazaviSadr (2010) study.

### **3.2.3 LIS needs analysis questionnaire**

To develop the LIS needs questionnaire analysis, the researchers adopted multiple models of needs analysis and considered motivation, perceptions, self-assessment, present situation investigation, and target situation investigation in addition to lacks and wants of Hutchinson and Waters' model (1987). Jordan (1997) believed that there are two models of needs analysis namely the target situation analysis and the present situation analysis. This research made use of both models. The items of the questionnaire were developed based on the results of interviews with the participants. The questionnaire was prepared in Persian to avoid misinterpretations. The questionnaire was administered to university students to answer within 10-15 minutes. The questions were mainly in the form of statements with asking the respondents to indicate a level of agreement on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree' or frequency ranging from 'always' to 'never'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was estimated to be .86. However, as Weinreich (2006) maintains, the quantitative research surveys do not provide all of the data

needed for research and qualitative methods such as interviews are less precise. In order to avoid this insufficiency, the researchers have utilized interviews as well. The questionnaire consisted of different sections inquiring about the students' levels of proficiency in English, the perceived importance of educational and occupational language skills and tasks in their present situation and target situation. Eight professors of EAP, who had a good command of both Farsi and English, examined the questionnaire in order to verify its content validity. They were asked to answer five questions that Radhakrishna (2007) mentioned for establishing the validity of a questionnaire: It should look like a questionnaire; Regarding validity, a questionnaire should measure what it intended to measure; It should represent the content; and it should be appropriate for the sample and comprehensive enough to gather the required information. The major themes obtained from the interviews were classified as follows:

- Target language use: perception of university students of English language skills required at target situations;
- Current practices in EAP classes at universities, including special programs and the syllabi designed to prepare students for future professions;
- Effects of changes to the content of university syllabi.

The students had to check in only one box to indicate their English needs in areas listed in the questionnaire.

#### **4. Procedure**

In the first step, in-service librarians, EAP professors and randomly selected students were interviewed to conduct a needs analysis. For selecting in-service librarians to be interviewed two points were considered; first, from each type of library (academic libraries, public libraries, school libraries, and special libraries) one library had to be selected; second, the librarians who were

interviewed had to be in charge of the library and be aware of all the other librarians' responsibilities. More often, the head of the library was interviewed. The most important libraries were selected, and the introduction letters from Allameh Tabataba'i University to the selected libraries were prepared. The appointments were made and interviews were conducted. The instructors selected for interviews were teaching special English or had experience in teaching EAP. Students were chosen by convenience sampling method. In the second stage, the syllabus of English for Library and Information Science was examined, and the content of the books was read.

The study was carried out in the second semester of the year 2016. Three types of semi-structured interviews were conducted with each study group including undergraduate students, EAP professors and in-service librarians. Each interview consisted of different sections inquiring about the participants' previous familiarity with English, their perceived importance of particular (occupational or educational) language skills and tasks in their present and target situation, which is the workplace. In addition, each interview had a section consisting of subjects of books. The participants were asked to choose the important topic.

The analysis of semi-structured interviews was done carefully following these broad steps: First, the data were transcribed because all the interviews (except one because of security precautions) were recorded and the researchers had the opportunity to listen to and transcribe the interviews many times. Second, the data were coded meaning that after classifying relevant information coding categories were defined and symbols were assigned to each of them (Gorden, 1992). In the third step, ideas were developed and were finally interpreted and concluded.

The data derived from the syllabus analysis and the analysis of the interviews were reviewed to develop the questionnaire. The questionnaire was

developed according to the results of needs analysis of the previous stage. Afterwards, it was administered to the students to elicit the problematic areas. The questionnaire was designed in a way to reveal some problematic issues associated with EAP in this particular context.

Establishing the trustworthiness is an important element of conducting any type of qualitative research (Merriam- Webster, as cited in Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012), which has four important elements including "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (p.115). To establish credibility, the researchers reviewed all the transcripts with their colleagues, who had MA degrees or PhDs in different majors such as Library and Information Science, Teaching English, Training Management, Psychology, or had experience in developing questionnaires. Some of them were instructors at universities. To show the degree of flexibility of the study, the researchers provided the description of the research context and the participants' data and would offer them to other interested researchers to share the results of the study to other contexts and replicate the study. For establishing dependability, eight EAP practitioners investigated the results. As for establishing confirmability, the researchers used multiple data sources in their investigation (Dwyer, 2012).

The participants were informed about the purposes of the study. The questionnaire asked them about the present and future English language needs of the students according to their opinions. They were asked to consider each item carefully based on their language needs and indicate how each item is important for their education and future occupation.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

A sequential exploratory mixed methods design was followed in this study to provide an appropriate answer to each research question. A mixed methods approach is one type of inquiry in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches are merged in one single study (Creswell, 2009). In this design,

first, the qualitative data are collected and analyzed. In the second phase, by considering the results obtained in the first phase, the quantitative data are collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2009). As for timing, it was sequential, that is first the qualitative phase and then the quantitative one was completed. The priority was assigned to the qualitative data.

#### **4.2 Data Analysis**

Besides quantitative data, this study incorporates qualitative data. To analyze data, qualitative content analysis of the interviews was conducted. To answer the first research question, three kinds of semi-structured interviews were conducted. After recording the interviews, they were transcribed, which made them easier to work with, and they were read multiple times to classify the parts to develop the questionnaire. A word processing program was used to enter the data into the computer.

In order to answer the second research question, a need analysis questionnaire was developed based on the results of the previous stage and was distributed among LIS students. Finally, the data were analyzed by descriptive statistics. SPSS was used to analyze the data effectively and put the results into graphs and generate tables for analysis. In addition to descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney and Chi-Square were utilized.

### **5. Results**

#### **5.1 Qualitative Results**

The first research question of this study probes the perceptions of the in-service librarians, students, and professors regarding the English language needs of librarians (occupational).

Based on the interviews with the librarians, all of the skills are important, but teaching skills have been very often ignored in our educational system, in general, and in EAP course design, in particular. Speaking is generally thought

to be the most important of the four skills. Most of the libraries have not provided the conditions for the improvement of librarians' English skills. Most of the librarians wanted to improve their English skills as a priority. They perceived their university English books as ineffective. They all agreed EAP topics were out of date. Most of them believed a great number of students in each class prevented them from practicing what they had learned before. Most of them only have taken advantage of LIS jargon, cataloging, and classification of their EAP books. They believed that the use of software in cataloging makes less use of the English language.

Most professors stated that all skills are important, but the syllabus mostly focuses on the reading skill and comprehension. They were also asked about the kind of books they used in their EAP courses. Most of them followed the syllabus offered by the Ministry of Science and Technology although there is no unified structure and content for Library and Information EAP courses across universities in Iran. They used "English for the Students of Library and Information Science" published by SAMT as their course book and since the majority of them were not satisfied with its content, they added some of their own materials. They did not speak English in their classes. When one of the professors was asked why he did not speak English in the class, he replied: "students can't understand English. Besides, I do not have enough confidence to speak English for 1 and half hours". As the book focused on comprehension, they also paid attention to reading and comprehension. They believed in student-centered classes, but unmotivated students make the class teacher-centered. They preferred to cover the EAP syllabus rather than work on the general English of their students. As a result, they allocated more time to specialized English rather than general English.

All the professors agreed on the ignorance of presentation skills and the lack of up-to-date materials.

One of the main points that professors referred to during the interviews was the poor general English of the students to build the EAP skills on. One of the professors of the state universities said, "students do not even know why a verb takes -s at the end". It seems to be a serious concern as all the professors referred to it. They believed if not attended to, all the efforts to improve EAP might be unprofitable. As General English is considered as the foundation of ESP courses (Golparvar, 2014), this calls for a systematic change regarding course design.

They all agreed that an English proficient librarian is more successful in his/her job. They need English to be aware of new articles and technologies, search the internet, communicate with foreign people, take part in conferences, take note, offer library services in English, write English letters, work with databases, watch English movies in order to cataloguing, write English articles, extract keywords of articles (indexing), write summaries, manage digital libraries, translate specialized texts, and do reference interviews. Most of them could not offer their services in English and write letters in English. They all regret not having improved their English proficiency before entering the job market.

In the interview with the students, some of them stated that lack of motivation and busy curriculum are the main reasons for not studying English. However, some of them emphasized the need to learn English for continuing education for future careers. Most students believed that speaking is more important than the other skills, but reading and comprehension were the only skills emphasized in their EAP classes.

In general, the students considered their EAP courses as some courses they have to pass, and they were not aware of the benefits of knowing English for librarians. They believed that using EAP books with boring and old topics, teachers' lack of experience in EAP teaching, ignorance of the students' needs,

not using all the four skills, etc. contribute to LIS students' lack of attention to the EAP courses.

## 5.2 Quantitative Results

Given the results of the interviews, the coded data were changed into a 40-question questionnaire.

To analyze the data besides descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney and Chi-Square were also used for comparing each questionnaire item in two universities, namely, state universities and Applied Science universities to understand if there is any difference between the two groups of responses. Because most of the questionnaire items were Likert scales or non-parametric, Mann-Whitney test was used. For the items that were not Likert scale, Chi-Square was used for comparing the two groups of responses.

Table 1

*Chi-Square Test for Comparison between State and Non- state Universities*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.428 <sup>a</sup>	3	.093
Likelihood Ratio	6.783	3	.079
Linear-by-Linear Association	.007	1	.934
N of Valid Cases	196		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.77.

According to Table 1, a Chi-square test for independence indicated no significant association between the type of universities the participants came from and their choices of different options for this question,  $X^2(3, n=196)=6.428, p=.093$ .

**Table 2**

*Chi-Square Test for Comparison between State and Non- state universities*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.017 <sup>a</sup>	3	.003
Likelihood Ratio	14.962	3	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.733	1	.030
N of Valid Cases	196		

According to Table 2, a Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between the type of universities the participants came from and their choices of different options for this question,  $X^2(3, n=196) = 14.017$ .  $p = .003$ .

**Table 3**  
*Chi-Square Test for Comparison between State and Non-state Universities*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.985 <sup>a</sup>	4	.137
Likelihood Ratio	7.145	4	.128
Linear-by-Linear Association	.268	1	.605
N of Valid Cases	194		

Based on Table 3 a Chi-square test for independence indicated no significant association between the type of universities the participants came from and their choices of different options for this question,  $X^2(4, n=196) = 6.985$ .  $p = .137$ .

## 6. Discussion

The discussion of the research findings in this study deals with three research questions in relation to the English-language needs of LIS students as perceived by the EAP professors, in-service librarians, and the students. English-language needs were investigated through the required tasks and skills in the target situations, which the in-service librarians referred to. Regarding the first question, the results revealed that most librarians need the four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing and some tasks such as internet searching, working with databases, translating, and extracting information from English sources to make a database. The findings of the study were in line with the results of studies by Zakerifard (2003) and Sharzadi and Mojiri (2011), and PeyvandRobati and Singh (2013) who examined the importance of English for librarians.

About the second research question, as it was proved by Uso-Juan (2006) that reading skill is an important and essential skill for students of English for academic purposes, reading comprehension was perceived by the librarians, professors, and students of state universities to be the most important skill that the books and syllabi mostly focus on. The other skills are totally neglected. Nevertheless, the other three skills were also considered to be important by in-service librarians. The other skills also need attention since they are not included in the design of the present EAP courses and materials due to the limited time allocated to EAP courses, lack of professor proficiency and experience, especially in listening and speaking skills. Most of the EAP professors at different universities are the subject matter professors who are familiar with English to some extent. As such, no standard set qualification requirements are specified for EAP teachers. In addition, there is no objective way of evaluating the professional competence of EAP professors. As a result, there is a strong need to clarify the distinction between the subject matter and EAP, and provide practical training in EAP, its methodology, use of materials, course design, assessment, etc. Given the above-mentioned reasons, it is not possible to emphasize these skills in the current EAP books and syllabi.

Most students evaluated their English language ability as moderate. They perceived English language skills as very important for their future professions as a librarian. Most of them believed that among the four skills, speaking is of utmost importance. They also stated that their classes mostly focus on reading and speaking skills. There were significant differences between the two groups of students. While state university students believed that their books focus on reading, Applied Science university students introduced speaking as the skill their books focus on. As mentioned above, the focus on speaking is in contrast with what the participants said on the interviews. All of the students and professors stated the focus of books and

classes is mainly on reading and comprehension and the other skills are neglected due to lack of time and unskillful students.

Although most students agreed on being affected by the way their books emphasize the skills, there was a significant difference between the two universities. It shows that students of state universities are more motivated than Applied Science universities are. The way students' study is also affected by the style of the book, but there was again a difference between the two groups of students in this respect. The EAP books have more influence on Applied Science university students' way of studying than state universities students. Given this widespread belief on the influence of the books on the learning and studying styles of the students, changes in the books are expected to bring about changes in instruction.

Most of the participants were of the opinion that inclusion of speaking skills would encourage more speaking activities in EAP classes. They also believed they would put more time into practicing the speaking skill if it were a part of their EAP books. The findings are also in agreement with the results of the study by Byrne and Jones (2014), who found that making a push during spoken activities can boost opportunities for linguistic processing and interlanguage development. Although most participants agreed that there was a difference between the two universities. Maybe students of state universities are more resistant to the changes while the other group accepts changes more easily, or because most Applied Science students work and study at the same time, they highlight the importance of learning skills in improving their jobs. Participants agreed that the inclusion of the writing skill in the EAP books would lead to an increase in writing activities in EAP classes. As to speaking, the students of the Applied Science University were willing to accept the changes more easily than the states university students. Participants also believed they would spend more time studying writing if

their books had a separate part on writing while students of state universities were resistant to these changes. In the 4 questions asking about the effect of inclusion of speaking and writing on the amount of time that students allocate either in class or at home, the number of students who preferred to choose 'no idea' was higher in state universities. This may reflect their satisfaction with the present books as they are, although it is against the results of the interviews.

The students believed that universities should maintain the same syllabus from year to year, but there is a difference between the two groups of students. In contrast to the results of the four questions presented before on how state universities students were resistant to the changes, this time they disagreed more than the other group regarding maintaining the same syllabus from one year to another. Although this question reflects widespread support for the introduction of a more standardized syllabus, it may be important to investigate why a higher proportion of students agreed with the suggestion.

Although a higher proportion of students (n=96) felt that the inclusion of only reading was not sufficient, the students (n=88) were less likely to give negative responses to this question. The responses from students may be explained by their experience in learning English so far. If their classes have prioritized reading, they may feel more confident to choose the same focus. Interestingly, most students will welcome the inclusion of listening, speaking and writing skills in EAP books and it was not a new result that obtained just in this study; Zand-moghadam, Meihami and Ghiasvand came up with the same result in their study.

The results suggest that in students' opinion, the English ability gained through the EAP classes is not enough to get a job as a librarian. However, the comparison between the two groups of the study revealed that a higher proportion of the students selecting 'disagree' are at state universities rather

than Applied Science universities. It may be because the students at Applied Science universities are practitioners and may not need English at work, or some employees may help them meet their English needs. Maybe they acquired the required English skills by experience. Most students need to receive feedback on their English abilities from their EAP teachers to improve their proficiency level. Course developers may also use such feedback.

The results of analysis showed that students are rarely able to identify and translate the specialized words in a text. The same results are true about comprehending the main ideas of a specialized English text. The participants are rarely able to comprehend the main ideas of the English conversations. They are not able or are rarely able to ask questions and take part in English conversations. The participants are rarely able or are never able to write a summary of English texts. They are never able to write an English essay. They are rarely able to search the internet to retrieve English information. Low level of English would cause problem when students start their jobs as librarians; it proved as one of the barriers to accessing needed information in the previous studies (Tafreshi & Angouraj Taghavi',2008 & Abdollahi and Jowkar, 2013).

However, the percentage of the second choice is almost like the first highly rated option. It indicates that they may usually be able to search the internet to retrieve English information. They are also rarely able to work with English databases. However, some of the participants indicated that they usually could work with English databases. They are rarely able to talk about a specialized English movie after it is finished. They also are never or rarely able to write an understandable specialized English text.

The participants' opinions were different on having difficulty in pronouncing and expressing English words while reading a text. Students of

state universities stated that they rarely had a problem while applied science universities students believed they usually had problem or difficulty pronouncing and expressing English words while reading a text. It may be because more attention is given to reading comprehension in state universities than in applied science universities. As it was expected, the students are not able to write an English letter to order a book. They are not able to offer the library services in English. They are not able to extract key information from English papers to make an index. The participants believed that they rarely or never introduced new LIS modern terms in EAP classes. The results show they are moderately familiar with new concepts such as digital libraries, digital resource management, and e-books.

Regarding the third research question, most students agreed that their EAP books present the subjects in the form of practical conversations and functional readings. Most of the students were willing to speak English in the EAP classes. Most participants agreed that their classes are not authentic and are too specialized and, for this reason, they cannot get satisfactory results. This is in contrast with what Robinson (1991) believed about language for ESP; according to him, it should be easy enough for the job and not necessarily native-like. The students were asked to choose the important reason among the reasons obtained from the interviews. They believed that the most important reason as to why they did not get good results in EAP classes was the lack of use of the English skills. The second highest rated item was the lack of motivation. Impractical texts are the third reason. The fourth reason is teachers' inability to convey, and the lowest rated item is old texts. In general, most students disagreed that the level of the book is consistent with the students' level of proficiency. The students believed that the changes in Persian syllabus do not apply in EAP books.

Students need more up-to-date reading tasks and skills. It needs more attention by the EAP course designer. Regarding the academic tasks, students need to practice skills, translate scientific texts, and search the internet. It is in line with what Dudley-Evens and Johns' (1998) belief that the courses should be authentic to make the students able to perform in real occupational situations. One of the important advantages of needs assessment is that it can increase students' motivation and involvement in the learning process. Students usually have a problem understanding specialized long English sentences.

One of the reasons that in-service librarians and students both referred to as the cause of the dissatisfactory results of EAP classes, was that they find their books boring and not in correspondence to what they perceived as important. The findings are consistent with those of Moslemi, Moinzadeh and Dabaghi's (2011) study on analyzing the English language needs of Iranian MA students, which showed students' dissatisfaction with the ESP courses and called for urgent improvement of English instruction in the Iranian Educational system.

In university English classes, there is a heavy emphasis on reading. Most interviewees identified reading as the skill taking the greatest amount of their time. It suggests a dominant role for reading and reflects the nature of exams and curriculum guidelines. Given the fact that syllabus does not include speaking, listening and writing skills, syllabus designer are suggested to include these skills in their programs.

About the third research questions, the librarians and professors believed that the present EAP books for LIS majors do not foresee the fact that our students need to be informed about the new concepts in English. This outcome is in congruence with the remarks of Gholaminejad (2020), who believed that improvement of the present program can increase the

effectiveness of the EAP syllabus. Business letter writing or even basic requirements such as writing a paragraph, and offering their services in English or communication with foreign people are necessary. Some students may later learn these tasks in a very unsystematic manner from their colleagues in the workplace. Others even will never find a good job due to their inability to perform the easiest tasks that are required by every librarian. Therefore, some professors add some materials of their own in their classes considering globalization and English as the international medium of communication, familiarity with new concepts, official correspondence, but they believed, given the students' very poor basic general English, the limited time and lack of students' motivation, the outcome is not satisfactory.

The above-mentioned comments highlighted the need for a systematic revision of the present EAP books and the syllabus, which is formed by a detailed needs analysis. The findings of Ranjbar and Soodmand Afshar (2021) support the results of the present study. They also concluded that bringing students' needs into focus can help EAP education to improve. Another important point is the gap between the perceptions of professors and in-service librarians or even students and those who develop a syllabus in their views on what to include in EAP books and courses. Professors as facilitators of learning and in-service librarians as former students using their acquired knowledge in a real situation are the most important sources of information to feed the EAP course developer. In-service librarians help the course designer to understand the characteristics of a particular situation the students may encounter in the target situation and possible needs of the students in that situation. Workshops and conferences on current EAP issues can provide the opportunity for exchanging ideas and improvement of the status of EAP in our universities.

It is suggested that professors learn the basic skills of improving their teaching materials considering students' needs, wants and lacks based on Hutchinson and Waters' model (1987). Moreover, students need to pay attention to what is being taught and the present curricula should not consider EAP as a secondary course. Professors should not use fixed questions like a long list of words that is to be translated from English into Farsi or vice versa in the final examinations. These types of questions make students memorize the equivalents of the technical words for passing the exams and forgetting them a few days or weeks later. This is verified by the findings of Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), who believed that one of the reasons for students' dissatisfaction was related to teaching methodology and the method of evaluation.

Globalization is inevitable and future librarians should be able to communicate effectively in English.

An examination of the EAP books reveals that no attention has been paid to the language needs of the students before developing the courses. It is against what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) believed in that NA is the starting point for the design of any EAP course. The focus is on the reading comprehension and learning new vocabularies and other skills are completely neglected.

## **7. Conclusion**

According to the findings of the present study, EAP seems to be unsuccessful for LIS in the universities of Tehran. Based on the results of this study, most of the students were not able to communicate even their basic intentions effectively in spite of the fact that they had studied formal language instruction in their language classes before entering the university. Most of them have a very poor command of the English language.

Based on findings of the present study, it can be concluded that most of the LIS students have not been exposed to adequate English language, because there is frequent use of the mother tongue by both students and the teachers and they only study their textbooks. The results of the study show a discrepancy between what the students and in-service librarians expressed as their needs and what is actually prescribed in the syllabus. In their comments, many of the respondents pointed out that not using the four English language skills is the main reason for their weakness in English. The lack of skilled instructors was also mentioned as a major issue by the interviewees. It is particularly difficult to find professionals with both good knowledge of the subject and English proficiency.

Despite the value given to the EAP in universities, most librarians acknowledged that improving their English language proficiency is a necessity for their profession. They believed that knowing English language is crucial or very important for their mobility at the international level as well as for encouraging research within the enterprise. They experienced problems especially communicating, speaking in formal contexts, understanding and using a special technical lexicon, and understanding the written professional materials. In that sense, they feel a need to acquire linguistic competence mainly in listening and speaking skills, translation of information, knowledge of technical lexicon, and reading skills in the target language.

The EAP books should integrate the four language skills as well as focus on communicative competence. Actually, it will encourage the development of the skills which the librarians highlighted as being the most difficult to master, such as communicating, writing e-mails, understanding and using a specific lexicon, reading specified texts, and participating in formal and informal conversations.

The information obtained through analysis of data is of great significance in educational contexts. The results of the present study can be applied to both the EAP program and materials development.

The interviews with the participants are valuable sources of information that can help course designers make required changes to the EAP courses and materials. This study calls for developing a standard EAP curriculum, which has definite goals and learning outcomes, a unified methodology and contents that are in accordance with the modern methods of teaching and testing.

The next implication regarding the EAP program deals with the type of activities in EAP classes. The activities should be designed in a way that they involve all the students in the classroom activities. They should all have a chance to practice English in context.

This study contributed to the current understanding of how early stage of needs analysis can effectively provide better sources and materials for the students who would be future librarians. The findings of this study show the importance of the precise English-language needs analysis reported by the in-service librarians, EAP professors, and students regarding students' actual needs, and the tasks and skills to be included in the EAP courses. The selection of the parts considered necessary for the EAP courses can thereby be based on the findings of this study. The interviews with participants are valuable sources of information that can help course designers make the necessary changes to the EAP course design and materials development. Since there is no suitable unified syllabus, different books at different universities are used in EAP classes. There is a need to develop high-quality English materials for Library and Information Science students based on detailed needs analyses to prepare them for the target situations. EAP professors can also use the findings of this study to develop their own course handouts.

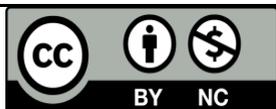
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