

**Original Article**

## Investigating the English Specific Needs of the M.A Students of Ancient Iran History

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### Abstract

This study investigated the different aspects of the English for Specific Purposes Needs of M.A students of Ancient Iran History studying at the Department of History in Iranian universities. The participants were selected from the universities of Iran based on convenience sampling. The Needs Analysis was designed on a qualitative and quantitative survey, using the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires. 45 M.A students and 5 ESP instructors expressed their views through questionnaires and interviews. The results revealed that the students asked for the inclusion of the four language skills in their ESP courses. That is, a new ESP course focusing on the integration of all four skills should be developed. The instructors, however, echoed the reading skill as the predominant need for students to achieve a higher standard in academic and future careers. The interviews showed that the ESP courses were not sufficient to account for the specific needs of the students since these courses were not prepared according to the learners' needs. The students expressed that they needed to master English because they had to use English sources during their academic studies. However, the ESP courses did not fully prepare the students to embark on their studies because it did not sufficiently take into account the learners' needs. The students were dissatisfied with the current ESP courses of Ancient Iran History and asked for the urgent revision of ESP materials. The ESP instructors' responses to the interviews indicated dissatisfaction with the students' poor language skills, lack of motivation, and the insufficiency of the needs-responsive ESP coursebook. Giving more weight to English in the M.A entrance exam was suggested by instructors as one possible solution as this may increase the students' level of motivation which may lead to the improvement of their language proficiency. The findings of this study can help researchers and ESP practitioners make particular pedagogic decisions. It presented a detailed description of the process of the Needs Analysis as a prerequisite step to design an ESP coursebook for English specific courses of the Ancient Iran History field at M. A level.

**Keywords:** Ancient Iran History, ESP, ESP coursebook, M.A students, Needs Analysis

## 1. Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a language course in which the specific needs of a particular group of learners are the main factor in selecting the content of the course (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). It has been a specific activity in English Language Teaching (ELT) since the 1960s and has been developed based on an assessment of purposes, the needs and the activities for which English is needed (Rahman, 2015). It is an approach to language learning and teaching in which all the decisions are based on learners' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The view of ESP encapsulated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) is "tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" (p. 8). The ESP research has been generally seen as an identifiable component of applied linguistics research (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). As Alfehaid (2011) asserts, there are as many as sixteen or twenty types of language study that can be identified under ESP and the process is continuing to expand. Needs Analysis (NA) is considered the cornerstone of ESP teaching, consistently articulated in the ESP literature (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013).

ESP is an approach to language learning and teaching in which all the decisions are based on learners' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Also, it is believed that what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of need but the awareness of the needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Basturkmen (2010) comments that English for academic purposes (EAP), English for professional purposes (EPP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP) are considered as the main areas of ESP teaching. But as Anthony (2018) asserts, "perhaps the most influential branch of ESP is English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which focuses on ESP in academic settings" (p. 13). On the other hand, Charles and Pecorari (2016) believe that "EAP is part of a larger area of applied linguistics called English for Specific Purposes (ESP)" (p. 7).

ESP courses are part of both graduate and postgraduate programs in Iranian universities, but it has not been established with systematic, research-based NA from different sources and stakeholders' perspectives: students, instructors, and administrators (Aliakbari & Bogharayi, 2014; Dehnad, Bagherzadeh, Bigdeli, Hatami & Hosseini, 2013; Eslami, 2010). It has been observed that graduate students usually act poorly in future professional situations, interacting with other counterparts, and expressing their views in English (Moslemi, Moinzadeh, & Dabaghi, 2011). This lack of competence in using

English effectively may root in the fact that the implemented ESP courses are not designed on a comprehensive systematic NA (Carnando, 2020; Eslami Rasekh & Simin, 2012; Ghonsooly & Pishghadam, 2011; Mirza Suzani, Yarmohammadi, & Yamini, 2011). In the pre-study interviews conducted in the present study, the ESP instructors and the students stated that ESP courses the Ancient Iran History field at M.A level failed to satisfy the English needs of the learners in the academic situation and workplace environment. As the learners were not able to use English sources during and after their academic studies or to publish an academic paper using English sources. They accentuated the importance of identifying the students' needs in designing ESP courses and pointed out that the Ancient Iran M.A students of Iran do not acquire enough knowledge of English and usually lack the required English competency to read English resources or express their views in important professional arenas. They show an inability to read other English reference books and sources while one of the requirements of the discipline is to read academic research in English. The requirements are even more recognized when there is no ESP coursebook for the course. As stated by the instructors, the Ancient Iran History field lacks a needs-responsive coursebook. Consequently, ESP instructors use materials like articles published in academic journals or reference books, which are not specifically designed for language teaching purposes and considered inappropriate for language proficiency levels of the students. Not to mention that this field lacks needs responsive materials. Therefore, the primary focus of the current study was to explore ESP needs of M.A students of Ancient Iran History.

This study is carried out to broaden the scope of the studies undertaken so far in ESP and to shed more light on the importance of the real needs of the field. Ignoring the sound of Needs Analysis during the process of material design may lead to a lack of enough compatibility between developed materials and the realistic needs of the students (Masoumpanah & Tahririan, 2013).

## **2. Literature Review**

ESP is a specialized English language teaching that aims to develop specific skills of the learner in response to the needs identified or indicated by various stakeholders. The ESP approach is sometimes referred to Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) since specific-purpose instruction can be in any language (Swales, 2000). For example, it is

stated, “ESP assumes the problems are unique to specific learners in specific contexts and thus must be carefully delineated and addressed with tailored to-fit-instruction” (Belcher, 2006. p. 135). As stated by Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018), ESP courses are an obligatory part of the TEFL graduate program in Iran. It is the second and foreign language teaching and learning which help the learners to use English for specific purposes in a particular domain (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013).

### **2.1. Needs Analysis in ESP**

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) describe how ESP courses based on NA, can promote educational effectiveness and also learners' motivation. Exploring the participants' learning needs will serve as a guide to design an English language course that meets the requirements, particularly in the most significant English language difficulties in particular settings. Reviewing the ESP studies demonstrate that success or satisfactory results are always reported in the courses which cater to the learners' specific needs (Sanmugam, 2013, Sukrani, 2020).

When it comes to the importance of supplying learners with needs-specific texts, exercises, and tasks, Brown (2016) stated: “Books and articles on the topic of ESP often roughly subdivide those purposes or needs into English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP)” (p. 7). Belcher (2012) pointed out that published materials are not always the best choice, but the NA should be considered the input for ESP material selection. Hyland (2006) argued that though the materials development process can vary widely, it typically begins with NA depending on local circumstances.

### **2.2. ESP Studies in Asian Countries**

Nowadays, the majority of the studies in the ESP literature placed particular emphasis on the indispensable role of NA that serves to assess the needs of selected groups of learners. In the Thai context, Kaewpet (2011) took into account the dissatisfaction expressed by Thai engineers and engineering students concerning their ability to use English which had never been satisfactory and consistently reported to be below average levels (Chaiyakosi, 2004). Other surveys support these findings, Malaysian graduates of Art and Design (Kaur & Ayub Khan, 2010), Malaysian graduates of Petroleum (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2010) and Taiwanese students of culinary art (Hou, 2013) face similar

problems in terms of seeking employment. The final data confirmed the significance of identifying the learners' needs before teaching and learning (Richterich & Chancerel, 1987).

In the Indonesian context, several studies were conducted to specify the needs of ESP learners. Oktarin, Syahrial, and Harahap (2019) analyzed the English learning needs of students in the Tourism study program of Bengkulu, and the suitability of the ESP coursebook. The result of the research indicated that the ESP coursebook, materials, and activities used in the ESP classes to support the requirements of the academic context and future jobs of the tourism field, failed to cover the students' needs. Duka, Sujana, and Melanie (2020) analyzed the students' needs in learning English based on implementing of the ESP approach in Indonesia at the International Relation Study Program. The findings showed that the English language skill of students did not reach the standard of the ESP approach. Syakur, Zainuddin, and Hasan (2020) described the analysis of the needs of ESP courses for the students of diploma three (D3) pharmacy Department of Surabaya Pharmacy Academy in Indonesia. The results showed that the instructors should provide an opportunity in the ESP classes to help students improve their speaking and communication and meet the demands of institutions and future professions. Carnando (2020) explained the present situation of the ESP of the Indonesian Medical students at the universities of Batam. Most of the students still face difficulties in English during their studies. The listening was the hardest one since the skills that they had achieved during the ESP courses failed to improve their listening ability. The findings imply the significance of conducting the NA as the guide to material designers.

Tim (2020) conducted the NA in a university in Japan to describe the ESP needs of Japanese students in Tokyo, Japan. The finding emphasized the importance of responding to the needs of the students by providing more practical English education, which is also supported by the result of other studies (Edwards, 2000; Iwai, 2010; Muhammad & Abdul Raof, 2020).

### **2.3. ESP Studies in Iranian Setting**

The increasing bulk of ESP instruction as EAP in Iran is limited and seems to have neglected the principles underlying ESP course design (Moslemi et al., 2011). Yarmohammadi (2005) pointed out, "language teaching in Iran does not follow any

specific purposes, i.e., it can be characterized as a language for no specific purposes” (p. 4). In this regard, several types of research have been conducted in Iran, focusing on the ESP needs of university students.

Tayebipour (2005) mentioned some major problems of ESP courses in Iran in terms of “instructors' competence and the design of the materials” (p. 119). He criticized the current state of the ESP/EAP approach for being too narrow and inefficient to fulfill the needs of the learner. Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) asserted that the ESP course for nursing and midwifery students, similar to other ESP courses in Iranian universities, is conducted without consultation or collaboration with the content Departments, and without having assessed students' learning needs. Nikpour (2008) revealed that the Iranian M.A nursing students do not have enough exposure to the English in a way that helps them to satisfy their subjective and objective needs at the M.A level. Amirian and Tavakoli (2009) examined the objectives of the ESP courses for B.S. engineering students in Isfahan. The findings revealed that the ESP courses are enough to satisfy the subjects' future job purposes, but they fail to account for the specific job requirements of individual engineers. Razmjoo and Raissi (2010) showed that the ESP coursebook of SAMT or The Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in Humanities for the Iranian Medical Sciences failed to follow theoretical considerations, organizational features, practical considerations, content, language skills, vocabulary and grammatical structure of the instructors' and students' viewpoints.

In the study conducted by Moslemi et al. (2011), a total of 80 MA students majoring in biology, psychology, physical training, accounting, and philosophy as well as twenty-five subject-specific instructors and seven ESP instructors took part. The finding emphasized the importance of consulting between ESP practitioners and the learner. Masoumpanah and Tahririan (2013), pointed to NA as the foundation for designing materials and based on which we can develop curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches which may, in turn, enhance learners' motivation and success. Danaye Tous and Haghighi (2014) asserted that although the ESP coursebook of computer engineering students has pedagogical values, it was not well-prepared concerning to design, organization, language content, exercises, skills, strategies, and practical considerations.

Alaei and Ershadi (2016) investigated certain areas of the Iranian ESP program through the lens of its immediate stakeholders, i.e., policy implementers, authors, teachers,

and learners. The findings pointed to the inevitable fact that ESP in the Iranian context does not satisfy the users' interest in terms of means and materials' appropriateness (p. 298). Soodmand Afshar and Hafez (2019) indicated that the ESP textbook of SAMT for B.A students of Computer, despite particular merits, focused mainly on reading skills and overlooked the specific needs of the students. Saidi and Sayyadi (2020) stated that the undergraduate students of Physical Education perceived speaking, reading, listening, vocabulary, and translation as essential. Moreover, EAP instructors added that writing, grammar, and pronunciation were considered vital.

The role of learners' needs in designing ESP courses is still neglected in the Iranian context. The ESP coursebooks designed by the Ministry of Higher Education in Iran lack any systematic Need Analysis (Eslami, 2010). Preparing the materials without taking into account the NA may lead to a lack of compatibility regarding the real needs of the students (Masoumpanah & Tahririan, 2013). It accentuates the importance of identifying the students' needs before designing an ESP course. So, the current study aims to broaden the scope of ESP studies by investigating the needs of students of Ancient Iran History through conducting the NA.

The following research question was addressed:

What are the specific English needs of Iranian M.A students of Ancient Iran history?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Overall Design of the Study**

This study was conducted to identify, analyze, and explain the ESP needs of students of Ancient Iran History at M.A level in different universities in Iran. It used the perceptions of M.A students and instructors concerning English academic needs and real-world needs.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The participants of this study came from two groups. The first group consisted of 45 (28 males and 17 females) M.A students majoring in the field of Ancient Iran from different universities (Shahid Chamran, Shahid Beheshti, Kharazmi, Ferdowsi of Mashhad, University of Tehran, Alzahra University, and Persian Gulf University) in Iran. The second group consisted of 5 ESP instructors who hold a PhD in Ancient Iran history and had the

experience between 3 to 8 years in teaching English at the History Departments of the mentioned universities. The selection of the final sample used in the study was a convenience sampling technique.

### **3.3. Instruments**

To gather the necessary data, a triangulation of sources and methods (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999; Long, 2005) was used to secure the validity and reliability of the research. The questionnaire consisted of 62 items and used a five-point Likert scale. For the ease of the statistical analysis, first, the questionnaire was divided into three parts with different subsections, then the data were turned to numerical data as ordinal data. Part A asked the learners' needs in all four language skills. The instructors' and learners' needs and views toward the ESP textbook were investigated by part B. Part C was designed to explore the learning styles and attitudes toward learning English.

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was adopted from Mazdayasana and Tahririan's (2008), Alfehaid (2011), and Masoumpanah and Tahririan's (2013) instrumentation. The draft was back-translated, and the final version was in Persian. For content validity, the draft version was modified and revised based on the suggestions of three experts. Next, the questionnaire was given to 100 participants majoring in the same field based on convenience sampling from different universities in Iran (Yazd, Ilam, Isfahan, Hamedan, Arak, Golestan, Yasouj, Kerman, Qazvin, Sanandaj, Birjand, Mahalat, and Sistan and Baluchestan). Using SPSS version 23, exploratory factor analysis was adopted to apply the data reduction strategy and ensure the validity of the questionnaire. The analysis confirmed the validity of the questionnaire with the KMO being 0.774 ( $p \leq 0.000$ ). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated and the reliability turned up to be a .973.

#### **3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview**

Six questions were prepared based on the Present Situation Analysis (PSA) that refers to what the students are akin to at the start of their language course, looking into their strengths and weaknesses and the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) that refers to form of Needs Analysis which centers on identifying the learners' language requirements in the



occupational or academic setting and elicit complementary responses in addition to the questionnaires.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

The Needs Analysis questionnaire was developed and administered to the corresponding participants, who were the M.A students and the ESP instructors of Ancient Iran. The questionnaires were distributed to 45 M.A students and 5 instructors. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher gave all the participants a brief explanation about the purpose of the study and the final desired goal. Additionally, the importance of designing an ESP material on their needs was notified. Then, semi-structured interviews (voice-recorded) with graduate students and ESP instructors were conducted to specify the needs and necessities. The process of data collection started in December 2019 and lasted for a total of 7 months. Some of the questionnaires were distributed during regular classes and the other sent via online messaging applications, WhatsApp and Telegram. The questionnaire was first administered, in a pilot study, to 100 participants. To check the validity and reliability, the results of the pilot study were analyzed by SPSS Statistics version 23 and the feedbacks used for the alterations. Moreover, the validity of the questionnaires was established by asking three well-trained experts to judge the content validity. Next, the final draft was administered to the main target subjects.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

To check the validity and reliability, three experts judged the content validity then, the questionnaire was administered in a pilot study. The results were analyzed by SPSS Statistics version 23 and the feedbacks used for the alterations. Next, the final draft was administered to the main subjects and the results were analyzed by SPSS. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with M.A students and ESP instructors were conducted to specify the needs and necessities.

Concerning the semi-structured interviews, the qualitative data (audio-recorded) attained were primarily thematic categorized to validate the participants' answers to the related items in the questionnaires. The technique to thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews was assigning preliminary codes to the voice-recorded data. Then,

the similar themes across the different interviews were coded and patterned into one group with common characteristics.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

An examination of factor analysis with Varimax rotation suggested that the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was favorable (KMO=.774 and P=.000) with Approximate Chi-Square being 0.731. The questionnaire was satisfactorily valid as shown in table one below.

Table 1.

##### *Results of Validity*

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.774
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi- Square	7312.378
	Df	1891
	Sig.	.000

The factor analysis results for the 84 items at the beginning of the statistical analysis revealed 17 underlying factors. An Eigen value greater than one was the criterion for identifying the number of factors. The final results indicated that 12 factors solution might provide a more suitable grouping of the questionnaire's items. By removing the unrelated factors, the items reduced from 84 to 62, and KMO became more significant than 0.5.

The calculated reliability of the 62 items is presented in Table 2. The result revealed a .973 alpha reliability coefficient, which was considered high.

Table 2.

##### *Results of Reliability*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.973	.973	62

#### 4.2. Analysis of the Questionnaire

The first part of the questionnaire was devoted to the participants' demographic information.

Table 3.

*Distribution of Students by University*

University	Frequency	Percent
Shahid Chamran	4	8.9
Beheshti	8	17.8
University of Tehran	5	11.1
Alzahra	2	4.4
Kharazmi	11	24.4
Persian Gulf	9	20.0
Ferdowsi	6	13.3
<b>Total</b>	45	100.0

The questionnaire items were analyzed quantitatively to answer the research question. Table 4 shows that reading comprehension was expressed as the most vital skill for the academic setting. 42.2% (19 out of 45) of the participants agreed, 'to a very great extent', that reading skill was essential during the ESP course. On the other hand, the listening, speaking, and writing skills were also considered 'to a great extent' important as 37.8%(18), 42.2%(19), and 46.7%(21) of the respondents expressed their needs, respectively.

The instructors believed that reading was an essential skill for academic studies. That is the better reading skill leads to academic success. On the contrary, the instructors rated the other skill mentioned by the students "to a great extent" to be important for their academic success.

Regarding the future career, the writing skill was selected by 46.7% of the students (21out of 45) as 'to a great extent' essential. On the other hand, it can be observed that the students expressed their equal needs for speaking and listening skills. On the contrary, while for the academic setting the reading skill was given a priority, for the future career it was considered the least important skill to develop for the M.A students of Ancient Iran History.

Table 4.

*Analysis of the Importance of English Language Skills for the Graduate Studies and the Future Careers from the Students' Perception.*

Item		Graduate Studies		Future Careers	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>The English skill of listening comprehension</b>	Not at all	3	6.7%	1	2.2%
	A little	2	4.4%	1	2.2%
	To a moderate extent	14	31.1%	9	20.0%
	To a great extent	17	37.8%	20	44.4%
	To a very great extent	9	20.0%	14	31.1%
	Total	45	100%	45	100%
<b>The English skill of speaking</b>	Not at all	1	2.2%	1	2.2%
	A little	5	11.1%	1	2.2%
	To a moderate extent	9	20.0%	9	20.0%
	To a great extent	19	42.2%	20	44.4%
	To a very great extent	11	24.4%	14	31.1%
	Total	45	100%	45	100%
<b>The English skill of reading comprehension</b>	Not at all	0	0%	1	2.2%
	A little	1	2.2%	1	2.2%
	To a moderate extent	9	20.0%	6	13.3%
	To a great extent	16	35.6%	19	42.2%
	To a very great extent	19	42.2%	18	40.0%
	Total	45	100%	45	100%
<b>The English skill of writing</b>	Not at all	2	4.4%	2	4.4%
	A little	1	2.2%	0	0%
	To a moderate extent	10	22.2%	9	20.0%
	To a great extent	21	46.7%	21	46.7%
	To a very great extent	11	24.4%	13	28.9%
	Total	45	100%	45	100%

Table 5.

*Analysis of the Importance of English Language Skills for the Graduate Studies and the Future careers from the Instructors' Perception.*

Item		Graduate Studies		Future Careers	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>The English skill of listening comprehension</b>	Not at all	1	20%	1	20%
	A little	1	20%	1	20%
	To a moderate extent	3	60%	3	60%
	To a great extent	0	0%	0	0%
	To a very great extent	0	0%	0	0%
	Total	5	100%	5	100%
<b>The English skill of speaking</b>	Not at all	2	40%	1	20%
	A little	1	20%	1	20%
	To a moderate extent	2	40%	2	40%
	To a great extent	0	0%	1	20%
	To a very great extent	0	0%	0	0%
	Total	5	100%	5	100%
<b>The English skill of reading comprehension</b>	Not at all	0	0%	0	0%
	A little	0	0%	1	20%
	To a moderate extent	0	0%	0	0%
	To a great extent	3	60%	2	40%
	To a very great extent	2	40%	2	40%
	Total	5	100%	5	100%
<b>The English skill of writing</b>	Not at all	0	0%	0	0%
	A little	1	20%	1	20%
	To a moderate extent	3	60%	2	40%
	To a great extent	1	20%	1	20%
	To a very great extent	0	0%	1	20%
	Total	5	100%	5	100%

The majority of the students expressed their needs to a great extent to the four sub-skills of the listening skill. 'listening to the conversation on a general topic' was selected by 46.7% of the participants. This sub-skill was felt by almost half of the participants (21 out of 45) as the most critical need.

Concerning the speaking skill, the most of the students strongly agreed about all six sub-skills. The highest percentage was for 'talking with lecturers and students in class' as over half of the participants (53.3%) felt that they need to develop speaking to communicate in class. The second sub-skill of speaking, 'asking and answering questions in seminars' was rated by 48.9% of the students as to a great extent essential. Concerning reading sub-skills, the highest percentage went for 'reading articles in professional journals', 'reading texts on the Internet', and 'reading English newspapers and magazines' with 55%, 51.1%, and 48.9%, respectively.

For the writing skill, a significant portion of the students to a great deal agreed to all four sub-skills of writing. Additionally, some were unsure about these sub-skills and deemed them moderate. The highest percentage was for 'note-taking while reading', which is also associated with the reading ability. Accordingly, 44.4% of the participants rated this sub-skill considerably important.

Concerning the instructors, the results revealed that they rated the sub-skills differently from the students. As shown in Table 7, most of the instructors thought that the students needed to develop the reading skill to 'read texts on the internet' and 'read articles in professional journals'. The instructors rated 'reading reports' and 'reading reference books' equivalently. That is to say, 40% answered 'to a moderate extent', 20% 'to a moderate extent', and 40% 'to a very great extent'. On the contrary, no one sensed the need to be significant for the 'Reading English newspapers and magazines'. To sum up, the instructors' reading skill was the most echoed language skill. Not to mention that it received the most attention in the ESP classes.

Table 6.

*Analysis of the Students' Perceptions of the Sub-skills of the English Language.*

Items	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Listening to presentations in class</b>	1(2.2%)	4(8.9%)	10(22.2%)	19(42.2%)	11(24.4%)
<b>Listening to conversations on general topics.</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	9(20.0%)	21(46.7%)	10(22.2%)
<b>Listening to students, colleagues</b>	4(8.9%)	3(6.7%)	11(24.4%)	16(35.6%)	11(24.4%)
<b>Listening to instructions in job-related situation</b>	1(2.2%)	2(4.4%)	10(22.2%)	19(42.2%)	13(28.9%)
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Participating in academic discussions in conferences</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	9(20.0%)	16(35.6%)	15(33.3)
<b>Asking and answering questions in class</b>	4(8.9%)	3(6.7%)	8(17.8%)	16(35.6%)	14(31.1%)
<b>Talking with professionals in job-related situations</b>	2(4.4%)	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	21(46.7%)	18(40.0%)
<b>Talking with lecturers and students in class</b>	1(2.2%)	1(2.2%)	7(15.6%)	24(53.3%)	12(26.7%)
<b>Asking and answering questions in seminars</b>	3(6.7%)	1(2.2%)	4(8.9%)	22(48.9%)	15(33.3%)
<b>Speaking at seminars, meetings and presentations</b>	2(4.4%)	1(2.2%)	8(17.8%)	21(46.7%)	13(28.9%)
<b>Reading comprehension</b>					
<b>Reading reports</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	6(13.3%)	19(42.2%)	18(40.0%)
<b>Reading reference books</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	6(13.3%)	18(40.0%)	19(42.2%)
<b>Reading texts on the Internet.</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	17(37.8%)	23(51.1%)
<b>Reading articles in professional journals</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	0(0%)	18(40.0%)	25(55.0%)
<b>Reading English newspapers and magazines</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	2(4.4%)	19(42.2%)	22(48.9%)
<b>Writing</b>					
<b>Writing articles</b>	1(2.2%)	1(2.2%)	8(17.8%)	19(42.2%)	15(33.3%)
<b>Note-taking while reading</b>	0(0%)	1(2.2%)	12(26.7%)	20(44.4%)	12(26.7%)
<b>Note-taking in speeches</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	11(24.4%)	17(37.8%)	15(33.3%)
<b>Writing a paper for oral presentation</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	11(24.4%)	17(37.8%)	15(33.3%)

Table 7.

*Analysis of the Instructors' Perceptions of the Sub-skills of the English Language.*

Items	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Listening</b>					
Listening to presentations in class	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Listening to conversations on general topics.	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Listening to students, colleagues	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Listening to instructions in job-related situation	0(0%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)
<b>Speaking</b>					
Participating in academic discussions in conferences	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
Asking and answering questions in class	0(0%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Talking with professionals in job-related situations	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
Talking with lecturers and students in class	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Asking and answering questions in seminars	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
Speaking at seminars, meetings and presentations	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(80%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
<b>Reading comprehension</b>					
Reading reports	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	2(40%)
Reading reference books	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	2(40%)
Reading texts on the Internet.	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	3(60%)
Reading articles in professional journals	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	3(60%)
Reading English newspapers and magazines	0(0%)	2(40%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
<b>Writing</b>					
Writing articles	1(20%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	1(20%)
Note-taking while reading	0(0%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
Note-taking in speeches	1(20%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
Writing a paper for oral presentation	0(0%)	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)



Questions 28 to 36 deal with language needs and attitudes toward ESP coursebook. The majority of the students agreed remarkably about the first five items of language needs. ‘translating each word to understand the meaning of a sentence’, ‘reading specialized manuals, forms, instruction, reports’, ‘creating a well-organized paragraph’, and ‘formulating and articulating ideas’ were the language needs which the students wanted to a very great extent to find in the ESP coursebook.

‘Translating each word to understand the meaning of a sentence’ was the only item selected by the majority of the instructors as to a very great extent pivotal. The following language need to deal with was ‘understanding the text rhetorical pattern like narration and argumentation’ and ‘formulating and articulating ideas’ which 40% viewed it to a great extent necessary.

Table 8.

*Analysis of the Language Needs toward ESP Textbook from the Students’ Perceptions.*

Items	Not at all	A Little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very Great extent
<b>1. The strategy of skimming (the main idea)</b>	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	10(22.2%)	18(40%)	13(28.9%)
<b>2. The strategy of scanning (specific word, date)</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	8(42.2%)	19(42.2%)	16(35.6%)
<b>3. Drawing conclusion and understanding implied ideas</b>	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	7(15.6%)	18(40%)	16(35.6%)
<b>4. Understanding the text rhetorical pattern like narration and argumentation</b>	2(4.4%)	4(8.9%)	12(26.7%)	14(31.1%)	13(28.9%)
<b>5. Understanding the ideas like cause and effect</b>	2(4.4%)	2(4.4%)	12(26.7%)	16(35.6%)	13(28.9%)
<b>6. Translating each word to understand the meaning of a sentence</b>	1(2.2%)	2(6.7%)	8(17.8%)	13(28.9%)	20(44.4%)
<b>7. Reading specialized manuals, forms, instruction, reports.</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	7(15.6%)	15(33.3%)	18(40%)
<b>8. Creating a well-organized paragraph</b>	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	8(17.8%)	15(33.3%)	18(40%)
<b>9. Formulating and articulating ideas</b>	1(2.2%)	5(11.1%)	9(20%)	13(28.9%)	17(37.8%)

Table 9.

*Analysis of the Language Needs toward ESP Textbook from the Instructors' Perceptions.*

Items	Not at All	A Little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>The strategy of skimming (the main idea)</b>	0(0%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	0(0%)
<b>The strategy of scanning (specific word, date)</b>	1(20%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
<b>Drawing conclusion and understanding implied ideas</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
<b>Understanding the text rhetorical pattern like narration and argumentation</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	1(20%)
<b>Understanding the ideas like cause and effect</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)
<b>Translating each words to understand the meaning of a sentence</b>	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	2(40%)
<b>Reading specialized manuals, forms, instruction, reports.</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Creating a well-organized paragraph</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)
<b>Formulating and articulating ideas</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	1(20%)

The participants were asked about some aspects regarding the design of the ESP coursebook. The students wanted their ESP coursebook to focus on the specialized vocabulary and to include Persian translation, general vocabulary, and syntactic knowledge. 60% of the instructors expressed that the ESP coursebook should devote a section to the knowledge of grammar.

Table 10.

*Aspects of Language from the Students' Perceptions.*

Items	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Specialized vocabulary</b>	1(2.2%)	2(4.4%)	8(17.8%)	15(33.3%)	19(42.2%)
<b>General vocabulary</b>	1(2.2%)	1(2.2%)	13(28.9%)	19(42.2%)	11(24.4%)
<b>Persian translation</b>	2(4.4%)	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	18(40%)	20(44.4%)
<b>Syntactic knowledge</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	12(26.7%)	19(42.2%)	9(20%)

Table 11.

*Aspects of Language from the Instructors' Perceptions.*

Items	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Specialized vocabulary</b>	0(0%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
<b>General vocabulary</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Persian translation</b>	1(20%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)
<b>Syntactic knowledge.</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	0(0%)

Table 12.

*Exercises for the ESP Coursebook of Ancient Iran History from the Students' Perceptions.*

The ESP coursebook should include:	Not at all	A little	To a moderate Extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Summarizing the main idea</b>	1(2.2%)	5(11.1%)	9(20%)	18(40%)	12(26.7%)
<b>Providing short answer exercises</b>	3(6.7%)	3(6.7%)	11(24.4%)	17(37.8%)	11(24.4%)
<b>Providing full answer exercises</b>	3(6.7%)	3(6.7%)	11(24.4%)	17(37.8%)	11(24.4%)
<b>True/False</b>	3(6.7%)	3(6.7%)	13(28.9%)	14(31.1%)	12(26.7%)
<b>Multiple choice exercises</b>	3(6.7%)	4(8.9%)	8(17.8%)	16(35.6%)	14(31.1%)
<b>Matching (vocabulary/grammar)</b>	2(4.4%)	4(8.9%)	10(22.2%)	15(33.3%)	14(31.1%)
<b>Providing Persian equivalent</b>	1(2.2%)	2(4.4%)	7(15.6%)	18(40%)	17(37.8%)
<b>Providing English equivalent</b>	2(4.4%)	2(4.4%)	8(17.8%)	15(33.3%)	18(40%)
<b>Translation from Persian to English</b>	0(0%)	2(4.4%)	6(13.3%)	19(42.2%)	18(40%)
<b>Translation from English to Persian</b>	1(2.2%)	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	19(42.2%)	21(46.7%)
<b>Writing a new sentence</b>	1(2.2%)	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	21(46.7%)	18(40%)
<b>In-group discussion activities</b>	1(2.2%)	4(8.9%)	6(13.3%)	16(35.6%)	18(40%)
<b>Communicative activities (with peer)</b>	0(0%)	4(8.9%)	7(15.6%)	19(42.2%)	15(33.3%)
<b>Out of class activities</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	7(15.6%)	13(20%)	20(44.4%)

Table 13.

*Exercises for the ESP Coursebook of Ancient Iran History from the Instructors' Perceptions.*

<b>The ESP coursebook should include:</b>	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Summarizing the main idea</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)
<b>Providing short answer exercises</b>	1(20%)	1(20%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Providing full answer exercises</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	4(80%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
<b>True/False</b>	1(1%)	1(1%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Multiple choice exercises</b>	0(0%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Matching (vocabulary/grammar)</b>	2(40%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
<b>Providing Persian equivalent</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)
<b>Providing English equivalent</b>	1(20%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)
<b>Translation from Persian to English</b>	1(20%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	3(60%)
<b>Translation from English to Persian</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)
<b>Writing a new sentence</b>	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	3(60%)
<b>In-group discussion activities</b>	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	2(40%)
<b>Communicative activities (with peer)</b>	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	2(40%)
<b>Out of class activities</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	3(60%)

Generally, the students expressed the need to include of all the exercises in the ESP coursebook. However, it was identified that some were more required than others. Concerning the instructors, the importance of out-of-class activities was highlighted by 60% as great importance.

The ESP courses favored activities that make the students spring out and extend the learning outside the classroom. Moreover, 60% of the instructors believed that they needed to write a new sentence and translate it from Persian to English. 40% thought that exercises

such as ‘in-group discussion activities and ‘communicative activities’ were to a great extent pivotal for the ESP coursebook.

It turned out that 42.2% of the students were very much optimistic about having quiz parts at the end of the coursebook. In response to whether the unit of the coursebook should relate to the topic of the following unit, an equal number of students (35.6%) picked both options ‘to a great extent’ and ‘to a very great extent’ besides, 20% have moderate views. Additionally, concerning the bibliographic part, 37.8% decided that it was both great and very great, and 11.1% held a ‘moderate’ or ‘little’ view. It was observed that 35.6% to a great extent, 48.9% to a great extent, and 11.1% to a moderate extent consented to include pictures, graphs, and maps in the coursebook. Similarly, the instructors were great proponents of a quiz, bibliographic, glossary parts, pictures, graphs, and maps.

Table 14.

*The Content of the ESP Coursebook from the Students’ Perceptions.*

<b>The content of the ESP coursebook</b>	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Every unit should relate to the topic of the following one.</b>	1(2.2%)	3(6.7%)	9(20%)	16(35.6%)	16(35.6%)
<b>Include pictures, graphs and maps</b>	1(2.2%)	1(2.2%)	5(11.1%)	22(48.9%)	16(35.6%)
<b>Include quiz parts at the end.</b>	2(4.4%)	3(6.7%)	9(20%)	12(26.7%)	19(42.2%)
<b>Include Bibliographic part</b>	1(2.2%)	5(11.1%)	5(11.1%)	17(37.8%)	17(37.8%)
<b>Include Glossary part</b>	0(0%)	1(2.2%)	9(20%)	14(31.1%)	21(46.7%)

The last part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to rate the learning styles and the attitude toward learning English. According to Table 16, the students showed a similar to all the styles. That is to say, the same number of students (35.6%) had the same preferences to work in a small and pairs group and to engage in creative project-lead activities. However, no style was expressed by the instructors to be greatly important.

Table 15.

*The Content of the ESP Coursebook from the Instructors' Perceptions.*

<b>The content of the ESP coursebook</b>	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Every unit should relate to the topic of the following one.</b>	2(40%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
<b>Include pictures, graphs and maps</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	3(60%)	1(20%)
<b>Include quiz parts at the end.</b>	1(20%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	2(40%)
<b>Include Bibliographic part</b>	1(20%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(60%)
<b>Include Glossary part</b>	0(0%)	0(0%)	9(20%)	1(20%)	3(60%)

Table 16.

*Learning Style and Attitude toward Learning English from the Students' Views*

<b>Items</b>	Not at All	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Working in small group</b>	3(6.7%)	5(11.1%)	6(13.3%)	15(33.3%)	16(35.6%)
<b>Working in pairs</b>	2(4.4%)	7(15.6%)	8(17.8%)	12(26.7%)	16(35.6%)
<b>Engaged in creative project-led activities</b>	2(4.4%)	4(8.9%)	10(22.2%)	13(28.9%)	16(35.6%)

Table 17.

*Learning Style and Attitude toward Learning English from Instructors' Views*

<b>Items</b>	Not at All	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
<b>Working in small group</b>	1(20%)	0(0%)	3(60%)	1(20%)	0(0%)
<b>Working in pairs</b>	2(40%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)	1(20%)
<b>Engaged in creative project-led activities</b>	2(40%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

### 4.3. Analysis of the Interviews

All the participants asserted that most of the research studies in this field are delivered through the medium of English language and only a small number of them were translated into Persian. The students need to improve their academic English to study and write a thesis and an academic paper.

Table 18.

#### *The Verbal Data of the Semi-structured Interviews*

Items	Instructors' Perspectives	Students' Perspectives
<b>The reason for learning English</b>	To write a thesis and academic paper, the students need to read studies written by non-Iranian researchers.	The majority of historical studies and published books were in English.
<b>Which skills are most important for the graduate studies and future career</b>	The reading comprehension was considered essential for academic studies. For the future career, the listening and speaking proficiency required.	All the four skills were vital for the academic and future career.
<b>The learning style</b>	Teach English through carefully selected technical text and team working.	Learn English by reading academic papers and try to analyze it.
<b>The students lack after passing the course</b>	They lack everything.	They could not listen, speak, and write in English. Additionally, they lack the reading proficiency and the skill to translate.
<b>The way to increase the motivation</b>	1. Academic success in graduate studies 2. Financial success in a future career	1. Academic success in graduate studies 2. Financial motivation in a future career
<b>The factors and exercises to consider in the design of the ESP Textbook</b>	Select texts from reliable sources and incorporate practical activities and tasks. Include translation and reading comprehension exercises.	In addition to the instructors' view, the students wanted some related pictures and maps.
<b>The sources for ESP textbook</b>	1. The Cambridge History of Iran 2. The Encyclopedia Iranica	_____

Concerning the significance of language skills and how they contribute to their graduate studies and future careers, reading comprehension was considered by the instructors the most significant. A critical objective is to become familiar with historical texts, including inscriptions and ancient epigraphy. They added that reading comprehension is required for academic studies, listening and speaking are needed for future careers. They justified that the job's requirement of the field listed different English qualifications. The most important qualification is to communicate with people from the outside world and transfer and report information. Next to this, the students remarked that although they need all the four skills for the academic settings and the future career, the ESP course focused more on reading comprehension.

Regarding the learning style, it was found that the most effective way for the students to learn English is to provide them with some technical texts. The passages should be selected carefully, followed by several word definitions and pronunciations. Highlighting the same idea, they continued that is acceptable to learn English by studying popular academic papers, getting the main message, and summarizing it.

The instructors were not satisfied with the English level of the students. They rationalized that English is not treated seriously in undergraduate studies. Moreover, the time span of the ESP course was too short fulfilling their academic purposes and prepare them for future occupations. More English courses in undergraduate studies were recommended. Students were not satisfied with their English proficiency, as well. However, they admitted that ESP courses were beneficial since these courses helped them develop their vocabulary knowledge.

Asking about ways to improve students' motivation, all the participants stated that it could be achieved in two ways. One way was by explaining to them that there is a significant relationship between their English proficiency and academic success. Notify them that good thesis writing necessitates careful academic perusal, with a presupposition that the most popular journals are English. Another way was through financial motivation. It states that the tourism industry has become an essential source of income in many countries. The graduate of Ancient Iran history, due to their historical awareness and familiarity with the ancient places, could be hired for a job position as a tour guide. Those who want to occupy this position should be qualified enough in English.



The results of the last question were in line with the finding of the questionnaire's items. The instructors emphasized selecting texts from reliable and original sourcebooks and papers for the coursebook design, including some practical activities and tasks. The participants expressed their need to include some related pictures and maps and some translation exercises and reading comprehension tasks. As the comprehensive and authoritative English language sources, the instructors named the Cambridge History of Iran, the Encyclopedia Iranica, and the Encyclopedia of Islam

## **5. Discussion**

In brief, the analysis of the students' perceptions of the English skills for the graduate studies was as follows: reading comprehension was the most needed skill for academic studies, followed by writing, speaking, and listening. While the learners expressed their needs differently, there were few discrepancies between the students' perceptions of needs in the ESP courses.

The students believed that teaching of skills such as listening, speaking, and writing has been neglected in the ESP courses emphasizing that it was limited to only teaching reading and translating passages. However, while reading comprehension was the focus of the ESP course, the perceived reading ability was insufficient to meet the challenge of the large number of reading materials that were expected to handle. For future jobs, they need to read professional articles and be able to interpret, summarize, and in some cases, report. It was demanding for them to translate texts abounded with specialized vocabulary. The findings are also congruent with several studies in the ESP literature which asserted that the ESP courses did not satisfy the learners' needs (Eslami Rasekh & Simin, 2012; Mirza Suzani, Yarmohammadi, & Yamini, 2011). All the participants believed that M.A students of Ancient Iran History need to improve their general English proficiency. This supports to other studies conducted in the Iranian settings (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Moslemi, et al, 2011).

Along with the instructors, the students commented that their general English is lower than the requirements of the standard of the ESP course. Additionally, even though reading and translation were the concerns of the ESP courses, they are unable to do reading and translation tasks after passing the ESP course. Not surprisingly, the instructors also

believed that after the course, the students lack sufficient expertise in English as they did not have at the beginning of the ESP course.

The ESP learners wanted their ESP courses to focus on all four language skills, though the expressive needs were not equal. Moattarian and Tahririan (2014) supported the inclusion of all skills. However, it was revealed that the students' perceptions of their prospective job when assigning tasks or activities at the workplace to emphasized all four skills, while the students mentioned that they need to a great extent all four skills. The findings were consistent with the results of Aliakbari and Boghayeri (2014), Mal Amiri (2008), and Soodmand Afshar and Movassagh (2016) studies in which the stakeholders perceived reading comprehension as the paramount need for EAP students

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study focused on different aspects of the ESP needs of the M.A students of Ancient Iran History studying in the Department of History of Iranian universities. The reading skill was the most frequent skill stressed by the ESP instructors, while the students emphasized that they need all four skills for their graduate and job success. The instructors classified the skills according to their functions. For academic studies, the reading was helpful, and listening and speaking are essential for future job requirements. The ESP coursebook should incorporate translation activities, summarizing, constructing the main ideas, providing English and Persian equivalents and short and complete answer, writing a new sentence and paragraph, and communicating with classmates and some pictures and quizzes and glossary part at the end.

The current ESP courses were not in line with the specific English needs of the M.A students. The students believed that the problem of ESP courses was due to the inaccurate NA, that the materials were not tailored to their specific needs. They blamed the improper selection of ESP material, the exaggeration on the part of the instructors in focusing only on reading and translation skills and ignoring others, and the insufficient time of ESP classes. However, while emphasizing the problem of time limitation, lack of motivation, and the needs-responsive materials, the instructors declared that the main problem lay beyond this. Instead, it is with the General English knowledge of the students, which could not be solved by only a two-hour ESP course every week. Only the Persian language was used as the medium of instruction with no time for speaking and listening.

To sum up, the students' English proficiency was low when they started their ESP courses. Some of them scored zero in English in the M.A entrance. It seems that the students had a weak English proficiency at the beginning, when they were involved in the M.A level. It can be concluded that the problem is rooted in the National Organization of Educational Testing, Sanjesh. This organization had not considered the English scores as a criterion in the admission to higher education of the field. Therefore, it resulted in M.A students with low proficiency in General English.

The results could notify the ESP instructors, material writers, coursebook designers, course developers, curriculum designers, stakeholders, and policymakers about the effectiveness of the NA. It is hoped that the importance of a thorough understanding of the needs and preferences of a particular group of students can be applied to other contexts in the ESP development process since a step-by-step details of conducting NA are presented.

## 6. Limitations of the study

Concerning the present study's limitations, it was initially intended to use observation. However, the data were collected via questionnaires and interviews due to the time limitation. Moreover, while those who studied in this field could not be counted as many, further efforts and more collaboration from the ESP instructors in the History Department of the Iranian universities could provide a larger sample of the respondents.

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