

## Afghan Students' Attitudes and Motivations Toward ESP and EGP Courses

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### Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated the students' attitudes and motivations toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes (EGP) courses. It also explored the perceived reported experiences of Afghan English teachers regarding teaching ESP and EGP courses. The quantitative data was collected through distributing questionnaires among students, and teachers were interviewed through semi-structured interviews for the qualitative data. The results revealed that students' interest can be further enhanced if they were taught in more homogenous classes, with creative and well-qualified teachers. Besides, the instructional materials should be further goal oriented, resulting in addressing the needs of students' needs. Moreover, from teachers' perspectives, lack of diverse use of teaching activities, and scarcity of appropriate materials, and class size were among the significant challenges which teachers and learners are faced with. In the light of the study results, implications for teaching, research and higher education were also provided.

**Keywords:** Afghan Students, ESP, EGP, Students' Attitudes, Students' Motivations, Teachers' Reported Experiences.

### Introduction

Most of us as teachers have heard the complaint coming out of parents or the educational institution leaderships, or even from the students themselves that there are students who have studied English for two or more years yet cannot say more than a couple of sentences. The complaint is quite deeper and complex than what we, teachers, can primarily perceive. Because of the comprehensive growth of English, many policies have been developed to institutionalize

English as a medium of teaching and learning. Amid all these advancements, Afghanistan has tried to modify the medium of instruction to English; however, through a very slow process. English has been an essential and required course in all the universities throughout the country. Learning English is very important for Afghan university students because it helps them access more academic resources and opportunities. It also provides the academia to engage in academic discussions and exchanges in an international level. Recognizing this need, Afghan students are required to take English courses for minimum four semesters to maximum six semesters. However, there has been little done to develop English courses for specific needs of university students.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a new and growing concentration in the field of EFL in Afghanistan as more specialized focus is needed in many different disciplines. ESP courses aim at helping students develop language skills they need for their specific field of study. Unlike general English courses, ESP courses focus on language skills students need to acquire to be able to use English in their studies or work in their specific fields such as law, business, medicine, and so on.

At Herat University, English has been a required course for all disciplines. Before 2010, these English courses were simply general English courses where commercial series such as New Intercom, Interchange, and Headway were used. In 2010, the university decided to change these Basic English courses with ESP courses. However, there were no specific textbooks or guideline for ESP instructors who had not been trained for the job. In winter 2010, some faculty went through a two months training at Hartford University. Under supervision of an ESL specialist, some of these instructors developed seven ESP textbooks for some disciplines and began teaching them. In developing ESP textbooks, the instructors worked closely with the discipline faculty to develop materials which cater to specific needs of each academic discipline.

Currently, students normally with very little or even no prior knowledge of English enter universities every year. As the English departments at every university should design a program for them, the English Department at Faculty of Languages and Literature, Herat University has developed a framework for better outcome. There are 16 colleges in Herat University. Every college has multiple departments comprising 72 departments. In general terms, based on the general policy of Ministry of Higher Education, every department should offer 4 courses of English to their students. The English department, as its cumulative plan, decided to teach English for general purpose (EGP) for the first two semesters, enabling students to enhance enough English language ability. Then, the following two semesters deal with English for specific purposes (ESP). In other words, the first two semesters bank on the idea of enhancing students' fundamental abilities in the four skills. Students are required to learn basic English

grammar, reading skills, and speaking/listening skills for their communication purposes. Later, the final two semesters purely deal with the basic terminologies, grammatical structures, and reading texts strictly related to their majors.

However, students' language proficiency is below the expectation. According to personal interaction with many employers, many students, after graduation, cannot function very well because of their lower proficiency in the technical English required in their job. Moreover, teachers complain about lack of students' interest in the subject. They consider their lack of proficiency in the language skills required in the professional career as their inadequate motivation and seriousness in learning it. Therefore, the main aim of the current study is to investigate the causes of low English language proficiency after two years of taking English courses. In addition, the study examines the teachers' reported experiences regarding students' motivation and interest in learning English in EGP and ESP courses.

Although learning English is essential for academic and professional success for Afghan university graduates. ESP and EGP courses are believed not to be taken seriously by Herat university students and teachers. Students' lack of motivation is profoundly noticed by many ESP/EGP teachers at the English Department, Herat University. Most of the students consider the course an unnecessary one in their curriculum. Therefore, most of them do not pay much attention to the original outcome. Not only students, but also teachers ignore the fact of its critical impact on the future careers of the students. It seems that neither the material, nor the teaching methodologies are effective and useful for increasing students' motivation and interest. Therefore, students' language proficiency is below the expectation.

Finding about students' attitudes toward ESP/EGP courses will assist Afghan ESP and EGP teachers with their teaching practices. It also helps the administrators and curriculum and course developers to design more engaging and motivating courses for the future. This also supports the efforts to prepare students for engaging in global exchange of knowledge and experience with academia around the world.

### **Research Objectives**

This research aims to explore the students' attitudes toward ESP/EGP courses and their motivation level. It will help teachers and administrators plan and design more effective courses, teaching materials, and teaching strategies through increasing students' motivation.

### **Research Questions**

1. What factors impact students' low-motivation in ESP and general English courses?

2. Can teaching materials, teachers' teaching methodology, and the instructional material impact students' attitude and motivation in such courses?
3. What are the ESP and EGP teachers' reported experiences regarding teaching ESP and EGP courses at Herat University?

### **Null Hypothesis**

Students are demotivated because of low self-efficacy, non-supportive learning environment, lack of appropriate material for both ESP and EGP courses, teacher's methodology and teacher's behavior.

### **Literature Review**

#### **ESP Definitions, History, and Features**

As far the economy and trade/commerce are globalized and more keenly, English being the primary medium, the more people need to learn the language to their specific need. Researchers in the field of ESP suggest different reasons for the emergence of the need for English for specific purposes. Gatehouse (2001), and Hutchinson and Waters (1987) propose three main factors prevailing the need: (1) the post-world war II geopolitical change and oil crisis in early 1970s, (2) the global spread of science, technology, and economy, and finally (3) the universal advancement on the teaching and learning concepts. Hutchinson and Waters pointed the rising need for English for science, technology, economy, and so on in the following terms: "This expansion created a world unified and dominated by two forces – technology and commerce – which in their relentless progress soon generated a demand for an international language. ... this role fell to English (p. 6)."

So, all the aforementioned revolutions, in a sense, went hand in hand to spark the need for an English which can fit for the context of science, oil industry, or any other technological related aspects of the language use. Many Arab countries in early 70s, invested in English language programs to enable their employees to function with new technologies and the trainers who can speak only English. According to Abedeen (2015), Kuwait was one of the nations who felt the severe need for English those purposes because of oil industry. Furthermore, after 9/11 and American and foreign troops arrival to the country, many proposals were made to promote ESP in at least our undergraduate programs.

Learners at universities are required to acquire necessary language, in our case English, skills to adopt to the market or even academia. Therefore, ESP is defined as "a course which concentrates on three main factors of meeting specific needs of the learners, making use of the underlying methodologies of the discipline... focusing on the appropriate skills necessary for this purpose" (Kashef, Khorasani & Zahabi, 2014, p. 860). Kashef, Khorasani & Zahabi (2014)

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Afghan Students' Attitudes and Motivations Toward ESP and EGP Courses

357

focused on the attitudes of students toward instructional method used for teaching EAP courses claiming that teachers have been using traditional (grammar-translation) methods in teaching the courses. In their view, that methodology was not appropriate. Their findings show a significant difference in the students' attitudes toward traditional vs. learner-centered teaching methods. The participants appear to prefer the latter over the former.

In terms of theory, ESP, as a discipline consists of three areas (1) language, (2) pedagogy, and (3) content auspiciously considering students' areas of interest in mind. Dudley-Evans (1997; cited in Anthony, 1998) categorized the characteristics of ESP courses as “absolute” and “variable” (p. 116) ones. An ESP course should have the absolute characteristics; however, the variable characteristics can be optional in such courses.

To begin with, absolute features of an ESP course include: (1) designing materials to meet the learner's specific needs, (2) using activities and methodology strictly related to the source discipline or major, and lastly, (3) concentrating on areas of language like vocabulary, structure, register, and so on to do the activities.

After absolutes, variable features of ESP courses according to Dudley-Evans (1997) include: (1) probable use of different methodology in ESP than EGP, (2) developed for a special discipline, (3) taught in a contextually variable setting such as, in professional situation, secondary school level, tertiary institution, or adult schools, and finally (4) ESP courses prerequisites at least an intermediate level or above of language. It will be safe to conclude that ESP is a goal-oriented language learning course which serves the language supplementary function to the discipline and/or occupational requirements.

### **EGP Definitions, History and Features**

English for General Purposes (EGP) is considered to the base formation stage for any ESP course. Widdowson (1984) defines EGP as the foundation of English learning in which learners come with heterogeneous number of objectives. They, the learners, may come with different purposes, yet they will be fed with more fundamental aspects of the language such as general grammar, day-to-day vocabulary, and so on.

The history of this can go back to the early language learning experiences where grammar-translation was commonly utilized. Their purpose was to be able to learn reading of a language plus be able to translate or write back.

EGP like any other field requires careful administration of curriculum in order to fulfill the learners learning objectives. According to McDonough, in designing material for EGP, we

have to consider the “age, purpose, aptitude, attitude, motivation, previous English knowledge, and inclination of the learners (as cited in Zohrabi, 2015, p. 679). In sum, Widdowson (1984) asserts that we normally build the foundation through EGP and move forward on a scale toward ESP.

### **Teaching ESP vs. EGP**

Among many distinctive features and differences that ESP and EGP may have, the need is the most important one. What ESP aims for – professional or academic gains – may not be normally achieved with EGP. In addition, to need, curriculum design, material development, teaching methodology, and finally evaluation also plays a vital role in distinguishing between the two, according to Flowerdew, 2013. Furthermore, very rightly Hutchinson and Waters (1993) believe that there is no difference between ESP and EGP in theory, but in practice there are plenty of differences.

Moreover, many researchers (e.g., Hill et al., 2010) suggested conducting a systematic needs analysis for both types to avail the required material and add them for teaching purposes is crucial; despite believing one’s expertise on being aware of the needs of one’s students.

As previously pointed out (i.e., introduction), today in Afghanistan English is widely learned both for ESP and EGP purposes. Universities (public and private), language institutes and any academic and educational body provide both ESP and EGP courses. However, the question of what to teach for the course makes ESP different from EGP; needs and wants of the students decide what methodology is suitable for the course. Having said that, John and Dudley Evans (1991, p. 305) pointed out that, "ESP requires methodologies that are specialized or unique"(emphasis is added); the uniqueness is determined by the major, learning purposes and/or job requirements.

Researchers (Hutchinson & Waters, 1993; Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1989; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013; Robinson, 1991;) have poured enough ink on agreeing that ESP teachers should have the qualities of EGP teachers besides a thorough knowledge of ESP. In order to avoid the misinterpretations and misconceptions of what ESP is, Hutchinson and Waters (1993) define ESP instruction with three key points: (1) an ESP course not only teaches a certain register or form of English, but also it provides exposure to certain contextual features through language use. (2) Furthermore, through only learning several technical words and specific grammar does not suffice the enhancing of proper communicative skills in the learners. (3) ESP like any other type of language teaching is dependent on learning principles. So, the processes of learning for both EGP and ESP are similar. Therefore, teaching of ESP does not need any special methodology. To support the arguments of Hutchinson and Waters 1993), Ahmadi (2008), in his

descriptive study at Shaheed Beheshti Medical University observed that students of ESP classes believed that in teaching ESP courses, language teachers are more qualified than discipline-specialist teachers. In other studies, dealing with ESP it is quite evident that problems of ESP programs pertain three major factors: Teacher, teaching methodologies, and Textbook (Ahmadi, 2008; Hayati, 2008).

### **Attitudes of Students Toward ESP and EGP Courses**

Before indulging ourselves into students' attitudes toward ESP and EGP course, let us consider what attitude and its interfaces are. Likert (1932, p. 9), cited in Gardner (1980, p. 267), defines the term attitude as "an inference which is made based on a complex of beliefs about the attitude object". Elaborating on Likert's definition, Gardner (1980) defines attitude as "the sum total of a man's instincts [sic] and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic" (p. 267). Later, Ajzan (1988) perceives attitude as "a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event" (p.4). Lastly, Baker (1992) looks at attitudes as "a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior" (p. 10). We can conclude that attitude to be a behaviorally-oriented perspective that can evoke the positive or negative human behavior.

After comprehensively (to some extent) defining attitudes, now we will look at some studies that looked at the attitudes issue. In studies which examine the attitudes of students toward ESP, it has been pointed out and showed that students' positive perspective toward teachers, teaching methods, and materials highly enhanced their learning outcome. According to a study conducted by Martinović and Poljaković (2010) in Croatia, their results revealed that students have a positive attitude against the researchers' primary personal intuition. ESP being though of a more technical domain normally perceives a rather negative attitudes or more accurately low motivation.

In addition to what has been said, it is brought to our attention that learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the language (Starks & Paltridge, 1996). Karahan (2007) reflects upon the idea saying that "positive language attitudes let learners have positive orientation towards learning English" (p.84; emphasis added). As such attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning.

All the above-mentioned studies reconfirmed the importance of identifying learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language. Some studies have been carried out to investigate second/foreign language learners' motivation. These studies help the researchers to understand how to identify learners' motivation. As a result, to assess petroleum engineering

students' motivation, Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) explored attitudes issue from four main perspectives. The one that concerns us is regarding the attitudes of students toward learning English. Their study revealed that Yemeni students have positive beliefs toward English instruction at their university and even suggested English to be added to secondary school subjects as well (pp. 45–46).

### **Motivation and Language Learning**

As Gardner (2006) states “motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets...Thus, it is not possible to give a simple definition” (p. 242). This is because the term motivation has been viewed differently by different schools of thought. From the behavioristic perspective, motivation is "quite simply the anticipation of reward" (Brown, 2000, p. 160). However, the cognitivists view the term motivation as being more related to the learner's decisions. Keller, quoted by Brown (p. 160), pointing at the cognitivist views defines motivation as "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they exert in that respect" (1983, p. 389). However, in the constructivists' definition of motivation, they place "further emphasis on social contexts as well as the individual's decisions"(p. N/A). Despite the differences, in all the definitions of motivation given by the three schools of thought the concept of "needs" is emphasized, that is, "the fulfilment of needs is rewarding, requires choices, and in many cases, must be interpreted in a social context" (p. 161).”

The importance of motivation in enhancing second/foreign language learning is undeniable. Lifrieri (2005) pointed out that “when asked about the factors which influence individual levels of success in any activity – such as language learning –, most people would certainly mention motivation among them” (p. 4). Brown (2000) stated that "it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation" (p. 160). With similar views, Gardner (2006, p. 241) posits that “students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels”. He further added that “if one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the goal, enjoys the activities, etc.” (Gardner, 2006, p. 243).

A considerable number of studies have addressed motivation either directly or indirectly. In 2005, Dornyei reported that during a decade about 100 research were published on different facets of motivation. According to Ellis (2008), studies on motivation, in 1970s and 1980s, were first focused on Gardner’s and Lambert’s (1972) integrative motivation. In the next decade, it shifted to cognitive oriented aspects of motivation. Among them, there exist studies by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and Williams and Burden (1997), which investigated the classroom learning



motivation. More recently, the dynamic role of motivation in language learning has been much explored.

Albert Bandura's (1986 & 1997) theory of self-efficacy has important implications regarding motivation. To support Bandura, Schunk (2003) believed that perceived self-efficacy or students' personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform at designated levels, plays an important role in their motivation and learning. Zimmerman (1997) added that students' perceived self-efficacy influenced their skills acquisition both directly and indirectly by highlighting their persistence. Motivation is directly related to self-efficacy in that if someone perceives him/herself as able to handle a situation (high self-efficacy), s/he will be more motivated to work hard and successfully perform in that situation. Pajares (1997) noted that self-efficacy could influence choices made, efforts expended, and perseverance executed when confronted with obstacles, stress and anxiety. Specifically, students who had high self-efficacy beliefs were persistent when faced with challenges and were more successful in academic achievement (Schunk, 1990; Wang & Pape, 2007). Furthermore, Multon, Brown and Lent's (1991) meta-analysis of researcher studies showed a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievements (Zare & Davoudi, 2011).

An effective teacher can surely motivate the students and increase their interest in the course. Eggleton (2007) in his article claims that motivation is the key to effective teaching. After discussing some features of motivation, he explains how teacher's personality and style lead to motivation. Personality is one of the aspects of motivation that is difficult to be changed. Some personality features of teachers may be motivating to the students. Among them are teachers' love, kindness, concern, sense of humor and high expectations (Cotrell, 1987; Mathews, 1988; Vasquez, 1988; Meek, 1989; cited in Eggleton, 2007). Eggleton (2007) also maintains that appropriate tasks and interaction can facilitate motivation and learning.

Entertainment and fun are not enough to make a class motivated. The teacher should be able to use various techniques of teaching such as cooperative learning, teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, competition and problem solving tasks to tackle motivation.

One more issue that facilitates motivation is "attitudes toward instructional setting" (Ortega, 2013, p.172). According to Ortega, this antecedent plays a vital role in determining the perception of students toward their curriculum and learning environment (2013). Some motivating factors that help to establish class environment more motivating; include teacher discipline, respect and supportive material aiming to the students intrinsic, extrinsic orientations (Davoudi-Mobarakeh, Eslami-Rasekh and Barati, 2014; Eggleton, 2007). A study by Connell

and Wellborn (1991, cited in Amorose and Horn, 2000) showed that some aspects of teachers' attitude can influence students' intrinsic motivation facilitating learning. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) reviewed that plenty of empirical research proved the positive correlation between motivation and involvement in high quality learning. They implied that teachers' considerations of learners' psychological needs are conducive to better academic learning and autonomous performance.

## **Methods**

The research design in this study is mixed methods—a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. According to Creswell (2012), “the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself” (p. 22). For the quantitative phase, data has been collected from undergraduate students at Herat University through questionnaires; for the qualitative phase, seven teachers have been interviewed and their views have been sought.

## **Participants**

Herat University is considered as the boundary of the research. The population size for the quantitative phase of this study is approximately 8000 students; however, 2500 students were targeted for this study. Based on Cochran's Formula, with a confidence level of 95% and margin of errors of 5%, 471 ESP students and 471 EGP students were randomly selected for this study.

The data was maintained to be covering all majors and colleges. Therefore, our sample size for both ESP and EGP courses (in total 942) is composed of 12 colleges at the university. For the qualitative data, teachers who had taught ESP and EGP courses at the university were requested to participate in a 30-minutes semi-structured interview in which the researchers asked them about their reported experienced regarding the significance of learning environment, teaching methodology, teacher's qualifications and seriousness, and whatever they thought to be profoundly important for motivating and changing the attitudes of the learners.

## **Data Collection**

The motivation and Interest Questionnaire (adopted from, University of Sydney's project) is one of the latest questionnaires measuring the students' interest and motivation towards courses. The researchers, in this study, have adopted the structure and scale of the questionnaire and developed one that fits the contextual needs of the target population. Since this study is a mixed-methods research design, both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected. The quantitative data has been collected from about 2500 undergraduate students from 12 faculties at Herat University. However, the data sample under study is 942 participants (EGP: 471, and ESP: 471) which were randomly picked from the total data poll. In this, since

students comprise one great portion of the EGP/ESP courses, several variables regarding ESP/EGP students' motivation in these courses was measured using a survey questionnaire (Motivation and Interest Survey, 2008). The questionnaire was composed of 45 statements on a Likert scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" options. The bullet point description has been provided below.

**Table 1**

**Methodology**

Research Design	Mixed-methods
Participants	Qualitative phase: 7 teachers
	Quantitative phase: 471 ESP students & 471 EGP students
Data Collection Methods	Quantitative: questionnaire
	Qualitative: semi-structured interviews
Data Analysis	Quantitative: SPSS
	Qualitative: Content analysis

**Data Analysis**

The quantitative data is analyzed through SPSS software. After collecting the data, the questions of the questionnaire were divided into five major categories: learning environment; teacher qualifications and seriousness, teaching methodology, learning materials, and learner's goals. The means and standard deviations have been extracted in order to determine the spread and divergence of the data.

After collecting the qualitative data, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed through content analysis. After coding the data, five major themes were constructed from the data, which include: (1) Heterogeneous large classrooms hinder quality teaching (2) Lack of ESP department (3) Insufficient appropriate teaching materials for different disciplines (4) Inadequate skilled ESP teachers (5) Inadequate skilled ESP teachers.

**Results and Discussion**

**Quantitative Data Phase**

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for ESP Courses*

<b>Data Categories</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Learning Environment	3.15	1.22
Teacher Qualifications and Seriousness	3.17	1.24
Teaching Methodology	3.47	1.12
Instructional/ Learning Materials	3.55	1.21
Learner's Goals	3.71	1.12

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations for EGP Courses*

<b>Data Categories</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Learning Environment	2.78	1.24
Teacher Qualifications and Seriousness	3.34	1.20
Teaching Methodology	3.5	1.13
Instructional/ Learning Materials	3.73	1.13
Learner's Goals	3.82	1.1

## **Learning Environment**

Besides observing the table for EGP participants, the mean (2.78) revealed that they have a more neutral standpoint toward learning environment. However, for ESP participants (mean: 3.15) the otherwise appear to be evident. Having the standard deviation quite stable, the ESP participants considered learning environment more significant than that of EGPs'.

The questionnaire had four specific questions related to the learning environment pertaining to the class size, and homogeneous and heterogeneous proficiency levels. The first two questions enquired about the class size which is, evidently, a huge issue at Herat University. Majority of the EGP participants favored the small class of (20 to 30 students) over a large class of (50-70 students). Seven hundred and ten participants out of 942 (75.3%) either totally or partially agreed that they can learn better when their class size is small. In contrast, only 244 participants (25.9%) favored the otherwise. Furthermore, pertaining the proficiency level in the class, participants' perception toward homogeneous and heterogeneous proficiency levels in a class show a significant difference. Eighty one percent of the responses are in the favor of studying in the homogeneous level class while only 63.7% agreed on not being interested in their English class because of heterogeneity. As statistics in table 2 demonstrates, majority of the participants agrees that learning can be effective in small and homogeneous class rather than in large and heterogeneous. However, the later homogeneous and heterogeneous issue is not as significantly divergent, yet we can see the difference.

## **Teacher Qualifications and Seriousness**

Besides learning environment, the researchers were concerned with the teacher's qualifications and seriousness factor pertaining to students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English. Therefore, six questions specifically dealt with the mentioned factor. The data was categorized in two sub-groups of teachers' qualifications and their seriousness in the class. To further clarify, my qualification we meant the teachers knowledge of the subject matter in ESP classes as well as their proficiency level in EGP courses. In addition, seriousness merely reflected upon how committed teachers are.

Among the six questions on the questionnaire, two dealt with teachers' qualification. Majority of the participants (82.6% of them) considered teachers as highly qualified both in ESP and EGP courses. Evidently, this high favoritism in teachers' qualification shows the important role of it in deriving students' interest and motivation toward learning English.

The four other questions were related to the teachers' seriousness on the course. A large poll of participants (84.05%) agreed to teachers who are so tough and pay more attention to

individual students learning achievements. This factor besides teachers' qualifications (as shown in the Table 3 below) can largely impact students' motivation and attitude according to current data poll.

### **Teaching Methodology**

In addition to the previous two categories, teaching methodology is one of the most significant factors that has been quite frequently emphasized in the literature. The current study also wanted to look at this variable from a communicative language teaching (CLT) and traditional (grammar-translation) methods even though only two questions were related to the grammar-translation (or traditional) methods.

In contrast, 87.935% of the participants agreed with CLT which included classroom discussions, group and pair work activities, diverse activities, and using audio-visual materials in the class. Quite surprisingly, 93.8% of data poll seemed to be interested in having audio-visual materials in their classes. This can be of great importance to both teachers to enhance their students' motivation and for students to get involved and motivated in learning.

### **Instructional/ Learning Materials**

One of the crucial factors that can either motivate or demotivate students can be the instructional materials used in both ESP and EGP courses. Learners are often motivated if they are learning things that they can either apply in future or can support their other curricular activities. A larger number of (7) statements in our questionnaire were related to this aspect. The statements can be further categorized into 4 major themes: (1) challenging material, (2) interesting material, (3) understandable material, and (4) diverse material.

Eighty-five point eight percent of the participants either totally or partially agreed to have challenging material in classes so that they can learn something new every day. So, we can speculate that students need instructional material that is a bit challenging for them. Besides challenging material, students also prefer materials that can spark their interest in the subject matter. Two statements which explored attitudes toward their learning materials include: if they work hard in the course because the material is interesting to them, and if they like the materials in the courses. Both ESP and EGP participants majorly (81.75%) agreed to the statements (for means and standard deviation look Tables 2 and 3). Moreover, 81% of the participants agreed if the course offers or utilizes diverse material and material that is not much beyond their understanding, they will spark in the course.

### **Learners' Goals**

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367

Most of the time, students are motivated, or they motivate themselves through their future goals. Our data's last category deals with the link between students' attitudes and motivation with their future goals. Around 85% of the participants showed a positive attitude toward learning English both as ESP and EGP based on their future goals. Most of the participants believe that for a better future, academically, occupationally, professionally, and economically they need English as a tool.

### **Qualitative Data Phase**

Seven Afghan English teachers who had the experience of teaching English to students of other disciplines have been interviewed through semi-structured interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, the data was transcribed verbatim, and four major themes were constructed.

These themes include: (1) Heterogeneous large classrooms hinder quality teaching (2) Lack of ESP department (3) Insufficient appropriate teaching materials for different disciplines (4) Inadequate skilled ESP teachers (5) Inadequate skilled ESP teachers  
Heterogeneous Large Classrooms Hinder Quality Teaching

All the study participants claimed that teaching English in large classrooms, where there are more than 40 students, is highly difficult. One of our participants noted that he had 137 students in one of his ESP courses which prevented him from incorporating various teaching techniques and classroom activities in his sessions. Besides, three of our participants reported that teaching heterogeneous courses is boring not only for the teachers but also for the students. For instance, one of the participants asserted, "Students who take Kankor Exam [the nationwide university entrance exam] do not prepare for English subject since it is not being measure in Kankor Exam" (Interview, August 2017). According to her, when these students enter university, they have difficulty with English subject because either they had not prepared for English or they did not have skilled teachers during their high school. In the same vein, another participant argued that in some disciplines (e.g., agriculture, sociology) because students believe that English is not significant in their discipline, they do not invest a lot of time on this subject prior to Kankor. Therefore, when entering university, there are students with different English proficiency levels, which make the teachers' job difficult.

Our participants reported that ESP courses are mainly for high-level students who have prior knowledge of English at least to upper-intermediate or advanced, but unfortunately as it was mentioned above, most of the students are not in such levels of proficiency. Moreover, the participants argued that majority of their students are unsure of the importance of English language in their future studies. Thus, after obtaining their bachelor's degree, if students decide

to continue their postgraduate studies, without the knowledge of English language related to their field, they will encounter a lot of difficulties.

### **Lack of ESP Department**

All participants noted that workload is a major challenge for addressing students' English needs. They specifically argued that there is a conspicuous lack of ESP department at Herat University. One of the participants claimed that establishing an ESP department can address many of the challenges teachers and students experience in English courses for different majors. He, for example, suggested that hiring a specific teacher for one or two disciplines could allow teachers to invest more on the courses they teach. According to him, currently teachers who teach English courses for students of different majors are being shifted every now and then. If Herat University and higher education authorities allocate a specific department for teaching English courses at different faculties, professors will take the courses more seriously. According to this participant, now there is no incentive for professors to spend time and develop materials for their courses, especially for ESP courses.

### **Insufficient Appropriate Teaching Materials for Different Disciplines**

Lack of appropriate instructional materials, particularly ESP materials, was common among the participants of this study. They all stated that there is an urgent need for designing and developing English materials, particularly ESP materials, that address students' background and needs. For example, two of the participants noted that three years ago some of their colleagues, through a project sponsored by the US Embassy in Kabul, developed some ESP materials for six different majors. According to these participants, because the project was funded for a short-term, the program stopped, and no other teacher designed ESP textbooks for ESP courses. These participants reported that those ESP textbooks had some shortcomings as they were the first edition. Now that the teachers have used those textbooks in their courses have realized that changes should be brought to those materials. On the other hand, other participants stated that they tried to find eBooks on the Internet, but they could only be found few. According to these participants, they have used books, which they had downloaded off the Internet, in their courses but they faced some problems, such as the level of the books was higher than the level of their students, the context of the books was not familiar or related in some units, or the context was inappropriate for Afghan context.

### **Inadequate Skilled ESP Teachers**

The last major theme, which was being constructed, addresses the challenge of lack of skilled ESP teachers. Three of the participants reported that teaching English in other faculties at Herat University requires teaching ESP, particularly for sophomores. Teachers who teach these courses, according to the participants of the study, need to have basic knowledge of that



discipline. However, according to these participants, some of the disciplines like medicine or engineering are difficult if teachers do not have background knowledge in them. This causes some teachers not to use English textbooks which are prepared for students of different majors. One of these participants postulated that upon establishing an ESP department at Herat University, ESP teachers should go through some basic trainings on how to teach English to students of other majors.

The three participants also noted that Afghan ESP teachers should meet with professors from different disciplines when they have concerns related to translating materials. Besides, some of our participants are eager to design and create their own materials based on the needs of their students; our participants should know how to conduct a need analysis first, but they need this knowledge, and how to plan lessons or design specific activities for different disciplines. In addition, since the majors are different, the teachers may need special methods to convey the ideas to their students.

### **Discussions and Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the attitudes and motivations of students toward taking EGP and ESP courses. It also investigated the teachers' perceived reported experiences with teaching EGP and ESP courses. In the light of the results of this study, implications for teaching, research and policy making can be drawn. The current English curriculum and materials at universities have not been developed according to the students' needs. That is, when these students graduate, they are not equipped with the English skills which are required in the job market or for continuing their studies abroad. Therefore, there is an urgent need to revise and develop English curriculum for each discipline following extensive needs analysis process to include views of all stakeholders, including alumni, employers and experts in the field. After doing such needs analysis, outcome for English curriculum should be developed considering the perspectives of English and related discipline experts.

As the results of this study yielded, most disciplines at Herat university offer only four English courses without specifying the content. That is, the teaching materials for these courses have not been specified. There is also no rational (e.g., needs analysis) for offering four courses. It seems that some disciplines may need more or a smaller number of English courses; further research can explore this number. Moreover, as the findings showed, most of the materials being used for English courses at Herat University are commercially developed materials. Although some ESP textbooks were developed by Afghan English faculty members, they had not been designed following a systematic needs analysis procedure. Therefore, material developers should work closely with the discipline faculty members to develop materials which respond to real needs of students upon graduation.

At Herat University, English department teachers are mostly required to teach EGP and ESP courses beside teaching English majors at the English Department. As a result, faculty members cannot develop skills and knowledge related to specific ESP courses. There is also a conspicuous lack of knowledge of discipline among ESP teachers. According to the study participants, students mostly preferred English teachers who had background knowledge of the students' disciplines. Therefore, establishing an ESP department seems crucial in addressing some of these challenges.

The establishment of an ESP department could have numerous advantages. First, it provides job security for faculty members and they can focus solely on EGP and ESP courses. Second, the new organizational structure allows the department to hire more expert faculty members. Third, the ESP department can focus on planning and executing ESP and EGP courses for all disciplines. For example, the department can conduct specific teacher training programs for building the capacity of its faculty members.

To address the issue of large and heterogeneous classes, it is recommended that ESP courses are offered based on students' levels not their disciplines. The ESP department can give a placement test to students of similar disciplines and divide them into different classes according to their levels. This way learning can be facilitated, and the instructors would not face a class of many different levels of proficiency.

Regarding the teaching methodology used by English instructors, the study clearly shows that the participants prefer student-centered approach. Using active learning and engaging students in the process of learning will help the students learn more and be motivated attending ESP courses. Moreover, student-centered approach increases the quality of learning by providing students more opportunity to use the language skills and learn by practice so that they can use English outside classroom.

Another motivating element to be used in English classes is technology. As the results of this study clearly shows students' attitude toward English classes where technology is used to enhance teaching and learning is very positive. Therefore, it is recommended that ESP classes should be equipped with educational technology and ESP instructors use technology frequently in their lessons. Material developers also should make the best use of technology while developing ESP materials for university courses.

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