

Investigating the Perceptions and Practices of Iranian Language and Content Teachers in Teaching EAP Vocabulary

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Abstract

Standing at the cornerstone of discipline-based EAP courses, vocabulary teaching warrants attention from the EAP scholars and research mainstream. However, such a shift of attention, in theory, has lagged behind the practice in particular contexts such as EAP and EAP teachers are yet afflicted by pedagogical chaos in the Iranian academic context due largely to the inconsistencies between language teachers' (LT) and content teachers' (CT) cognitions and practices. Thus, this study was conducted in the EAP context to explore Iranian EAP teachers' perceptions and practices of their vocabulary teaching. To this end, six EAP teachers (three LTs and three CTs) from three different disciplines (Electrical Engineering, Medicine, and Psychology) participated in this study, and their classes were observed for a semester. To thoroughly probe the teachers' perceptions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers. The findings pointed to differences between the two groups of teachers in terms of their vocabulary teaching practices and perceptions. It was revealed that LTs focused on a more varied combination of aspects than CTs did. The findings of the study provide implications for EAP teacher education to colour current practices and perceptions of the two groups of teachers about vocabulary teaching and learning with fresh paint.

Keywords: *EAP, Teachers' Perception, Teachers' Practices, Vocabulary*

Introduction

Flourished out of the colourful discursal analyses of the emerging trends in the 1970s onwards, English for specific purposes (ESP) was principally the heritage of World War II as a demand for a need-oriented approach to academic language learning. English for Academic Purposes (EAP), as one of the emerging trends in the ESP approach to language teaching, has long centred on

specific uses of English in the academic context and has achieved the leading edge of language education (Hyland, 2006). EAP as an academic orientation to language learning needs of discipline-based EAP learners was an attempt to help learners study, conduct research, or teach in English (usually in universities or other post-secondary settings).

Research on teachers' perceptions for teaching vocabulary abounds in teacher education literature with teachers in the EFL and ESL context of language education (Basturkmen, 2012; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Asyiah, 2017; Kabooha & Tariq, 2018). As such, despite the surge of recommendations on teachers' perceptions and practices in the two so-called contexts, there seems to be scarcity in the studies concerning teachers' perceptions and practices for teaching vocabulary in EAP contexts. Particularly, the gap is extremely realized in different Asian countries that present EAP courses with two groups of English and subject-area teachers, with little or no collaboration between content teachers and language teachers and their departments (Anthony, 2011; Atai, 2006; Chen, 2011). Thus, little is known about the vocabulary teaching perceptions and practices of these two groups of EAP teachers, which in turn may widen the gap in teaching subject-area-based EAP courses. Further, the absence of systematic EAP teacher training courses (Alexander, 2007, 2012) may worsen the situation. Also, although a wide variety of concepts has long been the research concern in the EAP field, vocabulary, and more specifically, how to teach vocabulary, has not received due attention in the research mainstream. Additionally, one of the needs of every student is to improve comprehension by mastering technical and academic vocabulary in their domain of specialization (Nation, 2001; Ardasheva & Tretter, 2017). As stated by Hyland and Tse (2007), a repertoire of specialized academic words is highly required on the part of teachers and learners of different fields of study to add to their current basic or general service vocabulary that is common to many academic disciplines to better handle studies. Following the categorization made by Baker (1988), lexis is categorized into three groups: general lexis, specialized lexis and sub-technical/rhetorical lexis. In this categorization, specialized lexis is defined as lexis, which is significantly different in the case of frequency of occurrence between academic fields and general English. When it comes to sub-technical lexis, the definition entails items that are neither highly technical nor specific to a certain field of knowledge, or even obviously general in the sense of being everyday words that are used in a distinctive way in specialized texts. There is evidence to suggest a relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, implying that vocabulary instruction has facilitative effects on reading comprehension (Laufer, 2003; Staehr, 2009). This indicates a need to understand various dimensions of classroom-based vocabulary instruction.

In the current study, teaching EAP vocabulary has been perceived as the instruction intended to broaden students' understanding [and use] of the semantic, pragmatic, morphological, or phonological aspects of the English vocabulary (Lewis, 1997; Nation, 2001). Given the fact that vocabulary is the most important part of a language (Morris & Cobb, 2004), the present study finds it necessary to investigate CT and LTs' instructional perceptions and practices regarding vocabulary teaching. In the Iranian context, teaching vocabulary, especially in EAP courses, is becoming a challenge for English LTs, and since it is an inseparable part of any teaching

syllabus, it should be taught on a well-planned and regular basis. The current study finds it necessary to bridge the gap and explore the perceptions underlying teachers' vocabulary teaching practices in the Iranian EAP context further as a response to the call made by Coxhead (2013) that the focus of future research might shift to the requirement of multiword units in different subjects and contexts in ESP (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013, p. 139). Grounded on this concern, the study was an attempt to seek answers to the following research questions:

RQ₁: What are the similarities and differences between vocabulary teaching perceptions held by LTs and CTs teaching EAP courses?

RQ₂: What are the similarities and differences between vocabulary teaching practices implemented by LTs and CTs teaching EAP courses?

Review of Literature

Research into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) through the lens of vocabulary instruction has been primarily led by the straightforward question 'What vocabulary do ESP learners need?' (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). Thus, bearing this concern in mind, considerable attempts have been made in the field, however; an EAP teacher-based perspective is missing in this line of support to achieve a particularly straightforward answer to this seemingly simple question. A quick perusal of the literature (see Paltridge & Starfield, 2013) shows that there are already several publications on EAP teaching and learning in discipline-based educational mainstream; for example, on teaching discipline-based EAP courses (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014; Soleimani & Alibabae, 2018), EAP and Language Skills (Anthony, 2011; Rajabi et al., 2012), ESP and pedagogy (Akbari, 2014; Tavakoli & Tavakoli, 2018), EAP and CALL (Mehran et al., 2017), EAP and genres (Bruce, 2011; Hyland, 2006), EAP and corpus linguistics (Alibabae & Zarei, 2014; Jalali & Zarei, 2016), and so on.

Besides focusing on the frequency and incidence of vocabulary in the input provided to the learners., Uchihara, Webb, and Yanagisawa (2019) found a direct correspondence between learner characteristics, the learning activity and the kind of vocabulary knowledge (recognition or recall). Following the same line, the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading skill for EAP students signifies the significance of the ability of meaning recall as a more reliable predictor of reading comprehension as compared to the ability to recognize word meaning (McLean, Stewart, & Batty, 2020). Furthermore, research on academic vocabulary in an EAP course has recently focused on inspecting the comparison between the Academic Vocabulary List (AVL) in the printed teaching materials designed in-house and implemented in a professional EAP course (Skoufaki & Petrić, 2021).

As a response to the call made by Hyland and Tse (2007) in prioritizing the specialist vocabulary in teaching as compared to other types, Masrai et al. (2021) investigated the impact of specialist subject vocabulary knowledge on academic performance, aside from and additional to the effect of general and academic vocabulary knowledge. The contribution of academic and general vocabulary knowledge to learners' academic achievement has also been investigated in this line of research and yielded fruitful results with regard to the application of The Academic

Word List (AWL) in raising the awareness of non-native speakers' knowledge of English academic texts for academic courses (Masrai & Milton, 2018).

In addition to these lines of research, some studies on discipline-based EAP courses and various variables within the Iranian EAP mainstream have been carried out and also on the critical ethnographic study of educational, political, and sociocultural roots among Iranian EAP language learners (Tavakoli & Tavakoli, 2018). Nonetheless, there have been a relatively smaller number of studies on EAP teaching with a special focus on vocabulary from the perspectives of EAP teachers in EAP educational settings and, in particular, in EAP teachers' perceptions. As a component of teacher cognition (Ellis, 2012) and an area of teacher pedagogical subject-area knowledge (Andrew, 2003), teachers' perceptions serve to constitute the culture of teaching. Particularly teachers' perceptions model their actual performance and provide a basis for general classroom approach and decision-making (Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2011). In addition, because of the situational and dynamic nature of teachers' perceptions and practices, teachers with different fields of specialization are preconditioned to approach and perceive the challenge of EAP teaching differently due to the influence of their shared notions in their content-specific community and pervasive expectation specific to a discipline (Trinder, 2013; Wong, 2010).

Methodology

Borrowing the words of Creswell (2015b, p. 16) for exploratory designs, "the researcher first initiates the data collection with qualitative research phase followed by inspecting the participants' views, the current study drew on an exploratory sequential mixed methods design using best of questionnaire and interviews to increase the dependability and credibility of the data and to comply with the triangulation principle. After the first round of data analysis, the data are then analyzed and used for the second quantitative phase.

Participants

A group of six EAP teachers (three CTs and three LTs) participated in this study. The LTs had ELT education, and CTs were educated in different faculties with no formal training in ELT. Teacher participants' age ranged from 26 to 44, holding M.A., M.S., and PhD and M.D. degrees teaching EAP courses in different universities in Iran from the faculties of Medicine, Psychology, and Engineering. In Iran, content teachers, reasonably proficient enough in English, are usually asked to take the responsibility of teaching EAP courses. Seemingly, this situation gets root from the reluctance of ELT teachers in terms of teaching EAP courses for technical fields like medicine and engineering due to their highly specific content knowledge requirement (Atai, 2002).

Instruments

Observation

To observe the teachers' behaviours, activities, and actual instructional practices directly, systematically, and accurately, three sessions of each teacher's class, in total, 18 sessions were

observed by the first author. The observation sessions were conducted over the course of two months and a half, and each observation session was 90 minutes long. In observation sessions, every activity regarding vocabulary teaching was observed. To classify the vocabulary teaching activities implemented by teachers, insights were taken from a study by Richards (1976), which reveals the aspects that vocabulary knowledge has (knowing the limitations imposed on the use of the word, the syntactic behaviour of the word, knowing the derivations of the word, applying the semantic value knowledge of the word and understanding various meanings associated with that word, etc.). Using a checklist from these aspects, the researcher observed whether they were touched upon or not and, if yes, how.

Semi-structured Interview

Based on the vocabulary related areas of the Teachers' Beliefs Inventory (Horwitz, 1988) and observation reports of teachers' instructional practices, ten items were designed to investigate the reasons behind teachers' instructional practices. All interview sessions were carried out in Persian (the teachers' L1) to ensure the fluent and easy expression of ideas and with simple wordings to prevent any probable misunderstanding concerning the special jargon and terminology of EAP teaching and applied linguistics (applying the same back-translation procedure and inter-translator reliability calculations; $r = 0.77$). Each interview, lasting at about 45 minutes to 1 hour and a half (an average of 1 hour), was administered with each teacher at their offices.

Data Analysis

Data collection for the current study was conducted during the one-semester period. After collecting the data, attempts were made to analyze the data qualitatively and quantitatively to answer the questions of this study. Field notes that were written while observing the classes were used to gather the frequency and percentage of each teachers' instructional practices based on the aspects of vocabulary knowledge described by Richards (1976). In addition, interview data were transcribed in detail and analyzed qualitatively through coding, and then the stated perceptions of the teacher participants were identified.

Results

Instructors' Perceptions of Vocabulary Teaching: Answering the first Research Question

Regarding the first research question that probed the perceptions of language and content teachers concerning their vocabulary teaching, the study revealed the following results summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Teacher Participants' Responses to Interview Questions

Teachers	LT ₁	LT ₂	LT ₃	CT ₁	CT ₂	CT ₃
Interview Topics						
1. Pronunciation	Important. Corrects wrong pronunciations	So important. Always corrects wrong pronunciations	Important. It blocks communication	Important but not practical	Important	Important
2. Primacy vocabulary/ grammar	Vocabulary, since it plays a more important role in understanding the text	Grammar, since it shapes language cognition	Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary
3. Best vocabulary teaching techniques	English definition, Synonym & antonym and Etymological explanations	English synonym and Etymological explanations	Etymological explanations, Persian explanation of collocation, Translation	Synonymy, Persian explanation of Collocation	Synonymy, Translation, Derivation	Translation
4. Skill primacy and contribution of vocabulary to reading	Reading, High contribution	Reading, Vocabulary contributes to reading more than other skills	Reading, Vocabulary contributes to reading more than other skills	Reading, High contribution	Reading, High contribution	Reading, High contribution
5. Attitude toward translation	Negative for intermediate students	Its beneficial	Translation is the only best way to teach technical voc.	Translation skill is needed for Engineering students	Neutral	Very beneficial technique and an important skill for student to master
6. Academic/ Technical vocabulary	1. Technical V 2. Academic V	1. Technical V 2. Academic V	Technical V, since Academic V can be guessed	Academic V, since Technical V can be guessed	1. Technical V 2. Academic V	1. Technical V 2. Academic V
7. Vocabulary aspect primacy	1. Derivation 2. Meaning 3. Collocation 4. Synonym & antonym	1. Meaning 2. Derivation 3. Synonym & antonym 4. Similar words 5. Collocation	1. Meaning 2. Collocation 3. Similar words 4. Derivation Syn & ant is not important	1. Meaning 2. Collocation	1. Meaning	1. Meaning
8. Language teacher/ Content teacher	LT but EAP teacher should know the content	In medical field CT is more appropriate	LT, Content knowledge can be gained by consulting CTs	A CT who has experienced teaching English classes	CT, since s/he has the content knowledge which is mostly required	CT, since s/he has the content knowledge which is mostly required
9. Best Technical vocabulary teaching technique	Etymological explanations	Etymological explanation, English definition	Translation, Persian expl. Of collocation	Translation only	Translation	Translation
10. Best Academic vocabulary teaching technique	No difference	English Synonym, Etymological explanation	Engxm. of collocation, using picture	Synonymy, Derivative and Translation	Translation	Translation

The first item of the interview examines teachers' views toward pronunciation. LT₁ believed working on pronunciation to be significantly important by the teacher. In the case of students' pronunciation, he stated: *"I give them feedback, but due to lack of time, students' mistakes cannot be corrected"*. LT₂ considered excellent accent very important and believed in correcting 100% of students' pronunciation errors. LT₃ mentioned the importance of pronunciation since it can cause learning troubles for other students. CT₁ admitted the importance of pronunciation, but she mentioned, *"it is not practical to correct and work on pronunciation due to students' lack of proficiency"*. CT₂ and CT₃ mentioned the importance of pronunciation too.

Regarding the second item, i.e. primacy of vocabulary/grammar, it is evident that LT₁ considered the importance of grammar in writing and vocabulary in reading and overall, he believed that vocabulary is the prominent one. LT₂ referred to the fact that in Iran, we do not have English as our second language, and we believe grammar to be the most important component of language. He asserted that grammar shapes language cognition, and so it is more important. LT₃ mentioned the significance of vocabulary for understanding a text and so believed in the importance of vocabulary. CT₁ and CT₂ considered vocabulary to be the most needed language component in EAP classes while keeping the technical vocabulary learning difficulty that the students' experience in mind. CT₃ stated vocabulary as the most important language component since it helps in a better understanding of the text (more than grammar).

As far as the third issue, 'the best vocabulary teaching technique', was concerned, among the various techniques usually used by teachers (e.g. English synonymy, Persian translation, etymological explanations, antonyms, explanation of collocation, etc.), LT₁ chose English definition, synonym & antonym and etymological explanation as the best techniques to teach vocabulary to EAP students. LT₂ answered this item based on the type of vocabulary which he wants to teach. LT₃ saw "etymological explanation" and "Persian explanation" of the collocation as the best techniques. She added that for Technical vocabulary, synonyms and antonyms and translation could be helpful. CT₁ believed synonymy and Persian explanation of collocation to be the best vocabulary teaching techniques. Her point of view regarding translation is also worth mentioning. She believed that translation not only does not have a negative effect but also is needed for engineering students since they need to translate catalogues in their future careers. CT₂ believed the English synonymy, Persian translation, and grammatical explanation of derivatives (part of speech) to be the best techniques. CT₃ believed Persian translation to be the best technique. He stated, *"when we can teach to our mother tongue, why bother students with English synonyms which cause more questions to them?"*

The fourth question addressed the skill primacy and contribution of vocabulary to reading. Regarding the first item, all the participants answered reading skills. Nevertheless, the importance of vocabulary in the skills was a matter of controversy between them. LT₁ believed that vocabulary plays a more important role in reading, listening, and speaking skills (than grammar), but about the writing skill, he believed grammar to play a more important role. LT₂, CT₂, and CT₃ believed in the equal importance of vocabulary in four skills. LT₃ believed in the importance of vocabulary in the four skills and prioritized them like reading, writing, speaking,

and listening. CT₁ believed that vocabulary is of its utmost importance in reading. She asserted that by knowing the vocabulary, 80% of reading problems are solved.

Considering item five, namely, ‘attitude toward translation’, LT₁ stated that translation is a dangerous tool for teaching to students of intermediate level, although he believed that it is beneficial for elementary and advanced level learners. He also mentioned the easiness of using a bilingual dictionary for elementary students. LT₂ saw translation as a beneficial tool for learning. Regarding the issue of translation, LT₃ stated that she uses other techniques for teaching academic vocabulary but for technical vocabulary, translation is the best technique since technical vocabulary items can have different meanings in different disciplines and hence leads to a misunderstanding on the part of the learners. CT₁ saw the translation technique as necessary since, in his view, students need to know the Persian counterparts of the words. CT₂ held a neutral view of the translation technique. He saw translation neither as a negative technique nor as an “always to use” technique. CT₃ uttered, “*Translation is a very positive technique for teaching and a good task for learning, and it’s very important for students to master it*”.

The sixth issue concerned ‘Academic/Technical vocabulary primacy’, for which LT₁, LT₂, and LT₃ believed that in EAP courses, technical vocabulary is more important and added that academic vocabulary could be guessed from the context, but this is not true for technical vocabulary. Unlike the LTs, CT₁ believed that academic vocabulary is of utmost importance. CT₂ and CT₃ believed technical vocabulary to be the class of vocabulary that students need the most since they are more frequent and more difficult for students.

As far as the seventh question (vocabulary aspect primacy) was concerned, LT₁ first mentioned the importance of the “Derivation” aspect, especially the knowledge of part of speech, register, and etymological knowledge of the word. After that, he mentioned the “Meaning” aspect and then “Collocation” and “Synonym & Antonym” aspects, respectively. LT₂ believed primacy of vocabulary knowledge aspects to be in this order: “Meaning”, “Derivation”, “synonym & Antonym”, “Similar words” and “Collocation”. LT₃ determined the “Meaning” aspect as the most important aspect for students to master, and then he ends with “Collocation”. The third and fourth important aspects from the LT₃’s point of view were “similar words” and “Derivation” aspects, respectively. Regarding the “Synonym & Antonym” aspect, she believed that it was not important, and she did not work on this aspect at all. Regarding this question, i.e. aspect primacy, CT₁ answered irrespective of the choices given. She just mentioned the importance of the “Meaning” aspect for technical vocabulary items and the “Collocation” aspect for academic vocabulary items. CT₂ and CT₃ emphasized the importance of the “Meaning” aspect only.

For the eighth question, i.e. language teacher vs Content teacher qualification, LT₁ replied to this question by choosing ‘A Language teacher’. He then explained that, for an ESP teacher, content knowledge is necessary, but it is not the only knowledge that an ESP teacher should possess. He believed that the language and content knowledge ratio is 70% for language knowledge and 30% for content knowledge. In other words, an EAP teacher’s mastery over the English language is about twice more important than the mastery that she or he has over content

knowledge. LT₂ believed that generally, Lang. Ts are more qualified for this job, but in the Medicine field, a CT may better handle the course due to the difficulty of the content knowledge of the Medicine field, which is hard for LTs to master. The last two questions, the ninth and tenth items of the interview, examined “the best academic and technical vocabulary teaching technique”. The results of what was said by the participants have been summarized in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1

Teachers' Priorities Regarding Technical Vocabulary Teaching Techniques

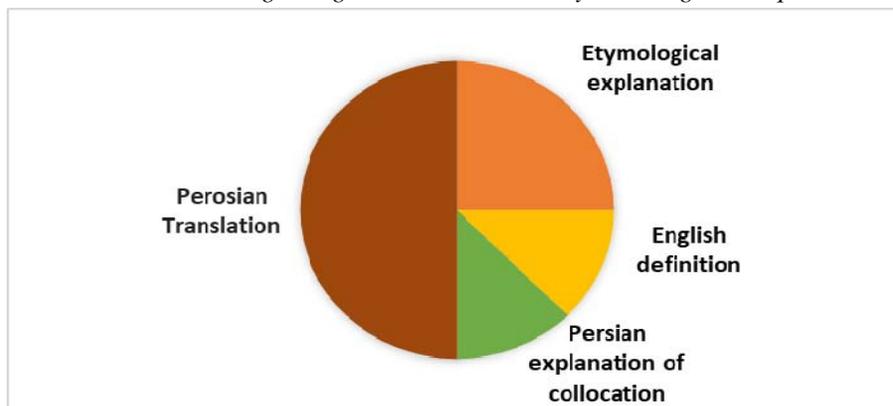
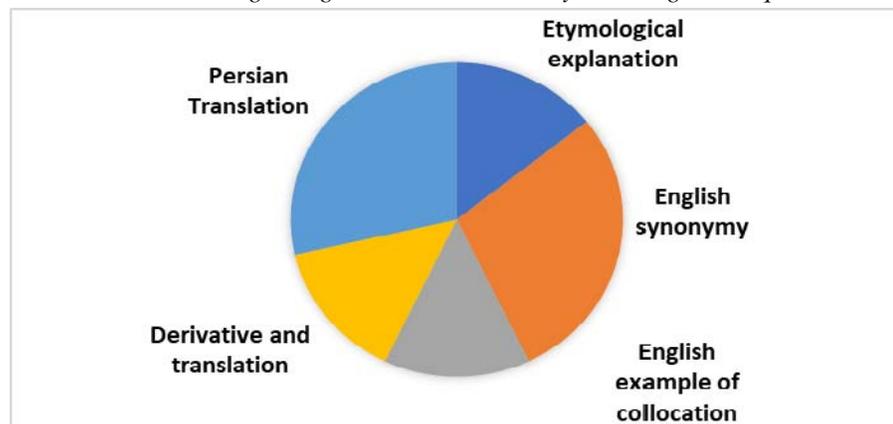


Figure 2

Teachers' Priorities regarding Academic Vocabulary Teaching Techniques



Comparing CT and LTs' Practices on Vocabulary Knowledge Aspects: Answering the Second Research Question

Figure 3 shows the observation results. As is evident, LT₁ worked on every aspect of vocabulary knowledge (although the main focus of all the teachers in this study has been more on aspect 1). The same is true about LT₂. However, LT₃, due to the strict and rigid policies of the university in which she taught, could focus on all but one aspect of vocabulary knowledge (though with low frequencies). Among CTs, it is impossible to find a teacher who attended all the aspects. It seems they were more willing to teach the vocabulary items by their meaning aspects (whether in

Persian or English). CT₁, for example, missed aspects 4 and 5 totally with only a little focus on aspects 2 and 3 (3% for every aspect). CT₂ worked on aspects 2 and 4 with low percentages (7% and 4%, respectively) and missed out on aspects 3 and 5. It is worth mentioning that although in Medicine, “etymological explanations” play an important role in perceiving a word, this aspect has been almost disregarded by CT₂ with a low frequency (aspect 2). CT₃ put his whole focus on aspect one and only with 3% of working on aspect 5 (which may be due to chance), held the most translation-based class in the study.

With a glance at Figure 4, it is revealed that LTs used a variety of aspects more than CTs. CTs focused more on the “Meaning” aspect, and their second choice has been the “Derivation” aspect. The same was true about LTs but with more frequency for the “Derivation” aspect and less for the “Meaning” aspect, compared to those of CTs. CTs’ next aspect was the “Similar words” aspect with a negligible percentage (1.34%) and finally “Collocation” and “Synonym & antonym” aspect with only 1% of focus. For LTs after the “Derivation” aspect, the most focused aspects were “Collocation” and “Similar words”, with 4.34% of focus for both. Finally, the “Synonym & antonym” aspect is ranked, which gains 2.34%.

Figure 3

Percentage of the Six Teachers’ Practices on Vocabulary Knowledge Aspects

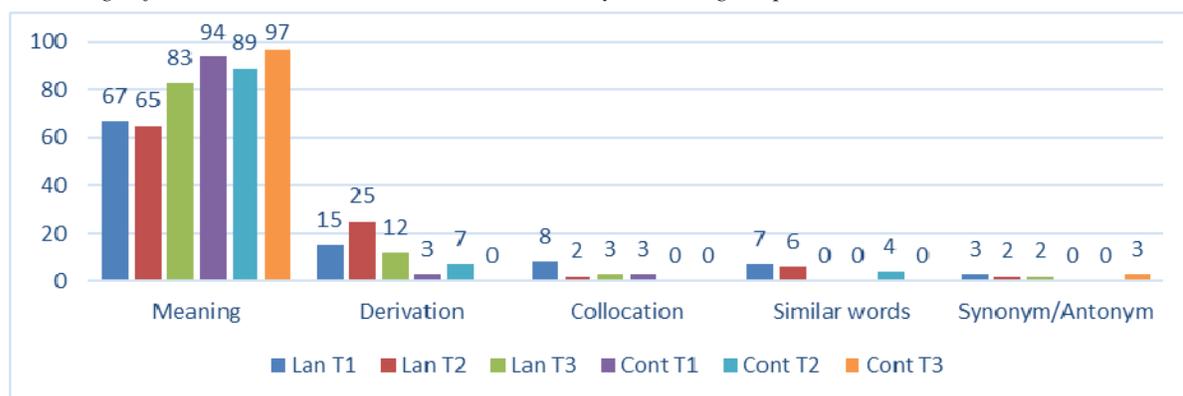
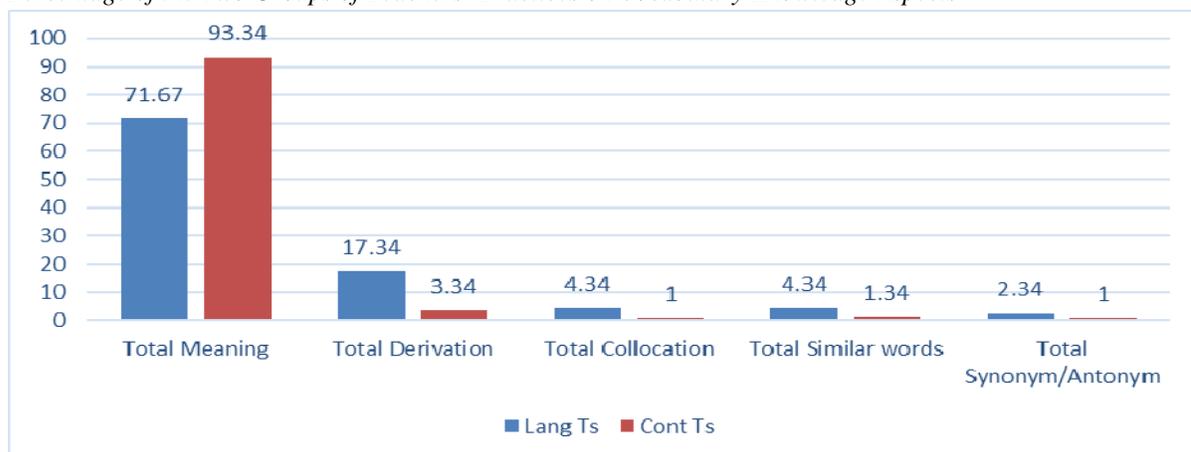


Figure 4

Percentage of the Two Groups of Teachers’ Practices on Vocabulary Knowledge Aspects



Discussion

Putting all the findings together, the two groups of teachers emphasized the importance of teaching vocabulary in EAP courses along with the four skills of language for EAP students, primed the absence of clear and coherent methods and techniques for vocabulary teaching in EAP courses at EAP teachers' disposal and pointed to the lack of having an integrated plan for incorporating practical aspects of vocabulary teaching into the EAP curriculum via developing their practical vocabulary strategies and skills in such courses which can noticeably increase their teaching perceptions and practices. The first research question that sought to be addressed in the current study inspected the similarities and differences between LTs' and CTs' perceptions about teaching vocabulary in EAP courses. In this regard, the ten themes (i.e., the topic of questions asked from EAP teachers) extracted from teachers' responses are put into the spotlight. Regarding the first theme, which was based on EAP teachers' perceptions about the necessity of paying attention to pronunciation, the two groups of teachers held different attitudes toward its importance. CTs argued that checking the correct pronunciation is a must for all EAP learners and must be taken into consideration. LTs, casting doubt on the necessity of checking pronunciation, believed that it is not important as long as the communication is not blocked. Indeed, this point is in line with what has been acknowledged as effective vocabulary instruction by many reading comprehension and EAP teaching scholars (Bernhardt, 2005; Grabe, 2004; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Nation, 2001).

Regarding the primacy of grammar or vocabulary, our findings indicated the two groups of teachers shared the same perception that vocabulary is of greater importance to them as compared with grammar. Yet, while CTs considered the primacy of content words over function words, LTs focused on the contribution of vocabulary to reading. This finding is well captured in the literature, specifically in genre studies in EAP (Hyland, 2006; Hyland & Tse, 2007). The two groups of teachers shared the same attitude towards the best vocabulary teaching techniques. That is, they favoured offering synonyms for the given words; however, it is worth mentioning that LTs highlighted suggesting an etymological explanation as well. About the rest of the themes, complete agreement between teachers was related to the vocabulary aspect primacy, and they chose the meaning aspect as the most important aspect.

On the other hand, the sharp contrast between the two groups of teachers was related to their attitude toward their right to teaching EAP courses in that teacher in each group found themselves rightful in teaching. Worth noting is the contrast between teachers in terms of the best way of teaching the dichotomy of technical/academic words (see Table 1, Item 9, and 10). While LTs had more tendency toward English explanation, CTs favoured translation irrespective of the type of vocabulary. Focusing on the necessity of translation, the two groups of teachers' attitudes match each other. LTs' total agreement with but CTs' partial attention to the dichotomy of technical/academic words in various dimensions of EAP courses in light of the future professional requirements of the graduates also showed that both were well aware of the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension success. Following Coxhead (2013, p.139), strong suggestion to zoom on balancing the attention to the "consideration of the nature of

specialized vocabulary” and “efforts made by teachers when teaching and learning vocabulary for ESP” to help bridge the gap between vocabulary teaching perceptions and practices, the current study tried to turn to the same untouched aspects which have been kept quite unnoticed in the Iranian EAP context.

Although the two groups of teachers shared the same perceptions in the primacy of vocabulary to grammar, they provided different explanations for this point of commonality, thus, leading to an inference that their perceptions which feed their practices are derived from different sources. Put it another way, the findings regarding the actual practices revealed that CTs and LTs had taken two different positions, which echo several shifts toward and away from subject specificity in terms of vocabulary teaching approaches and techniques. While LTs viewed vocabulary as a means to an end, CTs perceived vocabulary, especially content words, as the only end of reading and comprehension in EAP courses. This point may probably get its roots in different ideological positions taken by LTs and CTs about the instructional practices in EAP courses. However, unlike CTs in the studies by Rajabi et al. (2012), the three CTs in the current study drew the attention of EAP students to some language-related explanations in addition to “elaboration” of technical vocabulary.

This explanation in terms of teachers’ practices in highlighting the terminology and related genre is compatible with what Robinson (1991) noted in a discussion of different orientations in EAP methodology and the findings of Atai (2006) on EAP teacher education. Such orientations portray LTs and CTs’ conceptualization of vocabulary teaching in this study. While LTs preferred to consider EAP as an approach to ELT, CTs tended to deal with content related aspects rather than linguistic features. Further, the contrast is in line with the claim made by Naunan (2004), who said that EAP is an important subcomponent of language teaching with its approaches to curriculum development, material design, pedagogy, testing, and research. In contrast with LTs and in line with CTs, Bell (2002) believed that a very good grasp of specialist context is required on the part of teachers to assess the accuracy and validity of what their students said.

When it comes to translation practices, the importance that CTs gave to translation was completely different from LTs. In other words, translation was favoured by both groups of teachers, but their purposes were different. Considering it as a skill to master was what made CTs focus different from that of LTs (Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014). As supported by Rajabi et al. (2012), this implementation of translation, especially by CTs, is the easiest way of conducting EAP classes as well as the removal of students’ psychological barriers in such courses. Moreover, one explanation for these findings may be learners’ insufficient linguistic proficiency, ease of instruction, and sociocultural factors that have made CTs predominantly focus on translation activities (Anthony, 2011). The findings indicated that LTs were more inclined to a variety of aspects than CTs. More precisely, LTs did their best to focus on all aspects, with most of their attention directed toward the “Derivation” and “Meaning” aspects as well as considering the other aspects. Yet, CTs were more inclined to “Meaning” aspects and ignored the rest by giving slight attention. In other words, findings revealed that LTs’ practices revolved around

almost all aspects of vocabulary. But CTs' practices tended to focus on a few aspects at the expense of missing the rest of the aspects. This implementation of various vocabulary techniques by LTs in this study is compatible with the findings of some of the related studies (e.g., Anthony, 2011; Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2014; Rajabi et al., 2012; Ketabi & Asgari, 2013) aimed to throw light on the issue of teaching vocabulary in general and EAP in particular. In terms of the priorities over vocabulary aspects, the results approximately indicated that most of the LTs took all the aspects into account and did their best to use different techniques to check students' vocabulary knowledge. Indeed, LTs attempted to use all five aspects as best as they could by giving them priority based on their importance and frequency of use in EAP classes and language learning.

In contrast, CTs, despite their awareness of learners' need in learning other aspects, just focused on the "Meaning" aspect and highlighted it while ignoring others. This point was confirmed by CTs' perceptions in the interview session; knowledge of vocabulary, especially content and function words were the purpose of the EAP courses, and their intended objective was to be attained. The finding of the study indicated that LTs' tendency, not only in their perception but also as was echoed in their practices, was attributed toward "Meaning" and "Derivation" aspects with different proportions. This is in line with the related literature in that prioritizing the vocabulary aspects and considering almost all of them, and the activities such as giving metalinguistic awareness regarding the structures of the sentences and paragraphs, providing synonyms and antonyms, etc. with the conclusions made by Atai (2006) and Atai and Fattahi-majd (2014).

As was supported by the related literature, the findings of this study showed that irrespective of the discipline, students taught by LTs were more involved in the process of teaching than students taught by CTs. This fact was also seen in the way LTs practised almost all aspects of vocabulary as compared with CTs whose repertoire of vocabulary knowledge was limited to Persian equivalent or a chain of content explanation about the use of the word in their original content textbooks. This point aligns with what literature has witnessed in this line of study (e.g., Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Alexander, 2012; Anthony, 2011; Atai & Fattahi-Majd, 2014; Atai, 2006; Atai & Khazaei, 2014; Ketabi & Asgari, 2013). Besides, this difference might be attributed to LTs' more experience in being engaged in studying and reading teaching and pedagogical related courses about the pedagogical knowledge and language teaching with which CTs are not familiar.

Conclusion

Comparing the LTs' and the CTs' perceptions and practices, this study concludes that the former had more consistent conceptualizations about their vocabulary teaching and favoured an all-inclusive approach to vocabulary teaching in EAP courses. Their tendency toward "Meaning" and "Derivation" aspects, giving metalinguistic awareness regarding the structures of the sentences and paragraphs, providing synonyms and antonyms which are highlighted by the related literature as the necessary aspects to consider in vocabulary teaching were salient in their

perceptions and tangible in their practices. As the results demonstrated, CTs' perceptions about the importance and priority of vocabulary aspects to teach, in comparison with their LT counterparts, were more sophisticated and incompatible due to the reiteration of a variety of factors, which were not addressed by LTs, in their perceptions of vocabulary teaching and were not realized in their practices as well. Both CTs and LTs were well aware of the exigency of vocabulary teaching and learning "practical" skills and strategies as they highlighted workplace-relevant activities, academic performances, etc., implying that they were totally aware of the sensitivity of vocabulary knowledge in EAP students' future performances both in academia and workplace as well as the serious damages lack of which would bring. Besides, several emphases on having high-level "technical" vocabulary knowledge from CTs standpoint and "academic" vocabulary knowledge from LT viewpoint implies teachers' advice for the necessity of possessing more than average knowledge, being updated of the cutting-edge academic papers, workplace requirements and overall expert identifications while they did not also forget to highlight the significance of "lexical bundles and corpus-based word lists" mastery in their field of study.

The promising indication is that according to the findings of this study, the two groups of teachers welcomed the incorporation of strategies, new techniques, and concentrations of EAP courses' resources, topics and lessons on the recent academic and actual occupational needs of the EAP students in each discipline. Such an inclination can be considered as a promising idea that contributes to paving the way for changing the material, practices, and perceptions of those curriculum planners, material developers and teachers in EAP courses to give them new looks and to revise several aspects of EAP vocabulary teaching in light of the requirements of students' academic and occupational needs. One more contribution of the results of the present study pointed to what Basturkmen (2012) has pinpointed as the platform for the meaningful basis for reflection on planned aspects of the practice by eliciting experienced teachers' stated perceptions, especially in EAP courses where scholars have not achieved to a common consensus regarding the instruction of vocabulary or other techniques, methodologies as well as the two faculties' qualification including language and content-specific, to take the responsibility of teaching EAP courses.

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