

**THE EFFECT OF AUTHENTIC CONTEXT ON  
MOTIVATION LEVEL, READING MOTIVATION  
AND READING ACHIEVEMENT AMONG  
IRANIAN EAP STUDENTS**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**August 2014**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Firstly, my profoundest gratitude is due to Professor Dr. Ambigapathy Pandian, my supervisor. I am deeply appreciative of his constant supervision and meticulous reading of the thesis and giving insightful comments and sound advice which immeasurably enhanced the quality of the present study. His policy in producing an autonomous learner and researcher out of me will always assist me in pursuing a successful academic life. Furthermore, I would also like to express my thankfulness to Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi for commenting on the final copy of the thesis.

Secondly, I have to thank the one whose inspirations sparked the desire of studying in me, my late beloved father (Mohammad). It is a pity I cannot have him beside me at this stage in my life. My heartfelt thanks also go to my mother (Fatemeh) whose never-ending encouragements and continuous support was with me throughout the candidature. I could constantly feel her prayers which protected me in difficult times during the long stay far away from family in Malaysia. Furthermore, I have to thank my sister (Maryam) and brothers (Arastoo, Ali, and Reza) for their constant moral support.

Finally, I must acknowledge my friends and the staff at both universities IAUM (Islamic Azad University of Mashhad) and USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) for providing me with the peaceful mind and resources to finish this work.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ARCS: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction

CBI: Content-based Instruction

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EGAP: English for General Academic purposes

ELT: English Language Teaching

EMS: English Major Students

EOP: English for Occupational Purposes

ESAP: English for Specific Academic purposes

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

EST: English for Science and Technology

H: High

HML: High Motivation Level

HRA: High Reading Achievement

HRM: High Reading Motivation

L: Low

LML: Low Motivation Level

LRA: Low Reading Achievement

LRM: Low Reading Motivation

LSP: Language for Specific Purposes

ML: Motivation Level

Non-EMS: Non-English Major Students

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

RA: Reading Achievement

RM: Reading Motivation

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### Articles:

- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2014). An Evaluation of Authenticity: A Case of EAP Textbooks in Iran. *International Journal of Languages and Literatures*, 2(1), 91-113.
- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2011). A Review on the Effectiveness of Using Authentic Materials in ESP Courses. *ESP WORLD*, 31(10).
- Zohoorian, Z. (2011). Attitudes of the Iranian ESP students majoring in computer and Information Technology regarding authentic materials. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(10), 1437-42.
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- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2014). *An Evaluation of Authenticity: A Case of EAP Textbooks in Iran*. The 9<sup>th</sup> Language for Specific Purposes Conference. 27<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2014, Sarawak, Kuching, Malaysia.
- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2013). *Authenticity in Iranian EAP context*. Asian Literacy Conference. 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September, Bali, Indonesia.
- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2012). *A Needs Analysis Approach: Is the Reading Skill Prominent?* The 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference in Teaching English and Research English Language Teaching towards the ASEAN Community. 30<sup>th</sup> July, Songkhla, Thailand.
- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2012). *A Needs Analysis approach: productive or receptive skills?* The First national Conference on ELT: Challenges and Innovations. 14<sup>th</sup> May. Islamic Azad University. Torbat-e-Heydarieh, Iran.
- Zohoorian, Z. & Ambigapathy, P. (2010). Authenticity for ESP. 2<sup>nd</sup> ESP in Asia conference. 11th-13th Nov. Nottingham University, Ningbo, China.

**KESAN DARIPADA KONTEKS AUTENTIK TERHADAP TAHAP  
MOTIVASI, MOTIVASI BACAAN, DAN PENCAPAIAN BACAAN DALAM  
KALANGAN PELAJAR IRAN YANG MENGIKUTI KURSUS EAP  
(BAHASA INGGERIS BAGI TUJUAN AKADEMIK)**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini dijalankan sebagai respon terhadap tanggapan bahawa pelajar Iran yang mengikuti program EAP (Bahasa Inggeris bagi Tujuan Akademik) kurang motivasi dan pencapaian yang rendah dalam kemahiran bacaan. Antara pelbagai kaedah yang dicadangkan, dalam literatur untuk meningkatkan motivasi atau menggalakkan pencapaian, penyelidik mengkaji kesan pengautentikan konteks pengajaran-pembelajaran untuk mengkaji kesan tersebut. .Disebabkan batasan kajian tidak membenarkan penetapan konteks autentik sebenar, maka kumpulan eksperimen dibangunkan dengan menyediakan satu rangsangan daripada konteks autentik melalui integrasi teks autentik dan tugas autentik. Dengan mempelajari perbezaan ketara dalam kaedah penyelidikan yang berbeza, penyelidik menggunakan pendekatan kaedah bercampur bagi mengumpul data. Bahagian kuantitatif mencakupi pentadbiran soal selidik dan ujian bacaan. Kaedah kualitatif utama adalah temu bual dengan kumpulan tumpuan. Sementara itu, kaedah kualitatif tambahan adalah penulisan dairi. Berdasarkan ketidakfleksibelan pensampelan rawak yang betul, pemilihan sampel daripada kuasi-eksperimen adalah pensampelan rawak kluster. Subjek adalah pelajar EAP yang mengikuti program kejuruteraan di Universiti Mashhad Azad, Iran. Untuk menjalankan penyelidikan, seramai 30 orang pelajar terlibat dalam kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan eksperimen. Selepas 8-minggu intervensi, pasca-ujian motivasi bacaan dan pencapaian bacaan dijalankan.

Keadaan yang sama dilakukan, soal selidik tahap motivasi dijalankan sebanyak tiga kali sebagai pasca-ujian 1,2, dan 3. Data kuantitatif dianalisis berdasarkan SPSS: dan ujian t dan korelasi Pearson dijalankan bagi membandingkan min dan menentukan perkaitan di antara pemboleh ubah atau variabel. Di samping itu, saiz kesan turut dikira dan dilaporkan. Data kualitatif dianalisis melalui kaedah induktif melalui tema pratentu bagi temu bual dan tema yang diwujudkan secara berulang bagi data diari. Mengambil kira data kuantitatif dan kualitatif dalam konteks tiga penjurua atau tiga sudut didapati bahawa kumpulan eksperimen (konteks autentik) menunjukkan prestasi yang lebih baik daripada kumpulan kawalan (konteks tradisional), dalam tahap motivasi, motivasi bacaan, dan pencapaian bacaan. Sebagai tambahan, perkaitan positif ditemui dalam kalangan variabel kajian termasuk tahap motivasi, motivasi bacaan, dan pencapaian bacaan. Justeru, disimpulkan bahawa konteks autentik mempunyai kesan yang positif terhadap tahap motivasi, motivasi bacaan, dan pencapaian bacaan. Di samping itu, data diari menonjolkan pendapat pelajar secara am daripada kedua-dua konteks. Sebagai kesimpulan, pelbagai saranan diajukan kepada pemegang taruh EAP dan guru bahasa, yang berkaitan dengan keautentikan teks dan tugas, serta pelaksanaan konteks autentik bagi pengajaran bahasa Inggeris dan perkaitan dengan motivasi dan pencapaian yang tinggi.

**THE EFFECT OF AUTHENTIC CONTEXT ON MOTIVATION LEVEL,  
READING MOTIVATION, AND READING ACHIEVEMENT  
AMONG IRANIAN EAP STUDENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

This study was carried out in response to the question of Iranian EAP students' lack of motivation and low achievement for the reading skill. Among different methods proposed in the literature to enhance motivation or to promote achievement, the researcher examined the effect of authenticating the teaching/learning context to investigate its effect. As the limitations of the study did not allow the establishment of a real authentic context, the treatment of the experimental group was formed by providing a simulation of an authentic context through the integration of authentic texts and authentic tasks. Having learned about the different drawbacks inherent in different methods of research, the researcher adapted a mixed-methods approach for collecting the data. The quantitative section encompassed the administration of the questionnaires and the reading test. The main qualitative method was the focus group interview and the supplementary qualitative method was diary writing. Due to the unfeasibility of true random sampling, the sampling selection of the quasi-experiment was the cluster random sampling. The subjects were the EAP students studying engineering at Mashhad Azad University, Iran. To conduct the research, a control and an experimental group each including 30 students were involved. After the 8-week intervention the posttests of reading motivation and reading achievement were administered. Similarly, the motivation level questionnaire was administered three times as posttest 1, 2 and 3. The quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS; accordingly, the t-tests and Pearson correlation were run for comparing the means and finding out the relationships

among the variables. Moreover, the effect sizes were calculated and reported. The qualitative data were analyzed through the inductive method by finding out the pre-specified themes for the interview and the recurrent emergent themes for the diary data. Having triangulated the quantitative and qualitative data, it was revealed that the experimental group (Authentic context) outperformed the control group (Traditional context) in motivation level, reading motivation, and reading achievement. Additionally, positive relationships were found among the study variables including motivation level, reading motivation, and reading achievement. Thus, it was concluded that the authentic context had positive effects on motivation level, reading motivation, and reading achievement. Moreover, the data from diaries shed more light on the students' general views of the two contexts. Consequently, different recommendations were offered to EAP stakeholders and language teachers as related to authenticity of texts and tasks as well as the implementation of an authentic context for English language teaching and in relation to higher motivation and achievement.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

English teaching history in Iran dates back to 1900s. The two major institutions responsible for developing English language teaching were the British Council and the Iran-America Society. During 1960s, the role of English language teaching grew to the point that it was accepted as the medium of instruction in some universities such as the Pahlavi University, today called the University of Shiraz (Strain, 1971). However, following the Islamic revolution in Iran an extremist view called “book purging” started which aimed at the de-culturization of English teaching textbooks. As a result, English language was not used widely (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002). Moreover, since the education in Iran is through the national language, Persian, secondary schools adopt English as a foreign language and the use of English language is specifically restricted to the setting of the classrooms (Shirbagi, 2010).

Learning English as a foreign language and as a compulsory course begins from the middle school and continues to the end of high school in Iran (Moghimizadeh, 2008). There are about three formal instruction hours for English language every week (Noora, 2008). Thenceforward, the students are required to enroll in English courses at university level. Students who study English as a foreign language in Iran either specialize in English or major in fields such as engineering, medicine, law. The first group of students (English major) study in fields such as English teaching, English translation, English literature or linguistics. Other students who do not specialize in English have to enroll in different English courses as a



requirement of graduation. These courses include Basic English and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) including English for General Academic purposes (EGAP) as well as English for Specific Academic purposes (ESAP) (Atai & Shoja, 2011; Sadeghi, 2005). These EAP courses at the Iranian context mainly aim at filling the gap that exists between the students' competence of general English reading and their ability in reading "authentic discipline-specific texts" (Atai & Nazari, 2011). Thus, the major focus of EAP courses in Iran is on reading skill and comprehension (Akbari & Tahririan, 2009; Alimohammadi, 2003; Amirian & Tavakoli, 2009; Atai, 2002; Fathi, 2008; Jodairi, 2005; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Soleimani, 2005; Suzani, 2005; Tayebipour, 2005; Ziahosseiny, 2005). Similarly, according to other Iranian practitioners such as Jafari and Shokrpour (2012), effective reading is considered as "an essential tool for professional success and personal development". As Amiryousefi et al. (2012) maintain, in the Iranian context reading plays a key role because the students' exposure to English is limited and the students have the opportunity to read in English more than to speak, listen, and write in English. Consequently, the objective for the course books published for EAP courses is officially defined as the following:

[Enabling] the students to study their specific academic reference materials and textbooks to get familiar with scientific and technological advances in their field of study. (Soleimani, 2005, p. 216)

EAP is fundamental in Iranian context where English is used as an academic language and essentially for academic purposes (Eslami-Rasekh, 2010). According to Eslami-Rasekh and Simin (2011), there is an inevitable need for conducting research in EAP in Iran because these courses are repeatedly administered for a large group of students majoring in different fields.

Nevertheless, there is a consensus among several EAP practitioners that EAP courses in Iran have not been successful in different aspects. Consequently, different reasons have been addressed by the EAP practitioners ranging from the problems associated with materials included in textbooks, instructors, teaching methodology, approach to EAP, to courses being exam-centered, and ignoring future needs of the learners (Amirian & Tavakoli, 2009; Eslami-Rasekh, 2010; Hassaskhah, 2005; Hayati, 2008; Soleimani, 2005; Tayebipour, 2005; Zohrabi, 2005).

The teaching approach being used currently in EAP courses in Iran is the traditional approach which is closely similar to the grammar-translation method emphasizing on text analysis while focusing on reading with minor or no attention to other language skills (Amiryousefi, Dastjerdi, & Tavakoli, 2012; Hashemi, Lamir, & Namjoo, 2011; Hasrati, 2005; Hassaskhah, 2005; Hayati & Jalilifar, 2010; Moghimizadeh, 2008; Noora, 2008; Tajadini, 2002; Zohrabi, Torabi, & Baybourdiani, 2012). Nonetheless, it needs to be discussed that with the introduction of communicative language teaching, language classroom was considered, as Richards (2006) explains, “a preparation for survival in the real world” (p.21). Along with communicative approach there has been a call for language teaching for special purposes such as for businessmen, nurses, or engineers (Schmidt, 1994). These methods for language teaching replaced grammatical approaches to language teaching and encouraged the use of “realia”, “authentic materials”, and “simulations” (Jacoby, 1994, cited in Schmidt, 1994). According to Horwitz (2008) communicative language teaching is a methodology that highlights authentic communication in the target language and encourages the employment of authentic content as far as possible. Above all, EAP is known as having its roots in communicative language teaching (Benesch, 2001). Jordan (1997) and Karimkhanlui (2007) also believe that

communicative approach is more effective for EAP teaching. Thus, it seems that the communicative approach can be more appropriate in an EAP context rather than the traditional approach which is still dominant in EAP courses in Iran (Hashemi, Lamir, & Namjoo, 2011; Hasrati, 2005; Hassaskhah, 2005; Hayati & Jalilifar, 2010; Moghimizadeh, 2008; Tajadini, 2002). Based on the study conducted by Dahmardeh (2009) to find the compatibility extent of the English curriculum in Iran with communicative approaches, he concludes that although the curriculum document is to a great deal compatible with communicative pedagogy, the programs and materials do not match a communicative model.

On the other hand, insofar as course materials are concerned, materials included in every course have a significant role and their careful selection may facilitate the teachers in making choices, considering alternatives, and planning for learner needs (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Considering materials preparation for EFL contexts, Graves (2000) believes that materials must be chosen based on their authenticity principle so that the students get familiar with and have access to language as it is used in “real” world. On the other hand, several language researchers (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Kelly, Kelly, Offner, & Vorland, 2002; Khaniya, 2006; Mishan, 2005; Paltridge, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2000) have argued about the benefits of using authentic materials. These benefits may range from highlighting comprehension, presenting real language, providing opportunities to introduce cultural issues, enhancing experience in language learning, improving achievement, to increasing motivation, involving learners in real language, and creating language awareness.

Moreover, it has been mentioned by Iranian EAP practitioners that the EAP courses are ineffective and the students’ lack of motivation towards EAP courses and

their low achievement concerning the reading skill is observable (Atai, 2002; Atai & Nazari, 2011; Atai & Shoja, 2011; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Farhady, 2005; Hashemi, Lamir, & Namjoo, 2011; Hassaskhah, 2005; Jalilifar, 2010; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

On the other hand, several advantages of authentic materials are widely discussed in literature including, but not limited to being motivating and being a means of enhancing achievement. Moreover, it is well accepted by different scholars that the classroom context can affect the motivation and engagement of the students for reading (Caldwell, 2008; Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart, 1997; Guthrie, 2001). Similarly, as is discussed by Dornyei and Ushioda (2011), unlike the social as well as cultural impacts on motivation which develop over a sustained learning experience period, such developments for short-term may take place by explicit features of an instructional context; for example, the design of tasks and materials or the grouping structures.

Therefore, this research attempted to investigate the effectiveness of providing an authentic context in EAP courses for enhancing learners' motivation and reading achievement instead of the traditional context. The conventional courses as discussed above include a grammar-translation methodology and the current conventional materials in EAP course books are published by SAMT (institution in charge of the preparation and publication of the EAP course books in different areas of specialization from 1985 to date at university level in Iran).

## **1.2 Background Information about Iran**

### **1.2.1 Educational System in Iran**

In order to clarify the context of the study it is essential to explain the Iranian educational context and specifically the teaching of English in Iran. Iran's education system is divided into two divisions: K-12 and higher education. The former is administered by the Ministry of Education and the latter is under the administration of Ministry of Sciences, Research, and Technology (Student Advisory, 2006). The language of instruction at Iranian schools is Persian, the official language of the country and it is also used in media and press (Kamyab, 2004).

#### **1.2.1.1 K-12 Education**

The first cycle in Iran's educational system is K-12 cycle. This cycle begins with the primary school followed by the guidance school and is completed with the high school. The following profile is mainly based on the Student Advisory (2006) in Oslo (an allied website to the Iranian embassy in Oslo) explaining the educational system in Iran.

The first cycle, known as the pre-school cycle, is concluded in one year. Five-year old children are taught the notions needed for the primary schooling. No evaluation is conducted at the end of this cycle. The next cycle is the primary cycle which completes in five years and the children must be 6 years old as an entrance requirement. Having completed the course of five years successfully, the students will be given a certificate. After the primary school the students have to join middle school (sometimes called guidance school) which includes three years of education. Based on the students' interests and abilities and also their scores, they are prepared to decide on the branches of academic or vocational/technical courses to pursue their

studies in high school. Upon successful completion of this educational cycle, the students are given a certificate of completion for the lower secondary school at the age of 14.

In high school or upper secondary cycle, which includes four years of education, students learn different manual, theoretical as well as technical and professional skills. After the successful completion of the courses, the students get a diploma. The requirement to enter the higher education is to have a High school diploma and pass the national University Entrance Exam which is known as “Konkoor”. It is known as the “most stringent” test which allows the students who successfully pass it to be admitted to university (Kamyab, 2004).

#### **1.2.1.2 Higher Education**

Higher education is provided by universities, technology institutes, medical schools and community colleges, and recently by some technological and industrial centers. The higher technical diploma also called “Kardani” is a two year post-secondary degree through the completion of 68-78 units. At the next level, there are four years of education for a bachelor’s degree, also called “Karshenasi”, with the completion of 130-140 units. To pursue studies for a Master’s degree, two years of study is required which can be continued only by those who pass the university entrance exam which is sometimes accompanied by interviews depending on the major. The degree is awarded upon the completion of 36-40 units and a thesis defense. Another entrance exam with an interview allows the students to pursue a doctoral program/PhD (Doctor of Philosophy). Doctoral candidates study for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years. Also, there will be the requirement of passing a comprehensive examination and a dissertation defense.

### **1.3 Teaching of English in Iran**

English language is taught as a foreign language in the Iranian context (Amiryousefi, Dastjerdi, & Tavakoli, 2012; Khajavi & Abbasian, 2011). For middle and high school the time allocated to English language lessons is limited to two to four hours of instruction per week. Nevertheless, since the students cannot learn English communicatively, many of them attend the classes in private language schools to learn English (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi, 2005) which have been increasing in number recently (Vaezi, 2008). After several years of studying English at guidance school, secondary school, and pre-university, Iranian students are not competent in English nor can they interact confidently (Dahmardeh, 2009).

In higher education in Iran, English plays a significant role and it is the key for accessing information (Amiryousefi, Dastjerdi, & Tavakoli, 2012). At universities in Iran, English is taught in different fields. These fields are divided into two sectors based on the major. The first field is English. The students who major in English language and literature, teaching English as a foreign language, English translation, and linguistics comprise this group. Every English major student (EMS) goes through two years of general English instruction first to learn the four main language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. For the next two years, in general, the students concentrate on specialized courses of study (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi, 2005).

The next field is known as non-English. Non-English major students (Non-EMS) study fields such as engineering, medicine or law. Non-EMSs study English for a maximum of between 7 to 8 credits based on the departments' syllabus: 2 credits of Basic English, 3 credits of General Academic English and 2 to 3 credits of Specific Academic English in which they focus on their field-related English texts

and learn the related terminology (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi, 2005). The EAP courses are offered after the students complete their courses in Basic English. The Basic English course is common to all students which includes the teaching of basic grammar and general vocabulary. The English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) courses are aimed at developing learners' reading comprehension skills and enhancing their sub-technical vocabulary; whereas, the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses involve specialized content aiming at preparing the learners to comprehend the highly specialized English texts and technical vocabulary (Amirian & Tavakoli, 2009).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

As explained (section 1.1) several EAP practitioners in Iran agree that EAP courses are not effective. A wide range of reasons were mentioned in the first national EAP conference held in 2005 in Iran; these included: the textbook materials are similar to other textbooks for teaching general English (Sadeghian, 2005), the teaching approach is not learner-centered (Hassaskhah, 2005), the teaching methodology and activities do not adhere to the communicative approach (Rahimian, 2005), materials are not up-to-date (Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, 2005), content excludes reading strategies and there is no variety in task design (Soleinami, 2005), and the recent developments in linguistics and communicative paradigms are disregarded (Shokouhi, 2005).

As far as the learners are concerned, several Iranian scholars (Ajideh, 2009; Atai & Nazari, 2011; Atai & Shoja, 2011; Eslami-Rasekh, 2010; Eslami-Rasekh & Simin, 2011; Farhady, 2005; Hassaskhah, 2005; Hayati, 2008) believe that the EAP students are either de-motivated or have low motivation. Other researchers (Amirian & Tavakoli, 2009; Hassaskhah, 2005; Sayfour, 2005) have echoed the same concern



by stating that the students often do not take the courses seriously because they cannot see the immediate results of what is being instructed to them and cannot relate what they learn to their real-life use and needs. One of the reasons for this de-motivation is the materials' content where Horabadi (2005) believes that the contents of the EAP textbooks are de-motivating for EAP students.

In addition to learners' lack of motivation, their achievement is not facilitated through the materials in their EAP course books with respect to the reading skill which is predominantly emphasized in Iranian EAP courses. Thus, reading comprehension level is lower than what is expected of them to act proficiently in academic settings (Ahmadi & Bajelani, 2012; Amiryousefi, Dastjerdi, & Tavakoli, 2012; Atai & Nazari, 2011; Atai & Shoja, 2011; Hashemi, Lamir, & Namjoo, 2011; Jafari & Shokrpour, 2012; Jalilifar, 2010; Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, 2005; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

Having reviewed the EAP position in Iran as highlighted by Iranian practitioners (Eslami-Rasekh, 2010; Eslami-Rasekh & Simin, 2011; Farhady, 2005; Manafi, 2005; Riazi, 2005; Soleimani, 2005; Tayebipour, 2005) along with the papers presented in the first National ESP/EAP conference in Iran in 2005, it is revealed that the materials in current EAP textbooks do not enhance students' achievement and are not motivating for the EAP students.

Some of the EAP practitioners in Iran also believe in the necessity of "reengineering" (Shokouhi, 2005), "revising, modifying, or replacing" (Farhady, 2005) the textbook materials for EAP courses. As Farhady (2005) mentions, the EAP courses do not utilize a communicative approach in learning and teaching; also, the textbook materials are outdated and do not involve real-world tasks; instead, they include exam-oriented exercises and practices. In the same vein, Eslami-Rasekh and

Simin (2011, p.15) mention that “revision in the currently administered EAP courses will result in remarkable increase in motivation to learn, interest, and participation”.

However, one of the suggestions mentioned frequently in the language teaching/learning literature and also by the Iranian EAP practitioners (Askari, 2004; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Khonsari, 2005; Shokouhi, 2005; Riazi, 2005) is to expose learners to an authentic context. Hence, the present study proposes the incorporation of authenticity into the context of EAP courses in Iran through the integration of authentic texts and tasks to explore their effects on Iranian EAP students’ motivation level, reading motivation as well as reading achievement.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

Accordingly, the present study attempts to investigate the effects of authentic context through the integration of authentic texts and tasks on motivation level, reading motivation, and reading achievement among Iranian EAP students. Accordingly, the objectives of the study are as follows in detail:

- To investigate the effect of different contexts (Authentic and Traditional) on Motivation Level among Iranian EAP students.
- To investigate the effect of different contexts (Authentic and Traditional) on Reading Motivation among Iranian EAP students.
- To investigate the effect of different contexts (Authentic and Traditional) on Reading Achievement among Iranian EAP students.
- To investigate the relationships, if any, between Motivation Level, Reading Motivation and Reading Achievement among Iranian EAP students in the traditional and authentic contexts.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the foregoing objectives, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in Motivation Level of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts?
2. Is there any significant difference in Reading Motivation of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts?
3. Is there any significant difference in Reading Achievement of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts?
4. Are there any significant relationships between Motivation Level, Reading Motivation, and Reading Achievement among Iranian EAP students in the Traditional and Authentic contexts?

## **1.7 Research Hypotheses**

Based on the above-mentioned research questions and in order to find answers for the research questions, the null hypotheses are stated. A null hypothesis which is symbolized as  $H_0$  states that a relationship or an effect does not exist between the variables. It implies a negation of the researcher's expectation or prediction. It is possible to test the probability of truthfulness of a hypothesis through statistical analysis. If the observed probability that the change was based on chance was slight, it may be possible to reject the hypothesis. Then, the researcher is able to show that the relationship or effect existed between the variables of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Rajamanickam, 2001; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Therefore, the following hypotheses were posited

based on the research objectives and questions to be tested through statistical analyses:

- $H_{01}$  There is no significant difference in Motivation Level of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts.
- $H_{02}$  There is no significant difference in Reading Motivation of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts.
- $H_{03}$  There is no significant difference in Reading Achievement of the selected Iranian EAP students in Authentic and Traditional contexts.
- $H_{04}$  There are no significant relationships between Motivation Level, Reading Motivation, and Reading Achievement among Iranian EAP students in the Traditional and Authentic contexts.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is twofold. Firstly, this study provides new knowledge and extends the knowledge base which is available on authenticity, authentic texts, authentic tasks, and the implementation and integration of authentic texts with authentic tasks for English teaching in general and in the context of EAP in particular. Secondly, this study provides information on the effects that an authentic context (inclusion of authentic texts and tasks) has on English language learners' motivation level, reading motivation, and reading achievement specifically EAP students. The findings of the study can be beneficial for the EAP domain stakeholders such as EAP teachers/practitioners, EAP syllabus designers, as well as EAP material developers, EAP textbook writers and policy makers both in Iran and in other similar EFL contexts.

As for EAP teachers/practitioners, the findings provide them with a deeper understanding of an authentic context and how it works in an EAP setting

specifically when the reading skill is emphasized. Thus, having found the learners' motivations towards the authentic materials and the authentic tasks, the teachers who are engaged in EAP courses are provided with some insights on how to make the choice of the authentic materials and on how to authenticate them through tasks. Hence, the results provide them with recommendations for choosing materials and classroom tasks and activities which are more motivating to include them in EAP courses.

Similarly, having investigated the learners' motivations for the contexts and their achievement, the study provides insights for the EAP practitioners on which approach (traditional, authentic) to select in their teaching in order to enhance motivation and achievement. Furthermore, the tasks provided as part of the teaching methodology may facilitate EAP teachers in preparing authentic tasks. Thus, the teachers may use the proposed tasks as a model. Also, the lesson plan of the study may be used as a framework and a guide for EAP teachers.

Likewise, the outcomes would be noteworthy for EAP syllabus designers, material developers, and EAP textbook writers who are engaged in designing textbooks for EAP courses. Having found the effects of using authentic materials on learners' motivation level, reading motivation and reading achievement, syllabus designers and material developers may use the findings in the selection of the materials which are to be included in future EAP course books both in terms of the kind of texts, the methodology of instruction (authentic, traditional), and the tasks and activities. This will encourage EAP stakeholders to consider alternatives and make choices when material preparation and textbook provision is concerned.

## **1.9 Operational Definitions of key Terms**

### **EFL (English as a Foreign Language):**

English as a foreign language is the English learned by people from a community where English is not normally used (Cunningsworth, 1984). In an EFL context, English is taught as a school subject (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002) and it is learned only for educational purposes (Stern, 1992). Thus, in the Iranian context as an EFL context, where this study was conducted, English is not used in the community and it is viewed as a subject learned for educational purposes rather than communicative purposes.

### **EAP (English for Academic Purposes):**

EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In the context of the present study EAP relates to the English which is taught in academic settings of universities. The EAP students (majoring in different fields) have to pass these obligatory EAP courses as a requirement of graduation. The predominant skill in the context of Iranian EAP courses is reading.

### **Context:**

According to Gu (2003), the learning context is the learning environment and may include the students and their peers, the teacher, the curriculum, social-cultural traditions of learning, or the input and output availability. Accordingly, the different elements of the context in this study include the students and their peers, the teacher, the syllabus as well as the texts and tasks or the exercises included in the teaching procedure. The present study deals with two contexts of authentic and traditional:

### **Authentic Context:**

As Breen (1985) mentions, to ensure authenticity all different authentic aspects must be provided in the classroom such as text authenticity used as input, authenticity of

learners' interpretation of the texts, authenticity of tasks related to language learning and the authenticity of the actual social situation provided in the class. The teacher in this context has the role of a facilitator and supporter (Woo, Herrington, Agostino, & Reeves, 2007). Thus, to ensure authenticity of the context in this study, authentic texts accompany authentic tasks while the social situation and learner interpretation is also provided authentically. Moreover, the teacher's traditional role as a lecturer has changed to a facilitator and supporter.

### **Traditional Context:**

The traditional context of the study encompasses the grammar-translation method in which the teacher is the sole speaker and she/he is the one who explains the texts by providing the students with synonyms, antonyms, explanations, and paraphrases. The students in this context have a passive role through taking notes. Moreover, there is no student-student interaction. The course is teacher-centered and the students have no opportunity for communication.

### **Authentic Text**

Authentic texts are those texts which have not been specifically produced for language teaching purposes (Harmer, 1991; Jordan, 1997; Nunan, 1989; Wallace, 1992). These kinds of texts have specific informative communicative purpose. Among the wide range of authentic texts introduced in the literature, the present study focuses on infobooks, web pages, and web articles which are extracted from the websites (please refer to page 132).

### **Authentic Task**

Authentic tasks "mirror the challenges faced by individuals in the real world" (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Bastola (2006) refers to some of the samples of authentic tasks as playing a game, problem solving, information or experience sharing. Other

authentic tasks can be writing reports (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Martens, 2005), writing letters (Jacobson, Degener, & Purcell-Gates, 2003), sharing and discussions (Oura, 2001). As far as reading authentic materials are concerned, some of the tasks which are used include “ascertaining the topic, scanning for specific information, and getting information from charts or graphs” (Aebersold & Field, 1997). This study includes problem solving, finding the main ideas, information sharing, silent reading, summarizing, discussion, scanning, skimming, report writing as well as completing tables and charts as authentic tasks.

### **Motivation Level**

The definition of motivation level for the present study is based on the definition of motivation by Keller. According to Keller (2010, p.4) motivation is “the direction and magnitude of behavior, or in other words, it explains what goals people choose to pursue and how actively and intensely they pursue them”. Thus, the constructs of the motivation level in this study are attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction as presented in Keller’s macro theory of motivation and instructional design. Accordingly, motivation level was assessed through measuring the above mentioned constructs.

### **Reading Motivation**

Reading motivation is “a person’s beliefs, goals, and values about the reading topics, processes and outcomes” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Reading motivation in the context of this study includes constructs introduced by Wigfield and Guthrie’s reading motivation theoretical model including reading efficacy, reading challenge, reading avoidance, reading curiosity, reading involvement, reading importance, reading compliance. Accordingly, reading motivation was measured through assessing the aforementioned constructs.



## **Reading Achievement**

Reading achievement is the attained reading ability level which is tested based on “specific content” or “course syllabus” (Bachman, 1990). Reading achievement in the context of the present study includes the EAP students’ reading comprehension scores on the researcher-designed test. The reading comprehension test includes texts extracted from different websites the contents of which are matched with the topics covered in both groups. The texts follow two criteria of course content and relevance.

### **1.10 Limitations of the Study**

Due to the nature of the study several limitations were imposed on this research. Firstly, for practical reasons, in this Iranian EFL context, it was not possible to provide a real authentic teaching context which is defined as the immersion of the learner into the context of the target language by Menasche (2005, cited in Tatsuki, 2006). Hence, the context of the classroom was authenticated through the integration of authentic texts and authentic tasks.

Secondly, as the treatment of the experimental group included several steps and various considerations for the teacher as the contributor and the facilitator, the researcher was also the teacher in both groups to ensure the accuracy of the procedure. Nevertheless, the researcher was aware of bias issues related to the researcher as teacher in studies which could affect the results. Accordingly, care was taken to play a neutral role in both groups.

Thirdly, as the initiation of the authentic context required a brainstorming section, the warm-up section was planned for the authentic group. However, since only 10 minutes of the sessions were allocated to this section it is assumed that this would not have affected the motivation level, reading motivation and reading achievement.

### **1.11 The Study Organization**

Chapter one explains the study background which clarifies the educational system in Iran and the history of language teaching in Iran with an emphasis on EAP and the related statement of the problem and correspondingly the related questions and hypotheses.

Chapter two analyzes the literature review on the variables of the present study. It includes the discussions and views on EAP, authenticity and an authentic context including authentic texts and tasks, motivation with reference to motivation level and reading motivation and reading in the EAP context. Finally, the theoretical framework is presented.

Chapter three includes the description of the study methodology, design, sampling procedure, and data collection instruments and procedures. Moreover, it includes the description and findings of the pilot study conducted before the main study.

Chapter four provides the related statistical analyses of the study data. A detailed description of the analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data is presented. Furthermore, the assumptions for the statistical tests are presented.

Chapter five concludes with the study summary as well as the pedagogical implications of the study and the recommendations for future research.

### **1.12 Chapter Summary**

Having reviewed the current status of the EAP courses and materials design in Iran, it was markedly perceived that the EAP courses had not been efficient in motivating or keeping learners motivated. Moreover, it was also inferred that the level of reading achievement of the EAP students is lower than anticipated. Moreover, since all EAP students and likewise EAP teachers are involved in these

obligatory courses for non-English major students, the need for doing research in this area is unavoidable. Therefore, considering the beneficial effects of an authentic context which are frequently mentioned in language teaching/learning literature, the researcher suggested the provision of an authentic context through the integration of authentic texts and authentic tasks for the aforementioned problems.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The following chapter includes a review on the context of the study which is EAP (English for Academic Purposes), authenticity, authentic texts and tasks, motivation, and reading. Moreover, motivation as referring to the specific domain of reading and as relating to the motivation level for the instructional context will be discussed. Finally, the supporting theories of the study are explained and presented.

#### **2.2 English for Academic purposes (EAP)**

English has grown as a prominent language for academic knowledge dissemination and this has revolutionized the educational experiences of many students who need to be fluent in English academic discourse for comprehending their disciplines and successfully navigating their knowledge. Thus, EAP emerged within the field of English language teaching as a response to fulfill the above-mentioned demand.

EAP is derived from the umbrella term ESP, an acronym for English for Specific Purposes (Hyland, 2006), which appeared in the 1960s to meet learners' and employers' needs. As is mentioned by Sinha and Sadorra (1991) in the 1970s it stood for English for Special purposes. By Special it was implied that some purposes are special while others are ordinary. Hutchinson and waters (1987) call ESP as having a practical drive since it was devised for an increasing number of people all around the world who had clearly defined language needs such as reading academic textbooks. The prominent foundation based on which ESP emerged was the learners' needs and objectives multiplicity and specificity for English learning (Amirian & Tavakoli,

2009). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) ESP emerged initially for three main reasons. The first reason was the “demand for a brave new world” which accelerated the crisis for people to learn English for economical and technological purposes. The second reason was the “revolution in linguistics” which emphasized language use rather than usage and focused on specific kinds of needs. The third reason was the “focus on learner” which believed that learners are an essential part of learning and their motivation, attitude, and needs must be taken into consideration. According to Strevens (1980), ESP is devised to meet particular needs of the learners and the themes and topics which are covered relate to the occupations or the areas of study. Besides, the language chosen for ESP is selective rather than general and the language skills that are included are limited to learners’ needs. As Herrera and Murry (2005) state, ESP and LSP instruction use specially designed content-based texts to assist culturally and linguistically diverse students in developing speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Thus, ESP is designed to build up students’ skill in order to enable them to communicate in English language and the materials that are included are basically chosen based on the learners’ areas of professional expertise (Tarnopolsky, 2009).

ESP is divided into two main categories: The first category is called EAP which is an acronym for English for academic purposes and is the English which is instructed in an educational context such as a university or an institution. According to Dominguez and Rokowski (2002) EAP, as the name suggests, takes place in an academic environment and the essence of its inclusion in academic settings is that English is no more simply a foreign language; rather it is considered as “a universal form of communication in all walks of life”. The second category is EOP which is an

acronym for English for Occupational Purposes and refers to contexts in which professional purposes are important (Dudley-Evans, 2001).

According to Hyland (2006) EAP is mainly concerned with instruction and curriculum rather than analysis and theory. EAP is influenced by such theories like linguistics, genre studies, learning theories, communicative language teaching, sociolinguistics, as well as applied linguistics while its main basis is on instruction and curriculum rather than research or theory. Due to its preoccupation with material development or syllabus design, EAP has changed to a responsive field to complexities which exist in the learning and teaching of English as far as local contexts are concerned. Thus, instead of focusing on lexical items or text types appropriate for EAP courses, the unpredictable social context of English learning has become a main concern (Benesch, 2001).

Nevertheless, EAP has grown much to the point that it is considered as a way of developing academic literacy rather than just preparing learners to study English (Hyland, 2006). The discourse specificity is one feature that distinguishes EAP from other fields. Moreover, EAP is always accompanied with the notion of community and the exclusive form of texts and practices related to them is not what constitutes it. However, there is the potential of providing the sample texts which are representative to be differentiated based on both genre and field through analyzing and studying genres and the intertextual relations (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

EAP has two subdivisions. Based on the course being “common core” or “subject-specific”, it may be called EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) for the former and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) for the latter. An EGAP course mainly deals with general skills that the students at university level need such as writing reference skills or listening and note taking. An ESAP course is

subject-specific dealing with for example medicine, economics, or engineering. Concerning the content as the name suggests the vocabulary used in ESAP is more technical while the general, structural, and sub-technical vocabulary may be the same (Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997). The following figure (Figure 2.1) adopted from Jordan (1997) illustrates the EGAP as the base and the ESAP as the pinnacle. As is shown in the figure, while ESAP is more discipline-based and relevant to students, EGAP includes generalizable skills which are applicable to larger groups of students.

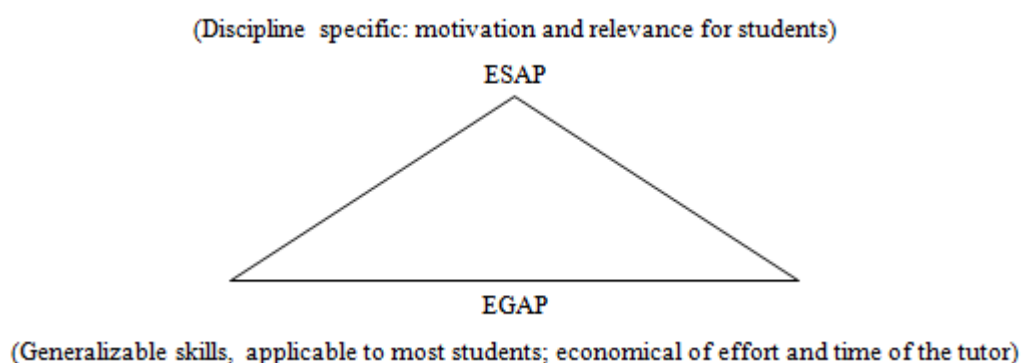


Figure 2.1 Jordan's 1997 illustration of EGAP and ESAP

Based on the above discussion as well as the definitions that distinguish ESAP from EGAP, the context of the present study is EGAP since the courses include less technical vocabulary and the students must learn more generalizable skills such as reading. Moreover, since the group of the students includes engineering students of different fields such as civil engineering, electrical engineering, computer engineering and mechanical engineering, the course is not tailored towards one field; thus, the content is general to all fields.

### 2.2.1 EAP Methodologies

According to Jordan (1997), in EAP as a branch of ESP it is possible to implement the teaching methodologies related to ESP. Thus, this section will review some of the proposed teaching methodologies for ESP which may also be practical