

**Contextualizing Situational Factors of Motivation  
in an Iranian Medical ESP Setting\***

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**Abstract**

The present study, whose main aim was to investigate the relative importance of a pre-selected set of situational factors which seem to motivate learners to engage in English for medical purposes reading, was carried out at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in Iran during February - June 2007. A total of 339 students from various fields of study including medicine, dentistry, pharmacology, nursing, midwifery, medical library, medical records, nutrition, health information management and environmental health participated in this study. A questionnaire consisting of twenty-six items on a five-point Likert scale was distributed among students to collect data. The collected data were then analyzed, using simple linear and stepwise regressions. The results showed that the situational factors of motivation with a focus on reading skills, content of EAP textbooks, requirement assigned by EAP teachers, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks and practitioner of EAP courses significantly contributed to motivating students to engage in EAP reading ( $p < .05$ ). The findings of the present study can shed light on EAP syllabus design, materials development, course delivery and instructional strategies in a tertiary medical educational setting.

**Keywords:** EAP reading, situational factors, motivation, medical ESP

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## 1. Introduction

Ever since the advent of the concept of ESP, such courses and the way they should be conducted have been a major concern for educators and syllabus designers alike. Out of their concern to provide ESP learners with stimulating and instructive materials, well-wishing experts, conversant with the latest trends of ESP and the philosophy of education, have attempted to design engaging textbooks as well as adopt new approaches to transform ESP courses, often to no or little avail. It appears, at least within the Iranian context, that while the teaching materials or other instructional factors have changed, the actual standard of courses has not improved. As a cynical commentator might say, these innovations have been like cosmetics applied to a corpse. That explains why the relevant literature is replete with instances where groups of ESP learners complain that their courses are rather tedious and that they have no motivation to study. The present study, therefore, sets out to investigate what factors could motivate students to take ESP courses more seriously. It also aims to explore the contribution of the five elements specified in this study to the learners' motivation.

### *1.1. L2 Motivation*

Early L2 motivational studies can be attributed to Gardner and Lambert, who borrowed the concept of motivation from social psychology and introduced it into the field of L2 learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Their binary distinction between instrumental/integrative orientations within their socio-educational model of motivation (Gardner, 1985) has, since its conception, been influential and has inspired numerous pieces of research up to the present day.

Gardner's socio-educational model, however, has come under severe criticism, not the least among which his instrumental/integrative dichotomy, with integrative motivation being superior to instrumental motivation, is considered to be "an oversimplification of a highly complex issue" (Humphreys & Spratt, 2008, p. 314). The shortcomings of Gardner's socio-educational model resulted in a rebirth of motivation in the early 1990s, this time not from social psychology but from education. A new avenue of research in motivation was opened and the scope of motivation was extended to focus on a) social as well as psychological dimensions, b) accounting for specific language tasks/behaviors, c) a tendency to address practical classroom realities. The "educational shift" (Dornyei, 2003) and "motivational renaissance"

(Gardner & Trembley, 1994) of this period were premised on the assumption that “the classroom environment—and, more generally, the contextual surroundings of action—had a much stronger motivational influence than had been proposed before” (Dornyei, 2003, p. 11). Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Dornyei (1994), and Oxford and Shearin (1994) were among the first to inaugurate the new agenda of research in L2 motivation to make it more education friendly. Later on, Trembley and Gardner (1997) and Williams and Burden (1997) joined the band wagon and added more dynamic dimensions to motivation, freeing it from the static notion of social psychological ring to motivation.

Dornyei (2003) summarized very neatly the alternatives to Gardnerian social psychology as well as the developments which have taken place since early 1990s. We will present an outline and the reader is referred to the original paper for a complete, detailed discussion and review. The outline reads as follows:

*I. Alternative theoretical approaches*

- A. Motivational orientations and self-determination theory
- B. L2 Motivation and attribution theory
- C. Goal theories
- D. The neurobiology of L2 motivation

*II. A more situated conception of L2 motivation*

- A. Willingness to communicate
- B. Task motivation
- C. Motivation and learning strategy use

*III. A process-oriented approach to L2 motivation research*

- A. Pre-actional stage
- B. Actional stage
- C. Post-actional stage

*1.2. Reading for academic purposes*

Reading, in general, and EAP reading, in particular, revolves around a series of factors which not only help students to read but also keep them motivated in reading. Some of these factors are briefly discussed below.

Reading skills have been shown to have a determining effect. As for EAP reading, two types of reading skills have been identified: macro and micro reading skills (Dudley–Evans & St John, 1998; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Jordan, 1997). Macro-skills consist of the use of schematic knowledge, i.e., existing material to make sense of new material, and fitting new knowledge into one's schema; micro-skills include skimming, scanning, drawing inferences and conclusions, understanding text organization, paraphrasing, logical relationships, etc. Applying these skills to reading keeps students motivated to pursue reading.

In addition to reading skills, the content of EAP textbooks plays a pivotal role in motivating students. Content can be general content coming from a broad range of common, everyday themes and topics or semi specialized content coming from a broad range of interdisciplinary fields of study or specialized content coming from the students' own fields of study. There is no unanimous consensus over content. Widdowson (1987) argues that any type of content can be chosen as far as the objectives of the course are fulfilled. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) believe that materials should be of interdisciplinary nature. Fanning (1993) holds that hard terminology must be totally avoided. Johns and Dudley–Evans (1993) draw a distinction between narrow angle and wide angle views and believe that the two approaches are utilized in choosing content. Hyland (2002) suggests that an 'English for general academic purposes' approach be used.

The role of the practitioner has also been emphasized as a motivating factor. Who should teach an ESP course? An English teacher or a subject–matter teacher or both an English teacher and a subject-matter teacher? This is a vital question because the teacher plays a main role in motivating or demotivating students. Jalilfar (2002) believes that the only qualified teacher to teach an ESP course is an English teacher. Dudley–Evans and St John (1998) are of similar opinion. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) believe in team–teaching: both an English teacher and a subject matter teacher collaborate with each other in teaching an EAP course.

The ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks also plays a part in motivating students to read. What makes a text easy or difficult to read? Traditional views (Huang, 2006) maintain that linguistic elements such as vocabulary and grammar and text length constitute ease/difficulty of a

text. The more lexically dense and the more heavily structured a text is, the more difficult it will be. Also, the longer the sentences and the more complex and compound sentences there are in a text, the more difficult it will be (Halliday, 1989). More modern approaches (Hauptman, 2000) view language to play a peripheral role, considering background schemata and text signaling as the major determinants followed by language and length factors. Hauptman (2000), for instance, argues that signaling should be both iconic (pictures, graphs, charts, tables, maps, figures, illustrations, etc) and non-iconic (titles, end notes, capitalization, underlining, bold-facing etc). He contends that the inclusion of text signaling of both types makes a text easier to read.

The last, but not least, factor affecting EAP reading is assignment, which Warden and Lin (2000) refer to as requirement motivation. In a study investigating Gardnerian social psychological approach to motivation in an Asian EFL context, Warden and Lin (2000) found both an instrumental and a required motivation in learning English. Littlewood (1999) also found that, when students were guided and directed by an authority figure, they were more motivated to engage in activities leading them to autonomy. Iyengar and Lepper (1999) also found that, compared to Anglo-American children, Asian children's motivation increased when decisions were made by trusted authority figures.

## **2. The rationale for the study**

The present study draws on the “*situated approach* characterized by a *micro perspective*” (Dornyei, 2003, p. 12), dealing with the motivational impact of the various aspects of the learning context. The study specifically applies Dornyei’s (1994) tripartite model of foreign language learning motivation. It mainly focuses on the learning situation level and integrates it into an Iranian medical ESP context to observe how students are motivated to learn to read. The study, therefore, sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent can the ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks motivate students in EAP reading?
2. To what extent does the content of EAP textbooks motivate students in EAP reading?
3. To what extent can reading skills motivate students in EAP reading?

4. Who should teach the EAP course: an English teacher or a subject-matter teacher?

5. To what extent does requirement assigned by the teacher motivate students in EAP reading?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. The respondents

The present study was conducted on a sample of 339 Iranian medical students. The students came from six faculties studying various fields of study. The average age of the students was 21.5, and they had already studied English for an average of nine years. The breakdown of sample was as follows:

Table 1  
*Breakdown of the Sample*

Number of students	Name of faculties	Degree	Field of study
40	Faculty of medicine	General	Medicine
38	Faculty of dentistry	General	Dentistry
51	Faculty of pharmacology	General	Pharmacology
17	Faculty of nursing	Master of science	Nursing and midwifery
23	Faculty of nursing	Bachelor of science	Nursing
20	Faculty of nursing	Bachelor of science	Midwifery
12	Faculty of Nutrition	Bachelor of science	Nutrition
26	Faculty of Nutrition	Bachelor of science	Environmental Health
18	Faculty of Nutrition	Bachelor of science	Health Management
27	Faculty of Paramedicine	Bachelor of science	Medical records
67	Faculty of Paramedicine	Bachelor of science	Medical library
Total	339		

### 3.2. *The instrument*

To collect data, we used a questionnaire based on the one devised, standardized, and used by Huang (2006), which consisted of 18 items on a seven-point Likert scale. We introduced some changes to the questionnaire, translating the items into Persian, changing the scale into a five-point scale, and adding 8 more items to it (See Appendix). The questionnaire was checked by six of our colleagues for correctness of the translated items and appropriateness of the added items. The finalized version of the questionnaire underwent a pilot phase to be standardized for the purposes of the present study, using a class of students studying medical records. The completed questionnaires were data analyzed to determine the internal reliability of the questionnaire, which turned out to be decently high (Cronbach's alpha= .81).

### 3.3. *Sampling Procedure*

The sample of the present study consisted of BSc and MS students as well as students of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacology. Following Dornyei (2007, p. 98), we adopted convenience or opportunity sampling. Our study sample selection was based on the criterion that all of them were studying EAP courses. The criterion for selection was the EAP course itself. So, only those students who were studying EAP course were selected.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 Show the distribution of the study samples based on gender, field of study, and degree.

Table 2  
*Sampling Distribution Based on Gender*

Gender	N	Percent
Male	92	27.1
Female	233	68.7
Missing	14	4.1
Total	339	1.00

Table 3

*Sampling Distribution Based on field of Study*

Field of Study	N	Percent
Environmental health	26	7.7
Medical library	67	19.8
Midwifery	28	8.3
Nursing	32	9.4
Medicine	40	11.8
Pharmacology	51	0.15
Dentistry	38	11.2
Health management	18	5.3
Nutrition	12	3.5
Medical records	27	0.8
Total	339	1.00

Table 4

*Sampling Distribution Based on Degree*

Degree	N	Percent
Bachelor of science	193	56.9
Master of science	17	5
General practitioner	129	38.1
Total	339	1.00

*3.4. Data analysis*

To answer the research questions, both descriptive and inferential statistics were done on the gathered data. Descriptive statistics consisted of mean, standard deviation, and variance; inferential statistics included both simple linear regression and stepwise regression.

**4. Results**

Table 5 shows the results of the stepwise regression for the variables of the study when they are taken together and Table 6 shows the amount of variance accounted for by individual variables. The overall results are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 5  
*Results of Stepwise Regression for Variables of the Study in Relation to Each Other*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
1	0.858	0.737	0.736	9444.435	0.000	0.308	199255685	0.000
2	0.937	0.877	0.876	1199.479	0.000	0.342	251624200	0.000
3	0.970	0.941	0.941	1786.495	0.000	0.215	165227619	0.000
4	0.989	0.978	0.978	3125.117	0.000	0.259	186046698	0.000
5	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.813	0.000	0.175	140987018	0.000

Note.1. Reading skills  
 2. Reading skills, requirement  
 3. Reading skills, requirement, content  
 4. Reading skills, requirement, content, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks  
 5. Reading skills, requirement, content, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks, practitioner of EAP course  
 Dependent Variable: Motivation in EAP Reading

Table 6  
*Results of Accounted Variance by Individual Variables*

Independent Variables	The Amount of Variance Accounted for by Individual Variables
Reading skills	0.73
Requirment	0.14
Content	0.07
Ease/difficulty	0.03
Practitioner of EAP course	0.03

To get a clearer picture, we analyzed the variables individually, using both simple linear regression and stepwise regression. This way of analysis allowed us to check the differences of variables analyzed individually and in relation to each other as a whole, so for every research question we ran two analyses and compared them with those in Table 5.

*Research question 1:* To what extent can the ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks motivate students in EAP reading?

The first six questions of the questionnaire (Questions 1 to 6) were used to measure the effect of ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks on EAP reading. As shown in Table 7, the total number of students who had answered each item is mentioned and the percentage for each item is calculated. 36.13 percent of the students had chosen item 5, 33.94 percent of them item 4, 6.78 percent of them item 3, 6.78 percent of them item 2, and 4.47 percent of them item 1. 70.07 percent of them had opted for items 4 and 5, suggesting that more than half of the students are motivated to read EAP texts characterized by the first 6 items of the questionnaire:

1. There are clear graphs, tables, and illustrations in the texts.
2. Key points are highlighted.
3. There are few new words.
4. The books are written in simple grammar.
5. There are no translated versions of the textbooks.
6. The organization and layout of the books are easy to follow.

Table 7  
*The Number of Questions and Items for Research Question 1*

Questions	Very unwilling to read (1)	Unwilling to read(2)	To some extent willing to read(3)	willing to read(4)	very willing to read(5)
1	11	19	71	125	113
2	6	10	41	121	161
3	11	30	77	126	95
4	6	13	46	113	161
5	53	53	103	85	45
6	4	13	42	120	160
Total	91	138	380	690	730
Percent	4.47	6.78	18.68	33.94	36.13

To determine whether the ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks had any motivational effect on EAP reading, we used both simple linear regression and multiple regression. First we employed simple linear regression, using Enter method to determine the effect of ease/difficulty by itself without considering the other variables. Then we used stepwise regression (See Table 5) to determine the amount of total variance accounted for by ease/difficulty in relation to other variables. Tables 8

and 9 show the results of descriptive statistics and simple linear regression.

Table 8

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1*

Number of respondents	Mean	standard deviation
339	23.42	3.94

Table 9

*Results of Simple Linear Regression, Using Enter Method for Research Question 1*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
0.780	0.609	0.608	524.542	0.000	0.780	22.903	0.000

Note. Independent variable: Ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks

Dependent variable: Motivation in EAP reading

As it can be seen in Table 9, R and R<sup>2</sup> for independent variable, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks, are 0.780 and 0.609 respectively. Beta is 0.780, by which is meant the ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks alone accounts for 0.60 of the total variance of the dependent variable. Both T and F values are statistically significant ( $p=0.000 \leq .05$ ).

But the situation changes when other variables are taken into account. When stepwise regression is employed, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks occupies the fourth position in Table 5. As shown in Tables 9 and 5, R and R<sup>2</sup> change from 0.780 and 0.609 (See Table 9) to 0.98 and 0.97 (See Table 5), respectively. This means that ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks, as shown in Table 6, accounts for only 3% of total variance of the dependent variable and the remaining variance is accounted for by other variables.

*Research question 2:* To what extent does the content of EAP textbooks motivate students in EAP reading?

To answer this question, we repeated the same procedure for research question 1, using questions 19 to 23 of the questionnaire. Based on Table (10), 22.65 percent of the students chose item 5, 33.70 percent item 4, 27.50 percent item 3, 11.70 percent item 2, and 4.30 percent item 1. 56.35 percent opted for items 4 and 5, which means that more than half

of the students are motivated to read EAP texts characterized by the five elements gauged in items 19 to 23.

Table 10  
*The Number of Questions and Items for Research Question 2*

Questions	Very unwilling to read(1)	Not willing to read(2)	To some extent willing to read(3)	willing to read(4)	very willing to read(5)
19	23	70	107	97	42
20	13	23	77	118	108
21	5	16	77	134	107
22	19	59	99	116	53
23	13	36	112	104	74
Total	73	197	472	569	384
Percent	4.30	11.70	27.50	33.70	22.65

To see whether the content of EAP textbooks had any motivational effect on EAP reading, we repeated the same procedure for research question 1. Tables 11 and 12 show the results of descriptive statistics and simple linear regression.

Table 11  
*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 2*

Number of respondents	Mean	Standard deviation
339	17.93	3.26

Table 12  
*Results of Simple Linear Regression, Using Enter Method for Research Question 2*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
0.696	0.482	0.482	315.973	0.000	0.696	17.776	0.000

Note. Independent variable: content of EAP courses  
Dependent variable: motivation in EAP reading

Based on Table 11,  $R$  and  $R^2$  for content of EAP textbooks are 0.696 and 0.482, respectively. Beta is 0.696, by which is meant the content of EAP textbooks alone accounts for 0.69 of the total variance of the dependent variable. Both  $T$  and  $F$  values are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

When other variables are taken into account, the situation changes. When stepwise regression is employed, content of EAP textbooks occupies the third position in Table 5. As shown in Tables 12 and 5,  $R$  and  $R^2$  change from 0.696 and 0.482 (See Table 12) to 0.97 and 0.94 (See Table 5), respectively. This means that content of EAP textbooks, as shown in Table 6, accounts for only 7% of total variance of the dependent variable and the rest of the variance is accounted for by other variables.

*Research question 3:* To what extent can reading skills motivate students in EAP reading?

To answer this question, the same procedure was repeated, using questions 13 to 18 of the questionnaire. As shown in Table 13, 40.75 percent of the students chose item 5, 30.33 percent item 4, 18.70 percent item 3, 6.55 percent item 2, and 4.17 percent item 1. 71.08 percent opted for items 4 and 5. Again, a majority of the students are motivated to read EAP texts characterized by the presentation of vocabulary and special terminologies, sentence structure, organization and structure of the articles, and teacher's response to students' questions.

Table 13

*The Number of Questions and Items for Research Question 3*

Questions Items	Very unwilling to read (1)	Not willing to read(2)	To some extent willing to read(3)	willing to read(4)	very willing to read(5)
13	23	31	76	98	111
14	15	8	28	111	112
15	16	25	68	95	135
16	15	26	89	99	115
17	12	21	59	159	138
18	9	12	60	105	153
Total	85	123	380	617	829
Percent	4.17	6.55	18.70	30.33	40.75

To investigate whether reading skills had any motivational effect on EAP reading, we went through the same procedure as the one for research questions 1 and 2. Tables 14 and 15 show the results of descriptive statistics and simple linear regression.

Table 14

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 3*

Number of respondents	Mean	Standard deviation
339	23.84	4.68

Table 15

*Results of Simple Linear Regression for Research Question 3*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
0.858	0.737	0.736	944.435	0.000	0.858	30.732	0.000

Note. Independent variable: Reading skills

Dependent variable: motivation in EAP reading

Based on Table 15, R and R<sup>2</sup> for reading skills are 0.858 and 0.737, respectively. Beta is 0.858, showing that 'reading skills' alone accounts for 0.73 of the total variance of the dependent variable.

When stepwise regression is employed, reading skills occupy the first position in Table 5. As shown in Tables 15 and 5, R and R<sup>2</sup> remain the same. This means that reading skills, as shown in Table 5, accounts for 0.73 of total variance of the dependent variable.

*Research question 4:* Who should teach the EAP course: an English practitioner or a subject-matter practitioner?

To answer this question, the same procedure was repeated, using questions 24 to 26 of the questionnaire. Table 16 summarizes the number of students who answered each item and the percentage for each of the following items:

- 24. English teacher teaches EAP courses.
- 25. Subject-matter teacher teaches EAP courses.
- 26. Both English teacher and subject-matter teacher teach EAP courses collaboratively.

Table 16  
*The Number of Questions and Items for Research Question 4*

Questions	Very unwilling to read (1)	Not willing to read(2)	To some extent willing to read(3)	willing to read(4)	very willing to read(5)
Items					
24	46	40	78	89	86
25	28	33	71	103	104
26	43	44	84	70	98
Total	117	117	233	262	288
Percent	11.50	11.50	22.92	25.76	28.31

The same procedure as that of the previous research questions was gone through to determine whether practitioner of EAP courses had any motivational effect on EAP reading. The results of descriptive statistics and simple linear regression are summarized in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 17

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 4*

Number of respondents	Mean	Standard deviation
339	10.43	2.65

Table 18

*Results of Simple Linear Regression Using Enter Method for Research Question 4*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
0.622	0.387	0.385	212.916	0.000	0.622	15.592	0.000

Note. Independent variable: Practitioner

Dependent variable: motivation in EAP Reading

Table 18 shows that R and R<sup>2</sup> for practitioner of EAP courses are 0.622 and 0.387 respectively. Beta is 0.622, showing that ‘practitioner of EAP courses’ alone accounts for 0.38 of the total variance.

However, when stepwise regression is employed, ‘practitioner of EAP courses’ occupies the last position in Table 5. R and R<sup>2</sup> change from 0.622 and 0.387 (Table 18) to 0.1.000 and 1.000 (See Table 5) respectively. This means that practitioner of EAP courses, as shown in Table 5, accounts for only 3% of total variance.

*Research question 5:* To what extent does requirement assigned by the teacher motivate students in EAP reading?

To investigate this question, the same procedure as that of the previous questions was repeated, using questions 7 to 12 of the questionnaire. Table 19 contains the number of students who answered each item as well as the percentage for each of the items below:

7. I am required to do written reports for my reading
8. I am required to do oral reports for my reading
9. I am required to participate in class discussion
10. The weekly reading coverage is clearly assigned
11. The exams are directly based on the English reading

12. The teacher asks us to answer post reading questions

To see whether ‘requirement’ had any motivational effect on EAP reading, we repeated the same procedure for questions 1 to 4. Tables 20 and 21 contain the results.

Table 19  
*The Number of Questions and Items for Research Question 5*

Questions	Very unwilling to read(1)	Not willing to read(2)	To some extent willing to read(3)	willing to read(4)	very willing to read(5)
7	49	64	90	82	54
8	56	68	92	78	45
9	32	38	99	96	74
10	20	32	80	122	85
11	7	12	66	102	152
12	31	54	93	107	54
Total	195	268	520	587	464
Percent	9.60	13.18	25.70	28.86	22.82

Table 20  
*Results of Descriptive Statistic for Research Question 5*

Number of respondents	Mean	Standard deviation
339	20.52	5.20

Table 21  
*Results of Simple Linear Regression Using Enter Method for Research Question 5*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
0.805	0.648	0.647	619.588	0.000	0.805	24.892	0.000

Note. Independent variable: requirement  
Dependent variable: motivation in EAP Reading

Based on Table 21, R and  $R^2$  for requirement are 0.805 and 0.648, respectively. Beta is 0.805, indicating that 'requirement' alone accounts for 0.64 of the total variance of the dependent variable. But when stepwise regression is employed, requirement occupies the second position in Table 5. R and  $R^2$  change from 0.805 and 0.648 (See Table 23) to 0.937 and 0.877 (See Table 5), respectively. This means that 'requirement', as shown in Table 6, accounts for 14% of total variance of the dependent variable.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

### 5. 1. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of situational factors of motivation on EAP reading. Situational factors of motivation were operationalized as five main categories consistent with Dornyei's (1994) model of motivation, consisting of reading skills, requirement assigned by the teacher, content of EAP textbooks, ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks and the role of practitioner in EAP courses.

Based on the results of both simple linear regression and stepwise regression, the above-mentioned factors significantly contributed to motivating students to pursue reading EAP texts. The overall picture emerging from the study seems, therefore, to be promising. As evident in the table of variances accounted for by individual variables (See Table 6), the lion's share belongs to Reading Skills, accounting for %73 of the total variance in EAP reading. The second contributor is Requirement, which accounts for %14 of the variance. The third most important contributor is content, accounting for %7 of total variance, and ease/difficulty and practitioner account for %6 of the total variance, %3 each. The overall findings of the study are in line with Huang (2006).

As to why Reading skills account for the highest amount of total variance, the reason could be partially attributable to the importance attached to them in the literature. Most ESP and EAP books (Hyland, 2002; Jordan, 1997) devote at least one chapter explicating skills and strategies required for tackling special or general reading texts. Reading skills are even taught to native speakers, telling them how to identify the organization of paragraphs, to extract main and supporting ideas, to recognize the structure and basic elements of paragraphs, etc. As shown

in this study, when students know how to read EAP texts, they are motivated to read and extract the required information.

Requirement, the second most significant contributor to the total variance (14%), has been a controversial issue in the motivation literature. Traditional motivation approaches favor choice and autonomy, arguing that without these students will be demotivated, but more recent approaches in the Asian social context and collectivist culture (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) provide empirical evidence that decisions made by trusted authoritative figures have more motivational value. The present study seems to support the more recent view, which is in line with Huang (2006). The results of our study seem to confirm that Iranian students tend to depend on their teachers as authoritative figures. This is because they consider teachers to be the providers of information and the students credit them with trustworthiness, and when they are given assignments by their teachers, they are more motivated to continue reading.

The third factor, content, accounts for %7 of total variance. In the literature, a distinction is usually made between English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) (Blue, 1993). This is a very important distinction because out of the five questions of the questionnaire under the label of content, four questions (Questions 19, 20, 21, 25) favored English ESAP and one question (22) favored English for general academic purposes. In ESAP, content is necessarily special, completely related to students' fields of study, but in EGAP, content is general in nature, coming from related fields of study. Overall, the present study shows that content is influential in motivating students to read EAP texts, but when we look at Table 10, the picture is far from clear. This is because the literature is replete with controversy as to the role of content in EAP reading. Some experts (Widdowson, 1987) believe that special content motivates students. Others (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) state that general content and materials suit students better. Our study seems to bear out both viewpoints.

Ease/difficulty of EAP textbooks and practitioner of EAP courses each account for %3 of the total variance. The findings support Dornyei's (1994) teacher specific motivational component of the learning situation and Hauptman's (Hauptman, 2000) reading ease/difficulty conception. Although the results are statistically significant, they contribute the least amount of variance. Many factors are involved. First

of all, the EAP courses were not taught by the same teacher; the inconsistency of EAP teachers may have biased the results, prompting the students to answer the items of the questionnaire based on the mentality thrust upon them by respective teachers. The second factor has to do with the nature of EAP courses taught in Iran. The general consensus is that EAP course is currently taught by subject matter teachers just because content is special. This is a lay contention, being scientifically unfounded because subject matter teachers lack the necessary qualifications and capabilities to teach skills and strategies generalizable across contents. Third, the students themselves do not know what they are expected to do after an EAP course. What they know, which is generally mistaken, is that EAP courses must provide them with technical knowledge of their fields of study, and this seems to be quite wrong because first they should learn to read EAP texts, which they usually cannot.

### *5.2. Conclusion*

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that both macro and micro reading skills play a vital role in motivating students to read EAP texts. It can also be concluded that in EAP courses, students like to be assigned and the assignment can take many forms ranging from oral and written reports to classroom participation, to exams. In addition, the content of EAP textbooks can be freely varied. EAP textbooks can consist of necessarily specialized materials related to the students' fields of study; they can borrow from interdisciplinary fields of study; or materials can be of general nature. It also seems that the easier the EAP textbooks, the more they can motivate students to read special texts. Finally, it can be concluded that both English teacher and subject matter teachers may teach EAP courses.

### *5.3. Pedagogical Implications*

1. The first and foremost pedagogical implication goes to EAP syllabus designers and material writers. In designing EAP courses, EAP syllabus designers should have an eye on reading skills to be included, various types of assignment to be taken into account, and type of content to be included. In writing EAP textbooks, material developers should devote a sizable part of EAP textbooks to exercises and tasks to cater for various types of reading skills, and they should also consider the ease/difficulty of texts they choose for EAP textbooks.

2. This study was carried out in an EFL context in which the EAP textbooks, which are taught at university levels, are those developed by SAMT (The Center for Studying and Compiling University Books in Humanities). The existing EAP textbooks compiled by SAMT lack the characteristics identified by the present study. The reading passages are haphazardly selected from related fields of study without taking into consideration their ease/difficulty. There is no room for reading skills and strategies of any kind. The content is necessarily technical; furthermore, the EAP books are designed to provide students with knowledge of their courses, a totally unjustified foundation. So it seems that a major revision in existing EAP textbooks is inevitable and the findings of the present research can prove illuminative.
3. The third pedagogical implication has to do with teaching EAP courses proper. The ideal situation for teaching EAP courses would be team teaching, joint teaching of EAP courses by an English teacher and a subject matter teacher, which is substantiated in the literature. Our study seems not to favor such an ideal situation explicitly. But the very fact that both an English teacher and a subject-matter teacher individually can motivate students implies an ideal situation.
4. Last but not least, the nature of ESP in general and EAP in particular is vague. Subject matter teachers who start teaching such courses think of them as bundles for transferal of technical knowledge and translation, and the students who take on such courses think they should be provided with knowledge of their courses. Such opinions, if not totally mistaken, seem to be unfounded. Both subject matter teachers and students should be justified in what they expect and the present study is a good initiation to pave the way for such justification.

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## **Appendix**

### **The questionnaire (the English version)**

If you are required to use only English textbooks in content areas, please indicate your willingness to read the English texts under the following situations between very willing to read (5), willing to read (4), to some extent willing to read (3), not willing to read (2), and very unwilling to read (1).

1. There are clear graphs, tables, and illustrations in the texts.
2. Key points are highlighted in the texts.
3. There are limited new vocabularies in the texts.
4. The books are written in simple grammar.
5. There are no translated versions of the textbooks.
6. The organization and layout of the books are easy to follow.
7. Textbooks consist of necessarily special terminologies.
8. Special terminologies are related to my own field of study and are not interdisciplinary.
9. Special, semi-special, and general terminologies used in textbooks are related to my own field of study.
10. The themes in the textbooks are of general nature with out necessarily being special.
11. Textbooks transfer special knowledge rather than learn to read special texts.
12. English vocabulary is taught
13. Special terminologies are explained.
14. The sentence structure and grammar are explained.
15. The organization and structure of the articles are explained.
16. Reading skills and strategies are taught.

17. Teachers are available to answer my questions encountered in reading
18. English practitioner teaches EAP courses.
19. Subject-matter practitioner teaches EAP courses.
20. Both English practitioner and Subject-matter practitioner teach EAP courses collaboratively.
21. I am required to do written reports for my reading.
22. I am required to do oral reports for my reading.
23. I am required to do participate in class discussion.
24. The weekly reading coverage is clearly assigned.
25. The exams are directly based on the English reading
26. The teacher asks us to answer post reading questions.