Qədim Diyar
May 2026, Cild. 8, Say 5, s. 99–110
Ancient Land
May 2026, Vol. 8, Issue 5, pp. 99–110
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36719/2706-6185/60/99-110

Teaching Academic English to Non-English Majors in Uzbekistan: Challenges, Needs and Pedagogical Adaptations

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Abstract. *Teaching English to students whose primary field of study falls outside language-related disciplines remains a persistent pedagogical challenge, one that is not fully addressed by general English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frameworks, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approaches, particularly in transitional higher education contexts. This qualitative exploratory study examines the challenges, learner needs, and instructional adaptations involved in teaching academic English to non-English major students at Fergana State University (FSU), Uzbekistan. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with eight English instructors and eighteen undergraduate students drawn from the Faculties of Economics, Natural Sciences, and Engineering, supplemented by fourteen classroom observations and document analysis of course syllabi. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) yielded four interrelated themes: (1) structural misalignment between general English curricula and discipline-specific language demands; (2) academic vocabulary as a persistent boundary between language instruction and subject-specific content; (3) teacher adaptation as an informal and largely unsupported professional practice; and (4) student motivation shaped by perceptions of instrumental relevance. These findings reveal a systemic gap between policy-driven English instruction and the actual academic needs of non-English major students in Uzbek higher education. The study concludes with evidence-based recommendations for curriculum redesign incorporating EAP and ESP principles, enhanced teacher professional development, and systematic needs analysis as a foundation for course planning.*

Keywords: *English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, non-English majors, EFL pedagogy, needs analysis, Uzbekistan, higher education, curriculum alignment*

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Received: 10 January 2026; Accepted: 17 March 2026; Published online: 28 May 2026

Qədim Diyar 8(5), 2026
Ancient Land 8(5), 2026

Özbəkistanda ingilis dili olmayan ixtisas tələbələrinə akademik ingilis dilinin tədrisi: Çətinliklər, ehtiyaclar və pedaqoji uyğunlaşmalar

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Xülasə. *Əsas təhsil sahəsi dillə əlaqəli fənlərdən kənarda olan tələbələrə ingilis dilinin tədrisi davamlı pedaqoji bir problem olaraq qalır və bu problem, xüsusən də keçid ali təhsil kontekstlərində ümumi ingilis dili xarici dil (EFL) çərçivələri, Akademik Məqsədlər üçün İngilis dili (EAP) və ya Xüsusi Məqsədlər üçün İngilis dili (ESP) yanaşmaları tərəfindən tam həll olunmur. Bu keyfiyyət tədqiqatı, Özbəkistanın Fərqanə Dövlət Universitetində (FSU) ingilis dili olmayan ixtisas tələbələrinə akademik ingilis dilinin tədrisində yaranan çətinlikləri, tələbə ehtiyaclarını və tədris uyğunlaşmalarını araşdırır. Məlumatlar İqtisadiyyat, Təbiət Elmləri və Mühəndislik fakültələrindən seçilmiş səkkiz ingilis dili müəllimi və on səkkiz bakalavr tələbəsi ilə yarımstrukturlaşdırılmış müsahibələr vasitəsilə əldə edilmiş, on dörd sinif müşahidəsi və kurs tədris planlarının sənəd təhlili ilə tamamlanmışdır. Refleksiv tematik təhlil (Braun & Clarke, 2019) bir-biri ilə əlaqəli dörd mövzunu ortaya qoymuşdur: (1) ümumi ingilis dili tədris planları ilə fənnə xas dil tələbləri arasında struktur uyğunsuzluğu; (2) dil tədrisi ilə fənnə xas məzmun arasında davamlı bir sərhəd kimi akademik lüğət; (3) qeyri-rəsmi və əsasən dəstəklənməyən peşəkar təcrübə kimi müəllim adaptasiyası; və (4) instrumental aktuallıq qavrayışları ilə formalaşan tələbə motivasiyası. Bu tapıntılar siyasətə əsaslanan ingilis dili tədrisi ilə Özbəkistan ali təhsilində ingilis dili olmayan ixtisas tələbələrinin faktiki akademik ehtiyacları arasında sistemli bir boşluğu ortaya qoyur. Tədqiqat, EAP və ESP prinsiplərini, müəllimlərin peşəkar inkişafını və kurs planlaşdırması üçün əsas kimi sistemli ehtiyac təhlilini daxil edən tədris planının yenidən dizaynı üçün sübutlara əsaslanan tövsiyələrlə yekunlaşır.*

Açar sözlər: *akademik məqsədlər üçün ingilis dili, xüsusi məqsədlər üçün ingilis dili, ingilis dili olmayan ixtisaslar, EFL pedaqogikası, ehtiyacların təhlili, Özbəkistan, ali təhsil, tədris planının uyğunlaşdırılması*

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Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education has positioned academic English at the core of university curricula worldwide. In many national contexts, English now functions not merely as a curricular subject but as the primary medium through which disciplinary knowledge is accessed, communicated, and validated (Hyland, 2022). Students across diverse academic fields are expected to engage with research literature, produce academic writing, and participate in English-medium instruction—all of which require competencies that extend well beyond everyday communication. Consequently, English teaching has expanded into contexts that traditional EFL models were not designed to address: classrooms of economics, engineering, medical, and natural science students who approach English as a functional necessity rather than a field of study in its own right.

In Uzbekistan, this development has been intensified by a series of national education reforms introduced since 2017, which have elevated English proficiency as a central educational and professional priority. Presidential decrees have mandated the inclusion of English across all levels of education, and university curricula have been revised to incorporate compulsory English modules for students in all disciplines (Djuraeva & Begmatova, 2022). The stated objective is to prepare graduates who can participate effectively in international academic and professional domains and contribute to the country's integration into the global knowledge economy.

However, translating this policy vision into sustainable classroom practice presents significant challenges. In many Uzbek universities, English is taught by instructors trained primarily in general EFL methodologies who are required to work with students whose disciplinary domains—ranging from thermodynamics to macroeconomics and organic chemistry—fall outside their own expertise. Simultaneously, students are required to engage with English courses that appear loosely connected to their academic specialisations. As this study demonstrates, such conditions generate recurring and insufficiently resolved problems, including reduced student motivation, mismatches in academic vocabulary instruction, and a structural disconnect between English teaching and students' actual disciplinary needs.

Research

The research was conducted at Fergana State University (FSU), a regional institution in the Fergana Valley where English is a compulsory subject across multiple non-language faculties. FSU offers a representative setting for examining these challenges, operating within national policy frameworks, employing trained EFL instructors, and serving a multidisciplinary student population.

Adopting a qualitative exploratory design, this study investigates three key dimensions: the professional challenges faced by instructors teaching academic English to non-English majors; the linguistic and academic difficulties experienced by students; and the informal instructional strategies developed by teachers in response. Rather than evaluating individual performance, the study seeks to illuminate the broader structural, curricular, and pedagogical factors shaping academic English teaching in multidisciplinary higher education contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for Academic Purposes: Foundations and Scope

English for Academic Purposes, as a sub-field of applied linguistics and language education, is fundamentally concerned with preparing students to use English effectively in academic contexts, including the reading of scholarly literature, the writing of structured academic texts, participation in academic discussion, and the comprehension of lecture discourse. Hyland (2022) argues that EAP is centrally orientated toward genre awareness: understanding the conventions and communicative expectations that constitute disciplinary life. The field has progressively differentiated between general EAP (EGAP), which targets common academic language skills shared across disciplines, and specific EAP (ESAP), which addresses the genre conventions, vocabulary, and communicative practices specific to individual disciplinary communities.

This distinction has significant implications for curriculum design in mixed-discipline university environments. An EGAP approach may be more practical when instructors lack disciplinary training and classes comprise students from multiple faculties; an ESAP approach requires disciplinary knowledge and course customisation that presents substantial resource demands (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). In the Uzbek context, as in many developing higher education systems, the practical default has been a general English curriculum that addresses neither EGAP nor ESAP with systematic

intent—a pattern documented in the present study and corroborated by existing regional literature (Djuraeva & Begmatova, 2022; Makhkamov, 2021).

2.2 English for Specific Purposes and Needs Analysis

The field of English for Specific Purposes is premised on the recognition that language instruction achieves greater efficiency and learner engagement when closely aligned with the target communicative contexts in which learners will need to function (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). ESP encompasses a wide range of sub-fields—including English for Business, English for Medicine, and English for Science and Technology—each characterised by specific genre conventions, lexical demands, and discourse norms.

Central to the ESP tradition is needs analysis: a systematic investigation of what learners need to be able to do with the language, under what conditions, and with what degree of accuracy and fluency (Long, 2015). Needs analysis encompasses target situation analysis, present situation analysis, and learning needs analysis. Despite its theoretical prominence, systematic needs analysis remains uncommon in many institutional contexts, including Uzbek higher education, where curriculum decisions are typically made at a national or institutional level rather than through course-level needs investigation (Djuraeva & Begmatova, 2022). Recent scholarship has called for greater integration of data-driven needs analysis into ESP curriculum development, particularly in non-Western higher education contexts (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2024).

2.3 Challenges in Teaching Non-English Majors

Research conducted across various national contexts has documented a broadly consistent set of challenges associated with teaching academic English to non-English major students. A recurring finding concerns motivational orientation: non-English major students typically approach English with instrumental rather than integrative motivation—they seek English because it is required or because it enables professional advancement (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Instrumental motivation is characteristically fragile when perceived instrumentality is low—that is, when students cannot identify a direct connection between the English content being taught and their own academic or professional goals (Boo et al., 2015).

Academic vocabulary presents another well-documented challenge. Research has confirmed that command of sub-technical and technical vocabulary is a critical determinant of reading comprehension in academic contexts (Nation & Webb, 2011; Schmitt, 2019). For non-English major students, the vocabulary demands of English courses are compounded by the simultaneous acquisition of discipline-specific terminology in their first or second language, creating a dual lexical burden. Studies of non-English major EFL learners in Asian and Central Asian contexts have consistently identified vocabulary as the most commonly cited source of academic difficulty (Lei & Liu, 2016; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2024).

A further challenge concerns genre conventions. Non-English major students are often unfamiliar with the structural and rhetorical expectations of academic English texts—not because they lack general literacy, but because the conventions of academic English genres differ significantly from their L1 literacy practices (Tardy, 2019). Instructors report difficulty in scaffolding genre knowledge efficiently within limited contact hours. Additionally, recent scholarship in the Uzbek context has highlighted cultural imbalance in English language instructional materials. Nematov's (2025) decolonial analysis of secondary school textbooks demonstrates that instructional content frequently prioritises Anglo-American narratives while marginalising local identities and multilingual realities, thereby reinforcing implicit linguistic hierarchies that may compound student disengagement.

2.4 Teacher Adaptation in Constrained Curriculum Contexts

When institutional curricula do not align well with student needs, individual teachers frequently engage in informal adaptations—modifying materials, resequencing content, supplementing prescribed texts, or adjusting pedagogical emphasis (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). This adaptive practice is a fundamental feature of professional language teaching but carries significant costs when it is unsupported, uncoordinated, and unrecognised at an institutional level. The most effective curriculum adaptations are evidence-based, collegially developed, and grounded in systematic understanding of learner needs—conditions rarely met in contexts characterised by heavy teaching loads and top-down curriculum prescription (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018).

In many Central Asian higher education contexts, English instructors are expected to implement nationally standardised syllabi while simultaneously managing the disciplinary heterogeneity of their student populations (Makhkamov, 2021; Karimov, 2023). The result is a set of informal, individualised adaptations that vary widely across instructors and are rarely documented or shared systematically. The present study treats this adaptive practice not as evidence of curriculum failure but as a valuable source of practitioner knowledge about what mediates effectively between policy mandates and classroom realities.

2.5 The Uzbek Higher Education Context

Uzbekistan's higher education system has undergone substantial structural reform since 2017, driven by a national agenda of modernisation and internationalisation. Reforms have included the expansion of university autonomy, the introduction of outcome-based education frameworks, and the explicit prioritisation of English proficiency as a graduate competency across all disciplines (Makhkamov, 2021). English is now taught as a compulsory subject throughout undergraduate programmes, and a national English proficiency examination system has been introduced to assess outcomes at scale.

Despite these policy advances, practical conditions for effective academic English instruction remain constrained. English instructors in most Uzbek universities are EFL-trained generalists with limited disciplinary knowledge of the faculties they serve. Contact hours are typically limited to two to four hours per week, and textbooks are often imported from global EFL publishers with limited relevance to local academic contexts. The gap between national policy and classroom implementation has been documented by multiple researchers (Djuraeva & Begmatova, 2022; Karimov, 2023) and constitutes the immediate policy context within which the present study operates.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), selected on the basis that the central aim was to generate detailed, contextualised understanding of a complex pedagogical phenomenon rather than to test predetermined hypotheses or produce statistically generalisable findings. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate for research questions concerned with lived experience, professional practice, and institutional context. The exploratory orientation reflects the limited prior empirical research on academic English instruction for non-English majors in the Uzbek institutional context specifically, necessitating an inductive rather than confirmatory approach.

3.2 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What challenges do English instructors face when teaching academic English to non-English major students at Fergana State University?

RQ2: What linguistic and academic difficulties do non-English major students report in their compulsory English courses?
RQ3: How do instructors adapt their pedagogical practices to address the disciplinary needs of non-English major students?
RQ4: What systemic and curricular improvements might better serve non-English major students in the Uzbek higher education context?

3.3 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Fergana State University, selected because it offers English instruction across a range of non-English major faculties and represents a typical institutional configuration within the Uzbek regional university system. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research committee, and all participants provided written informed consent. Participant confidentiality was protected through consistent use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying details from reported data.

The first participant group comprised eight English instructors (five female, three male; teaching experience ranging from four to nineteen years) responsible for compulsory English courses in the Faculties of Economics, Natural Sciences, and Engineering. All held undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications in English language teaching or philology; none held qualifications in the disciplines of the faculties they served. The second participant group comprised eighteen undergraduate students (eleven female, seven male; Years 1 to 3): seven from Economics, six from Natural Sciences, and five from Engineering. Students were recruited through criterion-based purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), with inclusion criteria requiring current enrolment in a compulsory English course and self-reported experience of difficulty or specific need related to English for their discipline.

3.4 Data Collection

Three data sources were employed. The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol, with separate versions for teacher and student participants. Teacher interviews addressed perceived challenges, materials and methods in use, informal curriculum adaptations, and views on effective academic English instruction. Student interviews addressed specific difficulties in English classes, perceived relevance of course content, vocabulary and reading challenges, and expectations from English instruction. Interviews lasted between 28 and 47 minutes, were conducted in Uzbek or English according to participant preference, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim.
The second source was classroom observation. Fourteen class sessions across the three faculties were observed over a six-week period (80 minutes each), guided by a structured protocol attending to the type and disciplinary relevance of teaching materials, patterns of interaction, vocabulary and genre demands of activities, and instances of disengagement or difficulty. The third source was document analysis of the English course syllabi in use across the three faculties, examined for evidence of discipline-relevant content, systematic vocabulary instruction, or explicit academic literacy development.

3.5 Data Analysis

All interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework for reflexive thematic analysis. Following verbatim transcription, data were read iteratively to develop initial familiarity. Open coding was applied inductively across the combined dataset, generating 87 initial codes. Codes were subsequently grouped into candidate themes, reviewed against the full dataset, refined through iterative discussion, and finalised into four overarching themes (presented in Section 4). Classroom observation notes and syllabus documents provided contextual triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) for the interview-derived themes. Member-checking was conducted with three instructor participants, who confirmed the accuracy of themes attributed to their accounts.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Institutional ethical clearance was obtained from Fergana State University prior to data collection. All participants provided written informed consent and were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Participant anonymity was protected through the consistent use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying contextual details from reported data. Classroom observations were conducted with the explicit consent of both the instructor and the students in each observed class.

Findings

Analysis of the interview, observation, and document data produced four interconnected themes, each presented below with supporting evidence drawn from participant quotations and field observation data. All participant names are pseudonyms.

4.1 Theme One: Structural Mismatch Between General Syllabi and Disciplinary Language Demands

The most consistently reported challenge across both teacher and student participants was the gap between the content of prescribed English syllabi and the disciplinary contexts in which students needed to use English. Examination of the three syllabi revealed that all were organised around general communicative functions—describing processes, expressing opinion, narrating events—supported by thematically general reading texts on topics such as technology, culture, and the environment. None of the syllabi incorporated discipline-referenced reading materials, genre-specific writing tasks, or explicit instruction in academic vocabulary beyond a small selection of general academic expressions.

Teacher participants were universally aware of this mismatch. Shakhlo (instructor, Economics faculty, 11 years' experience) articulated the gap directly: "The textbook is fine for general communication. But my students need to read economics articles, write reports, understand graphs and data. The textbook does not prepare them for any of this." Farrukhbek (instructor, Engineering faculty, 7 years' experience) noted both his awareness and the structural constraints preventing him from addressing it: "I want to teach them technical vocabulary, or how to read a research paper. But the syllabus gives me no time and no materials for this. I have to follow the plan."

Students frequently struggled to articulate precisely what was missing but expressed a general perception that their English classes existed in a separate world from the rest of their university studies. Zafar (Economics, Year 2) put it plainly: "In English class, we talk about things that have nothing to do with economics. And in economics, everything is in Uzbek or Russian. English is just something I do separately." Classroom observations confirmed this structural isolation: in twelve of the fourteen observed sessions, no reference was made to students' disciplinary content, and all extended reading texts were drawn from general interest or generic academic topics.

4.2 Theme Two: Academic Vocabulary as a Disciplinary Boundary

Vocabulary emerged as the most specific and consistently cited source of difficulty for student participants, manifesting at two distinct levels. The first was the level of general academic vocabulary—the sub-technical terms that recur across academic disciplines and constitute the shared lexical infrastructure of academic writing and reading. Students from all three faculties reported difficulty with this stratum. Mohinur (Natural Sciences, Year 1) connected it explicitly to reading difficulty: "I can understand the topic, but there are always words that I know are important and I don't know them. It breaks my reading."

The second level was technical and discipline-specific vocabulary. Here the challenge was bidirectional: students lacked English labels for disciplinary concepts they already understood in Uzbek or Russian, while English instructors lacked the disciplinary knowledge to provide or explain such labels. Nodir (Engineering, Year 3) described the resulting impasse: "When we have to write in English about something from our specialty, I know what the concept is, but I do not know the English word. And the English teacher also does not know. We both look at each other." This observation was corroborated by Dilnoza (Natural Sciences, 9 years' experience): "I am a language teacher. I do not know chemistry or biology terminology at a professional level. When students ask me, I tell them to find a bilingual dictionary or ask their subject teacher."

Classroom observation documented the vocabulary gap in concrete instances. In one observed Natural Sciences class, a reading text on environmental processes prompted a fifteen-minute off-task vocabulary discussion in which instructor and students collectively failed to reach consensus on several terms, ultimately resorting to Uzbek translation as a resolution strategy. While such moments occasionally generated useful metalinguistic discussion, they consistently consumed instructional time and left core content objectives unaddressed.

4.3 Theme Three: Teacher Adaptation as Informal and Unsupported Practice

Despite the structural constraints documented in Themes One and Two, teacher participants engaged in a range of informal adaptations aimed at increasing the disciplinary relevance of their instruction. These adaptations were varied, creative, and largely uncoordinated: no shared departmental framework existed, and no professional development support had been provided for disciplinary English instruction. Instructors described developing their adaptations independently through trial and error, often over several years.

The most commonly reported adaptation was supplementation of prescribed textbooks with additional reading texts sourced independently. Shakhlo described building a personal repository of economics-adjacent texts: "Over the years I have collected articles about trade, banking, economic policy. They are not in the textbook. I bring them myself. The students respond much better to these." Farrukhbek had developed self-made vocabulary lists aligned with the engineering concepts his students were studying in parallel modules: "I asked some of my students to bring me their engineering textbook and I made a list of the English terms. It took time. But now I use it every semester."

A second category of adaptation involved task redesign. Malika (Economics, 4 years' experience) described adapting a generic process-description task so students explained an economic process of their choice: "The grammar target is the same. But they are writing about supply chains or inflation instead of 'how to make tea.' It is more meaningful for them." Kamol (Engineering, 13 years' experience) summarised the broader situation with evident frustration: "I spend a lot of time outside class preparing materials that are not in the syllabus and not required. Nobody asks me to do this, nobody pays me extra for it, nobody knows I am doing it. If I stop, nothing changes officially. But my students learn better." This points to a systemic reliance on individual instructor initiative—a reliance that is both unsustainable and inequitably distributed across the student population.

4.4 Theme Four: Motivation Shaped by Perceived Instrumental Distance

Student motivation to engage with English instruction was substantially shaped by perceived instrumentality—specifically, the degree to which students could identify a clear and proximate connection between the English being taught and their academic or professional goals. Where this connection was visible, motivation and engagement were higher; where it was invisible, engagement was characteristically low. This pattern was consistent across both interview data and classroom observations.

Several student participants described motivational turning points connected to concrete disciplinary encounters with English. Dilshod (Engineering, Year 2) recounted finding a critical technical article available only in English: "I needed a source for my project, and the best one was in English. I struggled a lot, but I realised that English was not just a subject—it was the door to the information I needed. After that, I tried harder in class." Zarnigor (Natural Sciences, Year 3) described a similar experience during a research internship: "When I was in the laboratory, the supervisor asked us to read an article. It was in English. That was the first time I understood why we study English."

Conversely, students who had not had such experiences described persistent difficulty motivating themselves for instruction that appeared unconnected to their fields. Murod (Economics, Year 1) expressed this directly: "I study economics. English class is another world. I do what I have to do, but I do not feel it matters for my future." Classroom observations documented the motivational consequences: in sessions where instructional content bore no visible relationship to students' disciplines, rates of off-task behaviour, passive compliance, and minimal participation were consistently higher than in sessions where instructors had incorporated discipline-relevant materials or tasks. Gulsanam (Economics, 8 years' experience) captured this dynamic precisely: "When I bring something related to their major, they wake up. Suddenly there are questions, discussion, engagement. Then we go back to the textbook and the room goes quiet again."

Discussion

The four themes documented in this study together describe a coherent and structurally generated problem: English instruction that is mandated for non-English major students but designed around neither their disciplinary needs nor their motivational realities. The findings align with and extend the existing literature on EAP and ESP in constrained institutional contexts, while contributing empirical specificity to the Uzbek higher education setting.

The structural mismatch identified in Theme One reflects what Hyland (2022) characterises as the tension between institutional efficiency—achieved through standardised, generalisable curricula—and the epistemologically specific nature of disciplinary communication. Academic English is not a uniform, transferable skill; it is enacted through the genre conventions, vocabulary systems, and discourse norms of specific disciplinary communities. A general English syllabus that is silent on discipline actively misrepresents what English use looks like in academic contexts, offering students a model of language they will not recognise when they encounter the actual communicative demands of their fields (Tardy, 2019). The Uzbek policy commitment to English proficiency across all disciplines has not yet been matched by curricular frameworks that take disciplinary specificity seriously.

The vocabulary challenge documented in Theme Two is well predicted by the EAP literature. Nation and Webb (2011) and Schmitt (2019) have argued that vocabulary instruction for academic purposes must address at least three lexical strata: high-frequency general vocabulary, general academic vocabulary, and discipline-specific technical vocabulary. The findings of the present study suggest that current English instruction at FSU addresses primarily the first stratum, occasionally the second through incidental exposure, and almost never the third. Closing this gap requires curricular revision and investment in instructor professional development that builds at least basic familiarity with the lexical demands of the disciplines served.

The informal adaptation practices documented in Theme Three represent a pedagogically significant but institutionally invisible response to the curriculum gap. As Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) have argued, teacher curriculum adaptation is a legitimate and valuable professional practice—but its value is substantially diminished when it is unsystematic, unrewarded, and unavailable to the wider

institutional community. The instructors in this study were performing substantial unpaid curriculum development work with no mechanism for it to be recognised, shared, or built upon. Institutionalising such adaptation through structured curriculum review, collaborative materials development, and professional development orientated toward disciplinary English would convert individual ingenuity into collective institutional resource.

The motivational patterns documented in Theme Four are consistent with the motivational framework developed by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) and extended in recent meta-analyses (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). Students who perceived English as instrumentally distant from their goals exhibited characteristic features of low motivational investment: passive compliance, minimal effort, and absence of intrinsic engagement. The motivational turning points described by several participants suggest that instrumentality is not fixed but can be activated by experiences that make the connection between English and disciplinary goals vivid and concrete. EAP pedagogy that builds such connections explicitly, rather than leaving them to chance, would address both motivational and cognitive learning needs simultaneously, as demonstrated in task-based language teaching frameworks developed for academic purposes (Long, 2015; Skehan, 2018).

Taken together, the findings suggest that improving academic English instruction for non-English major students in Uzbekistan requires action at multiple levels. At the curriculum level, standardised general English syllabi need to be supplemented with—or restructured around—EAP and ESP frameworks incorporating discipline-specific content and genre instruction. At the institutional level, mechanisms for collaborative curriculum development, cross-faculty consultation, and ongoing needs analysis are needed (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2024). At the professional development level, English instructors require structured support to develop the disciplinary literacy necessary to bridge the gap between their language expertise and students' academic worlds.

Conclusion

This qualitative exploratory study has investigated the challenges, student needs, and instructional adaptations associated with academic English teaching to non-English major students at Fergana State University, Uzbekistan. Drawing on interview data from eight instructors and eighteen students, supplemented by classroom observations and syllabus analysis, the study identified four structurally interconnected themes: curriculum mismatch; academic vocabulary as a disciplinary boundary; unsupported teacher adaptation; and motivation shaped by perceived instrumental distance. Together, these themes describe a persistent and systemic gap between the policy aspiration of English proficiency for all graduates and the instructional conditions in which that aspiration is expected to be realised.

The study's principal contribution is its detailed, contextualised documentation of how this gap is experienced and negotiated at the level of individual instructors and students in a representative Uzbek regional university. The informal adaptation practices reported by instructors—supplementing textbooks, designing discipline-adjacent tasks, building personal vocabulary resources—represent productive professional knowledge that currently goes unrecognised and unshared. Systematic efforts to capture, develop, and disseminate this knowledge could substantially improve the quality of academic English instruction without requiring large-scale resource investment.

Several limitations merit acknowledgement. The study is bounded to a single institution and three faculties, which limits the scope of analytical generalisation. Reliance on self-report data means that the study captures perceptions of practice rather than practice itself, though classroom observations provided partial triangulation of key claims. Future research might employ longitudinal designs to track changes in student motivation and language development across an academic year, or

comparative designs examining how different institutional approaches to academic English instruction produce different learner outcomes. A systematic needs analysis of the disciplinary English demands facing graduates of Economics, Engineering, and Natural Sciences programmes in Uzbekistan would provide a strong empirical foundation for curriculum redesign.

The capacity of non-English major students to benefit from English instruction depends substantially on the quality of alignment between what is taught and what is needed. Policy commitment to English proficiency is a necessary but insufficient condition for that alignment. Without curricular frameworks grounded in EAP and ESP principles, professional development for disciplinary English instruction, and institutionally supported needs analysis, the ambition of graduating English-proficient specialists across all fields will remain partially unrealised—not for lack of effort on the part of individual instructors and students, but for lack of the systemic conditions that transform individual effort into sustainable educational improvement.

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