



Original Research

Academic literacy development and EAP in English medium instruction: A needs-based inquiry at a Bangladeshi private university

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English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in Bangladeshi private universities are positioned to equip non-native undergraduate students with the required academic language skills needed for English Medium Instruction (EMI) education. However, these courses have frequently adopted generic language proficiency models, neglecting students' academic and disciplinary literacy needs. Moreover, the paucity of studies on EAP leaves a critical lapse in understanding what changes are required, given this misalignment. Guided by Brown's Needs Analysis framework (2016), this qualitative study investigated non-native undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences of EAP courses at a Bangladeshi private university offering EMI education, focusing on its method of instruction, the barriers they face and the alignment of its content with their academic and professional needs. Thematic analysis of forty-five semi-structured interviews and document analysis of EAP course syllabi revealed a misalignment between current EAP courses and students' academic and professional needs. The development of academic writing for disciplinary courses is unfulfilled, suggesting a need for a more targeted EAP curriculum. The study identifies students' needs as systemic failures rather than linguistic deficits and challenges the generic EAP implementation in non-native higher education contexts like Bangladesh. It concludes that context-driven curricular reform, incorporation of skill-oriented content, and enhanced pedagogic practices can make current EAP courses to be needs-responsive. Additionally, teacher training in discipline-specific pedagogy is crucial for an equitable EAP redesign as it would better align with non-native students' academic language and professional needs.

KEYWORDS: EAP, needs analysis, higher education, EMI, academic literacy, teaching methods in EAP, Bangladesh

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most higher education institutions (HEIs) in EFL countries like Bangladesh implement English Medium Instruction (EMI) in undergraduate education (Hamid & Al Amin, 2022), despite

most students' prior education predominantly using Bangla, their L1 as the MOI (medium of instruction) (Rahman et al., 2019). The result of this abrupt transition creates linguistic barriers hampering students' academic literacy development (Cai, 2017),

with English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses being offered as a remedy to alleviate this situation by preparing them for undergraduate study (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012). The purpose of EAP is to equip students with the essential reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking skills, addressing their needs to transition into diverse academic and career pathways where English proficiency is crucial. However, prior studies reported EAP's inadequacy regarding this, stating that EAP courses still fall short of meeting non-native learners' needs in EMI education (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012; Sultana, 2014). Furthermore, non-native learners struggle to develop discipline-specific writing, critical thinking and communication skills, hampering their scope for academic and professional success (Hyland, 2006). This underscores a crucial misalignment between EAP curricula and their suitability in terms of local contexts and students' needs (Hyland, 2006).

Unfortunately, this gap is aggravated by the contradictory and complex picture of the country's language policy landscape (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The 2010 National Education Policy states the MOI at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels should be Bangla and English should be taught as a compulsory academic subject in school education (NEP, 2010). This makes English be considered as the second language (Ali & Hamid, 2020; Rahman & Pandian, 2018) but taught as a foreign language (Ali & Walker, 2014). Moreover, the policy mandates English to be the compulsory MOI at the tertiary level (NEP, 2010).

The Private University Act 1992 permitted the formation of private universities amidst the increasing demand for higher education (HE) in Bangladesh (Rahman & Singh, 2020). These institutions strictly implement EMI (Rahman et al., 2020). The uncertainty and lack of a clear vision (Rahman & Pandian, 2018) complicate the language policy, creating a linguistic mismatch as the majority of the students enter private universities from Bangla-medium schooling (Rahman et al., 2019). Although EMI education in private HEIs demands students to possess a higher English proficiency local research points out that 86% of private university students are underprepared for the demands of EMI education (Rahman et al., 2019; Sultana, 2014), as the linguistic mismatch hampers their academic learning and professional development (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013). Existing studies acknowledge that English as a global lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005) continues to influence the HE landscape of Bangladesh, serving as the main language of communication, that determines academic success and professional opportunities. Even though universities provide 'learner-centered pedagogical practices' (Hamid & Honan, 2012, p. 150), the 'bogged down' ELT situation (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, p. 19) fundamentally affects students' learning outcomes (Hamid, 2011).

While private universities offer undergraduate EAP courses to improve this situation (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012), their effectiveness is compromised by ineffective teaching methods, infrequent teacher-student interactions and misalignment

between course content and course objectives (Karim et al., 2023; Bhuiyan & Khan, 2022; Rashid & Rana, 2021). As a result, students are unable to achieve the required levels of English proficiency and their academic language difficulties persist. They fail to develop academic literacy (Murray & Muller, 2019), resulting in poor performance in academic activities (Sultana, 2014), leading to unsatisfactory outcomes (Islam & Stapa, 2021; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The paucity of research on EAP courses in Bangladesh leaves a critical lapse in understanding university students' needs, the extent of the effectiveness of current pedagogies, and factors that affect learning outcomes. Moreover, as students' learning needs vary across contexts, cultures, and disciplines, thus, the process to innovate and improve EAP courses, especially in non-native contexts becomes more complex (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012). It poses considerable challenges for stakeholders in Bangladeshi HE to implement English medium instruction successfully (Rahman et al., 2024). Thus, without urgent reforms, EAP courses in Bangladeshi HE only risk reinforcing the inequities they were designed to address.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

EAP emerged from the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research (Hamp-Lyons, 2011) as the need to teach English learners' needs through EMI increased (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). The current demands of the workplace and the world have influenced EAP courses to now play a crucial role in developing skills that students will need later in life (Hyland & Shaw, 2016). In the HE context today, EAP courses are designed to support students' achievement of academic literacy, focusing on developing skills like academic writing, critical reading, oral presentations, and listening comprehension. To develop these, effective EAP instruction is essential, and instructors must rely on pedagogical approaches that foster student engagement and promote interaction in the classroom. Task-based learning and group discussions, as interactive teaching strategies enhance student participation in the EAP classroom (Basturkmen & Wette, 2016). However, such a student-centered approach is often not consistently applied across institutions around the world. Also, the diversity of contexts such as ENL, ESL and EFL countries (Ding & Bruce, 2017) determines which type of EAP teaching is suitable for that context, requiring EAP teachers and administrators to consider the institutional and national needs (Hyland, 2006) to deliver the course successfully.

Challenges such as variation in teacher expertise often hinder EAP delivery as many teachers lack specialised training for teaching EAP, and end up relying on traditional lecture-based methods (Hamp-Lyons, 2011). This leads to inconsistencies in course quality, reducing the effectiveness of instruction. Furthermore, the diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences of the students also pose significant challenges. In non-native contexts, students who enroll in EAP courses have unique educational experiences, resulting in different levels of English proficiency, which creates difficulties for the course and material developers

to match content and activities that would promote effective instruction (Damayanti et al., 2024). Additionally, students' previous experiences often make them hesitant to engage in the classroom actively as they are not accustomed to such classroom practices due to previous teacher-student dynamics (Kardijan & Yundayani, 2019). Researchers have advocated Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a preferred student-centered approach for teaching EAP (Plumb, 2008) but in EFL settings like Bangladesh, traditional teacher-centered methods are still prevalent in the classrooms, resulting in passive learning experiences and reduced student engagement (Karim et al., 2023). These types of practices pose various challenges for students in the EAP courses, lowering their confidence and hindering their ability to develop the required English competency (Sultana, 2014).

Needs analysis (NA) is an essential process to improve EAP courses in settings where students need to develop specialised linguistic and academic skills (Brown, 2016). It helps determine students' necessities and wants, the lack of EAP courses and the constraints that need to be overcome (Braine, 2002). Previously, EAP courses were developed based on generalised language proficiency models, conflating learners' general and academic language needs as the same (Hyland, 2006). However, studies (Sebolai, 2016; Wingate & Tribble, 2012) challenged this notion, demonstrating that academic literacy development requires distinct skills such as critical reading and writing and developing disciplinary discourses – that general language proficiency models do not address. This theoretical shift accentuates the importance of context in determining EAP's success, at the same time, revealing an insistent tension; while NA aims to align EAP courses with localised needs (Basturkmen, 2010), challenges riddle its implementation in HE. For instance, NA is essential for identifying and diminishing the gap between students' academic expectations and language proficiency and research has debated which stakeholder's perspective should govern the process (Atai et al., 2018). Some studies have prioritised institutional and employer demands (Huang, 2024) while others advocated that NA should center student voice to foster ownership and engagement (Hyland & Shaw, 2016; Gillet, 2013).

The above information shows that implementing needs analysis is a complex task for educators and curriculum developers because the nature of students' needs is dynamic and context-specific, plus, it changes over time and across disciplines in HE (Flowerdew, 2015). Additionally, conducting NA requires significant resources that include time, expertise, and institutional support, which often is not readily available across all institutions (Tajino et al., 2005). Yet, NA continues to significantly impact EAP practices in HE (Evans & Morrison, 2018; Brown, 2016). This information underscores several concerns regarding NA and EAP practices in non-native settings. First, whether these students' self-perceived needs and wants align with the institution's necessities; second, whether the NA conducted in well-resourced and Anglophone settings is suitable for

replication in non-native and under-resourced contexts; and third, can NA in non-native EMI settings reframe students' needs beyond linguistic deficits to address systemic barriers such as difficulties in academic literacy and disciplinary literacy development. Therefore, adapting NA is crucial in such settings to better understand non-native students' perceived needs and wants pertaining to EAP courses in EMI education.

Only a few studies on undergraduate EAP courses in Bangladesh exist. They have looked at EAP courses targeted towards engineering students, reporting that the courses do not address engineering students' academic language development as students are left with low speaking and writing proficiencies and lack disciplinary vocabulary (Aziz, 2017; Rahman & Jelane, 2021). Similar findings were found in Sharmin's (2011) study that focused on medical students. These studies reveal that the absence of tailored instruction in EAP courses fails to meet students' needs and wants (Haque, 2017). The lack of a systematic evaluation of EAP needs is also evident. Moreover, these studies were conducted in public universities where EMI is not implemented strictly (Rahman & Singh, 2020). Sultana (2014) and Chowdhury and Haider (2012) also focused on private university students, reporting that EAP courses partially contributed to developing their academic language skills. Misalignment between students' disciplinary requirements and what is taught in the EAP courses is evident from these studies. Moreover, these studies also do not address the interplay of complex factors that affect non-native undergraduates' learning, especially in EMI institutions. Previous work on EMI education in Bangladeshi HE have focused on language ideologies (Rahman & Singh, 2020), language practice (Rahman & Singh, 2023; Rafi & Morgan, 2023), language management (Rahnuma, 2023), linguistic inequality (Sultana, 2014). However, there is paucity of research that looked into the misalignment between students' disciplinary requirements and what is taught in undergraduate EAP courses.

Thus, to address this, it is important to report students' perceptions and experiences regarding this pressing problem. With the aim to fill this knowledge gap, this research evaluated current practices of undergraduate EAP courses from learners' perspectives, highlighting areas for improvement to bring changes to the undergraduate curriculum at a private HEI in a non-native setting. So, this study used Brown's (2016) need analysis approach to describe the exact learning situation of the EAP courses, non-native students' present-situation, and deficiency in terms of their academic language skills at a private university in Bangladesh. The findings of this study will benefit policymakers, curriculum developers and EAP teachers, informing them of strategies to undertake for modifying EAP courses and instruction. This includes making relevant interventions for enhancing the effectiveness of undergraduate EAP courses in a non-native context. The outcome will alleviate the challenges non-native students face, leading to better academic and career outcomes (Sultana et al., 2019). The specific objectives of this study are as follows.

1. To explore non-native students' perspectives on the teaching methods used in undergraduate EAP courses and their effectiveness in meeting learning objectives.

2. To identify and evaluate the hindrances to the development of academic language skills and effective communication in EAP courses from the perspective of non-native students.

3. To assess the academic and professional needs of non-native students and evaluate how well EAP courses align with these needs.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Approximately 8,000 undergraduate students are enrolled at the focal university, a leading Bangladeshi private university, known for offering diverse undergraduate programmes (business, engineering, natural and applied science, social science, arts and humanities, and law) and EMI education. It was chosen for this small-scale qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2012) as it is a representative case (Yin, 2017). Additionally, this type of inquiry was chosen as it offered flexibility and allowed an in-depth examination of non-native students' experiences in a specific institutional context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This helped to focus on the details of the inquiry (Astalin, 2013), and explore EAP courses' effectiveness, the barriers students face and their suitability for their academic and professional needs.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2016) as it ensured the data collected was detailed and comprehensive, reflecting their actual experiences of undergraduate EAP courses.

The selection criteria were: (i) students have completed at least one EAP course, (ii) they are from various disciplines, and (iii) they are accustomed to the university's EMI policy and the role EAP courses play in addressing their academic language and disciplinary needs.

As most of the participants are non-natives, they were more susceptible to encountering academic language challenges in their pursuit of EMI education. Afterward, participants were reached out to and inquired if they were open to participating in this independent study. They were informed that involvement was fully voluntary and they could withdraw without any consequences. The participants provided verbal consent and participated willingly.

To confirm that this study conformed with the ethical practice of the focal university, the researchers have assigned codes to anonymise participants' identities as well as the institution where this study took place. A total of forty-five undergraduate students participated in this study (Table 1). This number was adequate as additional responses received were saturated (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Table 1
Distribution of participants from the departments at the focal university

DEPARTMENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Business	10
Engineering	9
Natural & Applied Science	10
Social Science	10
Arts & Humanities	4
Law	2
Total	45

This study used Brown's (2016) Eleven Analysis Options to adapt questions from Bosuwon and Woodrow's (2009) study. This comprehensive tool comprises strategies that covered the constructs of this study, which were, to examine, explore and analyse (Brown, 2016, p. 18) needful information and determine non-native students' current needs in the learning-teaching context of the EAP courses in EMI education. Moreover, prior studies exploring EAP needs analysis have widely used this framework (Farea & Singh, 2024; Huang, 2024; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2023; Arias-Contreras & Moore, 2022; Song & Zhou, 2022; Arnó-Macià et al., 2020). So, this framework helped

prepare the semi-structured open-ended questions and ensured that participants could provide detailed accounts regarding three crucial areas that are aligned with this study's objectives. These are: students' perceptions about teaching methods used in EAP courses, the barriers they face in developing communication and academic language skills, and the alignment of course content with students' academic and professional needs. The interviews were conducted in two phases from 2019-2022. Half of the participants were interviewed on-site in 2019 and the rest via Google Meet due to the pandemic. Additionally, document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of the EAP syllabus and materials helped

researchers to triangulate the findings (Flick, 2018), increasing the study's robustness and ensuring the validity and depth of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This multi-phased examination has proven to be useful in other studies too (Hu & Lei, 2014; Rahman et al., 2024) as it helps researchers to clarify and expand upon participants' responses to develop a thorough insight into their experiences and perspectives.

Data from on-site interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed carefully to ensure accuracy. The same was done for the online interviews. The interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. The information collected was put in Microsoft Excel. Thematic analysis was then conducted on the compiled data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). First, researchers read the data several times to familiarise themselves with it (Nowell et al., 2017). Second, it was re-read with a focus on keywords and phrases related to the study's objectives. This initial open coding stage helped establish distinct codes by reading the data iteratively (Saldaña, 2021). Afterward, the codes were categorised into larger meaningful units, and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016) by making comparisons across the transcripts. During this time, document analysis was conducted concurrently by reviewing the two EAP course syllabi. This ensured further comparison of the interview data and helped map distinct patterns from it. The broad themes that emerged were aligned with Brown's (2016) framework. Afterward, a peer review (Nowell et al., 2017) was conducted to ensure that the coding process was refined and the emerging themes were consistent, establishing the trustworthiness of the data analysis process.

4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1 Students' perceptions of EAP teaching and its effectiveness to meet learning objectives

The first research objective was to report undergraduate students' perspectives about the teaching methods used in the EAP courses taught at the private university. The thematic analysis of the interview data helped report this below.

Different levels of satisfaction were evident from student interviews about the teaching methods used in the EAP courses. Most of the students stressed the benefits of using interactive pedagogic approaches, sharing how it impacted their overall learning and engagement. A student said, *'I liked [...] the classes as they were very interactive. I feel comfortable speaking in English in group discussions now. It has helped me overcome my hesitation'*. This perspective aligns with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach commonly used in EAP classrooms where student interactions are prioritised (Farooq et al., 2015).

Additionally, the use of group discussions is an aspect of task-based learning used in the EAP classroom (Douglas & Kim, 2014) as it allows more spoken English practice. This is evident in another excerpt from the interviews:

S9: *'I think the speaking classes highly affected my English performance. I was taught how to express my views and ideas in a constructive and organised manner'*.

On the other hand, a significant portion of students criticised traditional lecture-based methods used in the EAP2 course. They stated that they did not find such methods engaging as they could not practice English in those classrooms. A student explained, *'the lectures were boring [...] there wasn't much interaction. We only listened and took notes'*. Such an approach leaves non-native students feeling disconnected from their learning process, negatively affecting their learning outcomes. It also suggests that lecture-heavy classes fail to address the needs of Bangladeshi students in the EAP classroom. This is resonant of another study that found passive learning approaches do not equip students with the communicative and analytical skills needed for academic success (Basturkmen, 2010). Additionally, EAP teachers' performances that promote passive learning negatively affect students' satisfaction (Ghaffarian Asl & Osam, 2021), suggesting that a gap between what students expect and what they receive in the EAP classroom exists. Therefore, a more balanced approach in teaching EAP is needed, to ensure students' expectations are met. Otherwise, many students would not be interested in learning, which will hamper the development of their academic language skills (Dooey, 2010).

The students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the teaching methods in the EAP courses were mixed. Some participants felt the teaching methods significantly enhanced their speaking skills while others shared that it partially helped with their writing and exam preparation. This is evident in these excerpts:

S12: *'[...] but I believe it's not entirely the teacher's teaching style but rather the fact that they get a really small-time frame to teach a lot of things'*.

S39: *'[...] not all the faculties' feedback were helpful'*.

S27: *'Subconsciously we try to imitate our teachers, and we focus on their vocabulary, feedback, and accent'*.

S42: *'The teachers' methods did affect a lot [...] Even after 3 years I still refer to those teaching styles, such as using a grabber, or ending my statement with a clincher'*.

The mixed feedback shows current EAP teaching methods partially address students' learning needs and developing speaking skills is crucial to participate in academic discourse successfully (Crosthwaite, 2016). However, given students' academic writing challenges in the HE context (Karim et al., 2023), it is evident that current EAP courses are partially addressing students' academic writing needs as students did not find the feedback very helpful. This suggests that EAP teachers may need further development in language assessment literacy (Sultana, 2019), as a study from China (Cui et al., 2022) showed that improving this increased the effectiveness of EAP instruction.

4.2. Students' perspectives on effective communication and academic language learning barriers

The second research objective was to report the barriers that undergraduate students face in developing their academic language skills in the EAP courses taught at the private university. The thematic analysis of the interview data helped identify this.

'It is evident that the fear of judgment or negative evaluation from their peers hinders their attempts to speak in the EAP classroom. Similar findings in a study from Turkey (Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015) show this is common across non-native contexts. EAP teachers need to be supportive and provide motivational discourse to reduce students' anxiety to speak (Salimi et al., 2024). Also, the anxiety about speaking in the Bangladeshi classroom stems from their previous learning experiences (Islam & Stapa, 2021) where they rarely practiced speaking in English. The excerpt proves this as students who came from EMI schools were naturally better speakers. This reasserts that a lack of coherent policy implementation in Bangladeshi schools is hindering students' academic language skills development needed for university'

The students shared that fear, and shyness was a significant barrier when they needed to speak in English. As students had fewer chances to practice speaking in English in their schools, the English-only policy in the EAP classroom made them anxious. They said they were happy with the opportunities they received but the fear of speaking in front of the class bothered them. Some excerpts from students interview about this:

S3: *'I felt shy... to speak... in front of people I did not know'.*

S6: *'I am an introvert person, which is why I always felt shy while speaking in front of my peers in classroom. As a result, at the beginning of the semester my presentations were not up to the mark'.*

S14: *'I only spoke whenever the teacher asked me to share my opinion. I did not like to speak much because I felt that people would laugh if I made any mistake. They might think that I am not able to speak fluently'.*

S15: *'Students from English medium background was very fluent in speaking which made me demotivated [...] I felt nervous while giving presentation'.*

It is evident that the fear of judgment or negative evaluation from their peers hinders their attempts to speak in the EAP classroom. Similar findings in a study from Turkey (Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015) show this is common across non-native contexts. EAP teachers need to be supportive and provide motivational discourse to reduce students' anxiety to speak (Salimi et al., 2024). Also, the anxiety about speaking in the Bangladeshi classroom stems from their previous learning experiences (Islam & Stapa, 2021) where they rarely practiced speaking in English. The excerpt proves this as students who came from EMI schools were naturally better speakers. This reasserts that a lack of coherent policy implementation in Bangladeshi schools is hindering students' academic language skills development needed for university (Rahman et al., 2019).

Some students shared that teachers' behavior and communication style created difficulties in communicating with them, often making them not understand what the teacher meant. They said:

S35: *'Even though the teaching style that the EAP course adapted is very unique, I personally believe not all faculties can teach in that style. Not all of them had that edge to grab the student's interest. Not that I'm a great judge, but I found my written English faculties English skills quite poor. Hence, I would often lose my interest in his class'.*

S28: *'Sometimes the task was not clear even after instructions were given. As I had many friends in the class, I always took help from my friends'.*

S16: *'Not understanding what actually teacher wants to say'.*

It is evident from these responses that some non-natives EAP teachers lack the efficacy to meaningfully communicate with the students (Copland et al., 2016). Some Bangladeshi university teachers tend to employ lots of group activities to make the students solve their problems by themselves (Alam et al., 2024). Although this approach may foster independent learning and collaborative problem-solving, in case of EAP courses, it is not always beneficial as hurriedly instructing students only confuses them more.

However, most students shared that their EAP teachers had good English skills, were friendly and provided consultation hours where they could go and speak about the difficulties they were facing in the courses. They shared:

S34: *'Luckily, I had a great faculty for oral English class. He shared a lot of his life and work experiences about how he communicated with different people and he always asked our opinion in different matters'.*

S40: *'I used to talk to my teacher during consultation hours, discussing the teacher about my problems in class'.*

This shows that students' affective factors are reduced if they can communicate with the teacher about their problems. Non-native students' willingness to communicate facilitates their language development and the former manifests if teachers are cooperative and provide opportunities to reduce students' affective factors, allowing authentic L2 use (Cao & Xiao, 2013). Furthermore, speaking to teachers for clarification shows that students are trying to develop their understanding, which is important for developing academic discourse ability (Skyrme, 2010).

4.3. EAP Course Content Alignment with Students' Academic and Professional Needs

The third research objective of the present study was to evaluate the alignment of students' academic and professional needs and the EAP courses taught at the private university. A combination of documents and thematic analysis helped evaluate this.

Both EAP1 and EAP2 are 3-credit hour courses, and teaching duration is 13 weeks as the private university follows a trimester system. One weekly class focuses on Speaking and

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Listening and two weekly classes are Reading and Writing. Students undertake a mandatory admission test (Roshid et al., 2023) to enroll in the university which determines which EAP course they will get. Most of the students usually get EAP1 in their first semester. After completing EAP1, students enroll in the EAP2 course in their third or fourth semester. However, many students complete this course in later semesters as the university's credit system allows flexibility in choosing credits in a semester.

The syllabus shows that students are introduced to different types of texts that allow them to employ various reading strategies to develop and improve their reading literacy (Delgado, 2015). A study from Bangladesh (Hayet et al., 2016) have reported that students entering universities are 'poor readers' (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012), and have lower reading proficiency due to lack of regularity. Therefore, students are taught various reading strategies to perform close and critical reading to distinguish claims and facts from beliefs and opinions. This delicate scaffolding allows students to understand texts by themselves (Brown, 2016).

Most students shared that the EAP syllabus and course content are aligned. They learn to prepare and deliver formal presentations in EAP1, using correct pronunciation, pitch, stress, and intonation. They shared that this did help develop their English speaking, which would aid in professional communication later. On the other hand, reading texts help practice analytical reading. The group activities allow them to practice English communicatively and challenge their analytical abilities:

S11: *'[...] I didn't know back then in school and college how to write essays, paragraphs and summaries using my own knowledge instead of memorising. So, the EAP1 course helped me a lot to broaden my mental horizon and use my knowledge in writing'.*

S29: *'The syllabus was very effective for me. It covered texts related to our social context. Social problems like; child marriage, poverty, pollution, population etc. was included in the text. I didn't know back in school and college how to write essays, paragraph and summary using our own knowledge instead of memorising'.*

The excerpts validate the suitability of EAP1 syllabus and its contents. The students undergo training in extensive and intensive reading, essential to develop academic literacies in HE (Murray & Muller, 2019). The courses use a process-based

approach rather than a genre-based approach to teaching writing (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). Classroom writing practices help develop students' personal voices and encourage critical thinking (Hyland, 2003).

Few students expressed misalignment in EAP2, stating that the content is a repetition of EAP1, which did not teach them how to write research papers for their disciplinary courses. A student said, *'I hoped to learn more on research-based writing in EAP2 [...] expected more content [...] that was covered little'*. This shows that although EAP courses introduce students to academic writing, they partially meet discipline-specific needs, leading to students' limited academic success (Sultana, 2014). Moreover, from the document analysis, it was found that EAP2 does not teach technical writing. These findings show that more tailored content suitable for students' disciplinary and professional needs should be incorporated, otherwise, the struggle with workplace preparedness (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012) will continue.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to report non-native students' perceptions and experiences about undergraduate EAP courses at an EMI institution in Bangladesh. Utilising Brown's (2016) needs analysis framework, the study aimed to determine the current state of the EAP courses and understand its deficiencies to meet students' needs in a non-native context. The findings reveal that students exhibit gaps in their academic English skills at the beginning of the EAP courses, particularly in reading, writing and oral communication. They hold a preference towards interactive teaching methods as they foster engagement and participation in the classroom, helping improve their public speaking skills to a certain extent. Students still have communication barriers such as feeling shy and anxious when they need to communicate in English. The findings reveal that students rely on teachers' feedback to improve their academic language skills, especially writing and speaking.

Finally, a notable gap is revealed between the EAP2 curriculum and students' discipline-specific needs, resulting in limited improvement of their academic language skills compared to the demands of undergraduate study. For example, students struggled with technical writing in later undergraduate courses despite doing EAP courses. This misalignment suggests the need for a more targeted EAP curriculum to address this issue. The mixed feedback from students describes the learning situation of EAP courses (Brown, 2016), suggesting that the teaching methods and activities used in EAP1 are appropriate, but greater opportunities to interact and practice discipline-specific writing is needed in EAP2. The present situation accentuates students have limited English skills and low confidence at the start of their undergraduate study, and EAP1 course helps improve this situation. However, their target academic needs are still unfulfilled as they struggle with the demands of academic writing in their disciplinary courses. These deficiencies underscore the need for curricular reform of the EAP courses to a certain extent.

'This exploration of non-native students' perspectives and experience of undergraduate EAP courses at a private university implementing EMI education reveals their perspectives about EAP teaching methods, highlighting its limited effectiveness in meeting their learning objectives. It has identified the barriers students face to develop academic language skills, especially the ability to communicate effectively for undergraduate study. Lastly, the misalignment of EAP curricula with the academic and professional needs of non-native students is evident. These findings evince that the students prioritise interactive teaching methods, which are practiced in the EAP courses. However, the EAP courses do not aid in developing their disciplinary writing and critical thinking skills as the types of struggles students faced in disciplinary courses were revealed. This shows that EAP teachers are underprepared for disciplinary instruction, and the EAP course content only partially aids in students' academic literacy development'

This careful examination of non-native students' opinions about EAP courses highlights Basturkmen & Wette's (2016) observation that interactive teaching enhances student participation in EAP classrooms. The findings show that the diverse needs of EFL contexts (Ding & Bruce, 2017) necessitate instruction that promotes students' communication in the classroom. Thus, the study's first objective was met by identifying EAP teaching methods being partially helpful for developing students' academic language skills and meeting learning objectives. This reiterates that non-native students at the beginning of undergraduate have deficient English proficiency due to traditional language-teaching methods they received in schools (Hamid, 2011).

Next, the findings reiterate Flowerdew's (2015) observation that non-native students have dynamic and context-specific needs. For instance, students relying on corrective feedback to improve their academic language skills are reflective of Rahman and Singh's (2023) study that teachers need to ensure the feedback provided is meaningful. Furthermore, the various barriers students face in the EAP courses, reiterates that non-native students' shyness to speak in English (MacWhinnie & Mitchell, 2017) is a cause of anxiety, affecting their development of academic speaking skills (Islam & Stapa, 2021). Supportive behavior from EAP teachers can reduce this. Moreover, Rahnuma's (2023) observation about students' persisting academic language difficulties pertaining to their undergraduate study was found in this study. This identification and evaluation of hindrances to their academic language skills development and the importance of effective communication with EAP teachers addresses the second objective of the study.

Finally, the focal university follows the EMI policy strictly and implements the outcome-based curriculum (Tania & Phyak, 2022). Although HE and secondary curriculum are aligned (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021), but the incoherent MOI policy is not helpful. The study also reveals that the trimester system causes time constraints to finish the EAP syllabus. This implies that administrators and course designers need to either reduce the syllabus of the EAP courses or introduce another EAP course that would focus on developing discipline-specific literacy and workplace preparedness as students' dissatisfaction with EAP2 writing calls for developing more diverse writing-intensive materials. Their profound needs in academic reading, speaking, and writing are reflective of other EFL and EMI settings like Hong Kong (Evans & Green, 2007) and Malaysia (Rahman et al., 2024). This evaluation meets the third objective of this study.

Moreover, this study highlights several striking contrasts with earlier research. While Sultana (2014) and Islam and Stapa (2021) observed a lack of linguistic proficiency among undergraduate students, viewing it as a significant issue for EMI dissemination (Rahman et al., 2019; Rahman & Singh, 2023), this study emphasised the crucial role of EAP courses in enhancing the quality and supporting the implementation of EMI programmes. It also explored how these courses can be better aligned to meet students' academic and professional needs.

In addition to this, Rahman et al. (2019) recommended that the National Curriculum could benefit from a coherent MOI policy that promotes learner-centered instruction. However, this research extends the current understanding of Bangladeshi undergraduate students' perceived needs in EAP courses and how well these courses align with the development of academic language skills in EMI education. The study suggests that EMI education should be implemented at earlier levels, with a focus on task-based learning to provide students with more opportunities to practice academic reading and speaking. Therefore, this study has significant implications for addressing the EAP needs of undergraduate students in similar non-native settings.

6. CONCLUSION

This exploration of non-native students' perspectives and experience of undergraduate EAP courses at a private university implementing EMI education reveals their perspectives about EAP teaching methods, highlighting its limited effectiveness in meeting their learning objectives. It has identified the barriers students face to develop academic language skills, especially the ability to communicate effectively for undergraduate study. Lastly, the misalignment of EAP curricula with the academic and professional needs of non-native students is evident. These findings evince that the students prioritise interactive teaching methods, which are practiced in the EAP courses. However, the EAP courses do not aid in developing their disciplinary writing and critical thinking skills as the types of struggles students faced in disciplinary courses were revealed. This shows that EAP teachers are underprepared for disciplinary instruction, and the EAP course content only partially aids in students' academic lit-

eracy development. These results counter the predominant supposition regarding EAP instruction in non-native contexts by suggesting that students' EAP challenges in EMI education do not stem from linguistic deficits. Instead, it resonates the systemic failures in the design of EAP curricula as well as teacher preparedness in under-resourced non-native contexts like Bangladesh. These systemic gaps can be addressed through urgent context-driven reforms, such as integrating results from this participatory needs analysis to bring needful changes to the EAP curricula and provide training to EAP teachers for discipline-specific instruction.

Although this study will add to the emerging literature on EAP and EMI in Bangladesh, several aspects remain unaddressed. Future research could focus on these areas to further

enrich the field. First, this research focused on a single institution, however, multiple case studies can provide comparative views along with more in-depth analysis (Yin, 2017). Additionally, greater involvement of other stakeholders such as EAP teachers, curriculum developers and university administrators is needed to understand the reality of EAP instruction in Bangladeshi university classrooms and generate multiple perspectives to improve the context-specific needs of non-native undergraduate students in other HEIs, including public universities.

Lastly, as EAP courses aim to develop student's academic literacy, future research can probe content teachers to further evaluate EAP courses' suitability for academic and disciplinary literacy development.

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