

Developing a Profile of the Writing Needs and Problems of Iranian Doctoral Candidates

Golnar Mazdayasna, Mahdiyeh Abbaspour

Yazd University (Iran)

gmazdayasna@hotmail.com, mabaspour85@yahoo.com

Abstract

The writing difficulties and requirements of doctoral candidates have not been targeted in EFL writing survey research, in spite of the importance of writing in the lives of these candidates. Publishing research papers in English journals is now a requirement for many doctoral candidates in Iran. This research is concerned with EFL writing problems and needs at the tertiary level, trying to point out the major difficulties with which Iranian doctoral candidates face while performing different writing tasks. In this survey, multiple methods such as questionnaires and interviews were used. Data were collected in the spring semester of the academic year 2011 from three universities of, Isfahan, Yazd and Kerman. A 34-item questionnaire was administered to 100 doctoral candidates and 40 content specialists. In addition, doctoral candidates and their content instructors were interviewed. The findings of data analysis revealed that Iranian doctoral programs conducted nationwide have not sufficiently taken into consideration the doctoral candidates' objective and subjective needs as far as writing is concerned. The results of the questionnaires and interviews showed that Iranian doctoral candidates from different academic disciplines namely, engineering, sciences, and medical sciences have problems both in language and writing skills, but with a higher percentage of problems in writing skills.