**Engineering English textbooks in Iran: a multimodal case study of one engineering and two EAP textbooks**

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**Abstract**

This study is situated within the tradition of systemic functional linguistics, in the field of second language education, and presents a multimodal analysis of three related undergraduate level textbooks. The purpose of the research is to determine the veracity of claims made by publishers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) textbooks that their books enable students to deal effectively with discipline-specific undergraduate textbooks. Two EAP textbooks and one canonical first-year undergraduate textbook, all three for students of Mechanical Engineering, were analyzed in order to provide verbal and visual accounts of meaning-making. Multimodal ensembles, or co-occurring verbal and visual representations, were also analyzed in order to explain how the textbooks generated inter-semiotic meanings in their multimodal ensembles. Results show that the undergraduate Engineering textbook employs high levels of technicality, verbally and visually, characterized by complex lexico-grammatical and mathematical choices, and by complex patterns of inter-semiotic identification among verbal, visual, and mathematical elements in multimodal ensembles. The EAP textbooks, in contrast, show lexico-grammatical patterns that are consistent with non-technical language, employ simple visual and mathematical structures, and present few multimodal ensembles with few examples of inter-semiotic identification. It is suggested that EAP publishers represent the subject matter of Mechanical Engineering in the verbal, visual, mathematical, and inter-semiotic patterns that are more consistent with their representation in the discipline's canonical textbooks.

**Keywords:** *ESP textbook, textbook evaluation, textbook analysis*

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)