

## The perception of Male and Female Teachers of Learning Needs

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**Abstract** – This study aimed to explore English teachers' perceptions of learning needs. 30 male nonnative English teachers and 30 female nonnative English teachers from different institutes in Shiraz participated in this study. A questionnaire was used in this study for data collection. It was a 5-point Likert scale type questionnaire which contained 38 items. After gathering the data, the data was analyzed through the frequencies and Chi-square test. The results of this study showed there was a significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of learning needs.

**Keywords:** learning, need, need analysis, perception

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### I. INTRODUCTION

From the 1960s, need analysis has been increasingly used as a part of curriculum development (Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff, & Nelson 1985; as cited in Richards, 2001). Need analysis can be defined as "procedures for gathering information about learners and about communication tasks for use in syllabus design" (Nunan, 1998, p. 75). Need analysis (NA) is an effective way for clarifying and validating true needs. Through need analysis, educators and practitioners can be aware of communicative needs, wants and interests of the learners and make the curriculum and the content of language courses based on these needs. (Lepetit & Cichocki, 2002; as cited in Akyel, & Ozek, 2010). In this way, we can connect learning to teaching as closely as possible (Grier, 2005).

Moreover, needs analysis is the first step which should be done before teaching begins. Tarone and Yule (1989) contend that teachers and administrators should pay attention to the specific aims of the learners before the curriculum and materials are designed. For instance, they should investigate whether a language learner wants to get a job, to participate in an international conference, and so on.

Furthermore, need analysis is a process which can provide the required information for teachers regarding the knowledge and wants of the learners. Besides, it can be used for assessing the learners' language skills. Furthermore, through the results of need analysis, proper teaching materials and teaching approaches can be used. Additionally, according to Richards (2001), need analysis can be done for exploring the skills which learners need for playing a specific role, investigating whether a special course can appropriately address the students' needs, identifying which student needs more training in a special area, exploring the change of direction which is important for reference group, finding the gap between what they can do and what they need to do, and exploring the problems that the students have.

Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to learning needs and analyze them. Besides, it is necessary to emphasize on the factors which affect learners' learning needs.

Teachers have important roles in this regard. Teachers have effective roles in addressing course objectives, creating suitable conditions for learning, helping the students to be knowledgeable and interested in the subject matter and leading to learning, knowledgeable and interested in the subject matter, and presenting the material flexibly (Gadzella, 1977; as cited in Dordinejad & Porghoveh, 2014). Similarly, Hiebert, Morris, Berk, and Johnson (2007; as cited in Dordinejad & Porghoveh, 2014) contend that teachers can identify the learners' learning goals and evaluating whether the goals are achieved. They can analyze the effects of teaching and learners' learning to enhance teaching and learning quality. Therefore, due to the importance of learning needs in educational setting and the role of teachers in this regard, this study aims to answer to the following questions:

- 1) What are teachers' attitudes toward language learning goals?
- 2) What are teachers' attitudes toward preferred English learning styles?
- 3) What are teachers' attitudes toward assessment?
- 4) Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers regarding learning needs?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

A number of studies have been done on learning needs. For example, Chia et al. (1999) conducted a study on English needs of medical college students in Taiwan. The results of this study showed English was perceived as an important course in Taiwan; besides, medical students needed to improve their listening skill more than the other skills.

Furthermore, Kormos, Kontra, and Csö"lle, (2002) assessed the language wants of English major learners in Hungary. The results of this study indicated that participants mostly thought they might need to use English in these situations in the future: reading of texts on the Internet, the use of monolingual dictionaries, expressing opinion and job-related conversations, reading professional books, and writing e-mail messages.

Besides, Kim (2006) explored academic oral communication needs of East Asian international graduate students in non-science and non-engineering fields. According to these students, participating in whole-class discussions, asking questions during class, and participating in small-group discussions were the most oral activities which were used in the classroom. Moreover, the results of this study showed leading class discussions and participating in whole-class discussions were the most complicated tasks for these learners.

Additionally, Taillefer (2007) assessed the professional language needs of Economics graduates in French context. The results of this study showed Economics graduates had difficulty in meeting their target needs. Furthermore, they had more problems in oral skills in comparison to other skills.

Moreover, Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) explored the ESP needs of Iranian undergraduate medical sciences students. The results of their study indicated that these medical sciences students needed to increase their language proficiency before studying their subject-specific English course.

Bacha and Bahous (2008) also investigated the business students' writing needs at the Lebanese American University in an EFL environment. Bacha and Bahous contended that business students needed to improve their writing proficiency level to cope with the different writing genres which were needed in different situations. Participants also agreed both business and English faculty should cooperate in language teaching.

Additionally, Chostelidou (2010) conducted a need analysis in Greek tertiary education to clarify the students' needs and design needs-based course. The results of this study indicated these students needed a very specific ESP language course on the target discipline and accountancy which could address the immediate and long-term needs of the students.

Moreover, Dehnad et al. (2010) did a need analysis for postgraduate courses in the Ministry of Health in Iran. According to their findings, there is no match between the students' descriptions of their needs and what are contained in their syllabus.

Besides, Inceçay and Inceçay (2010) conducted a case study on need assessment of English language teachers. The results of their study showed in the design and implementation process of language teaching curriculum and syllabus, not only should designers pay attention to students' needs but also they should pay attention to teachers' needs too.

Atai and Atai (2011) also investigated reading comprehension needs of Iranian EAP students of health information management. According to the participants' opinions, skimming texts, using bilingual general dictionaries, scanning texts, knowledge of HIM terminologies, guessing meanings of words, and understanding main ideas are important or very important in their reading comprehension success. Furthermore, the results of this study showed EAP reading courses should be improved.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Participants**

30 male nonnative English teachers and 30 female nonnative English teachers from different institutes in Shiraz participated in this study. Moreover, the average of male teachers' ages was 29.93 and the average of female teachers' ages was 28.4.

#### **B. Instrument**

Kikuchi's (2005) questionnaire with some modifications was used in this study. It was a 5-point Likert scale type questionnaire which contained 38 items. It had three parts related to teachers' perceptions of English learning aims, their preferred teaching styles, and their preferred evaluation/assessment ways. This questionnaire required respondents to read each statement and select one of these choices: completely disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), completely agree (5).

#### **C. Procedure**

The written questionnaire was distributed to 60 English teachers. The questionnaire was given to them in their classes. A clear instruction for completing the questionnaire was written in the questionnaire. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire anonymously. After gathering the data, the data was analyzed through the frequencies and Chi-square test.

#### IV. RESULTS

As table 1 and table 2 indicate, according to female and male teachers, the most important goal for learning English is learning English to be more educated (completely agree =22).

**Table1. Female Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding English Learning Aims**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency	3	2	3	13	9
2		5	4	9	6	6
3		5	1	14	7	3
4		0	0	1	7	<b>22</b>

**Table 2. Male Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding English Learning Aims**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency		25	4	1	
2			19	8	3	
3			18	11	1	
4					<b>22</b>	8

**Table3. Female Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding preferred teaching methods**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency	0	0	0	10	<b>20</b>
2		10	7	3	7	3
3		2	5	5	8	10
4		2	9	1	12	6
5		1	4	2	14	9
6		4	<b>17</b>	3	6	0
7		3	3	9	13	2
8		10	5	7	5	3
9		11	6	3	4	6
10		6	9	2	6	7
11		1	2	7	13	7
12		0	1	4	13	12
13		1	0	5	15	9

14		0	2	0	15	13
15		9	4	3	11	3
16		0	0	1	14	15
17		0	0	1	16	13
18		1	1	0	14	14
19		0	2	9	8	11
20		0	6	3	9	12
21		0	0	3	15	12
22		0	0	6	17	7
23		0	0	0	15	15
24		0	1	0	17	12
25		0	2	6	12	10
26		0	4	3	14	9
27		0	0	0	7	<b>23</b>
28		1	0	6	8	15
29		0	3	3	8	<b>16</b>

**Table 4. Male Teachers' Perceptions Regarding preferred teaching methods**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency				17	13
2			1		<b>22</b>	7
3			7		9	14
4			1		13	16
5				3	14	13
6			5		<b>21</b>	4
7			1		28	1
8		2	17	1	9	1
9			<b>26</b>		4	
10					<b>28</b>	2
11					<b>22</b>	8
12					10	20
13					8	<b>22</b>
14					4	<b>26</b>
15					11	19
16					5	<b>25</b>
17				2	6	<b>22</b>
18				3	8	19
19					13	17
20					15	15
21					16	14
22					10	20

23					13	17
24					13	17
25			3		18	9
26				4	15	11
27				2	11	17
28				3	14	13
29				2	10	18

As table 3 and table 4 show, the female teachers completely agree with "using different examples first to teach the grammatical point" (completely agree=20), "using cassettes and videos in the class" (completely agree =20), and "asking students to read an English newspaper or watch an English film for their homework"(completely agree =16). Moreover, most of the female teachers somehow disagree with "correcting all their students' errors immediately "(somehow disagree=17). However, the male teachers mostly preferred to "use drills for practicing different points"(completely agree =22)," use a lot of repetitions for teaching the lesson"(completely agree =26), "let the students to talk freely in English during the class"(completely agree =25), and "teach them English with fun"(completely agree =22). Furthermore, most of the male teachers somehow agree with "using Persian for explaining different things"(somehow agree=22), "correcting all the students' errors immediately by the teacher" (somehow agree=21), "asking students to memorize a list of words from English to Persian and vice versa"(somehow agree=28), and "explaining the differences between English and Persian" (somehow agree=22). Besides, most of the male teachers somehow disagree with "being a very strict teacher who controls the lesson" (somehow disagree= 26).

**Table 5. Female Teachers' Perceptions Regarding evaluation**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency	0	5	9	9	7
2		1	0	3	13	13
3		0	0	0	12	<b>18</b>
4		2	5	9	7	7
5		2	1	6	16	5

**Table 6. Male Teachers' Perceptions Regarding evaluation**

Items		Completely disagree	Somehow disagree	Neutral	Somehow agree	Completely agree
1	Frequency				13	17
2					17	13
3					19	11
4		1	2	1	17	9
5					15	15

According to table 5 and table 6, most of the female teachers completely agree (18) and most of the male teachers somehow agree (19) with "using a series of small quizzes during the term for evaluating their students.

**Table 7. Teachers' Total Scores Regarding Aims**

Male teachers' total score regarding English learning aims	Female teachers' total score regarding English learning aims
364	442

As it can be seen in this table, the total score of male teachers regarding English learning aims is 364 which is smaller than female teachers' total score regarding English learning aims (442).

**Table 8. Teachers' Total Scores Regarding Preferred Teaching Methods**

Female teachers' total score regarding preferred teaching methods	Male teachers' total score regarding preferred teaching methods
3538	4574

Besides, male teachers' total scores regarding preferred teaching methods is 4574 which is greater than female teachers' total scores regarding preferred teaching methods (3538).

**Table 9. Teachers' Total Scores Regarding Evaluation**

Male teachers' total score regarding evaluation	Female teachers' total score regarding evaluation
657	587

Additionally, male teachers' total score regarding evaluation is 657 which is greater than female teachers' total scores regarding evaluation (587).

**Table 10. Teachers' Total Scores Regarding Learning Needs in General**

Items	Male teachers' total score regarding learning needs	Female teachers' total score regarding learning needs
1	151	185
2	192	148
3	205	117
4	189	137
5	200	144
6	204	150
7	186	149
8	189	146
9	205	148
10	166	167
11	162	143
12	163	170
13	164	134
14	204	131
15	158	133
16	201	208
17	202	162
18	167	151
19	202	163
20	195	144
21	189	160
22	192	150
23	201	161
24	194	160
25	145	162
26	234	149
27	191	148
28	199	135
29	156	160
30	189	152
Total	5595	4567

As it can be seen in this table, male teachers' total score regarding learning needs is 5595 which is greater than female teachers' total score regarding learning needs (4567).

**Chi-square Test**

**Table 11. Frequencies**

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Female	4567	7193.0	-2626.0
male	9819	7193.0	2626.0
Total	14386		

**Table 12. Test Statistics**

	Sex 3
Chi-Square	1917.385 <sup>a</sup>
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The results Chi-square test shows that, the level of significance is .000 which is smaller than .05 ( $P < .05$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and there is significant difference between male and female teachers regarding learning needs.

**V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

According to the male and female teachers, the most important goal for learning English is "learning English to be more educated". Besides, the female teachers completely agree with "using different examples first to teach the grammatical point", "using cassettes and videos in the class", and "asking students to read an English newspaper or watch an English film for their homework". Moreover, most of the female teachers somehow disagree with "correcting all their students' errors immediately". However, the male teachers mostly preferred to "use drills for practicing different points", "use a lot of repetitions for teaching the lesson", "let students to talk freely in English during the class", and "teach them English with fun". Furthermore, most of the male teachers somehow agree with "using Persian for explaining different things", "correcting all the students' errors immediately by the teacher", "asking students to memorize a list of words from English to Persian and vice versa", and "explaining the differences between English and Persian". Besides, most of the male teachers somehow disagree with "being a very strict teacher who controls the lesson". Additionally, most of the female teachers completely agree and most of the male teachers somehow agree with "using a series of small quizzes during the term for evaluating their students". Furthermore, the result of Chi-square test indicates that, there is significant difference between male and female teachers regarding learning needs. Therefore, gender can be an important factor which may cause differences.

Moreover, there are some similarities and differences between the results of this study and the results of Kikuchi's (2005) research. The results of Kikuchi's (Ibid.) study showed teachers believed that using fun activities, as well as using pair work and group work in class,

could have positive effects on students' learning. Besides, teachers thought it was very effective to let the students discover their own answers. Furthermore, in teachers' opinion, using a series of small quizzes for evaluating the students was better than using one large test, and translation exercises could not help learners increase their English proficiency.

Additionally, the findings of some studies confirm that gender is a variable which can cause discrepancies. For example, Varola and Yilmaz (2010) explored similarities and differences between female and male learners regarding inside and outside class autonomous language learning activities. The results of their study indicated that girls were more autonomous than boys in and out of the class. Besides, the results of Mahdavy's (2013) study on gender and motivational orientations of English language learners showed male students were more motivated to learn English. However, the results of Dordinejad and Porghoveh's (2014) research on the relationship between EFL teachers' gender and their success showed teachers' gender does not affect their success.

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## APPENDIX: A

This questionnaire is about learning needs. Please read each statement and select one of these choices: completely disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), completely agree (5).

### Aims

1. I have a goal to get a job which requires English.
2. I have a goal to get ready for going to an English speaking country
3. Learning English is a challenge that I enjoy.
4. I want to learn English to be more educated.

### Preferred Teaching styles

1. Using different examples first to teach the grammatical point.
2. Using Persian for explaining different things
3. Only using English in the class.
4. Sometimes, using Persian for explaining some points.
5. Let the students to discover their own answers.

6. Correcting all the students' errors immediately by the teacher.
7. Speaking with a lot of mistakes is acceptable if they can make themselves understood.
8. Only speaking without any error is acceptable.
9. Teacher should be very strict and controls the lesson.
10. Asking students to memorize a list of words from English to Persian and vice versa.
11. Explaining the differences between English and Persian.
12. Providing different situations in which they can use English.
13. Using drills for practicing different points.
14. Using a lot of repetitions for teaching the lesson.
15. Translating different parts from English to Persian and vice versa.
16. Let students to talk freely in English during the class.
17. Teaching them English with fun.
18. Asking students to work in small groups.
19. Teacher walks in the class and correct the students' errors individually.
20. Using all of the activities of the book exactly.
21. Using materials and activities which are interesting for the students but they are contained in the book.
22. Asking to have self-study.
23. Using the dialogs of the books for teaching the lesson.
24. Providing opportunities for speaking with a native English speaker about their favorite topics.
25. Speaking English with those whose native language is Persian.
26. For practicing speaking, it is useful to divide it into small parts like grammar.
27. Using cassettes and videos in the class.
28. Asking students to write a letter in English and mail it for their homework.
29. Asking students to read an English newspaper or watch an English film for their homework.

### **Preferred ways for evaluating the students**

1. Using a teacher made test at the end of the term.
2. Participation in class activities is a major part of their grades.
3. Using a series of small quizzes during the term.
4. Participating students in the decisions about how they will be graded.
5. Using a standard test such as TOFEL for evaluating the students' performance.