

The Importance Of Examining Teacher And Learner's Attitudes And Understanding Learning Needs In The Twenty First Century

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ABSTRACT

An indispensable part of any curriculum design in an educational setting is the analysis of the needs of the learners involved in the context. The needs can be addressed from different perspectives. Among them, the learners' needs in terms of their perceptions toward what constitute learning/teaching and testing processes are of prominent values. If there is a match between how they view these processes and what the course designers assume them to be, more achievement is likely to happen. In this regard, no one-to-one correspondence exists between what the learners think and what really should be; however, any modifications made to set the ideas closer to one another are of great value.

In this study, an attempt is made to study the learners' as well as their teachers' attitudes toward learning, teaching and testing processes in their own educational settings. 213 learners and 38 English language teachers who have been selected from state /non-state schools and two English language private institutes with different comparable curricula have been questioned. The items of the different questionnaires designed for the learners and the teachers constituted the measuring instruments of the study. The types of the questions included in the questionnaires can to form four patterns of the responses. These patterns can show the preference of learners/teachers over: 1- text based or fun task-based teaching materials 2- form-focused or meaning focused instruction 3- formative or summative testing procedures. The implications of the study can benefit both learners/teachers as well as course designers to reconsider the issues which are of great challenges to any educational curriculum in different educational settings.

Keywords: Curriculum Development; Needs Analysis; Program Evaluation; Course Design

INTRODUCTION

Broadly defined, needs analysis (NA) is a procedure to collect information about learners' needs (Richards, 2001). The importance of NA is emphasized in English for Specific Purpose (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and English for Academic Purposes (Jordan, 1997), and also in general language courses espousing learner-centered curricula (Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1996), task-based curricula (Long & Crookes, 1992), as well as performance-assessment (Norris, Brown, Hudson, & Yoshioka, 1988). NA is considered a crucial component of systematic curriculum development. In Brown's (1995, p. 21) systematic curriculum development model it is the first phase of an ongoing quality control process (see Table 1). Brown (1995, p. 21) defines NA as: "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to satisfy the language learning requirements of the students within the context of the particular institutions involved in the learning situation."

In the initial NA phase, administrators collect and analyze information about students' needs in order to design sound, defensible objectives-which is the second phase of Brown's five phase model depicted in Figure 1.

That is, based on this model, the purpose of conducting NA is to systematically gather information in order to design objectives. While goals are "general statements about what must be accomplished in order to attain and satisfy students' needs," objectives refer to "precise statements about what content or skills the students must master in order to attain a particular goal" (Brown, 1995, p. 21). Thus, objectives have to be derived from corresponding goals. Therefore, it is essential for a language program to have well-defined goals so that the subsequent evaluation instruments can accurately measure the extent to which students have mastered the goals. Administrators can select the goals that students feel the need to learn and extrapolate these in terms of specific objectives which represent a concrete manifestation of those goals. NA is generally administered to a particular target group of students at a program-level. For the administration to a large number of students, a questionnaire is the most frequently used and efficient method to elicit responses.

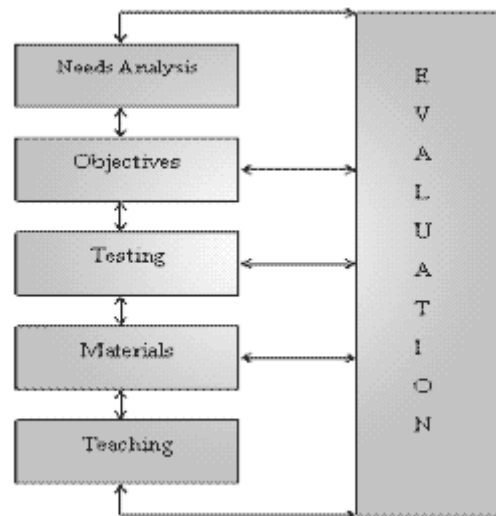


Figure 1. The systematic curriculum development model proposed by Brown (1995)

A number of articles have been published on NA such as those by Basturkmen (1998), Berwick (1989), and West (1994). However, the actual detailed studies on this topic are scarce (e. g., Iwai, Kondo, Lim, Ray, Shimizu, & Brown, 1999; Chaudron, et al., 2005). In Japanese contexts, quite a few studies have explored variables such as students' bio data, motivation, strategies, learning beliefs, learning styles and preference, and perceived difficulty in learning (Hiromori, 2003; Kikuchi, 2005; Kuwabara, Nakanishi, & Komai, 2005; Robson & Midorikawa, 2001; and Suzuki & Kumazawa, 2006). These instruments were employed to investigate individual differences among student respondents. Especially, teachers can make use of such information to discern characteristics of their students and subsequently make lessons more satisfying for them by addressing their needs. For instance, if students prefer working in pairs to small groups, teachers can provide more pair-work activities. However, it is often difficult to translate subjective student preferences into course objectives. One instrument that reputedly does this can be found in Busch, Elsea, Gruba, and Johnson (1992). In one of the sections called "present student needs", they list nine items in which the expression "need" was included as part of item description wordings so that respondents could specify the extent of their needs with concision (Busch et. al., 1992, p. 18). Moreover, in 2004 Kusangi and Kumazawa made an attempt to develop and validate an NA instrument with these features. In their study, a Rasch analysis was conducted assuming that all 75 items were one-dimensional. The results indicated that several items were misfitting, and the instrument lacked validity. One of the confounding factors was that many terms had a variety of ambiguous wordings which likely tapped into a number of constructs. Ideally, precise wording which taps into a single construct should be used.

Although needs analysis (also called needs assessment) is claimed to be a critical part of the process of curriculum planning in second language learning (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001), there are not so many published

studies on this topic. In 1994, in his overview of needs analysis studies, West (1994) stated only a handful of needs analysis studies have come out over the last 25 years. In the past decade, however, there has been an increase in such studies. Most of these studies, however, only use one method and one data source. Except for Busch, et al, which employed both teacher and student questionnaires, all other studies were based solely on students' self-reports. In his book on the curriculum development, Brown (1995, p. 52) states: . . . multiple sources of information should be used in a needs analysis — although the specific combination appropriate for a given situation must be decided on the site by the needs analysts themselves (probably after input from program administration, faculty, and perhaps students).

If possible, it is important to use different research methods and sources to analyze needs. Although there have been a number of studies using student questionnaires to obtain student information, such data has limited depth. How cognizant are most 18 or 19-year-old learners of their own learning needs? How willing are they to state their views openly? In the light of such questions, authors such as West (1994), Brown (1995), Long (1999), as well as Witkin and Asltschuld (1995) have emphasized the importance of triangulating data from many sources and using multiple methods as in Kikuchi (2001).

As Nunan (1988:43) puts it, 'during the 1970s, needs analysis procedures made their appearance in language planning' and 'became widespread' in language teaching. In their first days, such procedures were used as "the initial process for the specification of behavioral objectives" which then explored different syllabus elements, such as functions, notions, lexis, in a more detailed manner. At the same time, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) became a matter of general interest and LSP experts were making efforts to give birth to a more comprehensive and better LSP syllabus. As a result, needs analysis was warmly welcomed by LSP teachers as an approach to course design, which focused on learner's needs. But needs analysis did not find its remarkable influence and position in LSP until Munby's approach to needs analysis came into being.

In his attempt to make a contribution to syllabus design, Munby (1978) proposed his approach to needs analysis which soon drew great attention from syllabus designers, particularly ESP architects. His work was a landmark in ESP and had a huge influence on ESP since it provided a new vision on individual needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The work is briefly summarized here.

Munby's model consists of two stages: Communication Needs Processor (CNP) and the interpretation of the profile of needs derived from the CNP in terms of micro-skills and micro-functions. The CNP is set out under eight variables that 'affect communication needs by organizing them as parameters in a dynamic relationship to each other' (p32). The CNP operates by looking at its 'inputs' - the foreign language participant - and information concerning the participant's identity and language. Then it requires information on the eight variables: purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key. In the second stage of the model, the user must take the activities with their communicative keys and decide which of three alternative ways of processing them is appropriate. The alternatives are: specification of syllabus content by focusing on micro-skills, specification by focusing on micro-functions, and specification by focusing on linguistic forms.

Obviously, Munby explores thoroughly every aspect relating to learner's needs. His work is probably the most detailed, complex and informative studies. He thinks of the unthinkable and proves to be very thoughtful in the work. This analysis of Munby's approach focuses on the aspects of communication he emphasizes and the assumptions regarding the roles of language, the learner, the syllabus, the teacher that lie behind his design. He emphasizes all equal on: purpose, medium/mode/channel of communication, sociolinguistic aspects, linguistics, and pragmatics.

This indicates that he is taking into account language and culture and communication purpose, but pays no attention to implementation (activities, resources, and classroom dynamics). He also seems to assure a very teacher-directed method, in which students' inputs about purpose are superficial and only required at the beginning of the course. It is clear that his emphasis on text and his categorization rely on his intuition. All of these weaknesses result in criticisms of his work.

Munby's work "Communicative Syllabus Design" (1978) then became a target for criticisms by academics and linguists. Although Munby's work has been seen as having far more weak points than strong points, 'it has been very influential: either developments have stemmed from [it], or as a result of reactions to it' as Jordan (1997: 24) remarks.

During 1970s-1980s the impact of learner-centeredness in language teaching was evident with the development of communicative approaches which shifted the attention of the teaching-learning processes from language form to language function, or to language use in accordance with the needs of learners (Savignon, 1997). Contemporary English language teaching pedagogies have focused on developing learners' communicative competence and on promoting learning strategies and learner autonomy in language classrooms. This change in the approach to language teaching from traditional teacher-centered to more learner-centered (e.g. Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1996), which as Nunan (1988: 179) noted, is "an offspring of communicative language learning" requires learners to participate and negotiate actively in meaningful interaction in order to interpret and construct meaning by themselves (Breen & Candlin, 1980).

Therefore two different approaches have emerged. White (1988) uses the terms 'Type A' and 'Type B' to distinguish between what are generally accepted to be extremes on a syllabus design continuum. Similar syllabuses are alternatively referred to by others as 'linguistically-oriented', and 'communicative' syllabuses (Nunan 1988: 10), 'synthetic', and 'analytic' syllabuses (Wilkins cited in Yalden 1987: 31), or, more commonly, product, and process syllabuses (Nunan 1988: 12; 26) respectively.

Thus, whilst White (1988: 92) and Nunan (1988: 12) agree that any given syllabus will probably include such aspects as structure, functions, topics, and situations, their priority within the syllabus will be dictated by the syllabus designer's beliefs and values about language learning (Breen 1984 cited in Nunan 1988: 10; Nunan 1988: 12; White 1988: 45), which in turn, dictate the position of any particular syllabus on the continuum above mentioned.

It has been seen that both Type A and Type B syllabuses have positive and negative aspects. The main points concerning Type A syllabuses are that they provide clear goals and objectives, but ignore SLA research in treating language and the learning process in a linear way, compiling lists of linguistic items, and expecting students to master these items. Student needs and their motivation are also ignored.

The main points concerning Type B syllabuses, on the other hand, are that they show an awareness of SLA research and recognize the importance of the language learning process in their methods. Student motivation is largely recognized to be higher than when Type A syllabuses are adopted, since tasks engage the interest of the students. However, they lack empirical evidence to support them, and the majority of cases are seen to forfeit a focus on form and accountability in their approach to selection, grading, evaluation and targets.

During the course of this paper it has been possible to appreciate what White (1988: 90) refers to as '...the conflict between language teaching as training for ordained outcomes on the one hand and education for unexpected outcomes on the other.' Yet it would appear to be generally accepted that '[T]here are clear disadvantages...to an extreme focus in either direction' (Seedhouse 1997: 338), as there are a growing number of writers in the field who believe, as Nunan & Lamb (2001: 29) do, that '...language programs should have twin goals: language content goals and learning process goals.' Xiaoju (1984: 7; 8), Seedhouse (1997: 338) and Nunan (1998: 109) call for a syllabus providing a balance between these elements; A M. Shaw (1982: 84; 86; 87) proposes a flexible, modular syllabus, and McDonough & C. Shaw (1993: 294) suggest that a 'multi-syllabus' based on more than one methodology could provide a solution. Even White, who states that the '...basic incompatibility between Type A and Type B which might make some combinations or compromises unworkable' (1988: 109), admits that hybrid, or proportional syllabuses may prove a useful 'compromise' (1988: 110; 111) for teachers who wish, for whatever reason, to combine elements of both product and process-oriented syllabuses.

Whatever their title, syllabuses will continue to give priority to different aspects of language learning and in so doing, reveal their position on the Type A – Type B continuum (Richards & Rodgers 1986: 20; White 1988: 92). Yet hopefully, such issues will not prevent practicing teachers, when they are able to choose, from using a syllabus

which reflects their own methodological standpoint whilst providing their students with an appropriate course for their needs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper explores the following research questions:

1. What are students' preferred English learning styles and expectations of teachers?
2. What are students' attitudes toward assessment?
3. How well are English teachers at the schools and institutes supporting students' learning needs?
4. How differently do students in advanced, intermediate, and basic level classes in different institutes, and students in different high schools, perceive their learning needs?

METHOD

Participants

This study uses five research populations: (1) 57 students at Iran Language Institute in Yazd (applying a largely audio-lingual method) in advanced, intermediate, and basic level classes, (2) 55 students at Kish language institute in Yazd (applying a communicative language teaching method) in advanced, intermediate, and basic level classes, (3) 57 students in the first, second and third grades of Sayyed Jamalladdin state high school, (4)54 students in the second and third grades of Javadol-Aemme non-state high school, and (5) 38 teachers of English in both state and non-state high schools and the two language institutes concerned. Information about these three populations is summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

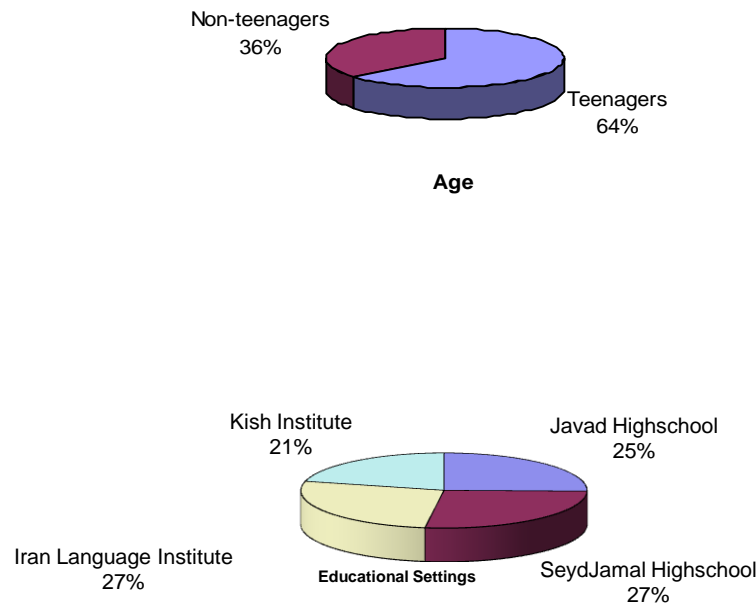


Figure 2. The age and educational settings of the student respondents

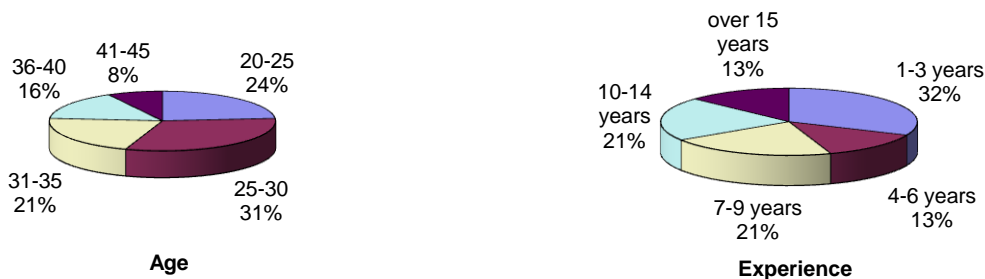


Figure 3. The age and teaching experience of the English teachers

Materials

In order to obtain a satisfying amount of authentic data, this study attempted to employ multiple methods and sources of information about student/teacher attitudes. Therefore, it made use of some interviews and direct observations (qualitative data) of learners in addition to the quantitative data.

Both learners and teachers in different educational settings concerned in this paper, were observed and interviewed about their ideas about teaching, learning and testing and the beliefs and motivations behind their preferences, the complete reporting of which lies beyond the scope of this paper. The collected information was used by the author to confirm and support the results achieved through the quantitative data.

The students' questionnaire consisted of thirty eight 5-point Likert scale questions in Persian. This questionnaire was based on a survey developed by Busch, et al. (1992) to identify the needs of students at Kanda University of International Studies. A few items from the original Busch et al. study were deleted because they were not relevant to the study and four background questions were added to obtain more information about the participants.

The teacher questionnaires consisted of twenty two 5-point Likert scale questions in English. This was also adapted from Busch, et al.(1992), though a few items from that original study were deleted and three extra background questions were added.

Procedures

After conducting the preliminary observations and interviews, the student questionnaires were distributed to 238 English students in the four educational settings, in early April 2008. The students had around ten minutes in class to complete the survey. At the same time, the teacher questionnaires were distributed to 38 teachers of English. They were asked to complete this survey during their break time between their classes. The questionnaire items and the collected data are organized into different tables to convey the results.

RESULTS

Students preferred learning styles and expectations about their teachers

The first 28 items in the survey concerned attitudes about learning and how teachers should perform. There was a strong preference for the conditions mentioned in Questions 1, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 22 and 25 and less preference for those mentioned in Questions 3, 27, and 28. If this data is accurate, it would seem that students both at high schools and institutes prefer to learn under so-called "communicative" conditions and real-life tasks with an

emphasis on pair/group work, fun learning, individual help from teachers, with a positive classroom atmosphere. Many students also seem to enjoy translation exercises and immediate error correction. Not many liked the way they learned English in high school, and strict teachers were not appreciated. Table 1 summarizes salient responses.

On the right side of each statement, means of the students placed in advanced (Adv), intermediate (Int), and basic (Bas) levels are described so that readers can identify the similarity/difference in responses among these different groups.

Table 1
Summary of Agreed and Less Agreed items in students' preferred learning styles and expectations about their teachers

Survey Item #	Statement	Preferred Conditions (General mean scores above 3.5) And Less Preferred Conditions (General mean scores lower than 2.8)							
		Mean (Adv)		Mean (Int)		Mean (Bas)		Mean Javad High school	Mean S. Jamal High school
		Kish Inst.	ILI	Kish Inst.	ILI	Kish Inst.	ILI		
22	I learn best when the teacher makes learning fun.	4.8	4.93	5	4.56	4.78	4.56	4.48	4.41
25	I learn best when I chose what work I would like to do.	3.8	3.57	4.08	3.61	3	3.36	4.15	3.97
7	I like the teacher to correct all my mistakes immediately.	4.07	3.86	3.58	4.06	4.17	4.36	4.02	4.07
16	I learn best when the teacher lets me discover answers by myself rather than just hearing them.	3.8	3.79	4.17	3.78	3.83	3.92	3.85	4.31
13	I learn best when I see the words rather than just hearing them.	4.07	4.07	4.17	4.17	4.06	3.72	4.17	4.40
11	I learn best when we have translation exercises.	3.2	3.43	3.67	4.17	3.39	3.40	3.83	4.16
17	I learn best when there is a friendly atmosphere in the classroom.	4.93	4.93	5	4.72	4.67	4.76	4.43	4.49
1	I like to work with other students in pairs and small groups.	4.8	4.57	4.58	4.61	4.44	4.36	4.04	3.93
10	I learn best when the teacher moves around the class and helps individual students.	3.13	3.71	4.67	3.72	4.00	4.40	4.31	4.01
28	I use the library rooms to study English.	2	2.57	2.33	2.33	2.56	3.24	2.52	2.48
27	I like the way I was taught English in high school.	1.47	1.29	2.25	2.00	1.44	2.44	2.76	2.94
3	I learn best when the teacher is strict and controls the lesson. (I like teachers who are very strict).	1.93	3.07	3.50	3.44	2.44	3.08	2.52	3.23

Student attitudes toward assessment/evaluation

Survey items 29 to 38 covered students' views on assessment/evaluation. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics. Generally, students seem to prefer taking a series of small quizzes and formative tests rather than large summative tests. They appear to be interested in learning test-taking strategies. Most have not taken computer-based tests and many plan to take some kind English proficiency tests soon. It seems they disdain essay tests focusing on productive language skills.

Table 2
Summary of agreed and less agreed items in students' self-reported views of assessment/evaluation
Preferred Conditions (General mean scores above 3.5)
and Less Preferred Conditions (General mean scores lower than 2.8)

Survey Item #	Statement	Mean (Adv)		Mean (Int)		Mean (Bas)		Mean Javad High school	Mean S. Jamal High school
		Kish Inst.	ILI	Kish Inst.	ILI	Kish Inst.	Kish Inst.		
29	I prefer taking a series of small quizzes rather than one large test.	3.58	3.86	3.75	3.94	4.06	3.24	3.65	4.06
31	I would like to know more about test taking strategies.	3.67	4.05	3.58	4.11	3.61	4.20	3.98	4.38
36	I want my teacher to teach me how to do well on a general proficiency test of English.	4.51	4.71	4.42	4.78	4.61	4.76	4.39	4.56
38	I think it is important to achieve the highest possible grade.	4.38	4.21	4.17	4.22	4.5	4.52	4.74	4.63
35	I plan to take a TOEFL test soon.	3.84	4.21	3.25	4.11	4.17	3.80	3.78	3.42
33	I prefer essay tests to multiple-choice examinations.	2.53	1.93	2.58	2.17	2.22	2.12	2.96	3.46

Teachers' perceptions of their students' English learning and teaching styles

Items 7 to 22 of the teachers' questionnaire pertained to their perceptions of students' preferred English learning and styles and beliefs about the students expectations of their teachers. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for each question.

Notice how items 9, 12, 14, 17, 19 and 21 have high mean scores for all groups. English teachers at institutes and high schools agreed with students about many basic learning factors. Though there were slight differences of opinions about the use of translation exercises or using Persian in class, the only statistically significant difference concerned attitudes towards strict teachers and using Persian explanations while teaching: English teachers at institutes were significantly more positive about being friendly and flexible and using the target language for explanations in class than English teachers at high schools were. The teachers in Kish institute applying CLT method consider more importance for guess work and students' self-discovery. The teachers at the ILI pay more attention to individual help to the students. The students appreciate both these techniques.

Teachers' attitudes toward assessment/evaluation

Items 1 to 6 of the teachers' questionnaire concern their attitudes toward assessment / evaluation. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics for those questions. Items 1, 2 and 4 showed a high mean among all English teacher groups. On the contrary, item 3 showed a rather low mean for each teacher group. All groups viewed class participation as an important facet of learning. They believed in the motivating effect of Semester-final tests on the Iranian students. Like students, teachers also preferred short formative quizzes to single large summative exams for evaluation.

Table 3
Teachers' perceptions of students' preferred English learning/teaching styles

Survey Item #	Statement	EFL Teachers Mean				EFL Teachers SD			
		Kish Inst.	ILI	High schools	Total	Kish Inst.	ILI	High schools	Total
7	Ss do not like to express themselves.	1.67	2.25	2.47	2.26	1.21	0.89	0.99	1.00
8	Ss do not like to talk freely in class.	1.67	2.38	2.93	2.58	0.82	.92	1.28	1.15
9	Ss learn when the class is fun.	4.17	4.50	4.33	4.39	0.75	0.53	1.05	0.79
10	Using Persian for explanations is okay.	2.33	2.25	3.27	2.79	1.51	1.16	1.39	1.34
11	Ss prefer same gender pair/group work.	3.50	3.25	3.27	3.39	0.84	1.04	1.33	1.10
12	Ss like pair/group work.	4.50	4.13	4.27	4.32	0.55	0.64	0.70	0.62
13	Ss prefer strict teachers.	2.50	1.88	3.33	2.63	0.84	0.64	1.29	1.20
14	Ss like tests and homework.	4.33	3.75	4.27	4.11	0.52	0.71	0.59	0.61
15	Ss want immediate error correction.	3.00	2.63	3.53	2.82	1.26	1.30	1.19	1.29
16	Ss like learning grammar.	3.00	3.50	3.27	3.21	0.89	1.31	1.39	1.19
17	Ss like being helped individually in class.	3.83	4.38	4.40	4.32	0.41	0.52	0.74	0.62
18	Ss like translation exercises.	2.83	2.63	2.67	2.63	0.17	0.74	1.54	1.17
19	Ss prefer finding their own answers.	4.67	3.63	4.53	4.32	0.82	0.74	0.52	0.70
20	Ss prefer correcting their own work.	4.50	3.38	3.80	2.92	0.55	1.19	0.86	0.88
21	Ss like using video/TV in class.	4.33	4.38	4.67	4.45	0.82	0.52	0.49	0.72
22	It is good to assign Hw using radio/newspaper.	3.67	3.75	4.00	3.87	1.03	0.89	1.20	1.12

Table 4
Teachers' views on evaluation/assessment

Survey Item #	Statement	EFL Teachers Mean				EFL Teachers SD			
		Kish Inst.	ILI	High schools	Total	Kish Inst.	ILI	High schools	Total
1	Semester-final tests motivate Ss.	4.33	4.00	4.60	4.34	0.82	0.53	0.51	0.71
2	Class participation is important in grading.	4.33	4.25	4.60	4.39	0.82	0.46	0.63	0.59
3	Ss should participate in the grading process.	2.67	2.38	3.07	2.89	0.82	1.06	0.96	1.09
4	Prefer giving short quizzes to final tests.	4.50	4.38	4.20	4.24	0.84	0.52	1.01	0.94
5	Use 4 skills for grades.	3.67	3.38	4.13	3.92	0.82	1.30	0.99	1.05
6	Eng. proficiency test skill courses should be offered.	3.50	3.88	3.53	3.58	1.05	0.83	0.92	0.89

How students in different classes varied

Among those 213 students who participated in this study, 29 students were placed into advanced level classes, 30 students were placed into intermediate-level classes and 43 students were placed into basic-level classes according to the placement tests applied in each of the two language institutes. Among high school students also 33 students were selected among the first grade students, 41 from second grade students and 37 among the third grade students in the two high schools. Tables 5 and 6 show how these student groups varied in terms of their preferred learning styles and expectations of teachers and attitudes towards assessment. Although there are small differences among each group, only few findings were actually statistically significant. Basic level students and high school students showed a clear preference for Iranian teachers when compared with advanced students. High school students and ILI basic level students are more book-centered than Kish Inst. students and they prefer to follow their

textbooks closely because a more text-based approach has been employed in their curriculum. The students in Kish however, have been exposed to a task-based approach and have enjoyed more fun learning, so they have less preference for many tests and much homework than the other student groups. Other findings such as a greater willingness among advanced students to speak English in class or read newspapers for homework than basic students were indicative, but not statistically significant. Views about testing and assessment did not vary widely among students in the various class levels, but students in Kish institute following a communicative, meaning-focused method believe that they can perform much better in tests of communication rather than grammar tests. On the other hand, the high school students and the students studying at the ILI, receiving more form-focused instruction, believe in performing better in grammar tests and don't feel confident about their communicative competence.

Table 5
Differences among student populations concerning learning and preferred teaching styles

Survey Item #	Statement	[Adv]				Mean (SD) [Int]				Mean (SD) [Bas]				Javad High school (All grades)		S.Jamal High school (All grades)	
		Kish Inst.		ILI		Kish Inst.		ILI		Kish Inst.		ILI		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	I learn best in pair/group work.	4.80	0.41	4.57	0.65	4.58	0.90	4.61	0.61	4.44	0.78	4.36	0.76	4.04	0.89	3.93	1.02
2	I learn best when working alone.	2.07	1.28	2.07	1.64	1.92	1.16	1.94	1.21	1.89	1.13	2.20	1.35	2.87	1.27	3.24	1.39
3	I learn best with strict teaching.	1.93	1.10	3.07	1.49	3.50	1.31	3.44	1.65	2.44	1.58	3.08	2.89	2.52	1.42	3.23	1.49
4	I learn best when following textbooks closely.	1.93	0.88	2.36	1.50	2.92	1.38	3.56	1.25	2.61	1.20	4.12	1.30	3.81	1.20	4.17	1.11
5	I learn best with many tests and much homework.	2.40	1.18	3.07	1.27	3.33	1.07	3.89	0.96	2.89	1.23	3.84	1.34	3.54	1.31	4.31	0.96
6	I learn best with Persian explanations.	1.40	0.63	1.50	0.76	2.25	1.29	2.06	1.30	2.17	1.38	2.72	1.31	3.50	1.46	3.86	1.36
7	I learn best with immediate error correction.	4.07	0.88	3.86	1.35	3.58	1.44	4.06	1.16	4.17	0.92	4.36	1.04	4.02	1.05	4.07	1.09
8	I learn best with AV materials in language labs.	4.33	0.98	4.79	0.58	4.67	0.49	4.33	0.84	4.61	0.50	4.32	1.22	3.67	1.39	3.89	1.09
9	I like to study grammar.	4.00	1.25	4.29	1.07	4.00	1.04	4.44	1.04	4.17	0.99	4.64	0.64	3.85	1.35	3.93	1.18
10	I like when Ts help us individually in class.	3.13	1.30	3.71	1.07	4.67	0.49	3.72	1.07	4.00	1.03	4.40	0.76	4.31	0.77	4.01	1.04
11	I like translation exercises.	3.20	1.47	3.43	1.34	3.67	1.30	4.17	0.92	3.39	1.24	3.40	1.47	3.83	1.21	4.16	0.97
12	I like to choose my own group partners.	3.60	0.83	3.71	1.20	3.42	1.44	3.56	0.92	3.61	1.24	3.88	1.24	4.19	0.83	4.04	1.08

Table 5 continued

13	I like to see words rather than hearing them.	4.07	0.80	4.07	1.14	4.17	1.27	4.17	1.15	4.06	0.73	3.72	1.40	4.17	1.04	4.40	0.76
14	I like to try guessing answers.	3.67	0.98	3.71	0.91	4.00	0.95	3.83	0.86	3.94	0.94	4.16	0.90	4.06	0.98	4.00	0.86
15	I prefer Persian EFL teachers over native EFL teachers.	2.73	0.70	2.14	1.03	3.25	1.22	3.00	1.03	3.67	0.84	3.76	1.23	3.26	1.26	3.77	1.39
16	I prefer to find out answers on my own.	3.80	1.01	3.79	1.05	4.17	0.83	3.78	1.17	3.83	1.04	3.92	1.15	3.85	1.16	4.31	0.77
17	Having a friendly class atmosphere is important.	4.93	0.26	4.93	0.27	5.00	0.00	4.72	0.57	4.67	0.69	4.76	0.52	4.43	1.00	4.49	0.80
18	I prefer to correct my own work.	4.33	1.05	4.14	0.77	4.58	0.51	3.56	1.38	3.67	1.03	4.12	0.97	3.89	1.19	3.98	1.01
19	I like using video/TV in class.	4.33	0.82	4.93	0.27	4.33	0.98	4.33	1.03	4.72	0.57	4.20	1.29	3.85	1.17	3.78	1.21
20	I like to practice English outside of class.	4.53	0.52	4.86	0.53	4.42	0.90	4.61	0.61	4.06	1.26	3.96	1.24	3.83	1.28	3.69	1.18
21	I like peer correction on writing work.	3.27	1.28	4.21	0.97	3.42	1.62	4.17	0.86	3.72	1.07	3.88	1.01	3.54	1.41	3.66	1.24
22	I like to learn in classes that are fun.	4.80	0.56	4.93	0.27	5.00	0.00	4.56	0.70	4.78	0.55	4.56	0.92	4.48	0.67	4.41	0.87
23	I like homework using radio/newspaper.	3.73	1.22	4.57	0.51	3.92	1.51	4.39	0.78	3.94	0.87	3.84	1.34	3.65	1.32	3.24	1.26
24	I like talking with classmates in English.	4.80	0.41	4.93	0.27	4.67	0.49	4.78	0.43	4.61	0.61	4.56	0.65	4.39	1.00	3.96	1.09
25	I like choosing class work on my own.	3.80	0.77	3.57	1.28	4.08	0.79	3.61	0.92	3.00	1.08	3.36	1.19	4.15	1.04	3.97	1.07
26	I prefer working in same gender pairs/groups.	3.87	1.06	3.50	1.16	3.83	1.40	3.89	1.08	3.72	0.96	3.76	1.16	3.30	1.50	4.20	1.02
27	I like learning English as in high school.	1.47	0.64	1.29	0.61	2.25	1.54	2.00	1.08	1.44	0.70	2.44	1.33	2.76	1.23	2.94	1.48
28	I like studying in language labs / library.	2.00	1.13	2.57	1.55	2.33	1.30	2.33	1.50	2.56	1.10	3.24	1.13	2.52	1.33	2.48	1.23

Table 6
Differences among student populations concerning assessment/evaluation

Survey Item #	Statement	Mean (SD) [Adv]				Mean (SD) [Int]				Mean (SD) [Bas]				Javad High school		S.Jamal High school	
		Kish Inst.		ILI		Kish Inst.		ILI		Kish Inst.		ILI		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
29	I prefer short quizzes to term tests.	2.87	1.77	3.86	1.10	3.75	1.54	3.94	1.43	4.06	0.80	3.24	1.39	3.65	1.51	4.06	1.25
30	I do better on grammar tests than on tests of communication.	2.60	1.24	3.71	1.14	3.58	1.38	3.94	1.06	2.33	1.24	3.40	1.15	3.04	1.23	3.67	1.20
31	I want to learn test taking strategies.	3.80	0.77	4.00	0.88	3.58	1.38	4.11	1.02	3.61	1.04	4.20	1.08	3.98	1.12	4.38	0.73
32	I prefer computer-based tests.	3.73	1.10	2.64	1.28	3.25	1.14	3.11	1.49	2.94	1.16	3.48	1.45	3.93	1.21	3.64	1.09
33	I prefer Essay tests.	2.87	1.51	1.93	1.14	2.58	1.51	2.17	1.34	2.22	1.26	2.12	1.36	2.96	1.61	3.46	1.51
34	I prefer annual oral tests	4.67	0.62	4.71	0.83	4.67	0.89	4.72	0.46	4.78	0.43	4.56	1.00	4.31	1.04	4.28	0.96
35	I plan to take an English proficiency test soon.	3.93	1.03	4.21	1.05	3.25	1.54	4.11	1.23	4.17	1.10	3.80	0.96	3.78	1.36	3.42	1.28
36	I want to learn how to improve my TOEFL score.	4.47	0.64	4.71	0.47	4.42	1.00	4.78	0.55	4.61	0.61	4.76	0.52	4.39	0.96	4.56	0.74
37	I'm concerned about failing grades.	2.20	1.26	3.29	1.64	2.75	1.48	3.28	1.60	3.00	1.24	4.04	1.31	2.81	1.65	1.98	1.32
38	I want to achieve the highest possible grades.	4.40	0.74	4.21	0.89	4.17	1.27	4.22	0.94	4.50	0.79	4.52	1.12	4.74	0.68	4.63	0.67

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on a careful examination of Tables 1-4, some generalizations concerning learner needs can now be attempted. The items that showed a mean of 3.5 or higher by all populations used in this survey are listed in Table 7.

Table 7
Major points of agreement between students and teachers in terms of preferred learning/teaching styles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both students and teachers think students learn best when teachers use fun activities. [Items #22 and #25 in SQ and #9 in TQ] • Both students and teachers agree that students learn best when teachers let students discover answers. [Item #16 in SQ and #19 in TQ] • Both students and teachers like to use pair work and group work in class. [Item #1 in SQ and #12 in TQ] • Both students and teachers think that teachers should help individual students in a friendly atmosphere. [Item #10 in SQ and #17 in TQ] • Both students and teachers prefer a series of small quizzes to one large test in evaluation. [Item #29 in SQ and #4 in TQ] • Both students and teachers like the idea of teaching test taking skills. [Items #31 and #36 in SQ and #6 in TQ]

The results presented here suggest that teachers and students see eye-to-eye about many teaching issues. However, it is important to note there are also significant contrasts. Table 8 lists some of the main points of variance between teachers and students.

Table 8

Major points of disagreement between students and teachers in terms of preferred learning/teaching styles

- While many students perceive that they learn best when they have translation exercises, some teachers (especially English teachers at institutes) do not think that it helps them improve their English proficiency. [Item #11 in SQ and #18 in TQ]
- While many students like to work in same sex groups, high school teachers do not think that they learn most effectively when working in same-sex groups. [Item #26 in SQ and #12 in TQ]

Through this simple process of taking class notes and asking students for their opinions about the class, the instructors will be able to learn more about how the course is perceived by students and whether instructor's perceptions are in line with students'. As a result, the instructors can change the format of class instruction in ways that can match learners' objectives to minimize perceptual mismatches.

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