

In the Name of God



Iran University of Science and Technology
Department of Foreign Languages

Students' Likes vs. Instructors' Perception of Those Likes in Language Learning

By:
Katayoon Valizadeh

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a
Foreign Language**

Advisor: Dr. Eslami Rasekh
Reader: Dr. Bidahri

December 2000

۲۹۹۱۳

We hereby approve that this thesis by *Katayoon Valizadeh* entitled “Students’ Likes vs. Instructors’ Perception of Those Likes in Language Learning” be accepted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Committee on the oral examination:

Dr. Zohreh Eslami Rasekh (Thesis Advisor)

.....*Z. Eslami*.....

Dr. Parviz Bidahri (Thesis Reader)

.....*P. Bidahri*.....

Dr. Seyyed Mahmood Tabatabaee

.....*S.M.M. Tabatabaee*.....

Head of Foreign Language Department

December 2000

۳۹۹۱۸

IN THE NAME OF GOD

Dedicated to:

my dear father, mother, and grandmother

who are all the world to me,

Those who have always provided me with

their love and support.

Abstract

Nowadays the world of teaching tends toward the learner-centered approach. In line with that, the present study aimed at investigating the degree of discrepancy between students' likes and instructors' perception of those likes in language learning. So it involved 603 EFL students at different universities who responded to a questionnaire on their likes and preferred activities in "General English" course which is, by itself, a type of subjective needs analysis. Moreover, 27 instructors were asked about their perceptions of students' likes in the same context. Then a comparison was made between these two groups' responses to find out the degree of discrepancy between students' preferred activities and instructors' perception of those preferences. The findings showed that there is a marked difference between these two; although, statistically it could not reach to the significance level. The results also indicated that, in communicative activities, there is a significant difference between students' likes and instructors' perception of those likes. Considering speech-based vs. text-based activities; although not statistically significant, a large difference is observed between two groups. Furthermore, it became clear that students' gender and field of study do not affect their likes significantly. The results have certain implications for syllabus and material design and classroom practice as well.

Acknowledgements

Although words can not express my indebtedness, I hope they would convey my very sincerity to all those who assisted me throughout completing this study.

I do not really know how to express my deepest thanks to **Dr. Zohreh Eslami Rasekh**, the advisor of this thesis, who provided me with her support, help, encouragement, invaluable advice and the sincerest consultation through the months of conducting this research project. I will never forget her kindness.

I also like to thank **Dr. Parviz Bidahri**, the reader of this thesis, for his helpful comments in this study. He was consistently so sensitive toward completing this research project in its perfect manner.

My special thanks go to **Dr. Abbas Hooman**, the statistician who guided me in the analyses of the study.

I am also indebted to my all professors in MA. and BA. levels for their invaluable guidance.

I also like to thank my dearest friends, **Mrs. Tavakoli, Mrs. Bahraminejad,** and **Miss Nikooperast,** with whom I have passed the happiest time of my life, for their support, encouragement and valuable comments in this thesis.

Last but not the least, I would like to give my warmest appreciation and thanks to my **dear family,** father, mother and grandmother, whose love, support and tolerance helped me in entering, passing, and finishing the MA level. I really do not know how to thank them since without their help I could have not passed the sweet but tough life of being a student.

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	xii
<u>Chapter I: Introduction</u>	1
1.1. Background to the Study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	5
1.3. Significance of and Justification for the Study	6
1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses	7
1.5. Definition of Important Terms	9
1.6. Delimitations of the Study	11
<u>Chapter II: Review of Related Literature</u>	13
2.1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)	14
2.1.1. EAP: A branch of ESP	19

2.2. Needs Analysis	21
2.3. Learner-Centered Approach	29
2.4. Variables of the Study	36
2.4.1. Type of activity: communicative vs. noncommunicative	36
2.4.2. Area of activity: The four skills	44
2.4.2.1. Listening	45
2.4.2.2. Speaking	48
2.4.2.3. Reading	53
2.4.2.4. Writing	57
2.4.3. Learners' gender	62
2.4.4. Learners' field of study	66
2.5. The Role of Learners and Their Beliefs	68
2.6. Related Empirical Studies	74
<u>Chapter III: Method</u>	81
3.1. Subjects	82
3.1.1. Students	82
3.1.2. Instructors	85
3.2. Instrumentation	86

3.2.1. Development of the questionnaires	87
3.2.2. Dividing the instruments into subscales	89
3.2.3. Reliability of the instruments	91
3.3. Procedure	92
3.4. Design	93
3.5. Statistical Analysis	94
<u>Chapter IV: Results and Discussion</u>	96
4.1. Descriptive Statistics	98
4.2. Analyses for null hypothesis 1	103
4.3. Analyses for null hypothesis 2	107
4.4. Analyses for null hypothesis 3	108
4.5. Analyses for null hypothesis 4	109
4.6. Analyses for null hypothesis 5	112
4.7. Summary of the Results	115
<u>Chapter V: Conclusions, Implications, and Suggestions</u>	116
5.1. Conclusions	116
5.2. Theoretical/Pedagogical Implications	119
5.3. Suggestions for Further Research	121

Bibliography	123
Appendix I	144
Appendix II	158
Appendix III	163
Appendix IV	168

List of Tables

Table	Page
1: The type of information required and the way of grouping learners based on the purposes in a learner-centered system	25
2: Contrasting views of needs analysis (Objective vs. Subjective)	27
3: The role of learner in each stage of learner-centered curriculum	34
4: Different aspects of communicative language teaching	42
5: The total number and percent of students in the four fields, in population and sample	83
6: The number and percent of males and females in four fields in the sample	84
7: Reliability coefficient (α) of both instruments and each subscale	92

8: Items arranged according to their means descendingly in students' questionnaire	98
9: Items arranged according to their means descendingly in instructors' questionnaire	100
10: Descriptive statistics of five variables for the students	102
11: Descriptive statistics of five variables for the instructors	102
12: Mann-Whitney U tests for each item regarding null hypothesis 1	104
13: Mann-Whitney U test for "total" regarding null hypothesis 1	106
14: Mann-Whitney U test for "Communicative" and "Noncommunicative" subscales	107
15: Mann-Whitney U test for "speech" and "text" subscales	109

16: Mann-Whitney U tests for each item regarding null hypothesis 4	110
17: Mann-Whitney U test for “total” regarding null hypothesis 4	111
18: Kruskal-Wallis U tests for each item regarding null hypothesis 5	112
19: Kruskal-Wallis tests for “total” regarding null hypothesis 5	114

Chapter I:

Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Teaching and learning have always been controversial issues among scholars. Nowadays the world of teaching tends toward the learner-centered approach (Richardson, 1992, cited in Makarova, 1997). This approach has got prominence over the previously-popular teacher-centered approach. In the learner-centered approach, learners can be invited to express their own views on their preferences and needs for learning the language (Horwitz, 1988; Brindley, 1984, and Willing, 1988, cited in Spratt, 1999). This approach is also a distinguished trend in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Johns, 1999b).