and sensitive enough to listen to the voice of their learners, know how their teaching is being received, and take (and be seen to take) students' views into consideration when planning and implementing their teaching programs". This not only increases the motivation of students but also creates a favorable and secure environment in which learners gain proficiency and positive experiences in their language learning processes (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989).

References

Abraham, R. and Vann, R. (1987). Strategies of two language learners: a case study. In A.L. Wenden and J. Rubin (eds.), *Learner Strategies in Language Learning. London: Prentice Hall, 85–102.*

Barkhuizen, G. P. (1998). Discovering learners' perceptions of ESL classroom teaching/learning activities in South African context. *TESOL Quarterly.* 32/1, 85-105.

Bess, J. L. (2001). Disincentives to commitment to teaching in Japan: Toward a theory of normative discontinuity. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research, Vol. 17.* (pp. 273-303). New York: Agathon Press.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.

Cogan, D. (1995). Should foreign teachers of English adapt their methods to Japanese patterns of learning and classroom Interaction? *The Language Teacher; 19*, 36-38.

Davies, A. (2006). What do learners really want from their EFL course? *ELT Journal*, 60/1. 3-12.

Garrett, P. and Shortall, T. (2002). Learners' evaluations of teacher-fronted and student-centred classroom activities. *Language Teaching Research,* 6 (1), 25-57.

Gorsuch, G. (1998). Yakudoku EFL instruction in two Japanese high school classrooms: An exploratory study. *JALT Journal, 20* (1), 6-32.

Green, J. M. (1993). 'Student attitudes toward communicative and non-communicative activities: do enjoyment and effectiveness go together?' *The Modern Language Journal,* 77(1): 1-10.

Gregersen, T., 2003. To err is human: A reminder to teachers of language-anxious students. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36, 25-32.

Horwitz, E.k., 2001. Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 21, 112-26.

Horwitz, E.K. (1985). Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in foreign language methods course. *Foreign Language Annals*, 18.4: 333-40.

Kitano,K., 2001. Anxiety in the college Japanese classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 85, 549-560.

Kleinmann, H., 1977. Avoidance behavior in adult second language acquisition. *Language Learning,* 27, 93-107.

Littlewood, W. (2010). Chinese and Japanese Students' Conceptions of the 'Ideal English Lesson'. *RELC Journal* . 41. 46-58.

Ludwig, J. (1983). Attitudes and expectations: a profile of female and male students of college French, German, and Spanish. *Modern Language Journal* ,67(3), 217-27.

McDonough, S.M. (1995). *Strategy and skill in learning a foreign language.* London: Edward Arnold.

MacIntyre, P. and Gardner, R. (1989). Anxiety and second language learning: toward a theoretical clarification. *Language Learning,* 39: 251–75.

Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centered curriculum.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D (1995). 'Closing the gap between learning and instruction'. *TESOL Quarterly 29*(1): 133-58.

Peacock M (1998). 'Exploring the gap between teachers' and learners' beliefs about "useful" activities for EFL'. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(2): 233-50.

Rao, Z. (2002). Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. *System, 30* (1), 85-105.

Satio, H. and Ebsworth, M. E. (2004). Seeing English language teaching and learning through the eyes of Japanese EFL and ESL students. *Foreign Language Annals, 37* (1), 111-124.

Savignon, S.J. and Wang, C. (2003). Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions. *IRAL 41*, 223–249.

Spratt, M (1999). How good are we at knowing what learners like? *System*, 27, 141-155.

Spratt, M (2001). The value of finding out what classroom activities students like. *RELC Journal 30.* 80-101.

Willing, K. (1988). Learning styles in adult migrant education. Adelaide: *National Curriculum Resource Centre.*

or 'playing games' in the classroom were the preferred activities these students. As it is stated by Littlewood (2010, p.57) although students " find communication-oriented teaching more enjoyable, they may still perceive the more traditional types of teaching as more useful" for their future needs.

The direct comparison between the results of this study and Littlewood's (2010) study shows that students in Iran showed a high preference for form-oriented as well as communicative-oriented lessons. Students in Singapore, Mainland China, and Hong Kong showed preference for communicative-oriented lesson-types. The rationale behind the choice of students was not undertaken in Littlewood's (2010) study. However, as it was stated by him (2010, p. 57) " The data give no information about the students' previous learning experiences, which are likely, as mentioned earlier, to be an important Source of influence on their current preferences. However, this does not alter the general implication that, whatever the reasons, students are ready to respond favorably to a range of teaching and learning approaches".

The common finding of the present study and the study by Littlewood (2010) is that

in their 'ideal English lesson' students prefer to have a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. This finding suggest that teachers should try to create a secure and non-threatening classroom environment and try to " assign tasks with sufficient scaffolding so that reticent students will feel more secure about participating in class" (Saito & Ebsworth, 2004, p.119). As it has been numerously documented in educational literature, language anxiety can dramatically influence the process of language learning (e.g., Kleinmann, 1977; Kitano, 2001; Horwitz, 2001; Gregersen, 2003). Language teachers not only should be aware of the effect of anxiety on the success of their learners, but also should help them to overcome this destructive feeling. Becoming more sensitive to the learners' affective needs not only will enhance students' learning potential but also make language learning experience more enjoyable to learners.

The findings of this study suggest that students like both non-communicative and communicative lesson-types. This implies that teachers can adopt an eclectic approach in their daily teaching practice in order to satisfy the general as well as specific educational needs of individual learners. Moreover, the comparison of the findings with other studies reveals that learners' preferences may vary depending on the context of learning. Undoubtedly, finding out about learners' perceptions and opinions brings real benefits to teachers. As Garrett and Shortall (2002, p.48) rightly noted "teachers soon realize that they have much to gain from being aware

Table 4. Some factors affecting learners' preference or non-preference for form-oriented and communicative-oriented lesson-types

	Reasons for preference	Reasons for non-preference
Form-oriented lesson-type	a. Need to pass university entrance exam b. Need to pass final school exams c. Holding the belief that learning a language is learning grammar & vocabulary	a. Teacher correction in front of others may be embarrassing b. Dictionary
Communicative-oriented lesson-type	a. Consolidating linguistic knowledge by using language b. Becoming familiar with others ideas c. Using the language helps to discover problematic areas d. real life materials are interesting	a. Insufficient command of language to converse in English b. Limited amount of classroom time for having fun & discussion

Discussion

Whereas previous studies that compared learners' preferences with teachers' preferences generally indicate that teachers prefer communicative activities more than learners do (e.g., Barkhuisen, 1998; Nunan, 1988; Peacock, 1998), the present study found that teachers rated form-oriented and control-oriented lessons higher than students.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers rated control-oriented and form-oriented lesson-types higher than communicative-oriented lesson-type. Students rated communicative-oriented and form-oriented lesson-types higher than control-oriented lesson-type. This shows that both groups favored form-oriented lessons, but students preferred communicative activities more than teachers. The results of the present study revealed that students favored non-communicative activities as well as communicative activities. this reveals that the students are tolerant and open

to various range of teaching and learning styles. Informal interviews with Iranian students uncovered some of the reasons behind selecting non-communicative activities as an 'ideal English lesson'. The reasons given by students were rooted in the need to pass university entrance examination and school exams, which are mainly based on students knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Although language instruction in Iranian schools are not based on communicative language teaching, students selected communicative-oriented activities as their 'ideal English lesson'. For choosing item 4: 'There is plenty of active discussion' the students claimed that speaking in the classroom help them consolidate their linguistic knowledge. Moreover, the students preferred to have a relaxed and secure atmosphere in their English classes. Additionally, because of the limited amount of time allocated to English at school and students's immediate future need to pass university exam 'having fun'

Table 3. Mean differences between teachers' and students' responses

Items	Students' mean	Teachers' mean	Mean Difference
1 . A lot of time is spent working independently of the teacher, (e.g. individually or in groups).	3.02	2.25	0.77
2. The teacher guides most of what the students do.	2.83	3.30	0.47
3. Some of the materials used are from real life (e.g. TV and magazine)	3.11	2.75	0.36
4. The atmosphere is relaxed.	3.44	3.21	0.23
5. Some time is spent 'having fun' (e.g. singing songs or playing games).	2.82	3.03	0.21
6. *The teacher corrects most of the grammar mistakes*.	3.08	3.25	0.17
7. *Some time is spent revising grammar*	3.28	3.44	0.16
8. *The teacher insists, most of the time, on correct pronunciation.*	3.00	3.12	0.12
9. *The teacher teaches new language items (e.g. grammar or vocabulary).*	3.47	3.35	0.12
10. There is plenty of active discussion.	3.23	3.17	0.06

● **Interview analysis**

The interview results indicated that participants had various reasons for selecting their preferred classroom activities. The need to pass the university entrance exam and school exams, which are mainly based on students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, were the main reasons for selecting items 1: 'The teacher teaches new language items (e.g. grammar or vocabulary)' and item 3: 'Some time is spent revising grammar'. Moreover, some of the participants believed that learning a language is learning its grammar and vocabulary. For selecting item 2: 'The atmosphere is relaxed', most of the students indicated that their learning potential would be enhanced in a stress-free environment. Although language instruction in Iranian schools is not based on communicative language teaching students selected items 4 and 5 as components of their 'ideal English lesson'.

Some items were not selected as a preferred components by some of the students. For item 6: 'The teacher corrects most of the grammar mistakes' some of the participants suggested that it would be embarrassing for some students to be corrected in front of others. Additionally, they commented that it would be unnecessary to be corrected by the teacher each and every time students make a mistake. What did not appeal to most students were items 9:' The teacher guides most of what the students do' and item 10: ' We spend some time having fun (e.g. singing songs or playing games)'. Table 4 summarizes some of the reasons given by the students.

communicative lesson-type were rated lower by the teachers compared with the students.

Table 2. Mean responses of Iranian teachers (N=23)

In my students' ideal English lesson:	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Some time is spent revising grammar.	*3.44*	
2. The teacher teaches new language items (e.g. grammar or vocabulary).	*3.35*	
3. The teacher guides most of what the students do.	3.30	
4. The teacher corrects most of the grammar mistakes.	*3.25*	
5. **The atmosphere is relaxed.**	**3.21**	
6. **There is plenty of active discussion.**	**3.17**	
7. *The teacher insists, most of the time, on correct pronunciation.*	*3.12*	
8. **Some time is spent 'having fun' (e.g. singing** songs or playing games).	**3.03**	
9. **Some of the materials used are from real life (e.g. TV and magazine)**	**2.75**	
10**.** A lot of time is spent working independently of the teacher, (e.g. individually or in groups).	2.25	

Table 3 shows the results of mean differences of teachers' and students' responses to different items. As it is clear the greatest difference is related to item 1 (A lot of time is spent working independently of the teacher (e.g. individually or in groups). For this item students' mean was greater than the teachers' mean which indicates that unlike teachers' perceptions, students like to work independently at some moments in the classroom. Teachers' mean was greater than students' responses to item 2 (*The teacher guides most of what the students do*). This consolidates students' view about working independently from their teachers. Whereas teachers believe that students like to be guided by the teacher in the classroom, students hold the opposite stance in this regard. Teachers' perceptions of students' preferences with respect to the three communicative lesson-types did not match with the students' preferences. Items 3, 4, and 5 show that, unlike teachers' perceptions students like to have these kinds of communicative activities in their 'ideal English lesson'.

was to elicit information regarding students' sources of preferences for their 'ideal English lesson'.

Results

● Questionnaire analysis

Table 1 presents the means and the standard deviations of 115 students' responses to the ten questionnaire items. The responses of teachers in terms of their conceptions of their students' 'ideal English lesson' are presented in Table 2. The bold items indicate communicative activities and the ones is italics indicate non-communicative ones. As it is evident from the table, the mechanical aspects of language learning like learning grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation were regarded as components of an 'ideal lesson' by the students (items 1 and 3).

Additionally, they preferred to have a relax and secure classroom environment (item 2). The communicative lesson-type items that were rated highly by these participants were item 4 (There is plenty of active discussion) and item 5 (Some of the materials used are from real life e.g. TV, magazines).

Table 1. Mean responses of Iranian students (N=115)

In my ideal English lesson:	Mean
1. The teacher teaches new language items (e.g. grammar or vocabulary).	3.47
2. The atmosphere is relaxed.	3.44
3. Some time is spent revising grammar.	*3.28*
4. **There is plenty of active discussion.**	**3.23**
5. **Some of the materials used are from real life (e.g. TV and magazine)**	**3.11**
6. The teacher corrects most of the grammar mistakes.	*3.08*
7. A lot of time is spent working independently of the teacher, (e.g. individually or in groups).	3.02
8. The teacher insists, most of the time, on correct pronunciation.	3.00
9. The teacher guides most of what the students do.	2.83
10. Some time is spent 'having fun' (e.g. singing songs or playing games).	2.82

Table 2 gives information on teachers' responses. The teachers were supposed to rate these items with respect to their perceptions of what their students' preferences were. As the table shows, the activity preferences that teachers thought their learners held were mostly non-communicative lesson-type. The top items highly rated by teachers (items1, 2, and 4) were related to grammar and vocabulary instruction. Items 5 and 6 which refer to

Nunan's (1988) study, the results showed a great mismatch between learners' and teachers' beliefs. Unlike teachers, learners rated non-communicative activities like error correction and grammar exercises much higher and pair work and group work much lower. In the same line, Spratt (1999) compared learners' preferred classroom activities with teachers' perceptions of what preferences learners held. 997 third grade level learners and their 50 teachers completed a 48-item questionnaire. The results revealed 50% correspondence between teachers' perceptions of learners' preferences and learners' reported preferences. The greatest lack of correspondence were in the area of feedback and greater correspondences were in the area of testing, listening, and participation mode.

Rationale for the present study

As Nunan (1995: 140) asserts "at the very least, teachers should find out what their students think and feel about what and how they want to learn". According to Ludwig (1983) if methods match learners' expectations the effectiveness of programs can be considerably increased. Also, by understanding learners's attitudes and preferences with regard to classroom activities teachers can increase students learning potential.

The present study was conducted in order to broaden the scope of studies done in the area of students' perceptions of classroom activities, and to include Iranian EFL learners whose profile differs from that of participants of previous studies. The context of English language teaching in Iran, especially language teaching in public schools with its emphasis on form-based or non-communicative instruction, is different from the EFL teaching contexts reported in other studies (e.g., Davies, 2006; Littlewood, 2010; Rao, 2002; Spratt, 1999). Therefore, it will be insightful to check whether similar findings will emerge.

Method

● Participants

The participants of the present study were 115 highschool thired grade EFL Iranian students and 25 high school English teachers in Zanjan. They all completed a questionnaire. From 115 students 23 of them participated in the follow-up interview.

● Instrument

The same questionnaire designed by Littlewood (2010) was used for the purpose of the present study. The items of this questionnaire were drawn from themes obtained through interview conducted with the students. Factor analysis of the items revealed three types of lesson: (a) communicative-oriented lesson, (b) form-oriented lesson, and (c) control-oriented lesson (Littlewood, 2010, p. 54). Students were supposed to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statements about their 'ideal English lesson'. Teachers were supposed to indicate their perceptions of what students preferences are. A four-point Likert scale format, ranging from *very true* to *very untrue*, was used to elicit the students' views and opinions about their preferred English lesson and teachers' conceptions of what those preferences are.

● Interview

To gain qualitative data, an informal interview was conducted with 25 students at the end of the study in Persian language. The purpose of the interview

The 15-item questionnaire used in this study consisted of communicative and non-communicative activities. The responses of learners to the questionnaire showed that students rated highly more traditional or mechanical aspects of language instruction. Spratt (2001) investigated 997 university students' preferences from among 48 English language learning activities. The results indicated that activities related to feedback were those most preferred by students, especially those that involved feedback from peers. In addition, students preferred oral skills to written ones. In terms of the distinction between communicative and non-communicative activities, learners liked communicative activities more than non-communicative ones. Rao (2002) surveyed the views of 30 university students on the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classrooms. The study found that the students favored a variety of classroom activities, but they preferred non-communicative activities more than communicative ones. Savignon and Wang (2003), also, investigated Taiwanese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions with regard to classroom practices. Unlike previous studies, the findings of this study suggested a discrepancy between learners' needs and preferences and their reported experience of classroom instruction. Learners preferred meaning-based or communicative activities over form-based non-communicative activities. The Learners' report on their English learning experience indicated that they received more grammar-based than meaning-based instruction and expressed their negative attitudes toward the former and positive attitude toward the latter. Davies (2006), based on a teacher-designed course-specific questionnaire, investigated the learners' views on classroom practices.

Survey results indicated that learners appreciated opportunities for self-expression via communicative activities.

The common finding of the present study and the study by Littlewood (2010) is that in their 'ideal English lesson' students prefer to have a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. This finding suggest that teachers should try to create a secure and non-threatening classroom environment and try to " assign tasks with sufficient scaffolding so that reticent students will feel more secure about participating in class"

McDonough (1995: 131) maintains that "activities valued by teachers were not the same as activities valued by learners". In this regard, other studies have focused on the degree of correspondence between teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards usefulness and enjoyableness of classroom activities. Nunan (1988), for example, found a great mismatch between teachers' and students' perceptions of classroom activities. In nine out of ten classroom activities teachers' views differed from students' in that students rated non-communicative activities as more useful than communicative ones. Peacock (1998) investigated the beliefs of teachers and students concerning the useful EFL activities. Data were gathered by means of interview and an 11-item questionnaire with 158 EFL students and 30 EFL teachers in Hong Kong university. Like

activities like pronunciation practice, error correction by the teachers, teacher explanation, learning new vocabulary, and studying grammar. Green (1993) too compared 263 first-year ESL students' perceptions of the 'enjoyableness' and the 'effectiveness' of 17 classroom practices and activities. The questionnaire contained nine communicative/real-world practices and eight non-communicative/form-based practices. The results showed that communicative activities were rated as more enjoyable than the non-communicative ones. Barkhuizen (1998) surveyed high school ESL students' perceptions of language teaching/learning activities presented in their classes by means of different methods of data collection including interviews, questionnaire, classroom observation, and students compositions.

Whereas previous studies that compared learners' preferences with teachers' preferences generally indicate that teachers prefer communicative activities more than learners do (e.g., Barkhuisen, 1998; Nunan, 1988; Peacock, 1998), the present study found that teachers rated form-oriented and control-oriented lessons higher than students

Introduction

Language learners hold different beliefs about language learning. Some learners believe that learning vocabulary is the main part of language learning. Other learners think learning a language is the same as learning grammar rules. Yet others view language learning as being able to converse on that language. According to Nunan (1995: 140) learners come "into the classroom...with different mind sets...different agendas". But what is the actual source of these beliefs? As Horwitz (1985) maintains learners acquire their beliefs from their previous learning experiences. Willing (1988) proposes that learners' beliefs may reflect their real needs rather than their preferences. Whatever the source, learners' beliefs affect how they approach learning and the degree of success they gain in language learning (Abraham & Vann, 1987).

In addition to the studies of learners' beliefs about language learning and with the shift towards a more learner-centered approach, some studies have focused on learners' attitudes towards which activities they regard as enjoyable or useful for language learning in their classroom. A study by Willing (1988), for instance, surveyed the views of 517 adult immigrant students in Australia on the 'usefulness' of the classroom activities. Both communicative and non-communicative type of activities were included in the 30-item questionnaire. It was found that ESL students generally favored form-oriented or non-communicative

Teachers and High School Students' Conceptions of an "Ideal English Lesson"

Narges Davoodi, MA in TEFL, English teacher
Email: Narges_davoodi_852@yaho.com
Sakineh Jafari, PhD Student, University of Is sfahan
Email: Sjafari597@yahoo.com

چکیده

با در نظر گرفتن تغییر جهت آموزش زبان انگلیسی به سوی رویکرد دانش‌آموزمحور، امروزه بر توجه به دیدگاه‌های دانش‌آموزان درباره آنچه در کلاس رخ می‌دهد، تأکید زیادی می‌شود. شرکت دادن دانش‌آموزان در انتخاب و ارزیابی فعالیت‌های کلاسی در کنار گوش دادن به نظرات و ترجیحات آن‌ها می تواند در طراحی درس و وسایل مورد نیاز آن برای معلمان بسیار مفید و ارزشمند باشد. در این راستا، در پژوهش حاضر فعالیت‌های ترجیحی دانش‌آموزان دبیرستانی و معلمان درس زبان انگلیسی دبیرستان‌های ایران مورد مقایسه قرار گرفت. در آغاز، ۱۱۵ دانش‌آموز سال سوم پرسشنامه‌ای را که توسط لیتل وود (۲۰۱۰) طراحی شده است، تکمیل کردند. نتایج با پاسخ‌های معلمان به همان پرسش‌نامه مقایسه شد. یافته‌ها نشان دادند که معلمان درس مبتنی بر فرم و کنترل شده را بر درس مبتنی بر محاوره ترجیح می دهند؛ در حالی‌که دانش‌آموزان درس مبتنی بر فرم و محاوره را ترجیح می‌دهند. همچنین به منظور ارزیابی کامل انگیزهٔ دانش آموزان در انتخاب نوع درس مبتنی بر فرم و محاوره مصاحبه‌ای با دانش آموزان صورت گرفت. نتایج مصاحبه با دانش‌آموزان نشان داد که باورهای آن‌ها دربارهٔ یادگیری زبان، سطح مهارت‌ها و نیازهای آینده‌شان، فعالیت‌های کلاسی ترجیحی فعلی آن‌ها را تحت تأثیر قرار می‌دهد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: فعالیت‌های کلاسی، درس مبتنی بر محاوره، فعالیت‌های غیرمحاوره‌ای، ترجیحات دانش‌آموزان، برداشت‌های معلمان

Abstract

With the shift in language teaching towards a more learner-centered approach, there is now an emphasis on considering learners' views on what goes on in the classroom. Involving learners in selecting and evaluating classroom activities as well as listening to their voices and preferences can be helpful for teachers in planning lessons and designing materials. Consistent with this direction, the present study compared learners' preferred activities with teachers' perceptions of those preferences in the context of Iranian high schools. 115 high school third grade students completed a questionnaire designed by Littlewood (2010). The results were compared with teachers' responses to the same questionnaire. The findings showed that whereas teachers rated form-oriented and control-oriented lesson-types higher than communicative-oriented lesson-type students preferred form-oriented and communicative-oriented lesson-types. In order to fully undrestand students' motives for choosing form-oriented and communicative-oriented lesson-type follow-up interview was also conducted. The results of interview with students suggest that learners' beliefs about language learning, their proficiency level, and future needs may affect their current preferred classroom activities.

Key Words: classroom activities, communicative-oriented lesson, non-communicative activities, learners' preferences, teachers' perceptions