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ENGLISH LEARNING NEEDS OF INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN: A SMALL-SCALE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Abstract. This article examines the English learning needs of six intermediate-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners studying at a face-to-face learning center in Uzbekistan. The study aims to identify learners’ reasons for studying English, priority language skills, perceived learning difficulties, preferred instructional approaches, opportunities to use English outside the classroom, and long-term goals. A small-scale descriptive research design was employed, with data collected through a needs assessment questionnaire followed by interviews. The findings indicate that participants studied English primarily for academic and professional purposes. All six participants identified speaking and listening as important areas for improvement, while two also reported needs related to academic reading and writing. The main difficulties included vocabulary retention, grammar, understanding naturally spoken English, and academic writing. The participants also expressed different preferences for classroom activities, including role-play, interactive discussions, visual materials, structured explanations, and collaborative tasks. The findings suggest that learners with the same general proficiency level may have different instructional needs. Therefore, classroom-based needs analysis can help teachers select appropriate materials, plan relevant activities, and adapt instruction to learners’ academic and professional goals. Although the small sample limits the generalisability of the findings, the study demonstrates the practical value of needs assessment in English language teaching.

Keywords: needs analysis, EFL learners, learner needs, English language learning, language skills, learner preferences, instructional planning, Uzbekistan.

O‘ZBEKISTONDA INGLIZ TILINI O‘RGANAYOTGAN B1–B2 DARAJADAGI O‘QUVCHILARNING TA’LIM EHTIYOJLARI: KICHIK KO‘LAMLI EHTIYOJLAR TAHLILI

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada O‘zbekistondagi o‘quv markazida tahsil olayotgan ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganuvchi olti nafar o‘rta darajadagi (intermediate) o‘quvchining ingliz tilini o‘rganish ehtiyojlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi o‘quvchilarning ingliz tilini o‘rganish sabablari, rivojlantirishga ustuvor ahamiyat beradigan til ko‘nikmalari, duch keladigan qiyinchiliklari, afzal ko‘radigan ta’lim usullari, darsdan tashqari vaqtda ingliz tilidan foydalanish holatlari hamda uzoq muddatli maqsadlarini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda kichik ko‘lamli tavsifiy yondashuv qo‘llanilib, ma’lumotlar ehtiyojlarni aniqlashga qaratilgan so‘rovnoma va keyingi suhbatlar orqali to‘plangan. Natijalar ishtirokchilarning ingliz tilini asosan akademik va kasbiy maqsadlarda o‘rganayotganini ko‘rsatdi. Barcha ishtirokchilar gapirish va tinglab tushunish ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirishga ehtiyoj bildirgan, ikki nafar ishtirokchi esa akademik o‘qish va yozish ko‘nikmalarini ham muhim deb hisoblagan. Lug‘atni eslab qolish, grammatikani o‘zlashtirish, tabiiy ingliz nutqini tushunish va akademik yozuv o‘quvchilar tomonidan qayd etilgan asosiy qiyinchiliklar sirasiga kiradi. Tadqiqot natijalari bir xil til darajasidagi o‘quvchilarning ta’lim ehtiyojlari ham turlicha bo‘lishi mumkinligini ko‘rsatadi. Shu sababli ehtiyojlar tahlili ingliz tili darslarini rejalashtirish, o‘quv materiallarini

tanlash va ta’lim jarayonini o‘quvchilarning akademik hamda kasbiy maqsadlariga moslashtirishda muhim vosita hisoblanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: ehtiyojlar tahlili, ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganish, EFL o‘quvchilari, ta’lim ehtiyojlari, til ko‘nikmalari, individual yondashuv, o‘quv motivatsiyasi, O‘zbekiston.

АНАЛИЗ ПОТРЕБНОСТЕЙ УЧАЩИХСЯ СРЕДНЕГО УРОВНЯ В ИЗУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ: МАЛОМАСШТАБНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ

Аннотация. В статье анализируются потребности в изучении английского языка шести учащихся среднего уровня, изучающих английский язык как иностранный в учебном центре Узбекистана. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении причин изучения английского языка, приоритетных языковых навыков, трудностей обучения, предпочтительных методов работы, возможностей использования английского языка вне занятий и долгосрочных учебных целей. В исследовании применялся описательный подход малого масштаба. Данные были собраны посредством анкеты по определению учебных потребностей и последующих интервью. Результаты показали, что участники изучали английский язык преимущественно в академических и профессиональных целях. Все шесть участников отметили важность развития навыков говорения и аудирования, тогда как двое также указали на необходимость совершенствования академического чтения и письма. Среди основных трудностей были названы запоминание лексики, усвоение грамматики, понимание естественной английской речи и академическое письмо. Результаты свидетельствуют о том, что учащиеся одного языкового уровня могут иметь различные образовательные потребности. В связи с этим анализ потребностей представляет собой полезный инструмент для планирования занятий, отбора учебных материалов и адаптации преподавания к академическим и профессиональным целям учащихся.

Ключевые слова: анализ потребностей, английский язык как иностранный, учащиеся EFL, образовательные потребности, языковые навыки, индивидуальный подход, учебная мотивация, Узбекистан.

INTRODUCTION

English plays an increasingly important role in education, employment, international communication, and access to academic resources. For many learners, proficiency in English creates opportunities for university admission, international study, professional development, and participation in global communication. However, learners do not necessarily study English for the same reasons. Some need the language for academic reading, writing, and presentations, whereas others prioritise professional communication, employment opportunities, or everyday interaction. Consequently, learners placed at the same proficiency level may have different educational priorities and expectations.

Needs analysis is an important component of effective language teaching because it provides information about learners’ current abilities, difficulties, interests, and future language requirements. Long (2005) argues that language courses should be informed by learners’ specific needs and the situations in which they are expected

to use the target language. Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguish between target needs and learning needs, emphasising that course planning should consider both the outcomes learners need to achieve and the processes through which they learn.

Needs analysis is particularly significant in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Learners preparing for professional contexts may need to participate in meetings, write emails, deliver presentations, and communicate with colleagues. In contrast, academically oriented learners may require stronger skills in academic reading, writing, seminar participation, and research presentations. Basturkmen (2010) highlights the importance of identifying learners' target situations and communicative requirements when designing specialised English courses.

In addition to learning goals, learners' previous educational experiences, perceived difficulties, classroom preferences, and opportunities to use English outside lessons may influence their progress. A teaching approach that focuses exclusively on a general proficiency level may not fully address these differences. Richards (2001) and Nation and Macalister (2010) emphasise the importance of aligning language curriculum planning with learner needs, instructional objectives, learning activities, and assessment.

The Uzbek EFL context provides a relevant setting for examining these issues because English is studied for various academic and professional purposes. Kosimov (2021) highlights the importance of needs analysis in improving English language instruction for Uzbek EFL learners. However, general proficiency classifications such as beginner, intermediate, or advanced do not provide sufficient information about each learner's particular strengths, weaknesses, and future objectives. This is especially relevant in private learning centres, where learners from different educational and professional backgrounds may study in the same group.

The present study examines the English learning needs of six intermediate EFL learners studying at a face-to-face learning centre in Uzbekistan. It focuses on their reasons for learning English, priority language skills, perceived difficulties, preferred learning approaches, use of English outside the classroom, and long-term goals. The study seeks to provide practical insights into how classroom-based needs analysis can inform instructional planning and help teachers respond to learners' diverse requirements.

The research is guided by four questions: What are the main reasons and long-term goals motivating the participants to study English? Which language skills do they consider their main priorities for improvement? What difficulties do they experience in learning English? What learning preferences and opportunities for using English outside the classroom do they report?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs analysis has long been recognised as an important element of language curriculum development. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explain that language

learning should be designed around the communicative purposes for which learners need English. Their framework distinguishes target needs, which relate to the language requirements of future situations, from learning needs, which concern the conditions, strategies, and activities that support learning.

Long (2005) further emphasises the importance of identifying the specific linguistic and communicative demands learners encounter in real-world situations. From this perspective, needs analysis should not be restricted to asking learners what they want to study. It should also investigate the tasks they are expected to perform, the language skills required for those tasks, and the difficulties they may encounter.

In English for Specific Purposes, needs analysis helps teachers establish connections between classroom instruction and learners' academic or professional objectives. Basturkmen (2010) argues that effective course design requires an understanding of target contexts and the language demands associated with them. For example, a learner preparing for university study may need to develop academic writing and presentation skills, whereas an employee may prioritise workplace conversations, professional emails, and participation in meetings.

Learner needs also include differences in preferred classroom activities and learning experiences. Linse (1993) discusses the importance of assessing student needs when planning educational programmes. Trendak-Suślik (2022) similarly highlights the practical value of gathering information about learners' goals, preferences, and previous learning experiences. Questionnaires and interviews can provide complementary information: questionnaires allow teachers to identify patterns across a group, while interviews provide opportunities for learners to explain their experiences in greater detail.

Needs analysis is particularly useful when learners share a general proficiency level but differ in their academic backgrounds, motivation, and language use. A placement test may indicate a learner's approximate linguistic level, but it does not necessarily reveal whether the learner struggles with spontaneous conversation, academic writing, listening to naturally spoken English, or remembering new vocabulary. Consequently, needs analysis can complement proficiency assessment by providing a more detailed picture of learners' instructional requirements.

Kosimov (2021), in examining needs analysis among Uzbek EFL learners, draws attention to the importance of considering learner-specific requirements when teaching and improving English proficiency. This is relevant to the present study because English learners in Uzbekistan may pursue different educational and professional objectives despite studying in similar learning environments.

Nation and Macalister (2010) also emphasise the relationship between learner needs, course goals, content, teaching procedures, and assessment. Their approach suggests that information collected through needs analysis should be used to inform actual instructional decisions rather than remain a descriptive exercise.

Overall, the literature indicates that needs analysis can help teachers identify shared learning priorities while recognising individual differences. It can also support the selection of authentic materials, the design of relevant communicative tasks,

and the development of courses that respond to learners' intended uses of English. The present study applies these principles to a small group of intermediate EFL learners in an Uzbek learning-centre context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a small-scale descriptive research design to investigate the English learning needs of six intermediate EFL learners at a face-to-face learning centre in Uzbekistan. The participants were between 17 and 32 years old and represented different educational and professional backgrounds. Their reasons for learning English included professional communication, school performance, university study, academic research, career development, and future educational opportunities. To protect their privacy, pseudonyms or participant numbers were used instead of their original names in reporting the findings.

Data were collected through a needs assessment questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire covered six areas: reasons for learning English, priority language skills, perceived learning difficulties, preferred classroom activities, opportunities to use English outside the classroom, and long-term goals. The instrument was informed by the principles of needs analysis discussed by Linse (1993), Long (2005), and Viana, Bocorny, and Sarmento (2019). The follow-up interviews enabled participants to clarify and elaborate on their questionnaire responses, providing a more detailed understanding of their learning experiences.

The data were analysed using descriptive and thematic procedures. Responses were organised according to the six areas covered by the questionnaire, and similar answers were grouped into common categories. The number of participants reporting each category was then identified to describe patterns within the group. Because the study involved only six learners, the resulting frequencies were used for descriptive purposes and were not intended to represent intermediate EFL learners in Uzbekistan as a whole.

Ethical considerations are important when collecting and reporting information about learners. Participant identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms or numerical labels. Before publication, the researcher should ensure that the original data collection and subsequent reporting comply with the applicable consent and ethical requirements, particularly because some participants were under 18 years of age. The findings are interpreted within the limits of the available sample and the learning-centre context.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed that the participants had varied reasons for learning English, different priorities for language development, and distinct perceptions of the difficulties they encountered. Although all six participants were classified as intermediate learners, their academic and professional goals were not identical. These differences demonstrate the importance of considering individual needs when planning language instruction.

Reasons for Learning English

The participants reported both academic and professional reasons for studying English. One participant primarily needed English for professional communication, including business emails and meetings. Another associated English with school performance and future university study. A third participant identified academic research and career development as important goals, while a fourth emphasised academic success and future employment opportunities. The remaining participants connected English with future education, communication, and professional development.

These responses indicate that the group did not have a single shared motivation. Instead, English was viewed as a resource for achieving different academic, professional, and personal objectives. This variation suggests that teachers should identify learners' intended uses of English rather than assume that all students require the same content and classroom activities.

Priority Language Skills

Speaking and listening emerged as the most consistent priorities across the group. All six participants identified these skills as important areas for improvement. Their responses suggest that oral communication was a common concern, regardless of their individual educational backgrounds or future plans.

Reading and writing were also identified as important by two participants, particularly in relation to academic requirements. These learners needed to engage with educational materials, complete written assignments, and communicate ideas in academic contexts. The findings therefore suggest that speaking and listening can serve as shared instructional priorities, while reading and writing may require additional attention according to individual learners' goals.

The results also demonstrate that language skills are interconnected. Learners preparing for academic presentations, for example, may need to understand spoken information, organise their ideas, and communicate them orally. Similarly, professional communication may involve listening to colleagues, responding spontaneously, and writing follow-up messages. Instructional planning should therefore consider how different skills support learners' intended communicative tasks.

Perceived Learning Difficulties

The participants reported several difficulties in learning English. Two identified vocabulary retention as a major challenge, suggesting that remembering new words and using them appropriately remained problematic. One participant highlighted grammar, while another reported difficulties understanding naturally spoken English, particularly speech produced by fluent or native speakers. Two participants identified academic writing as an area requiring further development.

These differences show that a general proficiency label does not fully describe a learner's linguistic strengths and weaknesses. Two learners at the same level may need different forms of support, depending on their previous learning experiences and intended uses of English. For example, a learner struggling with vocabulary retention may benefit from spaced repetition, contextualised vocabulary practice, and

opportunities to use new words in conversation. A learner who has difficulty understanding natural speech may need exposure to varied speaking speeds, accents, connected speech, and authentic listening materials.

Likewise, learners who report difficulties with academic writing may require support with paragraph organisation, coherence, formal language, grammar, and the presentation of evidence. Identifying such differences can help teachers prioritise classroom activities and provide more targeted feedback.

Preferred Learning Approaches

The participants expressed different preferences regarding classroom activities. Two preferred role-play and interactive discussions, indicating an interest in opportunities to practise communication through realistic situations. Two others preferred visual materials and structured explanations, while the remaining participants favoured group work and collaborative activities.

The findings suggest that no single instructional approach was preferred by the entire group. Some learners valued opportunities for spontaneous communication, whereas others preferred clear explanations, visual support, or interaction with classmates. Teachers may therefore benefit from incorporating a variety of activities into lessons.

However, learner preferences should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that a particular method produces better learning outcomes. Preferences can provide useful information about engagement and comfort, but instructional decisions should also consider learning objectives, language development, classroom conditions, and evidence of progress.

Use of English Outside the Classroom

The participants reported using English in different contexts beyond their formal lessons. One used English for business emails and meetings, while another encountered the language through textbooks and school projects. A third participant used English for academic research and presentations, and another reported using it for assignments and seminars. The remaining participants described using English through videos and social interaction.

These responses illustrate the range of situations in which the learners encountered English outside the learning centre. Some engaged with the language through structured academic or professional tasks, while others used it through digital media and informal communication. Such differences can inform the selection of learning materials and classroom activities.

For instance, learners who need English for professional communication may benefit from simulated meetings, workplace dialogues, and email-writing tasks. Those with academic goals may require presentations, research-based discussions, and academic writing practice. Learners who mainly encounter English through videos and informal interaction may benefit from listening activities, discussion tasks, and vocabulary practice based on authentic media.

Overall, the findings indicate that the participants' learning needs were shaped not only by their proficiency level but also by their motivations, perceived difficulties, preferred activities, and opportunities to use English beyond the classroom.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that learners who share the same general proficiency level may have different English learning needs. This observation is consistent with Long's (2005) argument that language instruction should take learners' specific requirements and target situations into account. Although the participants were all classified as intermediate learners, their reasons for learning English ranged from academic study and research to professional communication and future career development. These differences have direct implications for instructional planning.

The distinction between academic and professional goals is particularly important. Learners preparing for university study may require academic reading, structured writing, presentations, and participation in seminars. In contrast, learners whose priorities are professional may benefit more from workplace dialogues, business correspondence, meetings, and job-related communication. This supports the principles of needs-based course design discussed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Basturkmen (2010).

The finding that all six participants prioritised speaking and listening suggests that oral communication was a shared need within this particular group. Teachers could respond by incorporating pair work, role-play, information-gap tasks, interviews, and discussion activities into regular lessons. Such activities can create opportunities for learners to produce language, negotiate meaning, ask follow-up questions, and respond to different communicative situations. Nevertheless, the two participants who reported needs related to academic reading and writing illustrate why a course focused exclusively on oral communication might not fully meet every learner's requirements.

The variation in reported difficulties also supports the value of individualised instructional planning. Vocabulary retention, grammar, understanding naturally spoken English, and academic writing were not equally important to all participants. A teacher who relies solely on a general proficiency classification may overlook these differences. A more detailed needs assessment can help determine which learners require additional vocabulary practice, focused grammar instruction, authentic listening materials, or structured support with academic writing.

The findings concerning learning preferences indicate that classroom activities should offer a reasonable degree of variety. Role-play and interactive discussion can provide opportunities for communicative practice, while visual materials and structured explanations may help learners understand unfamiliar concepts. Group work can also encourage cooperation and peer interaction. However, the purpose of identifying preferences is not to assign each learner to a fixed learning style, but to understand what learners find useful and to create a balanced learning environment.

The participants' reported use of English outside the classroom further demonstrates the importance of considering target situations. English was used for academic assignments, business communication, research, presentations, videos, and social interaction. Teachers can use this information to select authentic materials and design activities that connect classroom learning with learners' real-life experiences. Such alignment may make lessons more relevant and provide clearer reasons for learning particular vocabulary, structures, and communicative strategies.

Methodologically, the combination of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews provided complementary forms of information. The questionnaire made it possible to identify patterns across the group, while the interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their individual experiences. This approach is consistent with the practical value of gathering information through more than one method, as discussed by Trendak-Suślik (2022).

Several limitations must nevertheless be acknowledged. The study involved only six participants from one learning centre, and the results reflect their reported needs rather than objectively measured changes in language proficiency. The findings cannot therefore be generalised to all intermediate EFL learners in Uzbekistan. In addition, self-reported preferences and difficulties may not always correspond precisely to learners' actual performance. Future research could combine questionnaires and interviews with speaking assessments, writing samples, classroom observations, and teacher evaluations.

Despite these limitations, the study illustrates how a relatively simple needs assessment can provide useful information for classroom planning. Teachers can identify shared priorities, such as speaking and listening, while also making provision for individual requirements related to academic writing, vocabulary development, grammar, and listening comprehension. In this way, needs analysis can support a more responsive and purposeful approach to English language teaching.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings have several practical implications for English language teachers working with intermediate learners in Uzbekistan. First, teachers should consider conducting a needs assessment at the beginning of a course and revisiting it during the learning process. Learners' priorities may change as they develop their skills or approach particular academic and professional goals. Regular assessment can help teachers keep instructional activities relevant to these changing requirements.

Second, classroom planning should combine common learning objectives with opportunities for individual development. When speaking and listening are shared priorities, teachers can organise regular communicative tasks for the entire group. At the same time, supplementary activities can address specific needs, such as academic writing, vocabulary retention, grammatical accuracy, or understanding naturally spoken English.

Third, learning activities should reflect the communicative situations in which learners expect to use English. Role-play, simulated workplace conversations, academic presentations, structured discussions, and writing tasks can connect classroom

practice with learners' real-world goals. Authentic texts, recordings, and digital materials may also provide exposure to the vocabulary and language structures required in different contexts.

Fourth, teachers should use learner preferences as one source of information when selecting instructional methods, while continuing to evaluate whether the activities support measurable learning outcomes. A balanced combination of individual work, pair activities, group collaboration, explicit explanations, and communicative practice can provide varied opportunities for participation.

Finally, needs analysis should be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time questionnaire. Short follow-up interviews, learner reflections, classroom observations, and formative assessments can help teachers determine whether the selected activities are meeting learners' needs. This approach may improve the relevance of instruction and help learners understand how classroom activities contribute to their academic and professional development.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the English learning needs of six intermediate EFL learners studying at a face-to-face learning centre in Uzbekistan. The findings revealed that the participants studied English for different academic and professional purposes, including university education, research, career development, workplace communication, and future employment. Although their motivations varied, all six participants identified speaking and listening as important areas for improvement, while two also reported needs related to academic reading and writing.

The participants described different learning difficulties, including vocabulary retention, grammar, understanding naturally spoken English, and academic writing. Their preferences for classroom activities also varied, encompassing role-play, interactive discussions, visual materials, structured explanations, and collaborative work. In addition, the participants reported using English in a range of academic, professional, and informal contexts outside the classroom.

The findings suggest that a shared proficiency level does not necessarily indicate identical learning needs. Needs analysis can therefore complement placement tests by providing information about learners' goals, difficulties, preferences, and intended uses of English. For teachers, this information can support the selection of relevant materials, the design of communicative activities, and the development of instruction that responds to both common and individual requirements.

The study is limited by its small sample size and its focus on a single learning centre. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as a description of the participating group rather than as general conclusions about intermediate EFL learners across Uzbekistan. Future research could include larger samples, multiple learning centres, objective language assessments, and longitudinal investigations of how needs-informed instruction influences language development.

In conclusion, even a small-scale classroom needs assessment can provide useful insights into learners' educational priorities. By systematically identifying and

responding to these needs, English language teachers can make instructional planning more purposeful, relevant, and responsive to learners' academic and professional goals.

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