

## **The Relationship between Teachers' and Students' Preferences about Different Classroom Activities among EFL Learners in National Iran Oil Company (NIOC) in Iran**

**Darush Rezaei**

Department of English, Qeshm International Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm & National Iran Oil Company (Exploration Directorate), Iran

**Alireza Karbalaeei** (Corresponding author)

Department of English, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran

[karbalaeei2008@gmail.com](mailto:karbalaeei2008@gmail.com)

**Shahram Afraz**

Department of English, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

### **Abstract**

The trend towards bilingual education has been a big focus in many places around the world. Communicative language teaching, which stresses preparing students with communicative competence needed for real-life purposes, is replacing traditional audio-lingual teaching methods. Some organizations and institutes are implementing educational reforms to advance toward globalization. At the present time, English is taught in many organizations such as National Iran Oil Company in order to promote his/her staff to higher level of English proficiency. The purpose of this study was to examine Iranian teachers' and students' preferences regarding implementing different types of classroom activities in adult EFL classrooms in NIOC in Iran. The selected sample consists of 59 students and 25 teachers. The questionnaire selected for this study includes 41 items, categorized as communicative versus non-communicative activities, speech based versus text-based activities, feedback, grammar, participation modes, and web-based activities. Significantly, the results indicated that teachers prefer to implement communicative activities related to speech-based areas to help promote oral proficiency in the English language, and to utilize cooperative learning to build up students' writing skills. However, some students displayed negative attitudes when asked to participate in some of the activities. In conclusion, the analysis of the data from teachers and students indicated a considerable mismatch between students' and teachers' preferences for some of both communicative and non-communicative activities. In addition, the results pose for educators and administrators in NIOC include what teachers and administrators can do to minimize the potential mismatch in teachers' and students' preference and beliefs on language learning activities. The result of the study can contribute to future modifications of syllabus/curriculum design, and teaching decision-making process in NIOC teaching centers.

**Key words:** communicative language teaching, communicative and non-communicative activities, NIOC

### **1. Introduction**

The trend towards bilingual education has been a big focus in many places around the world. In America, the growing population of immigrants has pressured the government to amend some bilingual education legislation to suit the needs of immigrant children. In Turkey, with the impact of western cultures and the demands for economic and technology improvement, English has become the most commonly used foreign language of instruction in hundreds of public and private high

schools and universities. Communicative language teaching, which stresses preparing students with communicative competence needed for real-life purposes, was replacing traditional audio-lingual teaching methods. While the state-owned schools used textbooks full of audio-lingual activities, many private English-language schools were devoting time and money to provide quality English education. Many schools hired qualified teachers, equipped language learning labs with updated language learning software and high-tech language learning facilities, and adopted flexible language teaching materials and curriculum (Eveyik-Aydin, 2003).

Some organizations and institutes are implementing educational reforms to advance toward globalization. At the present time, English is taught in many organizations such as Iran Oil Company in order to promote his/her staff to higher level of English proficiency. For this purpose, many organizations are looking for the teachers who have at least a bachelor degree in English teaching related areas, demonstrate competency in English language, and show experiences teaching in these organizations. The need for qualified English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers has become a national priority in Iran.

The educational reform to implement English language teaching in most organizations, especially in National Iran Oil Company, has created a big market for English teaching and learning. Regarding English institutes in Iran, many parents are sending their children to expensive, private bilingual kindergarten schools in order for their children to have English proficiency ahead of others. English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching beliefs, strategies, materials, and methodologies such as communicative language teaching, Phonics, and Computer Assisted Language Learning, which are intended to provide students with a better English learning environment or tools and promote overall language performances, had been widely discussed.

While a great deal of attention has been given to EFL teaching and learning by different organizations, whether state or public, there is still a lack of suitable teaching materials and curriculum to target students' communicative needs. In general, the textbooks tend to focus on functional communicative activities involving more social interaction and authenticity, such as problem solving and simulations. Most of the course designs reflect a mixture of traditional grammar translation and communicative language teaching approaches (Huong, 2004).

On the other hand, though some EFL students have poor background knowledge, many still learn a lot with a positive learning attitude. Researchers agreed that the tradition of classroom activities implementing teacher-centered approaches in EFL classrooms has been used for many years. This approaches include memorization, language drills, choral reading, and frequent testing that are emphasized within the specific context of EFL language classrooms. According to the researcher, the classroom is a place to transmit serious knowledge and knowledge of grammar plays a critical role in explaining and justifying the logic of sentences, and becomes the focus in textbooks and the college entrance examination.

### ***1.1. Statement of the Problem***

Many studies indicated the mismatch between teacher and students' classroom activity preferences in the areas of language teaching and learning. For instance, Peacock(1998) indicated that some teachers tended to promote communicative oriented language classrooms, while their students preferred traditional teaching methods, which focus on error correction, grammar translation, vocabulary memorization, and accurate pronunciation. Additionally, other classrooms reported underestimating students' teachers were not equipped to accommodate the second language learners' specific linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs. As a result, there exists an additional problem in that the mismatch could cause low participation in the learning process and low achievement in the language learning. To minimize the problems caused by these mismatches, the current study identified the

potential perceptions students and teachers had regarding classroom activities preferences and beliefs on language learning.

### **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine Iranian teachers' and students' preferences regarding implementing different types of classroom activities in adult EFL classrooms in Oil National company in Iran. Because learner-centered approaches encourage learners to take an active role and remain engaged throughout the learning process, and because these approaches require educators and teachers to adjust their teaching style and curriculum based on learners' learning needs, this study examines the influences of learner-centered approaches on the English education system in Iran currently. In order to seek and discover answers, the study is going to identify and compare the currently implemented instructional activities that are preferred by Oil National Company's students and teachers.

Additionally, the study examines the Iranian students' and teachers' differences in preferences regarding communicative versus non-communicative teaching techniques and other instructional activities. The teachers' and students' roles and level of engagements in EFL classrooms adopting communicative and non-communicative classroom activities are the emphasis for this investigation.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

In order to find solutions to the problems, the following research questions are suggested for further research:

*RQ1:* Is there a statistical difference in preferences between NIOC teachers and students regarding communicative teaching techniques currently used by the teachers to deliver instructional activities?

*RQ2:* Is there a statistical difference in preferences between NIOC teachers and students regarding non-communicative teaching techniques currently used by the teachers to deliver instructional activities?

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The emphasis of learner-centered approaches is to maximize learners' opportunities, and to actively involve them in the learning processes. Galloway (1993, as cited in Lee, 2006) reported that, "Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics" (p. 2). Students enjoy freedom to express their own ideas and to participate in determining the development of lessons (Jones & Wang, 2001). The idea behind communicative language teaching shows how instructors can help promote meaningful language exchange and interaction in the classroom. According to Eveyki-Aydin (2003), "Communicative language teaching (CUT) requires a considerable amount of exposure to target language and a learner-centered, communication-oriented language instruction based on learner's language learning needs in a supportive, non-judgmental and non-threatening classroom atmosphere" (p.3).

The types of classroom activities are being valued differently by teachers and students, and how teachers and students value the effectiveness and appropriateness of those classroom activities will be examined in the study. The study will provide suggestions and alternative teaching beliefs or ideas for current EFL teaching practices in NIOC. In addition, this study will inform educators or policymakers to be aware of the different views and beliefs of learners toward communicative and non-communicative classroom activities used in English teaching in NIOC. The significance of learner-centered approaches in promoting classroom interaction and their effectiveness will be documented or clarified. Consequently, the potential mismatch in students' and teachers' beliefs on language learning could be minimized.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. *Teaching approaches supporting communicative classroom activities*

The concept of the communicative language teaching approach is included in the learner-centeredness. Communicative language teaching (CLT) mushroomed in the 1970s, when a group of educators and linguists felt unsatisfied with traditional audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction. They believed that knowing appropriate ways to communicate in different social settings, and understanding both the non-verbal and verbal expression in the culture of the target language should be stressed in foreign language instruction (Galloway, 1993, as cited in Lee, 2006). Researchers concluded that communicative aspects and how language is used outside the classroom should be the emphasis in language teaching. Language should be interpreted as a system for meaningful expression, or a tool to communicate the personal ideas, rather than a list of syntactic rules as interpreted by traditional language teaching approaches.

In classrooms implementing communicative teaching, students are responsible for their own learning process, and actively engage in negotiating meaning and exchanging information with peers and teachers in various classroom activities. Nunan (1999,2005) stated that the learners' crucial task in the CLT classrooms, "is a matter of educating learners so that they can gradually assume greater responsibility for their own learning" (p.12). The instructors' role here is to maximize learning opportunities by assisting and guiding students through the language learning processes so that ESL/EFL learners are motivated for language learning (Lee & Vanpatten, 2003).

Contrary to the traditional teaching approaches, CLT instruction focuses on students' proficiency to communicate and use linguistic knowledge as a tool to engage in topic or group discussion. The curriculum goal is to build up students' communicative competence which includes:

1. Grammatical competence-the correct use of language patterns,
2. Sociolinguistic competences-the ability to use language appropriately to suit the social occasion,
3. Discourse competence- the competence to organize meaning and intention,
4. Strategic competences-the use of conversational strategies to accomplish the information exchange (Chang, 2006, p. 24).

Many studies in America agree with the beliefs and philosophy of the whole language approach. Payton and Crandall (1995, as cited in Chang, 2006) point out that whole language proponents hold the belief that, "language is social and learned in interaction with other speakers, readers and writers" (p. 3). The background knowledge of language is built up and promoted as learners naturally interact and become involved in the learning context just as a child learns to speak. Payton and Crandall (1995) summarized that "whole language educators emphasized that language must be kept whole when it is learned or it is no longer language, but rules, patterns and lists" (p.2).

### 2.2. *Teaching Approaches Supporting Non-Communicative Classroom Activities*

Grammar translation approach first started in mid-1800s and was widely used in 20th century all over the Europe as a way to learn classical Latin and ancient Greek (Howatt, 1984). A famous example is Ollendorff, 1803-1865, who promised to teach a foreign language within six months. His idea attracted some self-improving customers (Howatt, 1984).

The early feature of the grammar translation method aims to simplify the grammatical rules for foreign language learners. A typical lesson would include a few grammar rules, vocabulary list and a few translation exercises in each lesson. The public viewed this approach as a systematic way to study the grammatical rules of the languages (Howatt, 1984, Celece-Murcia, 1991). This method became complex as the teachers were elaborating and adding more exceptional grammatical rules in

the exams. The instruction is given in students' native language and the emphasis was providing translation drilling between the second language and the mother tongue, teaching and analyzing grammatical rules for students and having students memorizing vocabularies. This approach results in students' lack of oral proficiency or the skills to communicate in the second language. In addition, the teacher-centered model limited peers and student-teacher interaction in the language classroom (Celece-Murica, 1991). The public showed the willingness for a reform in foreign language teaching, an language teaching approach to better L2 learners' oral proficiency.

In reaction to the lack of emphasis on oral skills in grammar translation approach, the audio-lingual approach became popular in 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. This approach stresses the listening and speaking abilities in initial language learning stages, through correct pronunciation, mimicry, and memorizing dialogues (Celece-Mruica, 1991). Grammar was taught inductively. The classroom typically involves stimulus-response drills. The teacher works in a language lab and demonstrates the language. Students listen to the tape and mimic and memorize dialogue patterns. Then, a substitute lexical item is presented to the learners. The learners are required to practice the same grammatical sentence structure but modified accordingly. After that, teachers may ask students to modify the original dialogue and role-play the circumstance. The goal of these exercises is to make sure students have mastered the sound system of the language and have formulated the correct language habit (Huong, 2004, Celece-Murica, 1991).

Many studies have indicated the great influence of grammar-translation and audio-lingual approaches in EFL learning and teaching in Taiwanese context. The classes' sizes are usually big with around 50 students. Teachers act as authoritarians who explain the grammatical rules and provide the drilling exercises in the classrooms. The majority of students do not see the need to communicate in English outside the classrooms. For instance, Huong's (2004) study mentioned that "Chinese (Taiwanese) adhere to a process of repetition that begins very early in a child's education. This conception of learning permeates all other subjects as well and is reflected in the teaching of foreign language in which correct usage of grammar and vocabulary is emphasized" (p. 13-4).

Studies reveal that both grammar translation and audio-lingual approaches view language teaching and learning as a step-by-step process and practice to acquire more complex language rules. Nunan (1999), however, argued both approaches devalue the role of second language learners and their real communicative needs. Grammar translation and audio-lingual approach restrict the second language learners in the linguistic knowledge of language.

### ***2.3. Teachers and their Students' Preferences Regarding Communicative versus Non-Communicative Classroom Activities***

Several studies have indicated the learning frustration caused by students' and teachers' different perceptions toward language teaching and learning. Shaw (1996) investigated Content-Based Instruction (CBI) curriculum at the Monterrey Institute of International Studies. The aim was to monitor courses and report on their effectiveness.

Lee (2006) intended to compare students' preferences in different classroom activities and the teachers' beliefs in their students' preferred ways of learning English in Taiwan. Among thirty-six items in the questionnaires for students and teachers, both groups rated "watching and listening to film/ videos", "listening to English songs", and "learning English through multimedia technology" as the most preferred classroom activities. Both groups rated "doing formal assessed tests", "writing learning diaries/summaries/ letters or reports", and "writing short passages individually" as the least liked classroom activities. Students had better preferences in receptive skills (such as reading and listening) over productive skills (such as writing and speaking) (Lee, 2006). In addition, the students

consider learning English through multimedia as a fun way to acquire the language and their teachers are aware of this fact.

In contrast with the previous studies, a study conducted by Lee (2006) indicated that both groups show higher preferences for communicative classroom activities, though teacher participants showed better preferences in communicative classroom activities. In addition, the data showed that in contrast with communicative classroom activities, teachers are more aware of their students' preferences in non-communicative classroom activities. For instance, there is considerable mismatch in the activities such as "taking part in role play", "checking other students' writing", "working in pairs," and "working in small groups" (Lee, 2006). In general, student participants showed 69.2% preferences for the communicative classroom activities listed in the questionnaire while teacher participants thought their students should have 93.2% preferences for the communicative classroom activities listed. In the items related to non-classroom activities, student participants had 53.3% preferences while teacher participants expected their students to have 66.7% preferences for those activities (Lee, 2006). Lee's study (2006) concluded that "beliefs, emotions, and motivation influence how students learn" (p.92).

Garrett and Shortall (2002) had 103 Brazilian EFL students at a language school as sample participants. The instructional activities were identified as follows: (1) Teacher-Fronted Grammar activities (TFG) (2) Teacher-Fronted Fluency activities (TFF) (3) Student-Centered Grammar activities (SCG), and (4) Student-Centered Fluency activities (SCF). The participants were categorized into 3 levels based on their second language proficiency and asked to evaluate these activities in terms of affective reactions and the way they value different learning activities. The data indicated that all learners, regardless of the levels, perceived TFG activities as higher learning value than other instructional activities and SCF activities as more fun and relaxing than other instructional activities (Garrett & Shortall, 2002). In terms of differences in language proficiency level, students of level 3 tended to view student-fronted activities as more fun and relaxing than students of level and 2. Compared with teacher-fronted classroom activities, students in general did not link the enjoyment of student-fronted activities with better learning outcomes.

Hanh (2005) compared students' preferences about classroom activities with teachers' perception of students' preferences. The study was conducted in Vietnam. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire listed 32 in-classroom activities and used a five-point Likert Scale for the participants to rank from 1 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like). The classroom activities listed were categorized into 8 areas which included reading, writing, speaking, listening, feedback, grammar, participation mode, and others. The second part included open-ended questions in which the participants were asked to choose three of the most enjoyable classroom activities and three of the most disliked classroom activities listed in the questionnaire and give the reasons for their choice. The results were collected from 68 participants in Vietnamese colleges and universities (58 student participants from International Trade Department and 10 teacher participants in English Department). The findings from open-ended questions suggested that there were three factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in the classroom (Hanh, 2005). First, as far as linguistic self-confidence, students who showed better confidence with the linguistic knowledge of target language were less dependent on teachers. Therefore, those students are more willing to participate in classroom interaction with peers and teachers. Students with lower language proficiency are more comfortable in a more structured, teacher-fronted language classroom. Second, as far as students' beliefs about language teaching and learning, such as the aforementioned Vietnamese students, they tend to show reluctance to interact in the classroom and more accustomed to teacher-centered classroom. The teachers need to guide and provide a clear explanation especially (in the

initial stage) so that students know how to engage themselves in student-centered activities. Third factor to be considered is language anxiety. In the case of Vietnamese and Taiwanese student in which the same group of students stick together from class to class, there is familial relationship between students. Students with close relationships tend to sit near each other and in their own small groups. They may feel uncomfortable and show anxiety working with students other than their small group.

Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) examined the discrepancy between students' classroom learning preferences and teachers' perceptions regarding their students' preferences in an Iranian public university in 3 areas: first, the overall perceptions in language teaching and learning; second, the preferences in communicative and non-communicative related classroom activities; and finally, the preferences in the area of activity (speech-based vs. text-based). There were 376 female and 227 male undergraduates that participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years old. There were 27 Iranian instructors aged 25-55 years old with 3 to 19 years teaching experiences participated in the study. The results from Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh's study were quite different from Hanh's study in 2005. The findings in Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh' study (2004) indicated students' preferences and teachers' perceptions of their students' classroom preferences are not in correspondence. In eight out of forty items, there are 20% significant differences between students' preferences and teachers' perceptions especially in the area of communicative-related classroom activities. Students have high preferences for communicative-related classroom activities, but their teachers are not aware of it. There were no significant differences for both text-based activities (such as reading and writing) and speech-based activities (such as speaking and listening).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants in this study included the staff working in Iran Oil National Company (NIOC) taking or had taken conversation courses as one of the requirements for getting promotion. The teachers participating in this study are experienced English teachers in NIOC. The selected sample consists of 59 students and 25 teachers. Snowball sampling procedure was implemented. The snowball sampling is not a random sampling but a tool to select research participants and identify those with skills, knowledge, information, or characteristics that are required to suit the needs of the project (State of Victoria, Department of Sustainability & Environment, 2007). Potential respondents were selected based on their familiarity with communicative and non-communicative approaches to teaching English in Iran. The researcher considers snowball sampling as a convenient and useful implementation for this study.

The participants in this study were staffs taking or had taken "conversation" courses as one of the requirements for their promotion in Iran Oil National Company. The teachers participating in this study were experienced English teachers teaching conversation in different careers. They were mainly English speakers with some experience in teaching English at NIOC. In considering Human Subject Issues, a consent form was distributed for each participant. The participants' information, including age, gender, geographic region of the hometown, major, and grade level, were included in the questionnaire. The actual size of the sample population for the study depended on those who returned valid surveys and completed demographic information.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

This study utilized a mixed-method approach, and quantitative and qualitative question were constructed. The survey instrument was divided into two parts: the first part consisted of a six-point Likert scale questionnaire used to examine EFL students' and teachers' preferences of various class-

room activities. Quantitative methods and statistical analysis were implemented to analyze the data. The second part was an open-ended questions section to obtain students and teachers' various perspectives regarding instructional activities.

The pre-designed questionnaires were adapted from the existing instruments used in two previous studies by Hanh (2005) and Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) with some modifications. The researchers in these two studies gathered the data from both learners and teachers through interviews and pilot studied the questionnaires before putting them into practice. The researcher contacted the authors of both studies through e-mail and has received written permission from Dr. Eslami-Rasekh. The instrument was modified to complement this study. In addition to the previous two studies and to follow current trends in language teaching and learning, this current study included web-based classroom activities for observation. The open-ended questions were added to address the qualitative aspect of this study.

There were 41 items in the questionnaires in this study. To ensure the questionnaire served to collect data and reflect students' and teachers' perceptions toward various instructional activities, the 41 items were categorized as follows: communicative versus non-communicative activities, speech based (such as listening and speaking skills) versus text-based activities (such as reading and writing skills), feedback, grammar, participation modes, and web-based activities. In addition, there was an open-ended question section. The purpose for this section was to have students provide reasons for their preferences. In the qualitative section, students were asked to choose 3 activities they "like" most and 3 activities they "dislike" most and give the reasons for their choices. The section served as collection of qualitative data for the researcher to provide broader and more flexible perspectives from the respondents. The qualitative questions were included to provide richer and more interesting perspectives for the study.

The survey was designed to investigate staff and teachers' perspectives of various instructional activities implemented for "Conversation" courses in NIOC. The survey for both teacher and student participants contained the same items but in different perspectives. The questionnaire for students asked students to identify their personal experiences and preferences in different learning activities to be carried out in or outside English classrooms. As all of the teachers and staff had a complete familiarity in comprehending English, only the English version of the questionnaire was given to them. Teacher participants were asked about their perceptions, level of satisfaction, and attitude for various instructional activities implemented and teachers' attitude to engage students in these activities. A six-point-Likert Scale included "Like very much", "Like", "No opinion", "Dislike", "Dislike very much", and "No experience" was used for student and teacher participants to elicit their level of preference.

### ***3.3. Validity and Reliability***

As mentioned earlier, the instrument used was adopted from two previous studies by Hanh (2005) and Eslami and Valizadeh (2004), and was modified to complement this study. The content of each item in the closed question section and open ended section was examined regarding their appropriateness and comprehensibility from previous studies in order for the researcher to make appropriate interpretations about the respondents' attitudes in this study. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was calculated to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items and test the reliability of the data.

### ***3.4. Data collection procedures***

The researcher e-mailed and got the permission from the authors, Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh, who designed the questionnaires and survey. The two groups of participants, staff participants and teacher participants, were selected from employees working in NIOC, based on snowball sam-



pling mentioned earlier in this chapter. Before participating in the study, the two group participants were informed of the intention of the study and were asked to sign the consent form for the purpose of confidentiality. The survey questionnaires were distributed by an independent party to teachers and students for data collection. Further explanation was given if needed to the target participants.

Finally, in order to find out how well teachers were aware of their students' level of satisfaction for the instructional activities implemented. The responses from the open-ended question was collected, analyzed, and classified to indicate which three activities were the most preferred by students and teachers and which three activities were the least preferred by the students and teachers. Then, the data was analyzed to find out the reasons these activities were chosen.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

With regard to the purposes mentioned at the beginning of the article, the following questions were analyzed as follows:

**RQ1:** *Is there a statistical difference in preferences between NIOC teachers and students regarding communicative teaching techniques currently used by the teachers to deliver instructional activities?*

After analyzing the data, the results were shown in the following tables.

Table 1 shows the different means, standard deviations, and 2-tailed p between teachers and students. Two-tailed p value evaluates the difference between the means of 2 independent groups, whether the means have significant differences.  $p < .05$ , then there is significant differences between the two means and we should reject the null hypothesis (Cronk, 2006).

This study compared the means obtained from student group and teacher group. There were 16 communicative instructional activities. Five of the communicative activities showed statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ), including activity 15, 23, 36, 40, and 41. As far as the activity 15 is concerned, the students' mean was higher than that of teachers (2.6 vs. 1.76). In other words, the students preferred to writing small group reports outside the class more than what the teachers believed. Regarding activity 23, the teachers' mean was higher than the students' mean (3.56 vs. 3.14). In other words, the teachers preferred more to discuss and interact in English with classmates in class related to cultural issues, in comparison to the students. With regard to activity 36, the students were more interested in doing practical task outside class, e.g. interview native English speaker, in comparison to the teachers because the mean for the students was 3.10 while it was 2.16 for the teachers. As far as the activity 40 is concerned, again the students were more interested in discussing the topics of interests in web-based video-conferences, in comparison to the teachers as the mean for the students was 2.51 while it was 1.68 for the teachers. Regarding the reasons, we can say that the teachers may not familiar well with web-based activities although the students are well-acquainted with this kind of activity. Finally, the results of the above table indicated that the students ( $M=2.78$ ;  $SD=1.16$ ), in comparison to the teachers ( $M=1.96$ ;  $SD=1.56$ ), are more inclined to discuss selected themes and exchange their opinions regarding movies in on-line chat room. An interesting conclusion is that most of these instructional activities were activities related to web-based areas (Activity #38, #40, #41).

Nine communicative instructional activities showed non-significant statistically difference including activity 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 20, 25, and 32. The highest match between teacher and student participants was found in Activity #32, and #36. The result indicates a big mismatch between teachers' level of preference and students' level of preference in communicative instructional activities.

**Table 1. Paired sample t-test for communicative activities among the students and teachers**

	Group	N	Mean	SD	P -2 tailed
ACTIVITY2	teacher	25	2.92	1.382	0.875
	student	59	2.97	.669	
ACTIVITY5	teacher	25	3.36	1.186	0.871
	student	59	3.32	.880	
ACTIVITY6	teacher	25	2.92	1.077	0.557
	student	59	3.03	.669	
ACTIVITY8	teacher	25	3.20	.816	0.893
	student	59	3.17	1.003	
ACTIVITY10	teacher	25	2.48	1.661	0.299
	student	59	2.86	1.152	
ACTIVITY12	teacher	25	2.92	1.412	0.590
	student	59	3.08	.836	
ACTIVITY15	teacher	25	1.76	1.562	0.016
	student	59	2.61	.929	
ACTIVITY20	teacher	25	3.32	1.215	0.469
	student	59	3.49	.878	
ACTIVITY23	teacher	25	3.56	.507	0.036
	student	59	3.14	.937	
ACTIVITY25	teacher	25	3.16	1.313	0.320
	student	59	2.88	1.100	
ACTIVITY32	teacher	25	2.84	1.700	0.144
	student	59	3.37	.786	
ACTIVITY36	teacher	25	2.16	1.772	0.018
	student	59	3.10	1.012	
ACTIVITY37	teacher	25	2.76	1.508	0.639
	student	59	2.92	.988	
ACTIVITY38	teacher	25	2.72	1.621	0.939
	student	59	2.75	1.308	
ACTIVITY40	teacher	25	1.68	1.952	0.060
	student	59	2.51	1.292	
ACTIVITY41	teacher	25	1.96	1.567	0.024
	student	59	2.78	1.161	

**RQ2:** *Is there a statistical difference in preferences between NIOC teachers and students regarding non-communicative teaching techniques currently used by the teachers to deliver instructional activities?*

**Table 2. Paired sample t-test for non-communicative activities among the students and teachers**

	group	N	Mean	SD	P -2 tailed
ACTIVITY1	teacher	25	3.36	.569	0.000
	student	59	2.58	.914	
ACTIVITY3	teacher	25	2.56	1.325	0.553
	student	59	2.73	1.127	
ACTIVITY4	teacher	25	2.84	1.405	0.187
	student	59	3.24	.652	
ACTIVITY7	teacher	25	2.32	1.376	0.011
	student	59	3.12	.811	
ACTIVITY9	teacher	25	2.52	1.636	0.126
	student	59	3.07	.926	
ACTIVITY11	teacher	25	2.40	1.414	0.227
	student	59	2.78	.948	
ACTIVITY13	teacher	25	2.40	1.633	0.118
	student	59	2.95	.753	
ACTIVITY14	teacher	25	2.76	1.200	0.429
	student	59	2.95	.899	
ACTIVITY16	teacher	25	2.36	1.655	0.311
	student	59	2.73	1.048	
ACTIVITY17	teacher	25	3.36	.638	0.182
	student	59	3.54	.536	
ACTIVITY19	teacher	25	3.36	.860	0.176
	student	59	3.59	.646	
ACTIVITY21	teacher	25	1.88	1.666	0.000
	student	59	3.36	.804	
ACTIVITY22	teacher	25	2.52	1.262	0.054
	student	59	3.05	.879	
ACTIVITY24	teacher	25	3.28	.542	0.172
	student	59	3.05	.753	
ACTIVITY28	teacher	25	2.68	1.145	0.422
	student	59	2.88	1.001	
ACTIVITY29	teacher	25	2.64	1.114	0.790
	student	59	2.71	1.130	
ACTIVITY30	teacher	25	2.84	1.179	0.357
	student	59	3.07	.962	
ACTIVITY31	teacher	25	2.40	1.581	0.047
	student	59	3.10	.959	
ACTIVITY33	teacher	25	1.80	1.155	0.001
	student	59	2.64	.905	
ACTIVITY34	teacher	25	2.28	1.137	0.019
	student	59	2.86	.973	
ACTIVITY35	teacher	25	2.60	1.080	0.057
	student	59	3.05	.775	

The 21 non-communicative instructional activities are listed in Table 2. Eight non-communicative activities showed statistically significant difference or mismatches. Seven of the non-communicative activities showed statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ), including activity 1, 7, 21, 22, 33, 31, 34, and 35. As far as the activity 1 is concerned, the teachers' mean was higher than that of students (3.36 vs. 2.58). In other words, the teachers preferred to read texts silently in class for information and doing follow-up exercises, in comparison to the students. Regarding activity 7, the students' mean was higher than the teachers' mean (3.12 vs. 2.32). In other words, the students preferred more to write short passage (less than one page) reflection individually in class, in comparison to the teachers. With regard to activity 21, the students ( $M=3.36$ ;  $SD=.80$ ) were more interested in listening to teachers telling English jokes and stories, in comparison to the teachers ( $M=1.88$ ;  $SD=1.66$ ). As far as the activity 22 is concerned, again the students were more interested in practicing writing English exam answers within a time limit, in comparison to the teachers as the mean for the students was 3.05 while it was 2.52 for the teachers. Further, regarding activity 31, the results of the above table indicated that the students ( $M=3.10$ ;  $SD=.95$ ), in comparison to the teachers ( $M=2.40$ ;  $SD=1.58$ ), are more inclined to doing speed reading in class. With regard to activity 33, the students preferred to learn vocabulary in isolation, comparison to the teachers, as the mean of the student group was 2.64 while it was 1.80 for the teacher group. As far as activity 34 is concerned, the results indicated that the students ( $M=2.86$ ;  $SD=.97$ ), in comparison to the teachers ( $M=2.28$ ;  $SD=1.13$ ), are more inclined to do translation exercises in their classrooms. Finally, regarding activity 35, again, the students ( $M=3.05$ ;  $SD=.77$ ) were more interested in getting teachers' feedback (oral/written), in comparison to the teachers ( $M=2.60$ ;  $SD=1.08$ ).

Nine non-communicative instructional activities showed non-significant statistically difference including activity 3, 4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 24, 28, 29, and 30. The result indicates a match between teachers' level of preference and students' level of preference in these non-communicative instructional activities.

**Table 3. Independent sample t-test for all communicative activities between the student and teacher group**

	group	N	Mean	SD	P -2 tailed
communicative	teacher	25	2.73	.593	0.035
	student	59	2.99	.487	

In general, as it is clear from table 3, the result of independent sample test for communicative activities indicated that there is a significant difference between the students' opinions or preferences and teachers' opinions ( $P=0.03$ ). Further, by looking at mean statistics, we can observe that the students ( $M=2.99$ ;  $SD=.487$ ) were more interested in performing these activities in the classrooms, in comparison to the teachers ( $M=2.73$ ;  $SD=.573$ ).

**Table 4. Independent sample t-test for all non-communicative activities between the student and teacher group**

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P -2 tailed
Non communicative	teacher	25	2.62	.370	0.000
	student	59	3.00	.354	

Finally, as it is evident from table 4, the result of independent sample test for non-communicative activities indicated that there is a significant difference between the students' opinions or preferences and teachers' opinions ( $P=0.00$ ). Further, by looking at mean statistics, we can observe that the students ( $M=3.00$ ;  $SD=.354$ ) were more interested in performing these activities in the classrooms, in comparison to the teachers ( $M=2.62$ ;  $SD=.370$ ).

## 5. Conclusion

Significantly, the results indicated that teachers prefer to implement communicative activities related to speech-based areas to help promote oral proficiency in the English language, and to utilize cooperative learning to build up students' writing skills. However, some students displayed negative attitudes when asked to participate in some of the activities.

The findings indicated that teachers tended to incorporate traditional methods of language instructional activities to help students develop and improve listening comprehension (such as playing audio-recording), vocabulary ability (such as working on etymology), proficiency in pronunciation and competency in giving speech (such as reading aloud in class and giving short individual oral presentation), and writing skills (such as doing writing exercises and individual reports) but these students did not show strong desire to participate in the activities.

Finally, the responses from teachers and students indicates that students enjoyed multimedia learning to learn about different cultures and their teachers were aware of that.

In conclusion, the analysis of the data from teachers and students indicated a considerable mismatch between students' and teachers' preferences for some of both communicative and non-communicative activities. In addition, the results pose for educators and administrators in National Iran Oil company (NIOC) include: what teachers and administrators can do to minimize the potential mismatch in teachers' and students' preference and beliefs on language learning activities. The result of the study can contribute to future modifications of syllabus/curriculum design, and teaching decision making process in NIOC teaching centers.

## 6. Recommendations and Further Research

- NIOC students should be given opportunities to use English as a means for communication. The result from this study showed that most students have better proficiency and higher preferences in reading rather than writing English, and listening rather than speaking English.

- Teachers are encouraged to include group-oriented or communicative activities in the classrooms

- It is recommended that teachers educate their students regarding the value of these activities and how these activities can help improve students' productive skills (speaking and writing in English language).

- Future studies are recommended to examine an alternative teaching approach, designed to emphasize authentic and meaningful learning opportunities, promote a balanced approach between communicative-oriented and traditional skill-based instructional activities and promote authentic and meaningful learning opportunities. Studies are also needed to encourage autonomous learners who show desire to write and speak in English.

- Teachers are encouraged to use English jokes, stories, songs, and videos as a means to instruct English. Students tended to learn the cultural concepts better in a relaxed atmosphere.

- Students report a desire for interactive opportunities through the internet.

- Teachers are encouraged to implement the use of technology in their daily lessons.

- To minimize the level of stress or frustration associated with foreign language learning anxiety, future studies are recommended to highlight the importance of a student-friendly and conducive learning environment in NIOC teaching centers.
- Future studies can focus on exploring students' feedback and investigating affective factors related to various classrooms activities implemented in EFL classrooms in NIOC teaching centers.

### References

- Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. (2nd Edition). Boston, Mass: Heinle&Heinle Publishers.
- Chang, M. D. (2006). *Comparing the effects of traditional v.s. non-traditional reading instruction on level of reading comprehension and use of meta-cognitive strategies in EFL learners in Taiwan*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, La Sierra University.
- Eslami-Rasekj, Z. & Valizadeh, K. (2004). Classroom activities viewed from different perspectives: learners' voice and teachers' voice. *TESL-EJ*, 18(3).
- Eveyik-Aydin, D. (2003). *EFL teachers' view on Communicative Language Teaching*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management Eugene, OR. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED476 748).
- Garrett, P. & Shortall, T. (2002). Learners' evaluations of teacher-fronted and student-centered classroom activities. *Language Teaching Research*, 6(1), 25-57.
- Hanh, T. P. (2005). *Learners' & teachers' preferences for classroom activities*. Essex Graduate Student Papers in Language & Linguistics.
- Howatt, A.P.R., (1984). *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huong, K. (2004). *Students' and Teachers' Belief about CLT and English Grammar Instruction in Taiwan*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas A& M-Kingsville, Texas, U.S.A.
- Lee, F. J. & Vanpatten, B., (2003). *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*, (2nd ed.). The McGraw-Hill Companies, NY
- Lee, Y (2006). *Learners' and teachers' preferred way of learning English*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M university-Kingsville, Texas, U.S.A.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston, Mass: Heinle&Heinle Publishers.
- Nunan, D. (2005). *Energizing your classes: A learner-centered Approach*. Retrieved March 21, 2013, from <http://www.nunan.info/presentations/Energizing your learners.pdf>