

## **Tracking down the Academic Target Needs of Undergraduate Students of English Language and Literature in a Non-Native context**

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### **Abstract**

Based on the learning-centred approach to needs analysis, the current study aimed at investigating the academic target needs of undergraduate students of English Language and Literature in Iran as a non-native context nationwide by employing a triangulation of instrumentations namely, questionnaires, class observations, and semi structured interviews. To this end, 320 stakeholders from eight different Iranian state universities participated in the current study. The results of this study revealed a discrepancy between the target needs of the students and the actual EFL courses they undertake during their academic and pre-academic studies. During pre-academic studies, students are not adequately equipped with critical thinking abilities, study skills, and general English proficiency which are required by their prospective academic needs. Likewise, the prevalent lecture-based teaching methodologies as utilized by Iranian content specialists at the tertiary level, seemed to be ineffective in sufficiently equipping the students with sound literary knowledge as well as professional writing and reading skills. The findings may promise implications for establishing a consistent nationwide pedagogical framework for EFL instruction at the non-native academic and pre-academic levels by a synthesis of different communicative and learning-centered approaches to language teaching based on a systematic cooperation among different stakeholders.

*Keywords:* instructors, graduates, learning-centred approach, target needs, undergraduate students

### **Introduction**

During recent decades, English has been increasingly the medium of instruction for teaching and learning of academic subjects, especially

scientific and technical ones in non-native contexts worldwide (Benesch, 2001). This spread of English language teaching as the lingua franca, along with the significance of accountability in the field of ELT, has seriously questioned the concept of a one-fits-all-approach to language teaching (Hyland, 2006; Long, 2005). Subsequently, great demands have been put on context-specific needs analysis studies which act as prerequisites for focused course designs in the domains of second or foreign language education (Dudley-Evans & St Johns, 1998; Long, 2005).

Throughout the brief history of needs analysis since the 1970s, different approaches to it have been emerged, namely the sociolinguistic approach, the systemic approach, the learning-centered approach, learner-centered approaches as well as the task-based approach. Among these, learning-centered approach proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) focuses on how learners learn the target language, and what they require to do so effectively. This approach takes three aspects of target needs into consideration: necessities, lacks, and wants.

Necessities or objective needs are defined as what the learners should be able to do or know by the end of their language courses in terms of the frequently used discourse and linguistic features such as vocabulary, functions, and structures that are required by their target study or occupational contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Widdowson, 1981). In addition, lacks deal with “the gaps between what the learner knows and the necessities” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 56). However, wants or subjective needs deal with learners’ views towards their felt needs (Berwick, 1989; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Nation, 2000).

Regarding the Iranian context as a typical nonnative context, it should be noted that the study of EFL as an official course curriculum starts late at the junior high schools in Iran. What complicates this issue further is that most of the teachers follow the principles of teacher-centered, lecture-based, and reading-oriented Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in their classrooms. This is due to the fact that the traditional GTM is easier for teachers to apply in teaching of EFL in an educational context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

This teaching methodology for the end-of-course examination purpose shows itself off till the late senior high school levels during which the educational contexts in Iran predominantly strive to prepare the students for the academic pursue of the three major high school majors (i.e., mathematics, science, and humanities) in a wide variety of academic routes mainly at the expense of neglect of other specialized

Entrance Examinations. These facts along with the recent increase in the Iranian university applications and the subsequent large classes, may lead to heterogeneous classes in terms of English proficiency levels and interests for English majors at the academic level.

These issues being said in general identify the gap that the pre-academic and academic target needs of Iranian English major students have not been taken into consideration in a comprehensive sense to date although the academic needs of non-English majors have been taken into account worldwide in general and in Iran in particular. This neglect might be due to the presumption that English major students should know everything anyway and hence there is no need for the investigation of their needs and challenges. What complicates this issue further is that since the effective course specifications and curriculum designs should be based on the careful needs analysis studies (Richards, 2001), it seems that the lack of specific target needs analysis studies conducted in this regard pinpoints the fact that course designs and curriculum developments for the above-mentioned students have been mainly based on the intuitions of course designers and curriculum developers rather than careful context-specific target needs analysis studies. In order to fill this gap, the present study aimed at identifying the target language needs of undergraduate students of English Language and Literature in Iran as a typical nonnative context by adopting the Hutchinson and Waters' learning-centered approach to needs analysis (1987). More specifically, the present study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the target needs (i.e., necessities, lacks, and wants) of Iranian undergraduate students of English Language and Literature as perceived by different stakeholders (i.e., undergraduate students, recent graduates, content instructors, and language instructors)?
2. Is there any significant difference among the four groups of stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the target needs of Iranian undergraduate students of English Language and Literature?

### **Background**

In relation to the needs of English major students, Kormos, Kontra, and Csolle (2001) attempted to investigate the present and future language wants of undergraduate English major students in Hungary. The results revealed that while at present the students generally required academic study skills in English, they mainly required English reading and listening skills in order to satisfy the needs of their private or occupational lives in the future. Since majority of the students indicated that they had vague perceptions about their future occupations, it was

implied that their general English language proficiency should be improved accordingly in order to enable them to perform effectively in a wide variety of prospective occupational contexts.

With regards to the literature on the lacks of non-English major nonnative ESP students, the results of some studies (Chostelidou, 2010; Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011) indicated the importance of four language skills and specially reading skill for the effective academic performance of the above-mentioned students, while the results of some other studies (e.g., Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Evans & Green, 2007; Taillefer, 2007) highlighted the significance of writing and speaking skills in this sense. Still another study by Kim (2006) pinpointed the significance of speaking and listening skills for the successful academic performance of the nonnative ESP students. Furthermore, the results of the study conducted by Liu, Chang, Yang, and Sun (2011) indicated that students' necessities in terms of their current academic and future job requirements have influenced their enrollment in ESP/EAP courses rather than their lacks or wants. Consequently, it was suggested that students' needs do not always conform to their lacks but may relate to their expectations, needs as well as objectives.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 320 stakeholders including undergraduate students ( $n = 252$ ), recent graduates ( $n = 51$ ), English literature instructors ( $n = 7$ ), and language instructors ( $n = 10$ ) from six different Iranian state universities participated in the questionnaire administration of the current investigation. In general, 71.9% of the participants ( $n = 230$ ) were females and the remaining 28.1% ( $n = 90$ ) were males. The majority of the undergraduate participants were between an age range of 18-22 years (66.1%), 23-27 years (28.6%), and the remaining 5.3% were more than 28 years old. They included sophomores (44.8%,  $n = 113$ ), juniors (26.6%,  $n = 67$ ), and senior students (28.6%,  $n = 72$ ). Freshmen were excluded from the present study since according to Deutch (2003), they could not recognize their academic needs and challenges. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants who took part in the current investigation.

Table 1. A profile of the participants of this study

University	Undergraduate students	Graduates	English literature instructors	English language instructors	Total
Yazd	123	31	2	4	160
Shahid Beheshti	63	-	1	2	66
Isfahan	43	3	3	1	50
Tehran	21	3	1	2	27
Urmia	2	5	-	1	8
Rafsanjan	-	9	-	-	9
Total	252	51	7	10	320

The graduate participants were graduates of the academic years of 2009-2012. Majority of them were females ( $n = 45$ , 88%) and the remaining six (12%) were males. They were between an age range of 23-27 years ( $n = 46$ , 90%) and more than 28 years ( $n = 5$ , 10%). With regards to the graduates, their occupations were also investigated, the frequencies of which are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Ranking of the frequency of the occupations undertaken by the graduates

Occupation	Frequency
Postgraduate student of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	34
EFL teacher	20
Translator	8
Postgraduate student of English Language and Literature	3
Postgraduate student of Tourism Management	2
Postgraduate student of Arts	1
Librarian	1
Total	69

### Data Collection Instruments

Following (Long, 2005), a triangulation of both research instruments and methods was utilized in the current study in order to increase the reliability and validity of the research findings in terms of the students' needs. That is, the needs of the undergraduate students were examined from the perspective of a group of different stakeholders by means of various data collection instruments (i.e., questionnaires, class observations, and semistructured interviews).

For the purpose of class observations, an adapted version of Basturkmen's (1998) observation protocol, which included five parts namely, instructional activities, instructional aids, student activities, student difficulties, and miscellaneous items, was adopted (see Appendix A).

Then, some exploratory interviews with a number of stakeholders at Yazd University and Shahid Beheshti University were conducted regarding the undergraduates' lacks, necessities, and wants. The results of these exploratory interviews along with the class observation findings as well as the findings of the literature survey were subsequently subsumed for the design of a needs analysis questionnaire. The first draft of the questionnaire was piloted on four undergraduate students, nine graduates, one content instructor, and one language instructor at the above-mentioned universities in an attempt to gain some information regarding the clarity of the questionnaire items and their relevance to students' needs. Based on the obtained feedback, some of the items were modified for easy and quick broad administration of the questionnaire at different universities nationwide. In addition, the comprehensibility and appropriateness of the content of the items of the questionnaire were furthermore confirmed by an ESP expert as well as a content instructor. Correspondingly, the final version of the questionnaire was divided into two 25-item questionnaires for content/language instructors and undergraduate students/ graduates (see Appendices B & C, respectively), which were parallel to each other except in demographic information. With respect to all of the items of the questionnaires, the participants were required to mark the options on a five-point Likert Scale (i.e., *strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree, and strongly disagree*).

The aim of conducting interviews was to gain some information regarding undergraduate students' target needs in terms of lacks, necessities, and wants. To this aim, three semistructured interview protocols for the undergraduate students, graduates, and instructors (see Appendices D, E, & F) were designed based on the literature survey and consultations with the representative stakeholders. The main In addition, it was aimed at investigating whether or not the responses that the respondents provided to the items of the questionnaires were confirmed, gaining some clear insights regarding the possible reasons behind such responses, and eliciting some further information on the students' needs which was unpredicted by the previous data collection instruments.

**Procedure**

The data collection procedures of the current study were carried out over the fall and spring semester of the academic year 2012-2013. First, some preliminary interviews were carried out with the corresponding stakeholders (i.e., four undergraduates, nine graduates, one content instructor, and one language instructor) at Yazd University and Shahid Beheshti University in an attempt to gain some information regarding the academic target needs of the undergraduate students.

Subsequently, all of the fifteen classes (i.e., content and language courses) offered for the sophomore, junior, and senior students of English Language and Literature at Yazd University were observed by the researcher. During these whole-class observations, the researcher marked the options on the class observation protocol and took some observation field notes as well. Before the class observations, the full consent of the head of the department as well as the corresponding instructors was obtained and they were informed of the purpose of doing so. They were informed that the aim of their class observations was not to evaluate their teaching but to gain some clear information regarding the academic practice of English language and literature instruction in Iranian universities and undergraduate students' needs in this regard. During or after the class observations, the researcher discussed some of the items of the observation protocol with a number of the corresponding students, asking for more information or clearing any ambiguities if any. The aim of class observations was to identify the instructional activities practiced in the class, the role of L1 and second language (L2) in English literature instruction as well as the instructional aids utilized in order to facilitate students' learning. In addition, the students' class activities, their perceived difficulties along with some other information regarding their necessities and lacks were explored.

In the questionnaire administration phase of the present study, the researcher distributed the questionnaires among the undergraduates during the first or the last 20 minutes of their class meetings in an attempt to secure the maximum return rates. During the questionnaire completions, the researcher was present in order to clarify any ambiguities. Some of the graduates received their questionnaires during their free time provided that they were postgraduate students at Yazd University or via e-mails in the case of those who were not at hand. Some others, to whom the researcher could gain access in their occupational contexts, were administered questionnaires in their working contexts upon prior appointments with them. Majority of the instructors responded to their questionnaires during the class sessions; some others completed them during their office hours. Quite a few of the instructors,

who were not available, responded to their questionnaires through their e-mails.

Correspondingly, some semistructured interviews were conducted with a total number of 58 stakeholders (i.e., 32 undergraduates, 20 graduates, three content instructors, and three language instructors) at the English Department of Yazd University. The undergraduates and graduates were interviewed during their free time upon prior agreements with them. In addition to the graduates of Yazd University, some of the graduates of English Language and Literature from other Iranian universities, who were studying at the postgraduate level at Yazd University, participated in the semistructured interviews. Some other graduates to whom the researcher could gain access in their occupational contexts were interviewed in their working places. The instructors were interviewed during their office hours upon prior appointments with them. Before conducting the interviews, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study along with the definitions of different needs-related terminologies. During these interviews, which lasted for 20-30 minutes, the researcher transcribed the interviewees' responses to the questions.

### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data from the questionnaires and the class observations were transformed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17.0) for the purpose of data analysis. Regarding the questionnaires, simple descriptive statistics (i.e., cross-tabulations and chi-squares) were utilized in an attempt to obtain the percentages of each of the stakeholders' responses to the questionnaire items as well as to see whether or not there were significant differences among the four groups of stakeholders' views in this regard, respectively.

With respect to the class observations, percentages of the items, which were marked on the observation protocols, were calculated. The field notes were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively as well. In addition, the transcribed data obtained through the semistructured interviews were categorized into main themes and topics and then analyzed through qualitative and descriptive content analysis.

In an attempt to measure the reliability statistics of the scale of the questionnaire items, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value was measured, obtaining a value of .75 which indicated an acceptable internal consistency reliability statistics.



## **Results and Discussion**

In order to facilitate the data interpretation of the current study, the nominal categories ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ as well as ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ were reduced to ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’, respectively. The nominal categories ‘no idea’ were interpreted separately (see Appendix G for the cross-tabulation of the stakeholders’ responses to the questionnaire items on lacks, necessities, and wants).

Almost all of the stakeholders maintained that the students are deficient in study skills which should have been developed during their high school education (cf. questionnaires, item 1; semistructured interviews, item 3). This deficiency seems to be due to the shortcomings in the high school ELT curriculum, inadequate staff development programs as well as lack of a consistent and well-designed nationwide program and organizational support for EFL instruction at Iranian high schools, which can appropriately equip the students with EFL learning strategies required by their prospective academic demands at the tertiary level. Besides, some other factors such as Asian EFL teachers’ vague perceptions of aims of EFL programs, lack of regular meetings in order to negotiate professional and recent teaching methodologies, or their ignorance of the expected performance standards (Tsou & Chen, 2014) may be responsible for Asian students’ inadequate skills.

In addition, a solid majority of the stakeholders agreed with the undergraduates’ lack of background knowledge of their major before being admitted to the university (cf. questionnaires, item 2). In a similar vein, the findings of the semistructured interviews revealed that this kind of background knowledge may help high school students select their prospective academic majors wisely. Furthermore, due to the significance of students’ background knowledge in their future academic success (Kumaravivelu, 2006), this knowledge can help the students to better meet the needs of their subsequent mainstream courses (cf. semistructured interviews, items 2, 3).

Likewise, a vast majority of the stakeholders agreed with the inadequacy of the Specialized English University Entrance Examination as a placement test which can distinguish proficient from nonproficient applicants for English academic studies (cf. questionnaires, item 3). Similarly, a solid majority of the interviewees (cf. item 2) indicated that this deficiency may result in heterogeneous classes in terms of general English proficiency which consequently impedes students’ equal learning opportunities as well as efficient class management of their instructors. Furthermore, it can provide subsequent problems in the nonproficient students’ academic studies since they are not adequately

equipped with general English knowledge at an intermediate or advanced levels which enable them to successfully pursue their mainstream courses.

Also, a large majority of the stakeholders asserted that English literature classes are deficient in terms of the use of audiovisual facilities (cf. questionnaires, item 4). These results, which are in congruence with the content class observation data and the findings of the semistructured interviews (cf. items 2, 3), indicate that the underuse of the above-mentioned facilities may consequently lead to the undergraduate students' inadequate speaking and listening abilities which are required by the demands of their current academic and future occupational contexts. Provided that these facilities are used in English literature classes, they can help the students not only to promote their general English knowledge and language skills, but also to gain deep knowledge of literary works in a more interesting way and, hence, increase their motivation to learn English literature accordingly. The underuse of the above-mentioned facilities in EAP classes for non-native English majors is furthermore reported by Xiao (2007).

Besides, most of the stakeholders agreed that there is insufficient use of up-to-date and recently published literary textbooks and reference materials as authentic texts in English literature classes; despite the fact that the students demonstrated their willingness to be familiar with refined and authentic English literary sources in order to enhance their motivation to learn English literature (cf. questionnaires, item 5; semistructured interviews, items 2, 3). It is notable that text authenticity not only includes the similarity of the text to the target use situation but also its ability to promote learners' motivation and comprehensibility (Tsou & Chen, 2014). These findings in congruence with what has been echoed throughout the literature (Atai & Nazari, 2011; Moslemi, Moinzadeh, & Dabaghi, 2011) highlight the fact that there is inadequate use of up-to-date materials and sources for English instruction in Iran as a non-native context.

In addition, majority of the stakeholders admitted that the students are not adequately equipped with general English knowledge at the upper intermediate or advanced levels as well as four language skills, especially speaking, listening, and writing abilities which are necessary for their success in their current subject-specific courses and future occupational contexts (cf. questionnaires, items 6, 16; semistructured interviews, items 1, 2). Due to the prominence of all language skills as what constitutes language knowledge in the learning-centered

pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Tsui, 2003; Woods, 1996), most of the stakeholders acknowledged the need for some extracurricular and preparatory general English proficiency classes in an attempt to improve students' knowledge accordingly (cf. questionnaires, item 20; semistructured interviews, item 3). The necessity of the above-mentioned needs for EFL learners is reported throughout the literature (Atai & Tahririan, 2003; Chostelidou, 2010; Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Taillefer, 2007; Uso-Juan, 2006).

Moreover, a considerable number of the stakeholders stated that the students are not adequately familiar with English literary genres, history, philosophy, schools of thought, and different authors and critiques accordingly which are required for the successful pursue of their academic studies (cf. questionnaires, items 7, 13, 17, 18; semistructured interviews, items 1, 2, 3). These shortcomings may be due to the unavailability of sufficient and up-to-date English literary textbooks and reference materials, students' low motivation to increase their content knowledge, or the inadequacy of the number of mainstream courses in enabling the students to increase their literary knowledge to a great extent. Hence, majority of the stakeholders acknowledged that extracurricular English literature classes should be provided for the undergraduate students at the university or language institute contexts in order to improve their knowledge of different aspects of English literature (cf. questionnaires, item 21).

Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of the stakeholders indicated that majority of the students prefer interactive-based English literature classes; however, there are not adequate opportunities for them to participate in English literature class discussions, since a large majority of their mainstream courses are teacher-centered, lecture-based, and crowded as well (cf. questionnaires, item, 22; semistructured interviews, items 2, 3). In line with the current study observation data as well as what has been reported by (Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Helmer, 2013), these findings may indicate that what has stimulated the instructors to resort to teacher-centered and lecture-based English literature classes is their perception of their students' inadequate content knowledge or low motivation. In addition, the problem of large classes due to the recent increase in university admissions has further complicated this issue. Large classes not only deprive all of the students an equal opportunity to participate in class discussions, but also make it difficult for their instructors to manage such classes.

These findings, which are strengthened by the content class observation data, indicate that lecture-based and teacher-based classes as ineffective teaching methodologies may result in students' inadequate

argumentation and discussion skills, their negative attitudes towards English literature learning as well as their inability to operate in pair/group activities. However, the above-mentioned abilities and attitudes are important for the students' success not only in their current academic courses, but also in their future prospective occupational or private life. In line with Tsui (2003), a balance between student-centered and communicative content-centered classes as effective target language teaching methodology can be utilized for successful interactive-based English literature learning in non-native contexts. In addition, they may benefit from assigning students to pair/group work, helping them to be autonomous learners who take risks in order to communicate with peers and teachers and hence take responsibility for their learning transfer (Dickinson, 1987, 1995; Gilmore, 2007; Guanriento & Morley, 2001; Helmer, 2013; Holec, 1981; Tassinari, 2012). In this way, learners can reflect on their competencies, noting their areas of weaknesses, and accordingly make decisions for further learning (Helmer, 2013; Tsou & Chen, 2014).

Considering students' preference for communicative activities and learner-centered approaches to class teaching, the findings of the current study are in line with what has been reflected throughout the EAP/ESP needs analysis literature (Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Helmer, 2013; Nikui Nezhad, 2007; Xiao, 2007).

Likewise, most of the graduates, content instructors as well as language instructors reported that there are not adequate use of assignments and exercises in English literature classes (cf. questionnaires, item 9). However, the results of class observations revealed that in English language classes (e.g., Linguistics, Teaching Methodology, Essay Writing, etc.), students are given assignments and exercises on a regular basis which subsequently foster their understating of the materials to a great extent by helping them to plan, perform, and progress in autonomous learning (Tsou & Chen, 2014).

With respect to the professional language skills, a considerable number of the stakeholders responded that the students are not adequately equipped with professional writing skills, especially for writing academic literary and criticism papers as well as academic reading skills which are demanded by their current academic as well as future occupational needs (cf. questionnaires, items 10, 11, 15; semistructured interviews, items 1, 2). Most of the stakeholders felt that the current teaching methodologies do not adequately pave the way to develop students' professional writing skills (cf. semistructured

interviews, item 2). Regarding the deficiency of the students' reading skills, a considerable number of the stakeholders admitted that the students suffer from slow reading speed and are accustomed to read line by line which is a kind of habit that students have developed from the early stages of their high school studies (cf. questionnaires, item 11; semistructured interviews, item 2). The findings of the previous studies on ESP needs analysis of non-English majors (e.g., Atai & Fatahi-Majd, 2013; Atai & Nazari, 2011; Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Hashemi, Rashid Lamir, & Rezaee Namjoo, 2011) are in line with the results of the present study concerning Iranian students' insufficient EFL reading skills.

In addition, almost all of the stakeholders agreed that it is necessary for the students to develop their severely lacking critical thinking abilities in order to increase their understanding of their academic readings (cf. questionnaires, item 12, class observation data). However, the results of the content class observations and semistructured (cf. item 2) indicated that this deficiency might stem from their insufficient high school instruction as well as their heavy reliance on the use of easily-accessible literary web-based materials. In order to help students develop their critical scrutiny of literary materials, subject-specific teachers should try to develop authentic tasks which avoids correct answers, involving students in information gathering, value determination, and application of the gathered information in order to perform the task (Douglas, 2000).

Moreover, a substantial majority of the stakeholders reported that it is necessary for the students to have prereadings before attending English literature classes so that they may better understand their lessons and have enough self-confidence to express themselves in class discussions and activities (cf. questionnaires, item 14). The findings just discussed were largely corroborated by the results of the content class observations.

Regarding cultural awareness of the students, a vast majority of the stakeholders indicated that it is necessary for the Asian English major students to be well familiar with English culture, customs, and social norms in order to better make sense of their mainstream academic studies (cf. questionnaires, item 19). This must be strengthened by the fact that English literature is primarily western and western culture differs in significant ways from eastern culture and customs. Hence, awareness of the target culture in particular and global cross-cultural awareness in general should be an integral part of successful target language learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, the interview data (cf. item 2) in line with what has been echoed out in the literature on EAP/ESP needs analysis (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Xiao, 2007; Belcher &

Lukkarila, 2011), indicate that EFL learners in non-native contexts are not adequately equipped with knowledge of English culture.

Likewise, a considerable majority of the stakeholders indicated that students want to learn English literature in order to read professional English literary books and articles as well as to attend international or national educational conferences in English literature (cf. questionnaires, items 23, 24).

Correspondingly, a great majority of the stakeholders admitted that the undergraduate students prefer to select careers related to their own field of study namely, teaching English literature, translating literary texts, writing in different literary genres specially criticism papers, or doing research in the field (cf. questionnaires, item 25). In a similar vein, the results of the semistructured interviews (cf. item 3) revealed that it is necessary that students feel assured of their future job prospects in an attempt to improve their motivation to pursue their academic studies seriously. However, due to the inadequate opportunities for the students to gain such occupations or their insufficient content knowledge after their graduation, they mainly resort to general English career opportunities, such as EFL teaching, translating, and conducting business (cf. Table 2). These results are in line with the findings obtained by Kormos et al. (2001).

### **Conclusion**

The current study sought to provide a reasonably thick description of the academic target needs of undergraduate students of English Language and Literature in Iran as a typical non-native context. Regarding the target needs of English major undergraduates, the findings of this study as a common picture shared by various stakeholders can be categorized into several aspects and generalized to similar non-native contexts. First, the results revealed a serious gap in a systematic, well-designed, and up-to-date pedagogical framework for English instruction at Iranian senior high schools. This deficiency stem from the fact that non-native high school students are not adequately equipped with language knowledge, skills, strategies, and abilities which can facilitate their successful prospective academic performance along with the wise selection of their academic majors of interest.

What complicates the issue further is that the currently practiced Specialized University Entrance Examination in Iran cannot appropriately select among proficient intermediate or advanced level

applicants from nonproficient ones for English academic studies. This issue along with the recent increase in students' admission to the universities lead to heterogeneous classes in terms of skills, abilities, strategies, and knowledge which may deprive the students from equal opportunities to learn effectively at the tertiary level.

More importantly, it was revealed that the EAP courses offered for non-native English major students at the undergraduate level does not include a systematic, well-designed, and up-to-date pattern for the training of English literature based on the students' present and future real-world target academic or occupational needs. Since no empirical, systematic, and research-based evidence derived from context-specific and comprehensive needs analysis studies based on a triangulation of methods and sources in non-native contexts exist in this regard, it seems that the course design and curriculum development for non-native undergraduate English majors have been based on the intuitions of course designers and curriculum developers.

However, the current needs analysis study was limited to the extent that its interviews and class observations were conducted at one of the representative Iranian universities due to time and resource limitations available, the respondents to the needs analysis questionnaires represented approximately a large body of the target population which subsequently allow for generalization of our findings.

According to the postmethod approaches to language teaching, the results of the current study suggest that English literature instructors at non-native contexts should seek alternatives to methods by synthesizing strengths of different communicative and learning-centered approaches to language teaching in an attempt to meet all of the context-specific target needs of their students. Subsequently, they are recommended to carry out constant action research by adopting the principal of glocalization, that is using general principles in order to solve the practical problems of their local context-specific practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

The results of the current study may promise implications for the course designers and curriculum developers at the tertiary level in EFL contexts to revise and renew the existing courses based on the group interaction and shared decision-making among different stakeholders in the course design community. Also, the results suggest that some elective and extracurricular professional training courses in general English, academic language skills, English literary genres as well as academic writing and reading skills should be provided at university or language institute contexts in order to equip non-native English major students

with the required needs of their current or future academic and occupational contexts.

Likewise, the results of the current study calls the attention of the content and language instructors to systematically cooperate and interactively communicate with each other for the purpose of exchanging information and implementing a consistent and interactive-based academic EFL instruction for non-native English major students. Besides, they are recommended to gain insights from the results of the latest theoretical and practical developments in ESP teaching methodology in order to empower themselves and enhance their professional accountability, providing an ideal learning environment for exchange of ideas and promotion of learner autonomy.

Moreover, EFL teachers and course designers at senior high schools in non-native contexts are recommended to adjust the courses based on the EFL program assessments in order to foster the critical thinking abilities, study skills, and English proficiency of high school students in an attempt to facilitate their successful prospective academic performance. Likewise, there is an urgent need to provide a consistent and up-to-date nationwide EFL pedagogical framework at the pre-academic levels which can appropriately inform the students regarding the content of academic English majors confronting them in order to facilitate their selection accordingly.

Lastly, strong concerns have been voiced to the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology (MSRT) to increase the criterion level of foreign language requirements of the Specialized English University Entrance Examination in an attempt to better select among proficient from nonproficient applicants for English academic studies. Also, it is recommended that the number of admissions to English majors should be reduced in order to provide the students an equal opportunity to learn at the tertiary level.

Provided that the above-mentioned principles as well as the results and the implications of the present study in terms of the academic target needs of non-native English majors are taken into account to accommodate the courses accordingly, students' learning and learner autonomy might be enhanced and hence, the need for accountability in this respect will be satisfied in part (Basturkmen, 2010; Long, 2005).



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