

Language Learning Needs Analysis at Different Stages of the Undergraduate Course of Consecutive Interpreting

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Abstract

This study reports on an extended learner needs analysis carried out at different stages of course progress in the undergraduate course of Consecutive Interpreting. The participants were 32 undergraduate translation students. Two questionnaires were used to identify the initial- and final-stage lacks and wants, and learners' reflective diaries served as a tool to gain ongoing insight into their lacks. At each stage, after the identification of lacks and/or wants, the required adaptations were decided on and implemented, and their effect was traced on learners' views. The ongoing lacks were mainly related to L2 listening comprehension and note-taking from L2. The final stage investigation of the lacks revealed that although the majority of the learners reported progress in note-taking, listening comprehension, and consecutive interpreting, almost half of them did not feel confident to be active members in class. Moreover, the investigation of wants revealed that a high percentage of the learners believed the class materials and activities were effective regarding their progress. However, activities in which interaction and cooperation were essential were least preferred. This together with the final-stage investigation of lacks revealed that the course curriculum needed to work more toward creating a non-threatening atmosphere for interaction. Although the study was conducted in a specific setting, it bears implications for different settings since it is a practical example of how an extended needs analysis could be done. Besides, the nature of

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the problems the learners reported and the measures taken to address them could be very similar in other contexts.

Keywords: consecutive interpreting, lacks, listening, needs analysis, note-taking, wants

Introduction

Needs analysis is defined as “the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students” (Brown, 2001, p. 35). Needs are viewed in the literature from apparently different perspectives. According to Brindley (1989), for example, they could be regarded as *objective* and explored prior to the course, or *subjective* and addressed while the course is in progress. While objective needs are factual and determined based upon learners’ real context of use, their current skills and difficulties, subjective needs have to do with such affective and cognitive factors as personality, attitude and expectations. In a similar vein, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) propose the classification of *target needs* and *learning needs*. To accurately capture the breadth of needs, they further subdivide target needs into necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities, which are objective in nature (Brindley, 1989), are also termed as required knowledge, and target whatever a learner needs to know to function effectively in the target situation. Lacks, still fitting into objective needs, emerge when what learners already know is set against the necessities. However, wants represent what learners feel they need to acquire to perform appropriately in the target situation.

Practitioners and theorists alike assume that any program or course should be designed based on the results of the needs assessment. This is a prerequisite and a phase that gives validity to all other phases of the process. Nunan (1994) asserts that needs analysis is a determining factor in the selection and sequencing of the content, teaching methodology, and length, duration and intensity of a given course. Richards (2001) recognizes it as a distinct phase in the plan of educational courses and confesses that a sound curriculum should be based on needs analysis. Likewise, Ozdemir (2018) believes an effective course design which motivates learners relies heavily on needs analysis. In parallel with such theoretical considerations, in recent decades, several empirical studies in different fields have been reported which base one or different aspects of a course and/or curriculum design, from objective setting

and materials development to assessment, on the findings of needs analysis. The meta-analysis study conducted by Bocanegra-Valle (2016) provides a good review of such studies in the field of English for Academic Purposes.

Literature Review

Along with the rise of learner-centered approaches to teaching and learning, needs analysis has gained even more significance in different settings within the last two decades. Interpreter training has been no exception. Focus on learners' needs has had different manifestations in interpreting research. Among the empirical studies that bring the learners' interpreting needs to the fore, some have focused on the learners' views. Jeong (2005), for example, gained insight into the past students' views to improve the existing translation and interpreting program in South Korea. Takeda (2010) investigated interpreting students' feedback to identify their interests and expectations. Furthermore, learners' diaries have served as a tool for gaining insight into learners' interpreting needs. Miyamoto (2008), for instance, used learners' diaries to understand learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategies in their self-learning practices. In a recent study, Madrid (2020) focused on oral expression as an important component for interpreting among undergraduate students. Using learners' diaries as pedagogical introspection tools which foster among learners such skills as critical self-analysis, she gained insight into students' experiences and attitudes.

Some researchers have focused on objective needs and attempted to include real-world considerations in training based on a situated learning approach. Authors such as Cho and Roger (2010) and Baxter (2012) emphasized the role of theatrical training and role-play on the grounds that in such activities real-world conditions can be simulated. Others, with the same concern of training interpreters capable of meeting real-world demands, emphasized the gap between the skills acquired by students and the needs of the translation industry and focused on the inclusion of components in the curriculum that contribute to employability (Cuminatto et al, 2017; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017). In one recent study, Afolabi (2019) compared the actual market needs with what learners acquired at interpreter training centers in Nigeria. Finding the gap between the actual needs and the training offered, he stressed the need for a paradigm shift and offered a number of practical solutions for

revising the existing programs.

A brief review of the literature reveals learners' interpreting needs have been in focus during the last two decades and different aspects of learners' needs have been studied. Even so, few empirical studies could be found to show how a systematic needs analysis is carried out at different stages of course development, and how the findings of each stage can be served as the steppingstones for the rest of the same semester. Besides, although needs analysis should not be limited to one point and conducted only prior to curriculum or course design (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Ozdemir, 2018), the existing studies have limited collecting data on the learners' needs to a specific time (either the outset or the end of the semester). This highlights a research gap that needs to be addressed. Against this backdrop, this study aims to report a needs analysis study in which learners' views in the undergraduate course Interpreting are investigated and reflected upon throughout the semester. The study, borrowing from the concept of *needs* originally proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), specifically aims to explore the learners' major initial, on-going and final-stage lacks. At each stage, upon the identification of the lacks, the authors sought to explore remedies and accordingly make the required modifications and/or enhancements. Besides, to see if the course meets the learners' expectations and needs, final-stage wants are also investigated.

Method

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted to gain insight into the lacks and wants of undergraduate Translation students in the undergraduate course Interpreting 1 from the learners' perspective. As for the framework for needs analysis, Nation and Macalister's (2010) categories of needs were used which are, in turn, adapted from Hutchinson and Waters (1987). According to this classification, needs are defined and analyzed in terms of *necessities*, *lacks*, and *wants*. The guiding principles for outlining necessities were drawn out of the features Gile (2009) enumerates for consecutive interpreters.

Participants

The participants were 32 students who registered in the undergraduate

course Interpreting 1 at an institute of higher education in Isfahan, Iran. They were male (n = 4) and female (n = 28) learners whose L1 and L2 were Persian and English, respectively. Their ages ranged from 20 to 38 with an average of 22.3. Prior to the study, participants were informed that their performance and feedback to instruction would serve as the research data with the purpose of improving educational practice. They were assured that if any data was to be used, it would remain anonymous. The diaries completed by the learners as part of their regular assignments were a source of data and, therefore, were submitted to the researchers. However, the students were encouraged but not required to participate in this study if they so chose.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Necessities were basically elicited based on the features Gile (2009) outlines including knowledge of learners' working languages, knowledge of the subject matter, and declarative and procedural knowledge. Moreover, he includes such intellectual and personal features as self-confidence, concentration, and public speaking abilities. Having necessities in mind, learners' lacks were traced throughout the semester; i.e., data on needs was collected at the outset and end of the semester through questionnaires and continually throughout the semester using learners' diaries. For the ease of data presentation and discussion, three stages were assumed which represent the whole semester: at the outset of the semester while the course was in progress and at the conclusion of the semester. To see if the course was effective in pursuing learners' needs, data on *wants* was also collected at the end of the semester.

The First Self-report Questionnaire. To gain insight into the learners' lacks in the initial phase, a self-report questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was administered at the outset of the semester and comprised two general questions, one asking about the last level of English listening practices they experienced, and the other asking them to evaluate themselves in terms of a number of skills and characteristics. They majorly reflected the necessities which were based on Gile's (2009) characteristics enumerated for consecutive interpreters. The questionnaire was in Persian.

The Second Self-report Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed by the instructor-researcher (the first author of the article) and content-validated by two other experts to be administered at the conclusion of the semester. It comprised 17 items on a five-point Likert scale in learners' L1. Five questions were intended to investigate the learners' degree of progress (final-stage lacks) and 12 questions were designed to gain insight into their wants of which nine focused on teaching and learning effectiveness from the learners' perspective and three were about the learners' satisfaction. The questions were organized under three thematic subheadings of Class materials and activities, Assignments, and Your skills. The reliability of the questionnaire estimated by Cronbach's alpha was 0.78.

Learners' Reflective Diaries. To gain continual insight into the learners' lacks, they were asked to write reflective diaries on a regular basis. They were requested to reflect on their individual experiences in L2 listening comprehension, note-taking in both L1 and L2, and expressing ideas in L1. In their reflections, they were asked to focus on the problems they faced (be they linguistic or affective in nature), their possible source, and the solutions they came up with. Besides, they were asked to compare their present performance with the preceding ones and see how satisfied they felt with their work. Considering their weaknesses and strengths, the problems they faced, and the possible solutions they came up with, they were also said that it would be a good idea to determine the specifications of their upcoming task. As for the language of diaries, they were free to choose either their L1, Persian, or their L2, English.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the five-point Likert scale items was analyzed through descriptive statistics. As for the open question in the questionnaire, the content of the answers was analyzed to be classified thematically. Concerning the learners' reflective diaries, content analysis was also done and the learners' problems, solutions, suggestions, and strengths were classified in terms of the skills and characteristics pertinent to each case.

Results and Discussion

In what follows, the results of the study are presented in terms of different

stages at which needs analysis was conducted. Then, the findings are discussed and the implications are put forth.

Initial Phase

Investigation of Needs. At the outset of the semester, to gain insight into the learners’ initial lacks, they were asked to (1) report their last level of listening comprehension practices, and (2) judge themselves in terms of a number of characteristics and skills pertaining to interpreting. Regarding their English listening comprehension skill, 21 learners reported that the last practices had been in their speaking and listening courses they had passed within the first (two) semester(s) of university. They reported that the main book they worked on had been *Tactics for Listening, Expanding*. Six students reported the same book, but they added that meanwhile they had been occasionally engaged in watching movies. Two other learners reported that they were engrossed in watching movies and documentaries. The remaining three learners mentioned other sources: one of them reported that she worked on *Contemporary Topics* series without mentioning the level; another referred to *Contemporary Topics 3*, and one referred to *Northstar 4*.

As for the second question, the results of the learners’ self-evaluation are reported in Table 1. Among the skills and characteristics listed, listening comprehension seemed to be the most challenging area for the learners: less than 13% of them reported possessing a very good or good command of listening comprehension.

Table 1
Learners’ initial self-evaluation

Skill or characteristic	Very good	Good	Average (%)	Weak	Very weak	No Idea
Listening comprehension	3.12	9.37	34.37	43.57	9.37	0
Note-taking	15.62	50	21.87	12.5	0	0
Delivering ideas in L1	21.87	40.62	15.62	12.5	3.12	6.25
Public speaking	9.37	21.87	37.5	15.62	6.25	9.37
Concentration	3.12	21.87	40.62	28.12	3.12	3.12
Confidence	9.37	37.5	31.25	18.75	3.12	0

Implications and Measures Taken. As stated above, the major perceived lack was in learners' ability to comprehend English listening materials. Overall, this finding affected the decisions made by the instructor in four ways: (1) materials selection, (2) materials development, (3) class procedures, and (4) weekly assignments.

Materials Selection

Since the last level of the listening comprehension practices of the majority of learners was intermediate, the upper-intermediate level was chosen as the level of the first materials to be interpreted in class. Besides, considering the learners' weakness in listening comprehension, it was decided that it would be best to start with materials on more general topics as the sources for in-class interpreting practices. The idea was that more specialized topics posed additional challenges to the learners. To have a smooth transition and to pose a workable challenge to the learners, therefore, the authors decided on a pattern of progression for the class interpreting materials which moved from general to more specialized topics.

Materials Development

The instructor designed two types of materials as further help for each interpreting topic. Enhancers were developed to give the learners a general account of the topic of interpreting and provide them with linguistic (basically lexical) and extra-linguistic (e.g., names of places, people, events) knowledge on the topic. The materials usually started with a paragraph or two giving learners some general information regarding the topic of the interpreting material they were to work on. This was followed by a section in which those vocabulary items and expressions were included that the instructor believed most of the learners were not familiar with. Moreover, if a grammatical point was crucial to comprehending the interpreting material, it was included in the Grammar Focus section of the enhancer. Enhancers, therefore, served as tools by which the learners were hoped to be guided through fostering top-down processing. Moreover, worksheets were designed to serve as listening comprehension exercises for the class interpreting material. Both files were sent to a channel created for this course and launched on a social messaging application one week before the class. Meanwhile, the learners were

expected first to gain more general information about the topic of the material introduced in the Enhancer, and second to study the linguistic information they were provided with.

Class Procedures

As for the in-class provisions, in each session, the linguistic content of the enhancer was reviewed mostly in the form of question-asking. Then the learners were invited to share the result of their searches about the topic. Prior to interpreting, depending on the challenge of the track, the learners had the opportunity to listen once or twice to the whole track as multiple exposures to a passage can improve comprehension (Chang & Read, 2006). This was followed by the completion of listening comprehension exercises in the worksheet.

Weekly Assignments

A number of websites containing English podcasts as well as several listening comprehension practice books were introduced which entailed different levels of proficiency, a range of different topics, and different accents. As it was their first course in interpreting and considering learners' weaknesses in listening comprehension, the materials were not highly specialized. The learners were asked to listen to at least ten minutes of the materials weekly. They were asked to start their practices considering their current level, but they were expected to make progress by the end of the semester. In addition to the progress in their level, they were also expected to choose the material for their weekly practices from among different sources and different topics. That way, they had the chance to listen to a range of topics with different accents.

During the Semester

Investigation of Needs. To gain continual insight into the learners' lacks from their perspective, reflective diaries were used as tools for collecting data and were analyzed while the course was in progress. The learners' diaries were mainly focused on two areas of (1) English listening comprehension, and (2) note-taking from both Persian and English materials. As it was mentioned before, the learners were free to choose their L1 or L2 as the language of diaries. However, all

participants wrote their diaries in Persian.

Listening Comprehension

One demanding aspect appeared when the learners were listening to a track on a specific subject matter containing technical words. The focus of some reports was on the technical words:

(R1) I couldn't get some parts. I think the reason was I didn't know about medicine. There were some medical words and the name of drugs. Sometimes I couldn't understand even the words coming immediately after them... While I was concentrating on the medical word, I lost the next words; sometimes I couldn't recognize where the medical word ended, so I lost the next word.

Statements reflecting almost the same concern were frequently reported concerning other subject matters such as politics, economy, geography, and tourism. Still, in an almost relevant area of challenge, they reported their difficulty understanding proper names:

(R2) The material I was listening to right now had four parts, each about a character. There were many names; I got only Mother Teresa! It was confusing and difficult to go on when I even didn't know about whom the talk was. I got tired; I lost concentration in some parts.

Problems with non-technical, unfamiliar words and expressions were also among the learners' major challenges, which are related to vocabulary size. Most of the learners were well aware of the root of the problem:

(R3) I lost many words... I lost many sentences... there were many new words. The level wasn't appropriate for me.

Difficulty in understanding word boundaries was another problem area that was highlighted in the learners' diaries. Close attention to R1 reveals that the student refers to this problem as well, as she points out her difficulty recognizing where one word ends and the next starts. Following is a more illuminating report:

(R4) One annoying problem is that sometimes I can't get even the words I know; there are some words following one another, but I can't recognize them. Sometimes I even lose one or more sentences for that. For example, I listened to a part several times, five or six times, but I couldn't even find

out how many words that part consisted of. It was a strange rapid string to me. When I read the script, I found that it was “extra liquids” and I knew both words, but I couldn’t even recognize it wasn’t one word.

Speakers’ accent was another challenge; those students whose listening comprehension experiences were mainly focused on the American accent had difficulty understanding other English accents let alone understanding a non-native speaking English.

Note-taking from L1 and L2

The learners’ problems in note-taking comprised problems with notes taken from both Persian and English listening materials. Among the problems listed here, the first two were reported for both L1 and L2 with L1 having a remarkably less share; the rest were specific to L2.

The first major problem was the length of the material. They reported that when the listening material got lengthy, they faced problems in note-taking. The following quote from a learner could be revealing in this regard:

(R5) When it gets lengthy, my hand gets tired and I can't go on; I lose my concentration.

The second area of problem in note-taking relevant to both languages was the habit of writing all of the sentences as completely as possible; this was recognized by some learners as a barrier impeding them from noticing the upcoming statements. Other students who tried not to write all the ideas completely, faced some problems as well:

(R6) When I try not to write all the ideas, I forget some of them.

Another problem reported as a major challenge was the rate of speech. This was reported to be a problem merely in the case of note-taking from English listening materials. Below, is a part of one learner’s diary:

(R7) When I start writing the first words in a sentence, I lose the next words and the whole sentence altogether. Writing a sentence needs more time; the speech is so fast that I can't. I have the same problem in class; it is even worse there!

The same problem was voiced out by other learners frequently, sometimes from a different point of view and, therefore, way of expression:

(R8) My biggest problem is that while listening I can't take notes and if I don't take notes, I won't remember the points.

Besides, the learners' diaries revealed another area of difficulty pertaining to their English note-taking experiences, i.e., failure to understand the link between ideas from which they had taken note:

(R10) I had written some phrases and ideas but when it came to reading them, I couldn't understand how they were related to one another; [...] I couldn't make meaningful sentences.

Implications and Measures Taken. As it was reported above, the learners' diaries were telling of their problems in English listening comprehension, and note-taking from both L1 and L2. In what follows, the implications and measures taken are discussed.

Listening Comprehension

Learners' listening comprehension challenges entailed problems in both top-down processing and bottom-up processing. This was indicative of the fact that in many cases the learners needed to activate both processes so that the two work in synergy.

A good number of problems enumerated in the diaries were centered on the learners' unfamiliarity with a topic. This problem is acknowledged and discussed in the literature on L2 listening comprehension as possessing the knowledge of subject matter is believed to be a factor that facilitates comprehension (Chang & Read, 2006; Goh & Aryadoust, 2016; Vandergrift & Goh, 2009). The use of this metacognitive strategy, which facilitates top-down processing, can even help learners compensate for their shortcomings in getting some words in the continuous chain of speech; that is to say, it even can help them compensate for their weaknesses in bottom-up processing. This could be helpful, especially for less proficient listeners.

Vocabulary size, which was among the learners' concerns, is also regarded as a prerequisite to guarantee success in listening comprehension (Bonk, 2000; Buck, 2001; Kobeleva, 2012). Proper names, however, have been partly overlooked in the literature because of having a limited area of reference (Berezowski, 2002). The learners' self-reports suggested that they needed guidance in this regard. This is

a need highlighted by Kobeleva (2012) who valued possessing knowledge of proper names and found that it affected students' perception of the ease of the listening task.

Being in the situation and teaching the course for eight semesters prior to the semester in focus, the instructor was aware of these problems. Therefore, pre-planning as a metacognitive strategy had been thought to be a solution. To meet the need of the learners in class practices, Enhancers were the materials designed to serve as tools for pre-planning. The learners started to receive Enhancers early in the semester and for the very first sessions of class practices.

Enhancers could also work as models for the learners' pre-planning prior to home listening practices. Considering the lack they perceived, we were optimistic to see learners make use of this metacognitive strategy on their own in doing their weekly practices. This hope came true for some learners. As an example, working with a listening book, a learner gave the following report in her diary:

(R11) I did the pre-listening exercises first and then listened to the track. There were words I didn't know, and some parts I didn't get but it was better than last week's practice. [...] For example, there was the term "a flair for" which I hadn't known or heard. If I hadn't seen it in the exercises, I couldn't get it.

It was worth noting that some learners' in their own learning experiences perceived that they lacked and needed the background knowledge and the vocabulary required for completing such tasks. That way, they themselves chose to pre-plan, a decision that was soon expressed in the diaries. The value of this process gone through by the learners was that they, in their personal ventures, felt a gap, i.e., a need, and thought about a solution for it. This makes the solution more effective.

Later diaries in which learners expressed their failure to get words and/or ideas despite pre-planning were indicative of the fact that although top-down processes and metacognitive strategies were necessary in their path toward progress, they were not enough. R1 is a case in point, which is a telling account of the learners' failure in recognizing word boundaries, i.e., word segmentation. Considering that listeners do not enjoy the advantage of spaces in print, Vandergrift and Goh (2009) confirm that word segmentation is a major problem for language learners. They assert that the challenge of parsing a stream of sounds could be so

disruptive that listeners may even fail to recognize known words in “concatenated speech” (p. 399) since the problem has partly to do with adjacent sounds influencing one another in the stream of speech (Chang, 2012). Vandergrift and Goh (2009) believe that problem with word segmentation needs to be explicitly addressed in the course of instruction. A variety of techniques and practices are suggested in the literature; i-1 level listening (Hulstijn, 2001), dictogloss (Wilson, 2003), the six-step listening procedure (Hulstijn, 2003), and dictation and analogy exercises (Field, 2005) are among the most-cited ones. To address the problem, we decided to choose Hulstijn’s (2003) six-step procedure as the technique to be introduced to the learners with this problem. It was chosen on the grounds that the procedures went well with learners’ weekly listening comprehension practices.

Regarding their problem with less familiar accents, it should be noted that familiarity with the accent of the passage positively affects comprehension (Major et al., 2005). According to Floccia et al. (2009), the effectiveness of accented speech is in that it both decreases the successful retrieval of the passage and calls for more effort on the part of the listener to identify the words pronounced. Since most of the learners’ practices in our study had been focused on American English, attempts were made to include materials in the class representing other accents as well. The researchers also asked learners to include other accents in their weekly practices. This was counted as one of the criteria for evaluating their weekly assignments.

Note-taking from L1 and L2

Generally, areas of challenge in the learners’ note-taking practices were the length of speech, their habit of writing sentences in full, forgetting the points not taken note from, rate of speech, and inability to link the ideas. Among them, the first two were commonalities between note-taking from L1 and L2, while the rest were reported to be problematic only in their L2. Besides, note-taking from a text spoken in L1 was the area with the least reported challenges. Justifying this observation through the lens of Gile’s Effort Model (2009), it could be argued that working with L1 lessens the L Effort, leaving more room for the N Effort which results in a wholly more successful performance.

A closer look at the problems reported reveals that they were interrelated. When learners write sentences in full, they cannot write all the ideas; this is a

problem acknowledged in the literature on note-taking. The students in Piolat et al.'s (2008) study also reported it as a major challenge. The difference between the speed of speech and note-taking turns note-taking into a cognitively demanding undertaking that requires note-takers to implement wise content and formal reductionist strategies (Barbier & Piolat, 2005; Piolat et al., 2008). When learners fall behind, they attribute this failure to the rate or length of the speech. It is important to note that research has also supported that students tend to attribute their problems to the rate of speech while it may have been caused by other factors (Moore et al., 2007). In our case, the learners needed to pay attention to the meaning, not form, and be selective in taking notes.

If being selective is a solution, why then the selective learners in this study were also complaining that they forgot the ideas from which they did not take notes? Why did they fail to find the link between ideas in their notes? The answer is that they could not decide what to take notes from and what to leave. In addressing these challenges, it was explained to them that some of the problems they faced in note-taking had their roots in their L2 comprehension. Using Gile's terminology, this, in turn, facilitates L effort, opens up the way to N effort, and, as a result, leads to a more successful experience. However, to tackle the specific problems reported by the learners in note-taking, the instructor inspired by Gillies (2005) introduced three practices to the class.

A Mini Summary was introduced as a technique for increasing their attention to the ideas and not the forms (Gillies, 2005). This exercise requires learners to write a summary of the main ideas for each part of the passage in the margins. Structure map (Gillies, 2005), as a practice for drawing attention to macro-elements of speech, was the technique introduced to the learners to overcome problems with finding the links between ideas. In this exercise, learners write the function of each part of the speech concisely in the margins; they do not summarize the content but focus on the function. Later in the semester, for those learners who had difficulty taking notes from the content and/or those who were complaining that writing all the ideas left them behind in listening, and being selective resulted in forgetting some ideas, another practice was introduced. The practice was to take notes from ideas in terms of their basic units, i.e., subject, verb, and object. This practice was further emphasized in the class activities, especially sight translation

practices, which, with the written script in front of the learners, provided a good opportunity to further elaborate on and work with the technique.

At the Conclusion of the Semester

Investigation of Needs. As both lacks and wants were investigated at this stage, the findings are presented and discussed in terms of both categories.

Lacks

In the final questionnaire, items were designed so that we could gain insight into the learners' progress in the components under investigation.

Table 2

Learners' self-report of their progress

I have made progress in ...	1	2	3 (%)	4	5	6
note-taking from L1	28.12	65.62	3.12	0	0	3.12
note-taking from L2	9.37	46.87	25	12.5	3.12	3.12
listening comprehension	9.37	50	28.12	6.25	3.12	3.12
consecutive interpreting	6.25	34.37	50	9.37	0	0
confidence level for active class participation	3.12	43.75	12.5	37.5	3.12	0

1= strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=indifferent; 4=disagree; 5=strongly disagree; 6=no answer

Table 2 reflects the learners' views. Regarding the statement asking the learners about their progress in note-taking from Persian materials, 93.74% marked either strongly agree or agree, and thereby expressed their positive view toward their progress. Regarding note-taking from English materials, almost half of them reported their progress; however, 15.62% clearly expressed their weakness in this area. As for their listening comprehension skill, 59.37% reported progress during the semester. As for the affective side, 40.62 % of the learners still felt they made no progress in boosting their confidence level and, as a result, they could not cooperate in class.

Wants

To evaluate the success of the course from learners’ view, their wants were investigated.¹ To do so, some items were included in the second questionnaire that addressed teaching/learning effectiveness as well as the learners’ satisfaction.

Table 3

Learners’ report of teaching/learning effectiveness

Effectiveness of ...	1	2	3 (%)	4	5	6
Enhancers	34.37	59.37	6.25	0	0	0
Worksheets	31.25	53.12	12.5	0	0	3.12
Sight translation practices	25	56.25	12.5	6.25	0	0
Role-play	6.25	59.37	25	9.37	0	0
Class note-taking	31.25	56.25	6.25	6.25	0	0
Class discussions on progress, problem, and solution	15.62	53.12	21.87	6.25	3.12	0
Listening comprehension assignments	21.87	56.25	15.62	6.25	0	0
Note-taking assignments	9.37	50	25	9.37	0	6.25
Writing reflective diaries	3.12	9.37	21.87	34.37	21.87	3.12

Table 3 reveals the learners’ perceptions concerning the effectiveness of materials, class activities, and weekly assignments. Altogether, they confirmed the effectiveness of the materials developed by the instructor. Concerning class activities, the most well-received practice turned out to be sight translation. Besides, the majority of the learners found role-play, note-taking exercises, and class discussions on their progress, problems, and solutions effective. However, the effectiveness of role-playing and class discussions was dubious for a good number of learners. As to the effectiveness of weekly assignments (the last three items in Table 3), listening comprehension practices turned out to be the most welcome assignment. However, only 12.49% of the learners confirmed the effectiveness of writing reflective diaries in their progress.

¹ The investigation of wants, as in the case of lacks, was conducted throughout the semester. In this article, for space reasons, the report of wants is limited to the final stage.

Table 4*Learners' satisfaction*

Satisfaction from ...	1	2	3 (%)	4	5	6
level of English materials interpreted in class	15.62	31.25	12.5	28.12	12.5	0
progress of materials from general to subject-specific	28.12	65.62	6.25	0	0	0
class atmosphere for activities and cooperation	6.25	34.37	12.5	31.25	15.62	0

Learners' satisfaction was another factor included in the questionnaire. As Table 4 shows, they reported the highest rate of dissatisfaction with the statement regarding the atmosphere of the class being tensionless for their cooperation (46.87%), though almost the same number felt satisfied (40.62%). The highest degree of satisfaction was reported for the statement concerning the sequencing of the class interpreting practices.

Implications and Measures Taken*Lacks*

The majority of learners believed they had made progress in note-taking from L1 and L2, listening comprehension, and consecutive interpreting. However, it could not be overlooked that some learners expressed they did not make much progress. Even if these learners were among the less-motivated low-performing ones, the implication was that the curriculum still had way to go to reach excellence in engaging less motivated learners in learning. Considering that learning through self-engagement, cooperation and interaction was a key in the design of the course, this could be a threat to the fulfillment of the course's objectives. Although the instructor had been trying to encourage silent learners by assuring them that their participation, regardless of the accuracy of their answers, was valued, this seemed not enough for all the learners; i.e., the affective side still had room for improvement since almost half of the learners did not feel confident to be active members in the class.

Wants

The majority of learners believed that class materials and activities were all effective. Amid them, role-play and class discussions planned for the learners' problems, solutions, and experience sharing turned out to be the least favored activities. A closer look at these activities revealed that common to both of them was interaction and cooperation. Therefore, the learners may have had problems with interaction and cooperation inherent in such activities, not the activities themselves. This, in turn, could have been the result of the weaknesses they perceived to have in their skills and their low confidence. This argumentation gains strength considering the learners' attitude when they were asked to report their degree of satisfaction with the atmosphere of the class for cooperation and engagement in activities (Table 4).

Moreover, there was an additional reason for the learners to perceive class discussions on problems and solutions and experience-sharing as not effective enough: the class time did not allow the instructor to hold such discussions regularly. While in the initial plan it was intended to start each session with a short discussion as such, considering the time limit, it turned out not to be feasible in practice. Considering the importance of such discussions guided by the instructor on problems and solutions (Orlando, 2011), any defect in their true fulfillment could impede the pre-set objectives, resulting in the learners' perception of the ineffectiveness of the discussions. The negative effects of this were extended to the learners' reflective diaries; seeing that reflective discussions were limited to a few sessions, some learners downplayed writing reflective diaries. That being the case, they did not submit their diaries regularly or wrote some repetitive fabricated sentences that lacked any reflection. That could be the main reason why the majority of the learners were indifferent or in disagreement when they were asked if writing reflective diaries as a part of assignments had been useful (Table 3).

These results bore implications for the next-semester implementation of the same course. The instructor needed to take a two-fold action: she needed to first further clarify to learners the advantages of these activities both verbally and in practice since it is believed that being explicit about the reason behind the choice of instructional activities adds to learners' motivation and reduces their resistance against learning (Felder, 2007). Secondly, the instructor needed to provide a feasible, safe, and unthreatening ground to facilitate interaction and cooperation

among the learners.

Conclusion

This article reported on an extended needs analysis investigation conducted at three stages of course progress to gain insight into the weaknesses and strengths of the curriculum that had been developed for the course *Consecutive Interpreting*. Although the study explored learners' needs in a context with a particular group of learners and their specific needs, it bears implications for different settings because the nature of the problems the learners faced and their expectations could be similar in any other introductory course in interpreting. More importantly, the study bears implications for other contexts since it shows the implementation of an extended needs analysis in practice. It can be served as a practical example of how such an investigation could be informative at different stages of curriculum implementation. At the commencement of the semester, it can be revealing in that it shows the learners' weaknesses. Upon detecting the weaknesses, the instructor should make sure that the curriculum developed can meet the needs of the learners. If the shortcomings are identifiable; therefore, the instructor should take early action to address them. The ongoing investigation of lacks works as a signpost indicating how the learners respond to training, where they perform well, and where they need further guidance. This is followed by remedial actions for addressing the problems. The final-stage investigation into the lacks provides the course designers and instructors food for thought for the future implementation of the course. Therefore, while a needs analysis should be conducted before course design, it is not an action completed at a given point; it should be, instead, extended through the course progress. That way, the curriculum could be continuously monitored and reflected upon to detect shortcomings and strengths. In some cases, the drawbacks could be tackled within the same semester; however, if addressing the problem needs fundamental changes or enhancements, it would be put on the priority list for the next-semester implementation of the course.

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