

Needs versus Wants: Comparing Job-related and Personal Needs of Non-Academic University Employees for English Language Training

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ABSTRACT

In company-sponsored workplace training programmes, training developers have traditionally focused on employees' job-related needs when designing the training curriculum, in line with conventional wisdom in the practice of human resource development. The personal needs of employees that are not directly related to job demands, commonly labelled as 'wants', are often not considered as important. In the realm of English language learning, however, research and theories have pointed to the importance of learner factors and their motivation for language learning. The sources of motivation, in particular integrative motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1972), that arise from the learners' personal lives should not be neglected. This study compares the job-related and personal ESL (English as a second language) training needs of a group of non-academic employees of a public university in Malaysia. It investigates the extent to which personal needs are important motivators as compared to job-related needs in workplace English language learning. The framework of this research on workplace learning is informed by theories and concepts developed in the fields of motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Dornyei, 2005) and domains of language use (Fishman, 1972), as well as workplace training literature (Kraiger and Aguinis, 2001; Machin and Treolar, 2004; Tsai and Tai, 2003). Data were collected through a questionnaire containing statements of personal and job-related needs. The needs were rank-ordered to identify the most important needs. The results showed that on the whole, the employees found both personal and job-related needs equally relevant. However, analysis of the most important needs indicated a clear preference for personal needs. The results have implications for both the design and instruction of workplace ESL programmes for the study's population, and challenge the common practice of focusing only on job-related language needs in workplace ESL programmes. Finally, the results provide empirical support for the conceptualisation of an L2 workplace training motivation model which takes into consideration personal needs as an important component.

Keywords: English language training, ESL needs, job-related needs, Malaysian workplace, motivation, personal needs, workplace learning

INTRODUCTION

In most workplace training programmes, instruction is often geared towards workplace demands, that is, towards the fulfilling of job-related needs. Personal needs (or 'wants' in the language of training), which are known as non job-related needs arising from social,

self-development, family, and lifestyle goals, are seldom considered in the overall scheme of company-sponsored training. While this practice is in line with conventional wisdom in training management (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; McGehee and Thayer, 1961; Nadler, 1984; Mitchell, 1993; Blake, 2007), a training

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curriculum that narrowly focuses on workplace demands without considering the learner's personal needs is not without its drawbacks, especially in an ESL (English as a second language) training context. Motivation researcher, Dornyei (2005) has argued that L2 (second language) learning cannot be equated with learning of other academic subjects, as language is involved in most of an individual's mental activities and it forms part of his identity. Thus, understanding the L2 learner's motivation should be approached from the perspective of the whole person. In relation to this study, this would mean that excluding a learner's personal needs could possibly result in diminishing the learner's motivation to learn the L2.

A pertinent question faced by ESL training developers is whether employees' personal needs should be considered in workplace English language training programmes. The literature that best supports the importance of taking into account employees' personal needs can be found in theories and research on motivation in L2 learning (Dornyei, 2005; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991) and training motivation (Kraiger and Aguinis, 2001; Machin and Treolar, 2004; Tsai and Tai, 2003).

Motivation and Language Learning

Theories of motivation for language learning emphasise learners' needs and goals as important factors that affect the extent of their involvement and attitude towards learning, which in turn, influence the success of their language learning effort (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). In particular, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) model of instrumental and integrative motivational orientations acknowledges that motivation for L2 (second language) learning may be influenced by different aspects of the learner's life. In the context of language learning, instrumental motivation, which is the motivation to learn a language in order to obtain external rewards (such as a better job or better examination grades)

is said to be essential, especially for learners in environments where opportunities to interact with the target language community are scarce. On the other hand, integrative motivation, which is the motivation to learn a language for social purposes, enjoyment and personal fulfilment, has been shown to be a more significant force in ensuring learners' long-term success in their L2 acquisition (Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Sook Ryu Yang, 2003). This specifically indicates that for language learning to successfully take place, language instruction must take into account what motivates learners the most, and this will include learners' integrative needs which mainly fall in the personal-social domain.

Second, past research has lent support for the inclusion or consideration of personal language learning needs in ESL training programmes. For instance, Benson (1991) found that integrative goals such as "enjoyment of entertainment in English" (Benson, 1991, p. 36) were favoured over instrumental ones among Japanese ESL learners. Furthermore, Brown (2000) discovered that learners seldom cited needs that reflect only one motivational orientation when learning a second language. Rather, a combination of both instrumental and integrative needs plays a part in motivating the L2 learners. For example, he found that international students in the U.S. indicated their wish to learn English not only for academic purposes, but also for integration with local Americans.

Training Motivation

Personal needs of employees have been argued to be an important factor affecting the motivation of employees attending workplace training. Sarmiento and Kay (1990) propose that literacy programmes should be worker-centred and address the needs of the worker as a whole person. This would include the worker's personal, as well as job-related needs. Meanwhile, Fingeret (1994) asserts that many workers attending workplace literacy programmes are motivated by their personal needs such as the wish to be able to read to their children or help their children with school work.

Crocker *et al.* (2002) acknowledge that both employers and employees may have different goals and expectations from workplace ESL training programmes. They recommend that employees' personal goals be recognised and included as a way to empower employees and to prepare them for wider roles not limited to their jobs. This stance is in line with the observation by Kraiger and Aguinis (2001) that goal-setting is an important factor in determining trainees' motivation to learn. Finally, studies on training motivation (Machin and Treolar, 2004; Tsai and Tai, 2003) have found that employees' perception of the benefits and importance of training significantly affect their pre-training motivation to learn.

Thus, when a training curriculum ignores the learners' needs, whether job-related or personal, what motivates the learners most cannot be utilised to enhance learning, and this diminishes the effectiveness of the training programme.

Domains of Language Use

While the integrative-instrumental approach towards motivation has been the point of reference for most studies on motivation, Fishman's (1972) theory of domains of language use has offered another viewpoint on language and motivation. According to the domain theory, people use different languages or language varieties in different situations. In like situations, grouped together and called a 'domain', it was found that a certain language or language variety may be preferred over others. Based on empirical data from a particular group of people, the main domains identified by Fishman were family, friendship, religion, education, and employment, wherein certain languages or language varieties were dominant.

Following the domain theory, it is thus possible to determine whether a language or language variety is dominant in a certain domain for an individual or a group of people. Likewise, it is reasonable to expect that an individual's motivation to learn a language can be influenced by his or her need to learn it for different

domains. As shown in a study by Rahman (2005), the motivation of a group of Bangladeshi ESL learners to learn English was found to be very domain specific, with a significant slant towards the academic domain.

Support for the notion of the existence of language use domains can be found in later L2 motivation research, where it was pointed out that the notion of the integrative concept was rather superfluous and lacks empirical support (Dornyei and Ushioda, 2009). Instead, four orientations were proposed, which were "travel, friendship, knowledge, and instrumental orientation" (p. 24). This strongly suggests that L2 motivation can be linked to specific domains.

Thus, from an L2 learning point of view, it is likely that motivation to learn a language is domain specific, depending on what languages dominate particular domains in the learners' lives.

Two Domains of Language Needs: Job-related and Personal Needs

Training practitioners are well aware of the job-related and personal needs (also referred to as 'needs' and 'wants') dichotomy that rule in the discourse of corporate training, where 'needs' is the wheat and 'wants' is the chaff. However, practitioners have also agreed that getting the employee-trainee to buy into the need for training is essential in ensuring a successful training outcome. This basically involves articulating the convergence of needs of the employees and the organisation, as well as the mutual benefits that both parties will enjoy. It is proposed that this can be done more effectively with a thorough analysis of the employees' personal needs, in conjunction with their job-related needs.

Thus, to study learners' motivation to learn English in the workplace context, it is expedient to frame their needs in the two domains of job-related and personal needs, instead of using the integrative-instrumental framework, as these two categories of needs are significant for L2 learning, and yet are often in direct conflict in the context of workplace training.

OBJECTIVES

This study was undertaken to examine the role of personal language learning needs, which are often ignored in most corporate training needs analysis, in providing the motivation or interest for the learners to learn English. This was done by describing the personal English language needs of a group of adult ESL learners at the workplace, in relation to their job-related needs, and comparing the relative importance of both the categories of job-related and personal needs.

The objective of this study was to compare the felt job-related and personal language learning needs of the subjects. It sought to answer the following questions:

- How do personal needs compare with job-related needs as a source of motivation for the learners to learn English?
- What are the most important personal and job-related needs of the learners?
- How do the sub-groups of learners, defined by job, age and gender, differ in their needs?

By investigating the learner as a whole person with language needs that span his or her work, family and social lives, the study attempted to provide insight into: 1) what motivates this specific group of learners, and 2) the significance of personal needs vis-à-vis workplace ESL training. The findings would provide insight into the motivation of the learners in workplace ESL training programmes, as well as inform practical decisions on programme planning and instructional design. The findings would also contribute towards the development of an L2 training motivation model that includes personal needs as its component.

Context of the Study

Needs of learners are context dependent; therefore, it is important to describe the unique background of the study subjects and the

Malaysian university in which they are employed, and how it contributes to the framework for the study.

This study was conducted in conjunction with the university's on-going English language training project which was initiated for the purpose of upgrading the English proficiency level of the university's non-academic employees. This project was meant to be a part of the university's effort towards enhancing the university's appeal in the international post-graduate market. It was decided that for the university to be more competitive in attracting international research students, this group of employees (who provide administrative and technical support services) should undergo in-service English language courses to improve their command of the language. The university's mission and the reasons for the English programme had been well-communicated to all the university employees before the programme was instituted.

The language of the university's administration was (and is) Malay, the national language. Furthermore, ethnic Malays comprise over 90% of the non-academic staff in the university, contributing to the somewhat monolingual (Malay language) environment at work. However, in recent years, the university has increased its foreign graduate student enrolment, as well as its intake of foreign lecturers, giving rise to an increased need for both technical and administrative staff members to use English at work.

In the wider context of the country, English which holds the official status of a second language in Malaysia is spoken by a large section of the urban community, and is widely used in commercial, cultural, and educational activities. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that given the specific context of the university and the employees, these non-academic staff members may have English language needs contributed by job-related factors, as well as factors beyond the work-related domain (personal needs), which could prove to be strong motivators for them to learn English.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a survey design that involved a total of 208 respondents who answered a questionnaire comprising two scales, the job-related needs and the personal needs scales.

The Subjects

The subjects in the study comprised a group of the university's non-academic employees, consisting of clerical/administrative and technical staff members who were attending a basic in-service English language training course. The course that ran for two weeks, with six hours of instruction per day, was carried out at a centralised location in the university. The selection of the participants to attend the course was done by the heads of departments, or the faculty deans who had been invited to enrol their non-academic staff members for the English course. As the course was a basic course meant for learners with low to low-intermediate proficiency in English, the staff members enrolled included those who were within this level of proficiency, as subjectively

evaluated by the faculty deans in consultation with the respective staff members. A total 375 participants attended the course.

The course participants were randomly assigned to 18 classes, out of which 10 classes were randomly selected to answer the research questionnaire. The participants in the 10 selected classes (totalling 208 respondents) were given about half an hour to complete the questionnaire on the first day of their class. Since the questionnaires were administered and collected by instructors in class, the return rate was 100%.

As shown in Table 1, the respondents from both the clerical/administrative and technical categories were fairly distributed at 53.4% and 46.6%, respectively. Tables 2 and 3 show the breakdown by age and gender. The respondents were mainly ethnic Malays, making about 97.12%, while the remaining 2.8% consisted of Chinese, Indians, and other minority races.

The Questionnaire

A questionnaire, containing 32 job-related (J) and personal (P) needs statements in English,

TABLE 1
Job category of the respondents

| Job Category | Number of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Clerical/administrative | 111 | 53.4 |
| Technical | 97 | 46.6 |
| Total | 208 | 100 |

TABLE 2
Age of the respondents

| Age | Number of Respondents | Valid Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 18 – 25 years | 45 | 22.3 |
| 26 – 35 years | 38 | 18.6 |
| 36 – 45 years | 71 | 35.0 |
| above 45 years | 49 | 24.1 |
| *Total | 203 | 100 |

Note: *5 missing values

TABLE 3
Gender of the respondents

| Gender | Number of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Male | 72 | 34.6 |
| Female | 136 | 65.4 |
| Total | 208 | 100 |

was developed to measure the perceived English language needs of the respondents. A list of needs statements were written based on the non-academic staff members' job requirements for the J scale, and a specification of common activities related to recreation, friends, home, and family for the P scale. The list of statements was checked for relevance and face validity by the researchers in consultation with an assistant registrar who is the Head of Administrative Affairs of a faculty in the university. Initially, a total of 34 needs statements were short-listed and included in the questionnaire. To ensure that no other needs relevant to the group of respondents were left out, an open-ended question was included following the 34 statements asking the respondents to write down any other needs they might have had and indicate their degree of relevance.

However, after administering the questionnaire to the respondents, feedback received from the class instructors who had administered the questionnaire pointed out possible misinterpretations of items J8 and P15. Consequently, the two items were removed from the data set collected, leaving only 32 needs statements in total, with 16 items each for the J and P scales, respectively.

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through the class instructors. The class instructors explained the instructions and any item in the questionnaire which the respondents found difficult to understand. The respondents were given about thirty minutes to fill out the questionnaire. The respondents answered the stem question, 'Why do you need to learn English?' by indicating on a 4-point

scale the degree of relevance of each need. The needs statements were worded clearly in either job-related or personal terms. For example, the statements 'I need to answer telephone enquiries in English' and 'I need to order food at restaurants when entertaining for work purposes' are job-related, whereas the statements 'I need to help my children with their homework' and 'I need to order food at restaurants when eating out with my family and friends' are statements of personal needs. Job-related needs are either related to job requirements or are activities carried out in the work context, while personal needs are those needs which arise from non work-related purposes and situations such as social, family, and lifestyle contexts.

DATA ANALYSIS

The means across all the items in the J and P scales for each respondent represent the scores for both the J and P values for the respondent, whereas the mean of an individual needs statement across respondents represent the collective rating of that particular need for the group.

Based on the means of the individual items, job-related and personal needs were compared and rank-ordered for the overall group and the sub-groups of job, age, and gender. As the points on the rating scale in the questionnaire had been weighted from 1 to 4 (1=very irrelevant, 2=irrelevant, 3=relevant, 4=very relevant), the mean values of the collective responses therefore corresponded to the same descriptors, where only items with the means of 2.5 and above would be considered as relevant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the overall results that represent the needs of all the respondents as a group are presented first, followed by the results pertaining to the sub-groups as defined by job, age, and gender.

Overall Results: Job-related Needs and Personal Needs

The means of the J and P scales for the overall group and the sub-groups of job, age, and gender showed that overall, both job-related and personal needs were rated as 'relevant' by the respondents (means between 2.5 and 3.25), as displayed in Table 4. The perception of the relevance of both job-related and personal needs,

based on the mean values, appears to be the same for the sub-groups defined by the job, age, and gender of the respondents.

The result showing the respondents' perceived relevance of English to job functions is to be expected. One important reason for this is of course, the increased intake of foreign students by the university, as well as expatriate lecturers who do not speak Malay, the national language. Thus, both clerical/administrative and technical staff cannot avoid having to communicate with these English-speaking people at work. Furthermore, the emphasis on the importance of English by the university management serves to remind employees of the part they are expected to play. Top-down initiatives to create a conducive environment for

TABLE 4
Means of job-related and personal needs

| Grouping | Mean (Job-related Needs) | Std. Deviation | Mean (Personal Needs) | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Overall (n= 208) | 2.8933 | .26132 | 2.9465 | .38316 |
| Job | | | | |
| • Clerical/Admin (n=111) | 2.9657 | .26063 | 2.9916 | .37679 |
| • Technical (n= 97) | 2.8125 | .28782 | 2.8978 | .39272 |
| Age (5 missing values) | | | | |
| • 18 – 25 years (n= 45) | 2.9722 | .42233 | 2.9653 | .37325 |
| • 26 – 35 years (n= 38) | 2.8717 | .51912 | 2.9737 | .39843 |
| • 36 – 45 years (n= 71) | 2.8926 | .41355 | 2.9533 | .39032 |
| • above 45 years (n= 49) | 2.8827 | .44523 | 2.9171 | .38411 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male • (n= 72) | 2.8333 | .46072 | 2.8854 | .36890 |
| Female • (n= 136) | 2.9251 | .43851 | 2.9789 | .38793 |

Note: Mean value: 1- 1.74=very irrelevant, 1.75 – 2.49=irrelevant, 2.5 – 3.24=relevant, 3.25 – 4.00=very relevant.

the learning of English have included setting one day weekly as an English speaking day, where all communication, including meetings, must be carried out in English. Mandatory testing of non-academic employees' English proficiency, carried out by order of the management of certain faculties and administrative centres, would have further encouraged the perception that English is important to an employee's career in the university.

What is interesting is the perceived relevance of English in the personal lives of the respondents, especially the result which indicated the extent of need for English in the respondents' personal lives to be comparable to that in their work lives.

The results reflect the respondents' wish to participate in social/cultural/educational activities in English, and this appears as strong a source of motivation to learn English as job-related reasons. In other words, the wish to learn English for non job-related purposes such as watching television, making friends, or helping one's children to learn English is a significant motivator for the respondents.

The Most Important Needs: Main Motivators

Based on the means of the English language needs computed, the rank orders of job-related and personal needs were obtained.

For the whole group comprising 208 respondents, it was found that almost all of the individual job-related and personal needs had means of 2.5 and above, the cut-off point for a need to be considered relevant. Only two needs, namely 'interacting with neighbours' and 'presenting talks and speeches for non job-related purposes' (both personal needs), had means of less than 2.5 (see Appendix, Table 14).

While there is no practical difference in the overall mean values of the two categories of needs (i.e. both personal and job-related needs were rated as 'relevant'), the analysis of the highest ranking individual needs show a preference for personal needs over job-related ones. Table 5 shows the most important needs which were rated as 'very relevant' by the respondents. Out of the eight most important needs, six are personal needs and only two are job-related ones.

Personal needs

Out of the eight needs rated highest (with means of 3.25 and above), six are personal needs (see Table 5). Learning English for the purpose of getting more respect and better service from others were ranked as the highest and second highest on the list, respectively.

It appears that the respondents on the whole associated English with status, and the state

TABLE 5
The most important needs of the whole group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=208 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4135 | .58335 |
| 2 | P17 | Get better service | 3.3798 | .69850 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3654 | .55704 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3413 | .62463 |
| 5 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.3029 | .87895 |
| 6 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.2981 | .72738 |
| 7 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.2692 | .83093 |
| 8 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.2548 | .82677 |

Note: Mean value: 1- 1.74=very irrelevant, 1.75 – 2.49=irrelevant, 2.5 – 3.24=relevant, 3.25 – 4.00=very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

of being more respected, as reflected in their response to the statements 'People will respect me more as a person if I can communicate well in English' and 'As a consumer, I will get better service if I can speak English well.' These two items represent the respondents' strongest reasons for learning English. This, in itself, indicates the respondents' belief that mastering English confers social rewards that are tied to the way one will be regarded by others.

Equally important were the purposes of watching movies and TV programmes in English, and reading for leisure. These indicate the respondents' ready acceptance of such cultural and recreational activities in English.

It is interesting to note that out of the six highest scoring needs, two had to do with children: 'I need to help my children with their homework' and 'I want my children to practice speaking English with me.' These two needs show that the concern parents have for their children's educational achievement can be a main source of motivation for them to learn English. This particular finding is consistent with that of Fingeret (1994) who studied workers' reasons for attending workplace literacy programmes: "many adults come to literacy programmes because of concern with their relationships to their children" (p. 36).

In the specific case of the study's subjects, this concern might stem from the wider socio-political landscape in the country, where the medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics in Malaysian schools was changed from the national language to English in 2003. Hence, if a parent had in the past helped his or her children with their Science and Mathematics homework using the national language, he or she would now have to be able to do the same in English. Similarly, if in the past school children could afford to ignore English, doing so now would affect their performance in not only the English Language subject, but also the subjects of Science and Mathematics. Parents in general have understood the increase in the stakes for their children. Thus, it is not inconceivable that the study's respondents, many of whom are parents, indicated it was very important for them

to learn English for the benefit of their children. More generally, this result could be an indication of the growing awareness of the importance of English in the country, and in the world.

Job-related needs

As shown in Table 5, two job-related needs were rated as "very relevant" (means of 3.25 and above). The need with the highest score was 'I need to read work-related books/magazines/manuals' (Mean = 3.30), followed by 'My chances of career advancement are higher if I can communicate well in English' (Mean = 3.25).

People who attend training and development programmes may come with two kinds of objectives: he/she aims to improve performance in a current job, or chooses to prepare for a future job. The respondents' emphasis on learning English to help them read material related to their job indicates a focus on skills upgrading for either the current or a future job, and at the same time, they clearly indicated their orientation towards learning English in view of their future career prospects. This reflects the success of the university's administration in encouraging the perception that competence in English is a factor influencing decisions on staff promotion, despite the fact that in reality, there is no formalised policy that ties promotions to English language test scores.

The next section discusses the job-related and personal needs of the respondents across their jobs, age, and gender.

Job-related and Personal Needs According to Job, Age and Gender

As shown in Table 4, the job-related and personal English language needs for all the sub-groups, defined by job, age, and gender, were rated as 'relevant', with means ranging between 2.5 and 3.25. The mean ratings for both the categories of needs did not vary according to the respondents' job, age or sex. However, when only the highest scoring needs (means of 3.25 and above) were compared, the importance of personal needs over job-related needs become apparent.

Needs of the clerical/administrative group

The rank order of English language needs for the clerical/administrative group in the ‘very relevant’ (means of 3.25 and above) category shows a comparable number of job-related and personal needs (Table 6). Of these nine needs, five are personal needs and four job-related ones.

These highest ranked needs slightly differed from those which were derived from the overall group. There is an additional highly rated personal need for this group, i.e. ‘I would like to make friends with English-speaking people’, which did not get a high rating in the overall group results. Furthermore, the two needs related to helping children with learning English did not make it to top ranking. As for job-related needs, two additional ones for the clerical/administrative group were answering telephone enquiries, and answering enquiries from students and staff; both these activities truly reflect their job functions.

Needs of the technical group

The rank order for the technical group shows seven needs with top ranking (means of 3.25 and above). Of these seven, six are personal needs and one job-related need. It is surprising that even the activities closely related to the technical

staff’s job function such as ‘Explain processes and procedures’ and ‘Liaise with suppliers and vendors,’ were ranked lower on their list of priorities. Interestingly, the needs are similar to the list of the highly rated needs obtained from the overall group, minus one job-related need, i.e. ‘career advancement.’

Thus, it appears that the technical staff placed greater importance on personal needs (whereby almost all the needs rated ‘very relevant’ were personal needs) although they agreed that almost all of the reasons for learning English listed were relevant (mean above 2.5).

Needs according to age group

Tables 8 to 11 show the most important needs for the respondents from various age groups. On the whole, the most important needs are similar to those of the overall group, with some minor differences. Similarly, personal needs were found to predominate over job-related needs for all the age groupings.

The most important needs for the 18 – 25 age group (Table 8) appear to be mainly personal needs (four personal and two job-related needs). A significant omission from the list are the needs related to children. This is presumably because of the youth of the respondents in the group, making it less likely for them to have children

TABLE 6
The most important needs of the clerical/administrative group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n= 111 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.5225 | .56964 |
| 2 | P17 | Get better service | 3.4685 | .68517 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.4324 | .53294 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3874 | .64907 |
| 5 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.3874 | .81096 |
| 6 | J1 | Answer telephone enquiries | 3.3784 | .57294 |
| 7 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.2793 | .67650 |
| 8 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.2793 | .70287 |
| 9 | P9 | Make friends with English-speaking people | 3.2793 | .67650 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.

Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

TABLE 7
The most important needs of the technical group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=96 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.3958 | .80104 |
| 2 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.3333 | .77686 |
| 3 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.3229 | .76081 |
| 4 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.2917 | .57887 |
| 5 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.2917 | .57887 |
| 6 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.2917 | .59677 |
| 7 | P17 | Get better service | 3.2917 | .69459 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

of school-going age. Except for this group, the respondents from all other age groups clearly indicated the need to help their children with homework as important.

For the 26 – 35 age group (Table 9), the most important needs consist of five personal needs and only one job-related need. Topping the list is to ‘help children with homework’, reflecting the life stage of the respondents in this particular age group. The only need contributed by the work context for this group is to ‘read work related books/magazines/manuals.’

The most important needs for the 36 – 45 (Table 10) and above-45 (Table 11) age groups are similar to those of the overall group, with the addition of the job-related ‘answer enquiries from

students and staff’ for the 36 – 45 age group, and additions of ‘answer telephone enquiries’ and ‘make friends with English-speaking people’ for the above-45 group. Once again, personal needs were found to outnumber job-related needs for these two groups.

It is noted that the personal need to make friends with English-speaking people so far is unique only to the above-45 group. The wish to make friends with English-speaking people, who presumably cannot speak one’s native language, requires a certain amount of confidence and willingness to step out of one’s comfort zone. The results suggest that the mature respondents in the age group of above-45 are more likely to possess this characteristic.

TABLE 8
The most important needs of the 18 – 25 years age group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n= 75 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4267 | .61891 |
| 2 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3867 | .56704 |
| 3 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3600 | .67062 |
| 4 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.3330 | .64385 |
| 5 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.3067 | .83786 |
| 6 | P17 | Get better service | 3.3067 | .73473 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

TABLE 9
The most important needs of the 26 – 35 years age group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=39 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.4872 | .68333 |
| 2 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.3846 | .63312 |
| 3 | P17 | Get better service | 3.3590 | .74290 |
| 4 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3077 | .56914 |
| 5 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3077 | .46763 |
| 6 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.3077 | .83214 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75–2.49= irrelevant, 2.5–3.24= relevant, 3.25–4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

TABLE 10
The most important needs of the 36 – 45 years age group

| Rank | Item code | Description | n=71 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P17 | Get better service | 3.4507 | .67160 |
| 2 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4085 | .52314 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3662 | .59097 |
| 4 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.3239 | .77041 |
| 5 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.3099 | .74823 |
| 6 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.2958 | .64135 |
| 7 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.2958 | .59514 |
| 8 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.2817 | .94397 |
| 9 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.2817 | .75947 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75–2.49= irrelevant, 2.5–3.24= relevant, 3.25–4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

Needs of the male and female respondents

The male respondents rated only four needs as ‘very relevant’, and all of them are personal needs (Table 12). Thus, the job-related needs do not appear to feature as prominently as the personal needs for the male respondents. Also, the two personal needs related to children ranked as high in the overall group did not make it to the male respondents’ most important needs list. This probably reflects the gender roles in Malaysian society, where women generally spend more time on parenting duties. It is emphasised that these results do not in any way indicate that the men do not feel the need to help

their children with their homework. The men’s mean score of 3.2361 for ‘help children with homework’ places it along the higher end of the ‘relevant’ range (see Appendix, Table 15).

Meanwhile, the female respondents’ list of the most important needs contained the same needs as those of the overall group, with an additional job-related need, ‘answer enquiries from students and staff’ (Table 13). It is interesting to note the difference in the perception of job-related English language needs between the men and women. The work domain seems to be a strong source of motivation for the women, but not for the men.

TABLE 11
The most important needs of the above-45 years age group

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=49 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.4286 | .64553 |
| 2 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4082 | .53690 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3673 | .56629 |
| 4 | P9 | Make friends with English-speaking people | 3.3469 | .69384 |
| 5 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.3265 | .89883 |
| 6 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.3265 | .68881 |
| 7 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.2857 | .57743 |
| 8 | J1 | Answer telephone enquiries | 3.2653 | .56920 |
| 9 | P17 | Get better service | 3.2653 | .70057 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

TABLE 12
The most important needs of the male respondents

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=72 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.3333 | .62800 |
| 2 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.2917 | .51563 |
| 3 | P17 | Get better service | 3.2917 | .74023 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.2500 | .68693 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In summary, there are several important findings derived from the study. Firstly, both personal and job-related needs were collectively rated as relevant by the subjects comprising non-academic staff members of the university. This is true for the overall group and the sub-groups defined by job, age, and gender. Next, the analysis of needs by job, age, and gender showed that the technical subgroup ranked personal needs as higher than the job-related ones, whereas the clerical/administrative sub-groups were motivated more by a balance of both job-related and personal needs. For the age sub-groups, personal needs dominate over

job-related needs. Finally, male respondents cited personal needs as more important, whereas the work domain contributed more towards the female respondents' needs.

Analysis of the top ranking needs for the whole group indicated that on the whole, personal needs feature more prominently than job-related ones. This implies that the non-work environment provides a vibrant support for the respondents' needs and wish to learn English.

The results have several implications for workplace ESL training:

- ESL learners in workplace training programmes may have personal needs that could prove to be a strong source of motivation for them to learn English.

TABLE 13
The most important needs of the female respondents

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=136 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|---|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4559 | .55601 |
| 2 | P17 | Get better service | 3.4265 | .67372 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.4044 | .57580 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3897 | .58595 |
| 5 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.3456 | .71372 |
| 6 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.3382 | .87111 |
| 7 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.3235 | .85960 |
| 8 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.3162 | .76448 |
| 9 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.2721 | .83862 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.
Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

These personal needs, if incorporated into workplace ESL training programmes, will enhance learning and learner satisfaction.

- Analysis of personal needs, in conjunction with job-related needs, will yield a more complete needs and motivation profile of learners for more effective programme planning.
- Apart from practical implications, the results also suggest that L2 personal needs constitute an important variable in a conceptualisation of a model for L2 training motivation. Thus, future research on workplace language learning and training motivation should take account of learners' personal needs which have largely been excluded in the discourse of workplace training.

Needs versus Wants: Final Remarks

There are no easy answers to the question of whether needs or wants should be given priority in ESL workplace training. Given the time and budget constraints in any training programme, it has been a common practice for training practitioners to take great care in identifying 'wants'- often called 'nice-to-know stuff' - in order to ignore them. Meanwhile, 'need-to-know stuff' or 'needs' must take precedence over 'wants'. This practice has been the benchmark

of 'good programme planning' and has hardly ever been questioned.

We argue, however, that this practice of unilaterally favouring needs from wants may be misguided in light of the fact that language needs pervade both work and personal domains, unlike the more easily domain compartmentalised technical skills needs. Fingeret's (1994) assertion that workplace ESL learners come to class with concerns about their relationship with their children is applicable even to today's learners.

Thus, it is recommended that future research, which takes account of the importance of personal needs in workplace training programmes, deal with the issue of balancing learners' personal needs with job-related needs, addressing questions such as to what extent personal needs should be considered in the overall training curriculum, and how personal needs may be incorporated without detracting from training's aim of upgrading job-related skills. Answers to these questions will contribute towards the planning and execution of more successful workplace ESL programmes.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 14
The overall rank order of needs

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=208 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|--|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.4135 | .58335 |
| 2 | P17 | Get better service | 3.3798 | .69850 |
| 3 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.3654 | .55704 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.3413 | .62463 |
| 5 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.3029 | .87895 |
| 6 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.2981 | .72738 |
| 7 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.2692 | .83093 |
| 8 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.2548 | .82677 |
| 9 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.2452 | .66846 |
| 10 | P9 | Make friends with English-speaking people | 3.2260 | .67523 |
| 11 | J1 | Answer telephone enquiries | 3.2212 | .60524 |
| 12 | J9 | Read reports or other documents | 3.1058 | .67984 |
| 13 | J5 | Work-related travel | 2.9712 | .81598 |
| 14 | P7 | Travel for leisure | 2.9423 | .71326 |
| 15 | J2 | Understand/communicate in meetings | 2.9327 | .75199 |
| 16 | J12 | Liaise with suppliers/ vendors | 2.8462 | .71922 |
| 17 | J4 | Explain processes and procedures | 2.7981 | .75348 |
| 18 | P12 | Shopping | 2.7933 | .66707 |
| 19 | P6 | Order food at restaurants | 2.7692 | .71870 |
| 20 | J14 | Write telephone messages | 2.7692 | .74511 |
| 21 | J3 | Communicate with boss | 2.7500 | .69156 |
| 22 | J13 | Write announcements and notices | 2.7308 | .77060 |
| 23 | P10 | Communicate with children's teachers | 2.7260 | .79058 |
| 24 | J10 | Plan for further studies | 2.6731 | .90562 |
| 25 | P13 | Interact with children's friends | 2.6490 | .79667 |
| 26 | P14 | Interact with friends | 2.6442 | .70084 |
| 27 | P5 | Participate in radio / TV chat/game shows | 2.6394 | .82812 |
| 28 | J11 | Give talks, speeches at work | 2.5865 | .76910 |
| 29 | J15 | Order food at restaurants | 2.5769 | .76382 |
| 30 | J16 | Write reports/letters | 2.5337 | .76696 |
| 31 | P11 | Interact with neighbours | 2.3798 | .73883 |
| 32 | P16 | Present talks/ speeches at non job-related functions | 2.3029 | .79223 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.

Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).

TABLE 15
The rank order of the male respondents' needs

| Rank | Item Code | Description | n=72 Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|-----------|--|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | P3 | Get respect from others | 3.3333 | .62800 |
| 2 | P2 | Watch movies and TV programmes | 3.2917 | .51563 |
| 3 | P17 | Get better service | 3.2917 | .74023 |
| 4 | P4 | Read books and magazines for leisure | 3.2500 | .68693 |
| 5 | P1 | Help children with homework | 3.2361 | .89591 |
| 6 | J17 | Career advancement | 3.2222 | .80882 |
| 7 | J7 | Read work-related books/magazines/manuals | 3.2083 | .74944 |
| 8 | J1 | Answer telephone enquiries | 3.2083 | .50980 |
| 9 | P9 | Make friends with English-speaking people | 3.1944 | .66373 |
| 10 | P8 | Give children practice in speaking | 3.1667 | .76910 |
| 11 | J6 | Answer enquiries from students and staff | 3.1111 | .64033 |
| 12 | J9 | Read reports or other documents | 3.0139 | .70222 |
| 13 | J5 | Work-related travel | 2.8611 | .81020 |
| 14 | J2 | Understand/communicate in meetings | 2.8472 | .70531 |
| 15 | P7 | Travel for leisure | 2.8333 | .69254 |
| 16 | J12 | Liaise with suppliers/ vendors | 2.8333 | .71214 |
| 17 | P12 | Shopping | 2.8056 | .57263 |
| 18 | J4 | Explain processes and procedures | 2.7500 | .72686 |
| 19 | P6 | Order food at restaurants | 2.7222 | .67655 |
| 20 | J3 | Communicate with boss | 2.7083 | .65940 |
| 21 | J14 | Write telephone messages | 2.7083 | .68055 |
| 22 | P10 | Communicate with children's teachers | 2.6528 | .71523 |
| 23 | J13 | Write announcements and notices | 2.6528 | .71521 |
| 24 | P13 | Interact with children's friends | 2.6389 | .71813 |
| 25 | J10 | Plan for further studies | 2.6350 | .86330 |
| 26 | P14 | Interact with friends | 2.6111 | .70324 |
| 27 | J11 | Give talks, speeches at work | 2.5833 | .80052 |
| 28 | J15 | Order food at restaurants | 2.5278 | .75015 |
| 29 | P5 | Participate in radio / TV chat/game shows | 2.5139 | .80485 |
| 30 | J16 | Write reports/letters | 2.4722 | .82183 |
| 31 | P11 | Interact with neighbours | 2.3472 | .69523 |
| 32 | P16 | Present talks/ speeches at non job-related functions | 2.2778 | .77322 |

Note: Mean value: 1-1.74= very irrelevant, 1.75-2.49= irrelevant, 2.5-3.24= relevant, 3.25-4.00= very relevant.

Item code indicates the context of the needs as either job-related (J) or personal (P).