



University of Zabol
Graduate School
Faculty of Humanities
Department of English

**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a
Foreign Language (TEFL)**

**Exploring EFL Learners and Teachers' Perceptions
of Language Teacher Characteristics: A
Comparative Study of Privileged and
Underprivileged Schools**

Supervisors:

Dr. Mahbube Noura
Dr. Behruz Lotfi Gaskaree

By:

Masoud Khammar

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Abstract

This study investigates the perspectives of English language teachers and learners in public high schools across privileged and underprivileged areas of Zabol City, Iran. The research aims to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers and learners towards English Language Teaching (ELT) and the characteristics of effective language teachers. Four questions were posed in this research regarding the perceptions of EFL learners and teachers in both privileged and underprivileged schools. Utilizing a qualitative and comparative framework, the study incorporated semi-structured interviews and life-history narratives to gather insights from 10 language instructors and 30 male students. Participants were selected from five privileged and five underprivileged high schools using systematic sampling. Data collection occurred during the summer vacation through face-to-face and phone interviews, each lasting approximately 20 minutes. The methodology facilitated an in-depth understanding of participants' views on language instructor qualities. Thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews revealed significant themes related to the characteristics of effective EFL instructors. Results indicated that both privileged and underprivileged schools' students and teachers share a common understanding of EFL instructor qualities. However, underprivileged schools' learners demonstrated limited awareness of the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of second language acquisition, affecting their perception of teacher quality. The study concludes that there is a difference between perceptions of learners and teachers towards effective language teaching in privileged and underprivileged schools. The findings highlight the need for educational institutions to consider these perceptions in developing and evaluating language teaching curricula. Additionally, the study offers valuable insights for school principals, language institutes, and teacher education systems in recruitment and training practices.

Keywords: Perceptions, instructors, learners, qualitative research, Zabol City