NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

SIMION MINODORA OTILIA,
LECTURER PHD,
CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI UNIVERSITY OF TARGU-JIU

Abstract:
Needs analysis is considered to be the cornerstone of English for Specific Purposes(ESP). The concept of Needs analysis has been different along the decades. At the initial stages of ESP(the 1960s and early 1970s), needs analysis consisted in assessing the communicative needs of the learners and the techniques of achieving specific teaching objectives. Nowadays, the tasks of needs analysis is much more complex: it aims at collecting information about the learners and at defining the target situation and environment of studying ESP.

Key words: needs analysis, ESP, concept ,assessment, learners

1.Introduction :English for Specific Purposes –Definition
English for Specific Purposes(ESP) can be defined as teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language for the purpose of using it in a particular domain.

Since 1960s ESP has become a distinctive part of Teaching English as a Foreign Language(TEFL) its importance being due to the fact that English has become the contemporary lingua franca. Thus, the growing demand for English as a medium of communication and the introduction of governmental mass educational programs in which English was the first or even the only language contributed to the rapid expansion in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to which ESP belonged initially.

The communicative trend in teaching and learning English has resulted in different reasons for acquiring this language proficiency: daily communication, academic or business purposes and English for Specific Purposes was created with all these in view. There are various definitions of ESP:
According to Harmer it refers to ''situations where the student has some specific reasons to learn a language".[1:1]

Hutchinson et al is more specific when he declares that ESP is" An approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and methods are based on the learner's reason for learning"[2:19]. The same idea is supported by Strevens because as he says, the "ESP is particular case of general category of special-purpose language training. The same principles apply no matter which language is being learnt and taught".[3:24). Ten years later, Duddley – Evans et al gives a similar definition of ESP and both authors cooperated to offer absolute and variable characteristics of ESP. Most researchers seem to agree on two characteristics:
a) ESP is based on a particular context;
b)ESP is based on the learners' specific needs.

2. Needs Analysis :concept and components
In assessing the learners' specific needs we come across the term "needs analysis which has been different along the decades. At the initial stages of ESP(the 1960s and early 1970), needs analysis consisted in assessing the communicative needs of the learners and the techniques of achieving specific teaching objectives . Nowadays, the tasks of needs analysis is much more complex: it aims at collecting information about the learners and at defining the target situation and environment of studying ESP. According to Duddley-Evans and St. John(2009) there are eight components in today's concept of needs analysis which have been grouped into five broad areas including:
1. target situation analysis and objective needs analysis(e.g. tasks and activities learners will use English for;
2. linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis, i.e. knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situations;
3.subjective needs analysis, i.e. learners'wants, means, subjective needs-factors that affect the way they learn(e.g. previous learning experiences, reasons for attending the course, expectations)
4.present situation analysis for the purpose of identifying learners' current skills and language use;
5. means analysis, i.e. information about the environment where the course will run.
(Duddley-Evans, T., and M.J.St John(2009), *Development in English for Specific Purposes: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Cambridge: CUP)[4]

Because ESP courses are based on needs analysis, the learning objectives are more obvious than would be in the case of general ESL courses and it can be assumed that students will be more highly motivated in learning about topics and texts which are related to their study or work areas.

Stern (1992) distinguished four types of ESP teaching objectives: proficiency, knowledge, affective and transfer.

Proficiency objectives refer to the mastery of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Knowledge objectives include the acquisition of linguistic and cultural information.

Linguistic knowledge objectives refer to language analysis and awareness of the systematic aspects of language while cultural knowledge objectivesd refer to the control of socio-cultural rules(mastery of the norms of society, values and orientations and also the ability to recognize culturally significant facts)

Affective objectives are about the development of positive feelings toward the subject of study.

Transfer objectives concern the ability to generalize from what has been learned in one situation or another.[5]

According to these definitions , it is obvious that ESP focuses on relating the teaching and learning of English process to the learners' communicative needs. Hutchinson & Waters(1992) observe that if we know why learners need English, the content of the language can be adjusted accordingly and the teaching process will focus on these needs. In Zahra Masoupanah and Mohammad Hassan Tahririan's view, expressed in their article Target Situation Needs Analysis of Hotel Receptionists, published in English for |Specific Purposes World, http://www.esp-world.info., Issue 40, vol 14, 2013, once identified, "needs should be stated in terms of goals and objectives which, in turn can serve as the bases for developing tests, materials, teaching activities and evaluation strategies.So, needs analysis and material evaluation go hand in hand so that needs analysis determine the needs for a defined group of people and evaluation helps the teacher determine to what extent those materials, tests or the whole program meet the learners' needs|.[6:82]

Because there are so many various perspectives in defining needs, assessment of the learners/needs becomes a challenging task. Munby, for instance, focused on the selection of the material in needs analysis and observed that the selection of the material in needs analysis depends upon the systematic analysis of specific learners' needs by analyzing the reasons for learning, place and time of anticipated target use, others with whom the user will interact, content areas(activities involved), skills(listening, speaking, reading, writing, etc.) and the level of proficiency required. (Munby, J. ,1978, *Communicative syllabus design: A sociolinguistic model for defining the content of purpose-specific language programmes*, New York:Cambridge University Press)[7]

As Brown(1995) observes, needs must be stated in terms of goals and objectives which, in turn, can serve as the bases for developing tests, materials, teaching activities and evaluation strategies.(Brown, J.,1995, *The elements of language curriculum:A systematic approach to program development,* New York: Heinle &Heinle Publishers)[8]

3. **Conclusions:**

In conclusion, the results of the needs analysis help us as teachers to identify the students' prospective professional needs, the students' needs in terms of language skills and the students' deficiencies in the area of language skills. Only after analyzing the students' needs and determining the objectives of the language course, we can select a material that meets the needs of the students. Thus, needs analysis is the foundation on which we can develop curriculum content, teaching materials and methods that can lead to increasing the learners 'motivation and success.

4.Bibliography:

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