

Needs Analysis of English for Occupational and Specific Purposes

By

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Abstract

English for Specific Purposes is not a different variety of English in its nature. In the sense of linguistic terminology ESP means, what learner needs in target situation or what he/she wants about his function of language usage or what are his/her needs according to his/her own views. Needs analysis is a process which is undertaken by trainers, teachers and course designers to ascertain the pre-requisites for developing a course along with its plan implementation. Munby,s (1978) work on needs analysis in ESP is a landmark for the coming linguists. Although he has been criticized bitterly by linguists yet he is also a precedent in the field of ESP. There are seven approached to needs analysis: deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, language audits, set-menu needs analysis, computer based needs analysis and target/deficiency needs analysis. Three methods as pre course, mid course and post course are used for conducting needs analysis. In this study two instruments are used to find out the needs of target situation, learners' needs, wants and their lacks. First a questionnaire is used as an instrument to get information. The second tool to get data is semi structured interview which is used to collect the qualitative data. It is indicated by these instrument that all the learners are educated and good in general English but for their business they need training in specific fields. Although speaking and listening functions are performed mostly in their business yet the development of some specific reading and writing functions can also play an important role in promoting their business.

Keywords: Capacity, Threshold level, communicative syllabus design, English for academic, constellation, English for general purpose, English language teaching, English for occupational purpose, English for specific purpose, Sequitur.

Introduction

English has become an international lingua franca. People over the world use English as a means of communication. It has also become language of science and technology and a symbol of prestige in many societies. Case (2003) states in his review on "Teaching English as an International Language" that it is estimated that by 2025 there will be more speakers of English as a second language than the speakers of English as a first language. Because of importance of English language internationally the linguists have been exporting its different fields. So, this paper looks at a concise introduction of ESP, varieties of theoretical bases of needs analysis with its criticism and a real practice for needs analysis. It will consider how to discover the particular needs of people requiring English for specific purposes. What are needs and how they can be analyzed? What kind

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of theories or what approaches have been used to handle this issue and what procedure will be adopted before going to needs analysis? A real needs analysis is included with its evaluation. On the behalf of results from needs analysis a course can be designed for importers and exporters professionals.

What is ESP?

Apparently, the definition of ESP seems very simple through its words “English for Specific Purposes”. English that is learnt or taught to get specific goals in specific field like English in technology, science, business, law, study etc. However, there is no such comprehensive definition that can comprise all the details which is included in ESP because it can not be separated from English for general proposes. Although it has separate forms in practice yet in the theory the both ESP and EGP are one. (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

What ESP is not?

Hutchinson & Waters (1987). further define ESP by giving the answer of *what ESP is not?* They argue that ESP is not specialized varieties of English or a special form of language but, because of some context and learner’s needs some typical features of language are focused. But it does not mean that these differences should be allowed to obscure the larger area of common ground that underlies all English use. It is not a cluster of words of some special fields which are used in science, hotel, and workplace or in a special field but it gets its sources from all the language which is used as common. Some people described ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, think it more precise, describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes (Anthony, 2008). He further refers that Dudley-Evans (1998) defines ESP by its characteristics: (a) ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners. (b) ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves. (d) ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, Lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Division of ESP

ELT can be divided into main two categories ESP and EGP and these are then divided into various divisions. Our concern is here only with ESP that has also two main divisions EAP and EOP. These kinds have their sub divisions as Kennedy & Bolitho (1984) point out in the following: 1)- English for academic purposes (EAP), It is taught in an academic context, in a target situation according to learner’s needs and sponsor’s targets as a school subject (independent or integrated) and as a discipline-based. (pre-study/pre-sessional or in-study/in-sessional). 2)-English for occupational purposes (EOP), is taught in a professional frame work. Learners learn English according to their professional needs which are sometimes before starting their profession as a pre-experience or mid their work as a simultaneous or after starting their work as a post-experience. 3)- English for science and technology (EST). Much of the demand for ESP has come from scientists and technologists who need to learn English for a number of purposes concerned their specialism. It

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is natural; therefore, that English for Science and Technology (EST) should be an important aspect of ESP programmes. The term EST presupposes a stock of vocabulary items, grammatical forms, and functions which are common to the study of science and technology (Kennedy, & Bolitho, 1984). Although ESP claims to be a distinguished field of teaching of English from EGP yet its course in spite of its implied claim is no more specific in its purposes than the course which is designed for EGP. In this respect, EGP is more specific and purposeful than ESP. What distinguishes them is the way in which purpose is defined, and the manner of its implementation (Widdowson, 1983). In ESP, it is presupposed that the learners will use the language practically which is meant to meet their needs in a special context. For that purpose the course is designed and the course is expected to provide the required competence to fulfill their needs. In GPE it is not possible to define purpose in such a way but, here, the course is designed to the potential of language in general which will be used by the learner whenever he comes across the situation in future. Here, the restriction is not possible to specific tasks to achieve the specific ability. Widdowson (1983) points out that ESP and EGP are separate in two ways: Firstly, there is distinction of objectives and aims. Objectives are goals which are obtained within the duration or a course and at the end of a course. They are assessed by some devices, while the aims are set for the time after the end of course. The aims can include the objectives also along with developing general capacity. It could be declared that aims are more comprehensive than objectives. The second distinction that he indicates is between competence and capacity (the Chomskian terms). These terms mean the speaker's knowledge of the sentences of his language and he constitutes a generative device for the production and reception of correct linguistic forms along with the knowledge of social norms and rules that determine the appropriate use of linguistic forms.

Needs Analysis

Hutchinson. & Waters. (1987) indicate that the demand for specific English purpose was accelerated in 1970 when Oil Crisis started, which caused a great flow of money and western expertise into the oil rich countries. Day by day needs for English courses increased with clear goals in English language. Thus, it was also a natural phenomenon that the need for needs analysis aroused in that epoch. In 1970 English Language Teaching Development Unit used a procedure to collect the data by needs analysis. McDonough (1984) observes that the procedures set out by Munby (1978) for this purpose in his communicative design, are so detailed that they seem a representation of the both explicit and comprehensive but with some limitations. The nineteen hundred eighty saw the expansion of needs analysis. Actually, the base for needs analysis is Munby's model with its benefits and shortcomings. All the approaches to needs analysis, after Munby's target-situation analysis and his model, were in fact to make up the deficiencies his model. For example deficiency analysis, strategy analysis means analysis, etc. Nineteen hundred ninety was a decade of learning-centered approach. Many of linguists like Harbord, Nelson, Bheiss etc worked for this purpose.

Needs analysis is a process which is undertaken by trainers, teachers and course designers to ascertain the pre-requisites for developing a course and its implementation. It could be declared that needs analysis is name of providing all the things and collecting all the information which are necessary to start a journey to reach the destiny. A 'need' can be defined as, a condition or

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situation in which something is required or wanted: *crops in need of water; a need for affection* (Answers Corporation, 2008). Turning to the definition of “needs” in ESP it would be obvious that these are ‘necessities’, ‘lacks’ and ‘wants’ of a learner. Using “needs” as a term in ESP its definition differs according to approaches. In target centered approach it is “the ability to comprehend and or to produce the linguistic features of target situation” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Using learner-centered approach “needs” means lacks and wants of a learner. At what level that learner is at present and what are his/her motives concerning the learning language. A ‘necessity’ can be defined as a something that is necessary. A). Something dictated by invariable physical laws. B). The force exerted by circumstance (Pickett, 2000). In an ESP context its meaning are as under; ‘necessities’ the type of need determined by demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation (Hutchinson & Waters 1987). These are linguistic features –discoursal, functional, structural and lexical which are used in target situation. The fact or state of not having something or enough of something or that which is missing is also used in target situation (Bolender, 1993). In needs analysis, it is compulsory to know the necessities of target situation with the necessity to get awareness of deficiencies of learners to fill the gap between the former and the later. The target proficiency in other words, needs to be matched against the existing proficiency of the learners. The gap between the two can be referred to as learners’ lacks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Wants is an inclination of a person toward something. In the sense of ESP it would be noticeable that what the learner wants about his function of language usage or what are his/her needs according to his/her own views. Learners may well have clear idea of the ‘necessities’ of target situation: they will certainly have a view as to their ‘lacks’. But it is quite possible that the learners’ views will conflict with the perception of other interested parties: course designers, sponsors, teachers (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 56). All the mentioned above things are target needs to which one should know establishing a needs analysis to provide the needs of learners. Needs analysis does not mean the analysis of needs then it must refer to analyzing in order to establish need, i.e., what one needs to know the sequitur to this must be; analyzing what to establish needs (Chambers, 1980).

In order to uncover the needs of ESP learners, a needs analysis needs to be undertaken by the course designer, usually before the planning of the course takes place as well as during the course. From the beginning of needs analysis in 1970s till up to date there is gradually development in its approaches from simple to complex and from complex to more purposeful and comprehensive or from target-centered to learning- centered. Now, trainers, teachers and sponsors run the language courses more effectively by using different kinds of approaches to needs analysis.

Approaches to Needs Analysis

Threshold Level (Van Ek, 1975) this approach was used by the team of specialists under the guidance of the Council of Europe. The purpose of this approach was, as Cunningsworth (1983) explains, to facilitate the learners in their ability to tackle everyday situations in their work or study context. There were two steps: one was to define the target group and the other was to define the

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situation in which the learners would need to be able to use English. Using the steps the learners' needs are derived. The focus in approach was on the language used and target needs.

Munby's approach. Munby's '*Communicative Syllabus Design*' consists of two stages: Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) and the interpretation of the profile of needs derived from the CNP in terms of micro-skills and micro-functions (Ha, 2005). Although it was a great effort in the field of ESP yet some aspects were not given attention, such as learners' own needs, future needs etc?. Munby's model was a complex and time taking procedure and was purely focused on target needs. Complexity, constraints and failure to draw a clear sketch of syllabus are shortcomings of Munby's model. Although it was claimed that it is learner centered model, yet the fact is on the contrary that it collects the details about the learner not from the learner. Here the learner was considered only a participant not a student or learner. Munby has tried to make homogenous group according to his targets and goals and he concerned with individuals but not that the groups were homogenous in their wants, demands and in their learning activities. His idealization of the language learning group is a great disadvantage of his approach. Thus, a strict specification to the goals will be less productive than a general specification. In Munby's communicative activities that there was distinction between behavior and meaning while in Threshold Level the communicative events are so superficial that these are only utterances which cannot be directly encoded into language. However, in spite of all these shortcomings, he made great landmark in the field of ESP. Although all the critics attacked him very severely yet he is quoted in all discussions of ESP. A discussion, paper, article, or writing of ESP cannot complete without his mention. He is the only who stood first in constellation of linguists because, till now, there is no foolproof and method for needs analysis, much dependence is on individual subjective judgment.

Deficiency analysis: This approach to needs analysis has been developed to take account of learners' present needs/wants, as well as the requirements of the target situation, may be called analysis of learners' deficiencies or lacks (Allwright 1982). Actually it was designed to fill the gap between target needs and the present abilities of the learners. Many of systems taking this approach include two central components: (a) an inventory of potential target needs expressed in terms of activities, and (b) a scale that is used for the priority that should be given to each activity (West, 1997).

Strategy analysis: This approach focuses on the strategies, the methods of learning and the cultures which learners bring from their atmosphere. West (1997) writes that this approach implied a conversion from what to how. During 1980s tutors, teachers and syllabus designers were interested in styles, procedures and techniques related to classroom assessments.

Means analysis: Because of some practicalities and constraints in the failure of Munby's (1978) model, some of linguists supported the notion that the constraints and plans should be explored in the local environment/situation. This approach was called means analysis or the ecological approach. According to this view the question for the course designer is *how to make ESP root, grow, bear fruit and propagate in the local soil*. The course designer or teacher first identifies the

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relevant features of the situation (the ecosystem) then sees how the positive features can be used to advantage to accommodate what would conventionally be seen as constraints (West, 1997).

Language audits: The approaches that are stated above are complementary to each other and work at any minimal level, while the language audits are long term and wide on large scale. West (1997) says that language audits are larger scale operations establishing the LSP practice than the other. These include all the levels of needs analysis. However, these are established by big companies and governments making long term policies investing a big amount of money and time.

Set-menu needs analysis: This is a situational approach to meet the target needs. Different courses are offered at different times. Harbord (1994) developed this approach for a car company business ESP needs Analysis. He arranged 14 courses and one or more courses were offered at a time. It has one main feature that it provides a common language for course negotiation-a common language which is often missing between ESP teachers and ESP sponsors. Because ESP teachers focus on more specific targets needs related to learners than ESP sponsors.

Computer based needs analysis: This is a professional and sophisticated approach (West 1997) presented by Nelson (1994) in Finland. In this approach target situation needs analysis is carried out by delivering two questionnaires to the sponsor and learners. Deficiency needs analysis is carried by taking a placement test. Then the results are interpreted and fed into computers and needs are matched with the materials of course. Touching the strategy analysis the course material is negotiable between teachers and learners.

Target/Deficiency needs analysis: This needs analysis (West, 1997) is that of Bheiss (1988) in East Jerusalem, working as a trainee in a university teaching hospital. Bheiss used an expert informant (a native speaker nursing tutor) to draw up a list of potential target needs, expressed as sub skills, such as reading medical books, writing patient notes, speaking to doctors, etc., which then forms the bases of two questionnaires. The first establishes targets needs, using a scale to give a raw score for each potential need. The second questionnaire is similar in format but assesses learners' deficiencies. The overall "requirement" is then calculated by combining the scores for need with that for deficiency. Then the scores can be compared with those of all the other sub skills to establish overall priority of the ESP course.

Critique of the approaches

In fact the first four approaches are interdependent to each other. The later three approaches: deficiency analysis, strategy analysis and means analysis are complementary to the former one: target situation analysis. In the beginning the stress was on only target needs but the learning procedure involves something more, thus, the attention was given to the factors that affect the learning. In deficiency analysis the attention was given to the lacks and needs of learner. The strategy analysis involves the styles, methods and situation that affect the learning procedure. The means analysis answers the question of matching the constraints with local environment. Set-menu needs analysis is a special approach for particular circumstances and not possible for all kind of ESP students. It is a new shape of target situation analysis and is dependent on the behalf of

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sponsors. As for as computer based needs analysis, it seems good one because it involves both the sponsor and the learner. But there is also domination of target needs analysis; the difference is only that the collected data is fed into computer to match materials. Here two questions arise. Firstly, “is the information gathered from computer is reliable?” Secondly, “is this procedure is feasible in every place and time?” And the position of second last approach is not so different than the first two. McDonough (1984) presents an integrated approach. Though it seems comprehensive in all aspects of needs analysis but the question is; whether keeping all these aspects in performing needs analysis is possible? McDonough himself answers this question. The point has also been made that these other elements (other than target needs) are only seen as a hindrance if we take account of them subsequent to our goal specification (McDonough, 1984).

However, as it is mentioned above there is no single approach which is foolproof and perfect; more work should be done on this topic.

Methods for needs analysis

Methods for undertaking needs analysis include the following, suggested by Jiajing (2007) for designing an ESP course for Chinese University students of business:

- 1- Pre-course Needs Analysis in which the information is collected by using questionnaire, interviewing and informal discussion.
- 2- Mid-course Needs Analysis where the feedback is got from learners' performance and assessments or test results. Chen (2006) named this kind as Ongoing Needs Assessment to gather data from students about their perceived progress, drawbacks and requirements in all the courses.
- 3-Post-course Needs Analysis is carried out by final test results.

Instrumentation

Two tools are used for collecting of the data as a triangle approach. For quantitative data a questionnaire is used and for qualitative data semi structured interviews are conducted.

Rationale

Two instruments are used to find out the needs of target situation, learners' needs, wants and their lacks. First a questionnaire is used frequently as an instrument by researchers and as a main tool to get information. ‘It is a popular device for gathering facts and opinions’ (Rauf, 2000). Through by this instrument it could be ascertain the trends, aptitudes, attitudes, opinions of the people and experience it also has been used from the beginning (1970) of ESP development to get information about targets needs. Here, by questionnaire, information about attitudes of the learners toward English language can not be obtained but their previous experience, knowledge, their wants and the standards set by the sponsors or institution. This questionnaire includes personal life as well as the academic career of students. It provides us knowledge about the lacks of the learners and it will be helpful in enhancing the interest and motivation of learners because, here, the effort is being made to get awareness from the learners as students not as only participants about their needs. It means the questionnaire will encompass both (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) objective needs and subjective needs. The second tool to get data is semi structured interview which is used to collect the qualitative data. Sometimes a questionnaire cannot comprises all the items that can get a proper

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and correct information or because it is formal device to collect data. So, the informations gained through this are limited. Thus conducting interview is helpful to fill this gap between the formality and informality.

Data collection

Table 1: Learners' frequency with different qualifications

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
Matriculation	0
FA/FSc	20
BA/BSc	40
MA/MSc	40

Table 2: Learners' frequency with different abilities in general English

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency		
	Good	Better	Excellent
Reading		60	40
Writing		60	40
Speaking		20	80
Listening		20	80

Table 3: Learners' frequency of their importance of English language skills in business

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
Importance of language skills	100
Reading	0
Writing	20
Speaking	40
Listening	40

Table 4: Learners' frequency of their usefulness of sub skills of reading English language in business

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
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Reading of memos/bills	100
Reading of reports	20
Reading of letters	80
Reading of bank forms related export and import	20
Reading of Central Board of Excise and Customs forms	0

Table 5: Learners' frequency of their usefulness of sub skills of writing English language in business

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
Informal letters	0
Formal (business) letters	80
Reports	0
Filling some related forms	60

Table 6: Learners' frequency of their usefulness of sub skills of speaking English language in business

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
Demonstration	80
Discussion	100
Asking questions about some information	60
Requesting something	20

Table 7: Learners' frequency of their usefulness of sub skills of Listening English language in business

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
Usefulness of sub skills of Listening	
Listening news	0
Listening conversation	100
Attending seminars	80
Listening Any other	0

Table 8: Learners' frequency of their usefulness of English language in dealing business on the phone

Description of Items	% of learners' frequency
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E-mailing	100
Browsing web sites	80
Reading news about business	10
Any other	0

Analysis of the data

It is indicated in the above tables that all the learners are qualified. Thus they are all in better position in general English communication skill but they need training in English for specific context. All the learners are agreed upon the fact that the knowledge of English language is very useful in increasing their business. Most of the learners think that speaking and listening are the integrated part of their business but in specific domain. For example in speaking demonstration, discussion, asking questions about some information are main function except requesting something which has less importance comparing to others functions and in listening, listening conversation and attending seminars. Regarding reading and writing eighty percent of the learners think that these skills are useless for them in general purpose but these skills have an important role in their business because they have to read memos/bills, reports, letters and bank forms related export and import. The case of writing is not too different from the former one where they have to write business letters and fill some kind of forms related to their business. It is clear that all of the learners deal their business over the phone and use internet. Thus in these both functions four skills of English language are used but for specific purpose.

Semi structured interviews

The questions asked in the interviews are related to the following domains:

- 1- Business description
- 2- Problems related the business
- 3- Social interaction while staying abroad

Extra information regarding the learner's need is gathered through Semi structured interview. This information is a different data from the data that is collected through questionnaire. Here we get information that in listening and speaking video calls are conducted frequently in their business while in reading and writing there are a lot many things which are included in these function. For example, reading/writing quotations, offers, agreements, E-forms, I-forms, insurance forms, invoices, goods clearing forms, letter of credits, bill of lading, bill of air, map reading and readiness certificate.

Conclusion

Putting into nutshell, ESP is not a different variety of English but it is a contextual and need base situation in which some specific purposes of language functions are gained. ELT is divided into two categories ESP and EGP then ESP is divided into EAP and EOP. To carry out ESP courses a

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needs analysis is conducted to get information about target needs and learners, wants. There are many approaches to needs analysis that have been used by different linguists like deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, language audits, set-menu needs analysis, computer based needs analysis and target/deficiency needs analysis. It is conducted in three methods as pre course, mid course and post course. Through the needs analysis that we used to collect the data we come to know that all learners are educated and good in general English but for their business purpose they need training in specific fields. Yet speaking and listening functions are performed mostly in their business but the some specific reading and writing functions also can play an important role in promoting their business.

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