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NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP

1. INTRODUCTION

In all ESP teaching situations, we must start by considering the needs of the learners and what they have to do in the target situation (Flook, 1993). Needs are defined as being the requirements that the students have in order to be able to communicate effectively in the target situation. They are also defined as what the students need to learn to acquire the language.

The process of needs analysis often entails collecting information for the sake of having the necessary bases to develop a course which will meet the needs of a particular group of students. In this regard, Richards and Platt (1992**:**242) state that NA is "the process of determining the needs for which a learner or a group of learners acquires a language and arranges the needs according to priorities." Consequently, a teacher engaged in the process of NA is required to gather information about 'what' the learner need and 'how' he can learn. The above definitions imply the existence of different types of needs that the ESP course teacher should take into consideration while designing a course.

2. TYPES OF NEEDS

Hutchinson and Waters identify two types of needs as illustrated in the figure below

Figure 1. Types of Needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987)

2.1 TARGET NEEDS

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) target needs are mainly related to 'what the learner need to do in the target situation'. In order to answer this statement, ESP practitioner should also gather information about learners' necessities, lacks and wants.

- **Necessities.** Are the academic or occupational requirements of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Accordingly, needs "are perhaps more appropriately described as objectives" (Robinson, 1991: 7) to be achieved.
- **Lacks.** Are what the learners already know and what they are deficient in, i.e., what they ignore or cannot perform in English. Subsequently, lacks are the gaps between the initial or actual situation of the learners in terms of language proficiency or aptitudes, and the one which is required after the accomplishment of the language training.
- **Wants.** Are learners' personal expectations and hopes towards acquiring English, i.e. what they would like to gain from the language course. Usually these needs are very personal; therefore they are sometimes called 'subjective'. In fact, these wants are very real, and may conflict with the necessities as perceived by the employer. Therefore ways must be found to accommodate them.

In this respect, individuals' wants cannot all be accounted for; however, the wants of the majority can be discussed and partially met.

2.2 LEARNING NEEDS

Learning needs involve an answer to the question: How are we going to the destination? They can be defined as the "factors that affect the learning like attitude, motivation, awareness, personality, learning styles and strategies, together with the social background" (Xiao, 2007:2). Learning needs concerns about the route between the starting point (lacks) and the destination (necessities). For examples, learners may be greatly motivated in the subject or work, but may completely lose interests with the long, boring, and old teaching material. The learning process should be enjoyable, fulfilling, manageable, and generative. It is not concerned with knowing, but with the learning. The concept of "learning needs" put forward by Hutchinson & Waters and their analysis of "learning needs" have been proved to be fairly useful in practice because learning needs clarify the means through which learners proceed to achieve their target needs starting with realizing their lacks. As a result, in the process of leaning, learner's needs should always be taken into consideration. Course designers need to analyze the learner' learning needs according to their motivation, the conditions of the learning situation, and their existing knowledge and skills.

3. NEEDS ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Needs analysis has been introduced into language teaching in the 1960's through ESP movement. It is a set of procedures for collecting information about learners needs.

Understanding learners' needs can contribute to successful course planning. Hence, the Purpose of Needs Analysis is:

- To find out what language skills a learner needs
- To help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students
- To determine which students are most in need for training in particular language skills
- To identify students lacks
- To identify students wants and expectations
- To collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing.

How to conduct needs analysis?

In ESP, identifying what a course should contain and how it should be run is determined by the use of different sources and methods to gather data about the situation. The table below illustrates the main sources and methods for needs analysis.

Sources for NAs	Methods of NA
Published & unpublished literature	Interviews
Participating or administrative stuffs (materials)	Participant observation
Former students	non participant observation
Learners	Questionnaires
Teachers	Triangulated methods
Domain experts (ESP researchers, linguists, subject specialists)	
Triangulated sources	

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