

NEEDS ANALYSIS THE FULCRUM OF DESIGNING SYLLABUS FOR ESP AND ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to highlight the significance of needs analysis which is an important element in designing the syllabus for English for specific purposes and English for engineering courses because the reasons for which the students of these specific courses learn the English language vary from course to course even though the core elements of English remain same, there are some specific needs which are expected to be fulfilled by English language course. So, in order to meet the specific needs of students, it is essential to conduct a needs analysis.

The selection of suitable methods of teaching, especially language teaching methodology has been baffling educators for a long time. But most methods prove to be insufficient when it comes to real teaching-learning situations and No single method can be perfect by itself. The teacher has to amalgamate different approaches intelligently to suit local needs and to fulfill the desired goals of the learners, taking into account their proficiency levels. Needs analysis can provide learners with efficacious language instruction and programs that enable learners of ESP and engineering students in achieving communicative competence in specific content rather than merely attaining general linguistic competence.

Keywords: Needs analysis, English for Specific Purposes, English for engineering courses

Introduction:

In the last few years, newspapers have repeatedly brought out reports about the unemployability of Indian engineering professionals in the global scenario. In the Indian context, the success of an engineering student in the recruitment is mainly based on their demonstration of communication skills.

Times of India (Education Times section) report dated 21 February 2008, states that "As India rode the liberalization wave, the Indian youth, equipped with their inherent resourcefulness, intelligence, ambition, and enterprise, was lapped up by Indian Inc and money-spinning MNCs... Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, asserted that only 25 percent of graduating students were employable and that students were lacking in areas such as technical knowledge, English proficiency, and critical thinking.

The panacea for the present pathetic situation is needs analysis. As Long aptly states that 'Just as no medical intervention would be prescribed before a thorough diagnosis of what ails the patient, so no language teaching program should be designed without thorough needs analysis'(Long, 2005:1).

Importance of Needs Analysis:

In the late twentieth century, English language researchers shifted their emphasis from linguistic competence to communicative competence. This resulted to "a switch from 'content,' which normally meant grammar and lexis, to 'objectives' which refers to many variables other than linguistic content" (Shahriari & Behjat, 2014: 321).

One of the important points for this paradigm shift from 'content' to 'objectives' is the growth of English as an International Language. It has played a significant role in accelerating emphasis on the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). According to Shahriari and Behjat (2014), when the number of English speakers increased rapidly around the world, the needs and purposes for learning English changed and varied correspondingly.

Some may learn English to communicate when traveling; others may learn the language for academic purposes, or to meet the demand for specific professions and jobs. As a result of this enormous growth for which the English language is being used to meet varied purposes, it has become necessary to design syllabus keeping in view the needs of language learners.

Mehisto (2007) emphasized the need for a comprehensive needs analysis and collaboration with content specialists in order to avoid the mismatch between the workplace needs and ESP courses offered. To excel in workplace engineers not only need to effectively communicate technical information but also need to have acceptable social and communication skills.

Needs analysis is defined as a process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners require a language and arranging the needs according to their priorities (Richards and Platt, 1992: 242). Needs analysis is basic to any program of ESP and hence the learners have to be taken into confidence to assess their learning needs.

According to Iwai, Kondo, Lim, Ray, Shimizu & Brown (1999), needs analysis is defined as collecting information from a selective group of students with the intent of developing a curriculum that meets their learning needs.

Needs assessment, according to Iwai et al. (1999:10), should be either the basis for any new language program or the reference for "a well-established foreign language program" to be re-examined frequently and modified in terms of its goals and objectives.

Long is an authority on needs analysis for various purposes. Professional communication information about the language and skills used in the target situation. The environmental situation of the course. Michael Long (2005:19) in an authentic way in his article "Methodological Issues in Learners' Needs Analysis." He argues that: There is an urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant to the specific group of learners and to the society at large.

Shahriari and Behjat (2014:322) present a similar thought on the relation between a group's needs and curriculum objectives:

Benesch (1996:723) emphasized some elements must be investigated in needs analysis as the basis for ESP and EAP. She inspected a collection of needs analysis rationales and concluded that it is the process of studying "the students' English target situation." "Students' background and goals," observing their "naturalistic settings," and noting their "behavioral demands" are additional elements that must be considered.

Conclusion:

The selection of suitable methods of teaching, especially language teaching methodology has been baffling educators for a long time. But most methods prove to be insufficient when it comes to real teaching-learning situations and No single method can be perfect by itself. The teacher has to amalgamate different approaches intelligently to suit local needs and to fulfill the desired goals of the learners, taking into account their proficiency levels.

Needs analysis can provide learners with efficacious language instruction and programs that enable learners of ESP and engineering students in achieving communicative competence in specific content rather than merely attaining general linguistic competence.

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