RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE QUALITY OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AND ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES COURSE DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This study examined and identified the perceptions of the undergraduate students at Garden City College for Science & Technology concerning their academic and linguistic needs, lacks, and aspirations. It also explored the subject teachers' attitudes on the students' overall performance with English Language. The aim behind the Needs Analysis in this study was to collect information, which when acted upon makes courses better adapted to students' subjective and objective needs. Another objective is to reach a collective awareness on the part of students, subject teachers, and other stakeholders so as to set an ESP frame for all the English Language courses provided at the college. 213 undergraduate students, from five different departments, in addition to 45 subject teachers have been selected, to constitute the main samples in this study.

INTRODUCTION

The advantages of Needs Analysis (NA) in ESP course design has been acknowledged in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by a number of ESP practitioners. According to that English Language Needs Analysis (hereinafter NA) is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or a group of learners requires a language, and arranging the needs in accordance with priorities. Needs analysis is thus part of syllabus development and it is normally needed before the development of teaching materials .With respect to teaching English for Specific Purposes, there has been a continuing demand for such courses, which are concerned with the needs of learners who are in need of special attention with their English language competence so as to fit them better for a course of study, usually in a specific, technical discipline, or for an occupational purpose .Another area of interest is English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which is related to the study of a discipline, e.g. English for Multimedia and English for Architecture. The important steps typically in setting up an ESP course consist of the collection of initial information, an analysis of student needs, approaches to course design, a specification of syllabus and materials, the ESP classroom and the role of the teacher (McDonough, 1984). NA seems to be an effective means for gathering information on the students' perceived English-language needs before launching an English language course. A survey by means of a questionnaire can also serve as a guide to tailor the teaching materials and other teaching decisions to the actual needs of the learners for specific-purpose.

Aim and scope of the study

This study aims to investigate the absence of adaptation in ready-made courses such as Link up Series. It is strictly limited to the second year undergraduate students, who are studying Business Administration, Multimedia, Communication Science, Electronic Engineering and Architectural Engineering at GCCST in the academic year 2013 – 2014, as well as the subject teachers at the same college.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last few years, there has been a tremendous concern for English language teaching and learning in academic circles in general and among the ESP practitioners in particular. This concern is based on the awareness perceived regarding the learners' needs and concerning what to do with the target language, rather than what with the linguistic elements the learner needs to master. In this respect, a number of linguists, such as Strevens (1977) and Coffey (1984), have agreed on the centrality of Needs Analysis as the starting point for any

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teaching material development and any future English Language program.

To further clarify the Needs Analysis, Robinson (1991) quoted Brindly's statement in which the later defines and distinguishes two types of needs which are refered to as the "objective" and "subjective" needs of learners:

"The first of these terms refers to the needs which are derivable from different kinds of Factual information about learners, their use of language in real life communication situations as well as their current language proficiency and language difficulties. The second term refers to the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes , learner's wants and expectations with regard to the learning of English and their individual cognitive style and learning strategies".
Brindley (1994: 70)

In the same context, Nunan (1988) has defined the term Needs Analysis as a family of procedures for gathering information about learners and about communication tasks. Moreover, West (1994) described Needs Analysis as what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation. It constitutes one of the essential aspects of developing a program of study to determine the goals of the course in detail and in advance. Nunan (1999) also noted that learners' needs have gained momentum with the spread of learner-centered approaches to language teaching and learning.

What is more, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) classified learner' needs into necessities, lacks, and wants. According to them, the requirements of the target situation are referred to as the *necessities*, which are meant to include the language elements and structures that learners need to know and use in the target setting. Accordingly, the need for performing target situation analysis arises. The next stage then consists of clarifying what students already have at their disposal by identifying what the learners know about the English language, the necessities that they already lack; in this way, the gap between the necessities and lacks can be investigated. Following this is that effective materials can be developed and appropriate methods can be adopted in order to save more time. Richards (2001) stated that the teaching-learning success depends on a number of factors, such as background knowledge of learners and teachers, learners' learning styles and strategies, teachers' teaching methods, and the availability of resources. Hyland (2006) maintained that NA fulfills learners' needs and prepares them for the various workplaces and academic settings. It is worth noting that all the foregoing definitions share one common element which is the learner's needs.

Needs Analysis Types

Perceived needs vs. felt needs

Berwick (1989) distinguishes between two types of needs; 'perceived needs' and 'felt needs'. The former refer to the needs

that the educators make judgments about according to other people's experiences, meanwhile the later indicate what the learners have.

Objective needs vs. Subjective needs

Brindley (1989) and Robinson (1991) considered all factual information about the learners (language proficiency ,language difficulties , use of language in real life)as a means to collect data about objective needs; whereas cognitive and effective needs of the learner in language learning(such as confidence ,attitudes ,expectations) are considered as data about subjective needs.

Target needs vs. learning needs

Hutchinson and Waters (1994:54) define "Target needs" as "the ones that the learner needs to do in the target situation, these are necessities, lacks and wants. Nevertheless, "what the learner needs to do in order to learn" is related to "learning needs".

Implicit vs. Explicit needs

Richterich and Chancerel (1980) argue that in accordance with real life experience, the learners are generally little aware of their needs and even unable to specifically express them except in very vague terms.

Research Methodology and tools

The present study has been exploratory in terms of investigating the students' perceptions on their preferences, competence , needs, necessities , lacks and wants in using English Language ; as well as the views of subject teachers on the students' present English language situation and performance .Triangulation (Mixed Method) was adopted in carrying out this study. The researcher used two tools to collect the information of the study. One includes a questionnaire which was given to the Sudanese English teachers whom were selected randomly and another questionnaire for the students of five departments. The researcher has chosen 213 students and 45 subject teachers as samples for the study.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The researcher used the questionnaire (Students' and Teachers') as suitable tools for the collection of data relevant to this study. The two questionnaires have been designed by the researcher to investigate the perceptions of both students and subject teachers regarding their English language necessities, lacks and wants. The tables below show the outcomes of the two questionnaires.

Students' questionnaires

Table No (1) above justified that the overwhelming majority of students, which was represented by (92.96%), needed to be provided with English Language courses that include materials and topics related to their field of study rather than the ones

Table No 1

The English Language courses would be useful if they include materials and topics related to the students' field of study……		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, very useful	116	54.46%
Yes	82	38.50%
Neutral	00	00%
Not very useful	9	4.23%
Not useful at all	6	2.82%
Total	213	100.00%

selected for them in ready- made syllabi where the contents and the assumed course decisions are not tailored for neither their subjective nor their objective needs.

Table NO 2

The ESP courses would improve their general English language skills….		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, very useful	126	59.15%
Yes	68	31.92%
Neutral	00	00%
Not very useful	4	1.88%
Not useful at all	1	0.47%
Missing	14	6.57%
Total	213	100.00%

As it can be clearly seen from Table No (2), a vast majority of students, which was represented by (91%), justified that students need to be provided with courses that improve their general English language skills. If their English language level has been raised, this would give them confidence and motivation to successfully pursue their academic life at the college, and to function perfectly at work afterwards.

Table NO 3
The ESP courses would provide students with some professional terms in English regarding different fields of study.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it's the most important	117	54.93%
Yes, it will be useful	86	40.38%
Neutral	00	00%
No, I already know all necessary terminology	5	2.35%
No, it will not be useful	5	2.35%
Total	213	100.00%

As justified in Table No (3), an overwhelming majority of students, which is represented by (95%), need English language courses that provide them with professional terms, related to their fields of study in English.

Table NO4 ESP will develop students' reading skill.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it's the most important	115	53.99%
Yes, it will be useful	64	30.05%
Neutral	00	00%
No, my reading skills are already quite good	18	8.45%
Yes, it will be useful	1	0.47%
Missing	15	7.04%
Total	213	100.00%

The students' interest in receiving more training on technical terms is slightly higher than having materials and topics from their fields of study. This reflects the fact that some subjects such as (Sudanese Media) require the understanding of the equivalent technical terms.

Table No (4) shows and justifies that a considerable majority of students, which is represented by (84%), need to be provided with English Language courses that enhance their reading skill.

Table No 5

ESP will develop students' writing skill.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it's the most important	102	47.89%
Yes, it will be useful	69	32.39%
Neutral	00	00%
No, my writing skills are already quite good	25	11.74%
Yes, it will be useful	3	1.41%
Missing	14	6.57%
Total	213	100.00%

Table No (5) shows and justifies that a majority of students, which is represented by (80%), need to be provided with English courses that help develop their writing skill.

Table No6 ESP will develop students' listening skill

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it's the most important	105	49.30%
Yes, it will be useful	74	34.74%
Neutral	00	00%
No, my listening skills are already quite good	18	8.45%
Yes, it will be useful	1	0.47%
Missing	15	7.04%
Total	213	100.00%

Table No (6) shows and justifies that a majority of students, which is represented by (84%), need to be provided with English courses that develop their listening skill.

Table No 7

ESP will develop students' speaking skill		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it's the most important	118	55.40%
Yes, it will be useful	49	23.00%
Neutral	00	00%
No, my speaking skills are already quite good	10	4.69%
Yes, it will be useful	2	0.94%
Missing	34	15.96%
Total	213	100.00%

Table No (7) shows and justifies that a majority of students, which is represented by (84%), need to be provided with English courses that develop their oral communication skill. The study results reveal that there was a consensus among the students to adopt ESP as an effective mechanism for any English Language Program presented at GCCST. The research recommended that the solution for the students' lack of adaptability to the ready –made English Language courses can be achieved by establishing a well structured ESP center to undertake the responsibility of preparing ESP teaching materials for the college in consultation with the departments at the college.

Subject teachers' views

Table No8

Reading intensively		
	Frequency	Percent
Very unsatisfactory	17	38%
Unsatisfactory	11	24%
Neutral	00	00%
Satisfactory	15	33%
Very satisfactory	2	4%
Total	45	100%

Table No (8) above shows and justifies that a majority of teachers, which was represented by (62%), believed that students' ability in reading intensively for knowledge enrichment is not satisfactory.

Table No 9

Their writing in exams and tests		
	Frequency	Percent
Very unsatisfactory	21	47%
Unsatisfactory	10	22%
Neutral	00	00%
Satisfactory	11	24%
Very satisfactory	3	7%
Total	45	100%

As far as writing in exams and tests is concerned, Table No (9) shows and justifies that a significant majority of teachers, which is represented by (69%), believe that students' writing is unsatisfactory.

Table No 10

Listening to lectures in English		
	Frequency	Percent
Very unsatisfactory	14	31%
Unsatisfactory	12	27%
Neutral	00	00%
Satisfactory	16	36%
Very satisfactory	3	7%
Total	45	100%

Table No (10) shows and justifies that nearly two fifths of teachers, which is represented by (58%), believe that the students' rate of Listening attention and comprehension during lectures is unsatisfactory.

Table No 11

Giving presentations in English		
	Frequency	Percent
Very unsatisfactory	22	49%
Unsatisfactory	9	20%
Neutral	00	00%
Satisfactory	13	29%
Very satisfactory	1	2%
Total	45	100%

Table No (11) shows and justifies that a considerable majority of teachers, which is represented by (69%), believe that giving presentations in English Language is unsatisfactory. This can mainly be attributed to the poor standard of students' speaking skill. So urgent need for speaking skill is a must to complete the cycle of the educational process, in which giving presentations is an essential part.

REPORT DISCUSSION

statistics show that the students at GCCST prefer ESP courses that would improve their general language level (91%) ,with materials and topics related to their fields of study (92.96%) ,

help them improve their speaking skill (84%) ,listening skill (84%) ,writing skill (80%) , reading skill (84%) ,and provide them with technical terms (95%).

After the calculation of the percentages of the above sub hypotheses, which gives the average of the total percentages of the above sub- hypotheses which is estimated by (87%)? This justifies that the students at GCCST need to be exposed to ESP courses rather than to ready-made syllabi.

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