

NEEDS ANALYSIS AND MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN RELATION TO ENGLISH FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

English for Islamic Studies or EIS is a new branch in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). At the moment there is no specific tailor-made syllabus and materials designed specifically in this field. The focus of this paper is on the importance of needs analysis and how it helps in the process of materials designs. It also provides input to produce materials for English for Islamic Studies. Articles on Needs Analysis, material designs and Islamic Studies were reviewed to find out the best method in designing the best tailor-made syllabus and materials to be used in EIS. This paper explains the different approaches in needs analysis and also various types and categories of materials used in related studies. The paper aims to provide readers with new information in designing materials for any Language for Specific Purposes programs.

Keywords: LSP, ESP, EIS, Needs Analysis, Materials, Materials development, Methodology, Islamic Studies.

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has long being discussed by many well-known scholars in the world such as Tom Hutchinson, Alan Waters, Pauline C. Robinson, Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St. John to name a few. ESP started because of the demand for a new brave world in the English language learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). People wanted to learn English not for pleasure or for the prestige of knowing the language, but to learn English to open doors to the international currencies of technology and commerce. Currently, ESP is also stated as one of the major activities around the world (Robinson, 1991).

ESP should reflect the fact that many ESP teachings, especially where it is linked to a particular profession or discipline, makes use of a methodology that is different from the methodology used in the teaching of General English (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). ESP is classified into two sections. First, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where we have English for Academic Medical Purposes, English for Academic Science and Technology Purposes and many more. Second is English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) like English for Business Purposes, English for Medical Purposes and others.

There are five different stages in an ESP course preparation. The main purpose of ESP is to fulfil the needs of the learners as well as the sponsors. So the first stage in ESP is Needs Analysis which is done to identify the specific needs of the students as well as the sponsors of the program. The next stage in ESP is course and syllabus design. Having gathered all the information from the needs analysis process, instructors will then be able to design a course based on the needs stated by the learners and the sponsors.

The third stage requires the instructors to find or to produce their own materials to be used throughout the course. After producing the materials, the teaching-learning process, which is stage four, will take place. The fifth stage in ESP is assessment and evaluation. Here, the instructors will have to design a test paper to assess the student's ability. Assessment can be done before the course, during the course and also at the end of the course. On the other hand, evaluation is a process through which the students and also the sponsors would be able to know the outcome of the course and also the effectiveness of the materials. In theory, these processes might look as if it is done on a linear basis but in reality these process work recursively.

This article will focus mainly on needs analysis and materials development for English for Islamic Studies (EIS). The reason in choosing Islamic Studies is mainly because, the need in them to know English in order for them to use the knowledge in them to spread Islam to the world. Currently there is no specific syllabus or materials that can be used as a guide in the teaching of EIS. In fact the term EIS is also still very new to the world of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). Materials designed for EIS should be carefully designed so that it has an impact on the students and it can create interest in them to learn English as these students are often labelled as under achieving students when it comes to their English Language proficiency.

A study carried out by K. R. Narayanaswamy in 1978 entitled ESP for Islamic School-Leavers for students in Nigeria. The course was offered to the students in April 1976 to June 1978 but the study was only published in 1982. In this study the author explains about the level of English of various students from certain Arab schools in Nigeria in entering pre-degree classes at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. Sadly this so called ESP course was missing many important elements. The most important element that was missing, and should be the starting point in any Language for Specific Purposes course was Needs Analysis as agreed by many LSP scholars, (Richerich & Chancerel, 1977; Munby, 1978; Allwright, 1982; Richerich, 1983; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Nunan, 1988; Robinson, 1991; Richards et al., 1992; Holliday & Cook, 1982; Dudley Evans & St. John, 1998; Jordan, 2011). Needs Analysis was not done on these students to know what do they really want to know or learn hence this course was focusing solely on reading and grammar teachings which looks almost alike General English or GE.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

In English for Specific Purposes or ESP, the most important stage is the needs analysis stage. Students will be given a needs analysis form that covers Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Learning Situation Analysis. The function of TSA is to collect data about the learners and not from the learners and on the other hand PSA is more on learner-centered approach and it collects data from the learners by using methods such as questionnaires and doing interviews on the participant.

There are many methods and approaches that are used in coming up with the best Needs Analysis form, from TSA, PSA, LSA approaches to necessities, lacks and wants and many others. Each approach will be discussed individually. Target Situation Analysis as suggested by Munby (1978) is known to be the best known framework where he focuses on students' needs at the end of the language course and at the target-level performance. Munby is said to be more concern on communicative syllabus design and his procedures are very detailed.

The Communication Need Processor (CNP) as suggested by Munby too focuses on variables that affect communication needs by organising them as parameters in a dynamic relationship to each other and as a result, it can generate a profile of students language needs, communicative competence specification and the most importantly it would be able to produce a sequenced syllabus. Munby's attempt of an approach that is systematic and comprehensive has made the approach or instrument in gathering data more flexible, complex and also time consuming (West, 1994).

Though Munby's model looked very convincing, Hutchinson and Waters argued that Munby's model focuses was more on learners hence it neglects the role of society and they claim

that needs should be determined by a negotiation between society and individual stake-holders (1987). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) on the other hand proposed Learning-Centred Approach. There was a distinction between learner-centered and learning centred. In learner-centered the learners determined the learning process and on the other hand learning-centred is a process that involves learning as a tool of negotiation between individuals and societies.

Target needs were defined by them as Necessities, Wants and Lacks. Necessities is to look at what learners or students should know in order to be able to function well and communicate efficiently in the target situation, meanwhile Lacks on the other hand looks more at the gap between what the students or learners already know and which part are they lacking of and need more focusing on. Hence the gap that is discovered can be the basis of the language syllabus and is referred by Jordan (2011) as deficiency analysis.

Learners' wants are the most important input in the Needs Analysis and cannot be ignored in any ESP courses (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Learners' Wants is considered very important because it will determine their determination and whether or not they participate effectively in the class or throughout the learning process (McDonough, 1984; Nunan, 1988). By neglecting their needs and wants might hinder them from learning and it will cause demotivation among students. Students' motivation towards the course also depends on whether or not their wants are taken into account in the development of syllabus and materials.

Nunan (1988) on the other hand suggested two models in approaching Needs Analysis. They are Strategy Analysis which the focus of the analysis is on the methodology applied to effectively implemented language program and Means Analysis' function is to adjust language courses to local situations. Needs analysis is also defined as the method of establishing the 'what' and 'how' of a course (Dudley Evans & St. John, 1998). Their approach of Needs is to look at Objective Needs and Subjective Needs. Objective Needs is gathered by deriving facts from outsiders and Subjective Needs is collecting facts from cognitive and affective factors by the insiders of a community. Critical Needs Analysis was also stated as the most recent approach in the Needs Analysis method (Dudley Evans & St. John, 1998) where it looks at descriptive method that provides a list of learners' needs from Students, ESP teachers, Head of Departments and Policymakers' point of view. The transformative method provides indication for changes in the content, materials and teaching method (Pennycook, 1989; Benesch, 1996).

Needs analysis is also defined as a process of determining the needs of a group of learners that requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities where it uses both subjective and objective information (Richards et al., 1992). When we talk about Needs Analysis there are few things that should be focused on such as, whose needs are we looking at? When it comes to whose needs, it is suggested that the sponsors, subject specialists, the language course designer, the teachers and the students' needs are all the important factors that needs to be considered in designing any LSP courses or materials (Jordan, 2011).

Few scholars agree that as the starting point of any LSP courses, Needs Analysis should be able to provide input for syllabuses designing, materials and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place in a classroom (Higgins, 1966; Richterich in Trim in et al., 1973/80; Strevens, 1977; Coffey, 1984). Present Situation Analysis was proposed by Richterich and Chancerel (1997/80) to provide students state of language development at the beginning of the language course. Students, teaching establishment and user institution should provide the source of information by using surveys, questionnaires and interviews and it will later be analysed for the levels of ability, resources and views on language learning. In PSA, a learner is connected or is interrelated with society and culture.

Strategies Analysis that starts with students' perceptions of their needs in their own terms was proposed by Allwright (1982). Strategies Analysis was categorised into three subsections such as Needs that looks at the skills which a student sees as being the most relevant or important point for him or herself, Wants on the other hand looks at the needs on which the student puts a high priority to it and to be learnt in a limited time. Lastly Lacks, refer to as the differences between the students present competence and desired ones.

The main concern in Strategy Analysis is to help students to identify skill areas and their preferred strategies of achieving the skills needed. Holliday and Cooke (1982) proposed a term called Means Analysis. Mean analysis involves the study of local situation for example teachers, teaching methods, students, facilities and many more. Means analysis is done to see how long a course should be implemented. Means analysis starts with a positive premise which determines what might be achieved with certain given factors (Jordan, 2011).

A learning centered-approach was later coined by Holliday (1994). In Holliday's learning centred-approach, it acknowledges the social context of education that offers more freedom to teachers. The main reasons behind this approach are to avoid or prevent awkwardness caused by imported teaching methods that may be culturally inappropriate for the students (Jordan, 2011). Needs analysis requires a method that would be able to identify which subject to be studied and what language level needed. Instructors should also be sensitive to which study situations and related study skills are relevant for their students. The method used also, should be able to assess students' current abilities in English and study skills in order to determine the students' gap and their needs in coming up with the best syllabus, materials or methodology used in all the LSP courses.

In a nutshell, needs analysis is an incorporation of different approaches in needs analysis such as wants, lacks, target situation analysis, present situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, language audit and constraints, demands, necessities, likes, deficiencies, aims purposes and goals as stated earlier by other scholars

Materials Development in ESP.

Materials development in ESP courses is very crucial and it shows the effort and creativity of the course designers as well as the teachers. Authentic materials that are used in the real world are the best materials that should be used in any English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses. This would give the students a look on the real world that they will be entering once they have graduated. It will also attract them in learning English as learning English for second language learners has always been a problem due to lack of vocabulary and lack of confidence to name a few.

Let us look at what materials really mean. Materials can be defined as anything or any source that can be used to assist the students in the process of language learning. It can be textbooks, workbooks, Audio video, photocopied hand outs, paper cutting or anything that informs the language being learned (Tomlinson, 2008). Materials too can also be in the form of instructional, experiential, elicitive or exploratory (Tomlinson, 2001).

In this current IT or gadget centric age, M-learning or mobile learning (Laborda, 2011) is starting to make way. Materials designers are aware of the needs of many ESP participants be it students or adult learners who are always on the move and the time they have to sit in one place and holding an old school material to read in order to get input or to do assignments or homework is actually non achievable already. So currently they are looking on means and ways that mobile phones could be used as a replacement to paper based materials so students or adult learners will have their reading time while they are on the move.

Many ESP practitioners are thinking of the best materials that can suit their students or learners in this growing world today. What might be fun last year would no longer able to interest the student this year. Technology is developing rapidly hence educators, trainers and ESP practitioners should catch up and move according to the trend and not against the trend. Most importantly the rules of developing materials should be put as the main priority in designing and developing ESP materials.

Materials in ESP are tailored to meet the needs and interest of a specific group of learners. Taking into account the issue of centrality of the learner's needs analysis is said to be the main features that many authors in the field of materials design agree of (Sysoyer, 2000). In defining learner's needs in material design, authors should consider the language knowledge that the

learners' require for their proficiency development, the language and content knowledge that needs to be added or reincorporated to the learners' knowledge and not forgetting the learners' desire of language and content. All these elements are important as it will make or break any ESP courses.

When teaching ESP courses, course designers as well as materials designers should be able to reach to different target audience. This is because having different target audience can lead to having a variety of materials because the need to cater to their different needs. For example materials for English for Tourism and English for Aviation would be totally different. This does not only happened when it comes to developing materials but same goes to methods and teaching approaches such as lexical, task based, communicative and problem solving.

Three main characteristics or factors that need to be considered or look into seriously when designing ESP materials are, first, criteria of implementing or modifying materials, subjective criteria on what teachers and students want from that material and lastly objective criteria, which is what the material really offers (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This is really important because then only the author would be able to produce a good set of materials that will make the learners as well as the teachers teaching the specific course at ease throughout the whole process of language and knowledge learning.

In the process of designing ESP materials, there are also many suggestions on the factors that shaped a good set of ESP materials. Among them, are for authors to look at topics or speciality. Learners' situation, general and specific proficiency of the language at entry and exit levels, students previous educational and cultural experience. Authors should also look at types of skills to be developed and expected outcomes of the learning goals.

Current trend shows that many authors in field of ESP are trying to make their materials as interesting and as easy accessible as possible. Tomlinson has described positive trends in materials development as those that lead to self 'discovering the language, using corpuses for their development use extensive reading, personalize the process and experience spoken grammar in use (Tomlinson, 2008). While developing materials authors should not forget the aspects of linguistic that are important and well connected to ESP such as lexical items, language forms topics for conversations while trying to integrate all the four skills in English with authentic texts.

Authentic materials and ESP courses can never be separated. Students or learners should be provided with authentic materials that reflect their real world and in this case, the Islamic Studies field. Materials used should be able to link and relate to the students background knowledge as well as their language ability. A main concern is on the issue of the language and content focused are drawn from the input in order to fulfil any tasks given to them (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

This is the gap that all ESP courses are trying to fill. Materials used should benefit students or learners so that when they go out to the real world they will be not only able to function well in the real world but also they should be able to use English in their working life. Harding suggested three recommendations to consider while coming up with a set of materials:

- Use context, texts, and situations from the students' subject area – Whether they are real or stimulated they will naturally involve the language the students need.
- Exploit authentic materials that students use in their specialism or vocation – Do not be put off by the fact that it may not look like 'normal English'.
- Make the tasks authentic as well as the tasks – Get the students doing things with the materials that they actually need to do their work

(Harding, 2007, p 10 -11)

In the context of Islamic studies, the materials used for these students are supposed to be integrated with the text that they use in the real world. It could be a text or sermons that preachers or Imams used while preaching. It could also be a dialogue or questions and answers sessions or discussions between preachers in Islam. The main aim is that texts used should reflect their real life and also should relate to their background knowledge. A material designer should be aware that the goal is not to teach these students the content of Islamic Studies in English but how to use English properly in related to their field of study so that they would be able to communicate whatever they have learnt in the university to the community.

If the target audience is a set of 'Dakwah' students, then the material designers should use texts used by the preachers in the real world as for example a sermon text can be used as a reading comprehension text to teach these students Islamic terms and jargons in English. Of course as Harding said it would not look like normal English at first but the goal is to make them comfortable with the whole idea of learning English in their context and in this case The Islamic Studies context. Once they are comfortable then the learning process will be smooth. To get students' attention in learning English in their context is not easy hence students should find the materials challenging, interesting and usable in order to attract their attention and also to motivate the students or learners to learn. This is one of the principles of social constructivist approach to language learning as suggested by Wilson and Yang (2007).

Swales (1990) suggested that when materials are not available, adaptation and simplifications by eliminating dense contents are desirable to make text more semi authentic. These changes can be done by slightly modifying the style, register and vocabulary. This has given many materials designers, rooms and space in coming up with authentic materials. Most of the time sponsors would like to see authentic materials that their staffs relate it straight away with their working life.

Then again there are also many problems in getting authentic materials and one of it is when an ESP practitioner has to deal with documents or recording of something that has a certain level of privacy. In a study done among German bankers that was working in German Central Bank (the Bundesbank) in Frankfurt, in the year 2000, the author claimed that it was a problem to get authentic materials such as videos of meetings, authentic internal memos, faxes, business letters or email messages used at the Bundesbank. All these documents were labelled as documents that are highly private and confidential in Bundesbank (Edwards, 2000). This is why Swales suggested adapting and simplifying materials so that if it is not fully authentic it is at least semi authentic.

It is necessary to find interfaces in materials production, adaptation and evaluation between teachers in their own classroom and materials designers for commercial purposes taking into consideration the students present situation and their target situation in using those materials (Tomlinson, 2001). But then McGrath (2002) argues whether or not the commercial materials used will fit and be enough in numbers and quality to cope with students' needs, proficiency and learning styles and also as Frendo (2007) said whether or not it achieve the degree of authenticity.

These two arguments are logical in terms of the quality of materials develop and the usability of the materials. Materials designers should work hand in hand with the teachers in the process of developing materials and teachers should be given the freedom to enhance the materials given to them according to their students' level of proficiency and background knowledge in them. When teachers and materials designers work closely with each other not only the materials will have a certain level of quality in it but also the issue raised by McGrath and Frendo will no longer be worrying as teachers have the freedom in adjusting and playing around with the materials provided to them but not changing them 100% though commercial materials are used extensively.

Another issue in any ESP courses is that teachers usually have little knowledge on the content or specialised area of the students in this case Islamic Studies and students have little knowledge on the English Language. The gap has been there and teachers usually will try to minimize the gap by trying to mimic experiences in the specialize field (Laborda, 2011). Students most of the time comes in into an ESP classroom with not only the target on learning the language but they often want a good mixture of the both world, English and content related to their field of study. If the teacher is able to mix these two elements successfully, students will come in with the feeling of motivated and at ease with both the materials and the method used.

When deciding on materials or items to be put into materials, authors and designers should take into account the language and register to be used. This input can be gathered from the analysis of Target Situation Analysis and the students' needs too. It is an issue raised at all ESP courses on what kind of language that is most suitable to be used in the materials and also in the classrooms. Materials designers can choose to use traditional materials which comprises of the printed ones such as magazines, manuals brochures, and bulletins or current materials that are rising nowadays such as videos, listening files, websites, podcasts and many more. Again the issue of ready-made

materials would not be easily done if the designers choose to use the traditional or the printed version of materials in comparison of videos, audios and internet based materials. Designers as well as the teachers will have to put more effort and dedicate their time in designing authentic materials if they choose to use printed traditional materials.

Conclusion

As a conclusion materials development in ESP is very crucial. It should take into consideration what the learners' needs and also the sponsors' needs. Materials designers or authors should be able to connect, link and integrate the language elements as well as the specialized field that they are catering for.

This can be done if the designers and authors begin the whole process of developing materials with Needs Analysis. It is the most important part in the establishment of any ESP courses. Students or learners' as well as sponsors' needs will be answered in the Needs Analysis forms given to them. If there is a gap between the respondents, the ESP practitioner or the syllabus designers will have to look at the middle point or the 'happy mean' to satisfy both parties.

Another factor in developing materials is the level of authenticity of the material itself. Designers should consider using real life, authentic materials that reflect the target audience specialization. This will help students who are weak in the English Language to at least comprehend reading text for example due to the background knowledge that they have. ESP is not merely teaching grammar, reading, listening and speaking without any context in it. All these four skills are important for the learners or the students but it should be integrated with their field of study so that the background knowledge that they have will help them in understanding terms and jargons easily. By using real life materials, students too will be happy and will feel at ease when they are learning because they are familiar and comfortable with the materials used in the classrooms.

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