

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONDUCTING NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN THE PROCESS OF ESP COURSE DESIGN

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Tayanch so'zlar: ingliz tilini maxsus maqsadlar uchun o'qitish, ilg'or pedagogik texnologiyalar, tilga bo'lgan talabni o'rganish, mo'ljallangan holat tahlili, hozirgi holat tahlili, fan mazmuni tahlili, manfaatdor tomonlar, ingliz tilini ilmiy maqsadlarda o'rgatish, ingliz tilini kasbiy zaruratdan kelib chiqib o'rgatish.

Key words: English for Specific Purposes, innovative pedagogical technologies, Needs Assessment, Target Situation Analysis, Present Situation Analysis, Content Analysis, stakeholders, English for Academic Purposes, English for Occupational Purposes.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для специальных целей, инновационные педагогические технологии, анализ потребности обучаемых, выявление целевых ситуаций, анализ настоящей ситуации, анализ содержания, заинтересованная сторона, английский язык для академических целей, английский для профессиональных целей.

The importance of conducting Needs Assessment before designing a course program in ESP is highlighted in the article. The definitions to Target Situation Analysis, Present Situation Analysis and Content Analysis are provided and the ways of conducting analysis are explained.

Maqolada ingliz tilini maxsus maqsadlar uchun o'qitish jarayonida tilga bo'lgan talabni o'rganishning o'quv dastur tuzishdagi ahamiyati ko'rsatib o'tilgan. Shuningdek mualliflar mo'ljallangan holat tahlili, hozirgi holat tahlili, fan mazmuni tahlili kabi tahlil turlariga izoh berishgan va ularni amalga oshirish yo'llarini tushuntirishgan.

В данной статье подчеркнута важность проведения анализа потребностей учащихся до разработки учебной программы при преподавании английского языка для специальных целей. Авторами выделены такие виды анализа как выявление целевых ситуаций, анализ настоящей ситуации и анализ содержания курса .

Uzbekistan is a country in which a great attention is paid to education, science and enlightenment. The generation, which has a deep knowledge of world sciences, national culture and traditions, the people who have developed a sense of responsibility for the future and the present of the Motherland can contribute to the development and prosperity of it. In his speech during the inaugural ceremony at the joint session of Oliy Majlis President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov has stated that our most reliable support is our youth who has confidently been entering life as a decisive force that wields modern knowledge and professions, who thinks independently and in a new manner, and who is capable of assuming a responsibility for the future of the native land.[6]

The role of foreign languages in the process of upbringing and educating the youth of Uzbekistan is crucial in today's world of globalization. On December 10, 2012, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued the Decree "On further enhancement of measures on foreign language learning system". The aim of this Decree is to teach foreign languages to a young generation using modern pedagogical technologies together with information and communications technologies by implementing innovative

methods of teaching, to enhance the system that prepares specialists who can freely communicate in this language and on the basis of this to create favorable conditions and opportunities for them to use the achievements of the World civilization, world information resources and for International cooperation and communication.[5]

According to this decree, it is envisaged that university modules, especially in technical and international areas, will be offered in English and other foreign languages at higher education institutions.[7] This fact shows that ESP teaching at the university level has to meet the expectations stated in the decree and prepare the professionals who can freely use English for the research, for networking with the colleagues abroad, for staying updated on the latest innovations and changes that are taking place in the world. Because it is ESP that teaches students the specific language that is spoken in particular area and will enable them to master the language spoken at different specialties, contexts and fields.

Thomas Orr (2002) defines English for specific purposes (ESP) as an exciting movement in English language education that is opening up rich opportunities for English teachers and researchers in new professional domains. He states that growing demand for highly proficient speakers of specialized academic and workplace English is drawing increasingly large numbers of teachers into the ESP profession and awarding them higher salaries and prestige than were previously given to language instructors. Specific-purpose English includes not only knowledge of a specific part of the English language but also competency in the skills required to use this language, as well as sufficient understanding of the contexts within which it is situated. [3; 1,2]

ESP is taught in combination with EGP to the students of non-philological faculties at the universities and institutes of Uzbekistan. When taught, EGP is presented as a linguistic system to a wide range of learners for application in the most general of potential circumstances, whereas ESP is taught as a tailor-made language package to specific communities of learners with highly specialized language needs. (3; 1,2) The target learners of ESP can be Law School students, the students of Medical Institutes, Technological Institutes, the students of Social Economic faculties and the students of many other areas of study that higher educational institutions offer. English is taught to them with the focus on their specialty whether it is Medicine, Economy or Physical training. In the Program of Study of a Foreign Language confirmed by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers in August 28, 2013, it is stated that a foreign language as a subject is connected with social economic and specialty disciplines. This subject is taught in integration with other disciplines. It is not connected directly with the process of production. The students can use the knowledge that they obtain in this course in the process of studying other disciplines required for their specialty (finding information for their area of study, analyzing it, using it in the process of acquisition) and in their future professional activity. [1; 7] We can conclude from the above stated information that the combination of two subdivisions of ESP which are EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) are taught to the university students and we may call it EAP/EOP Blended teaching.

The success in course design can be counted as a half way to the success of the course to be conducted. Westerfield (2010) highlights the importance of Needs Assessment in the process of course design and states that a thorough organizational and instructional needs assessment lies at the heart of a well-designed, effective ESP course. By conducting an organizational and instructional needs assessment, the ESP

practitioner tries to discover information about the needs of his/her learners and other stakeholders. The term *stakeholder* refers to all the people who have an interest in the specific ESP course under development. Stakeholders are the people who, perhaps for different reasons, want the training program to succeed. Stakeholders include the client or sponsor who requests the course (a university department, company/organization, or individual), the learners, the teachers, and potentially others.[4]

Conducting needs assessment may consist of conducting TSA(Target Situation Analysis), PSA(Present Situation Analysis) and CA (context analysis). All of the above mentioned analyses are conducted in order to find out and analyze the factors that contribute to the success of the course and an ESP course has to be designed accordingly taking into consideration the results of Needs Analysis.

Target Situation Analysis is conducted in order to know what the expectations of the course are. An effective ESP practitioner must study carefully the state standards in which the objectives of the course are stated, interview stakeholders to find out what they expect the learners to be able to do, talk with the learners themselves and discover their personal and professional needs to learn the language. Speaking with other teachers in ESP sphere will also enable the practitioner analyze the experience they had while teaching and study the outcome of their work. Former learners who are currently working in the sphere which is the same as that of target learners can also be very helpful in the process of TSA. They can point out to the ESP practitioner what aspects of language the teacher must focus on and what language or discourse they are facing in their current jobs. The TSA can be conducted in the form of questionnaires, interviews, reading the relevant literature, observing the works of those professionals who have already started working in the field of target learners. After consulting, analyzing and studying the needs of learners an ESP practitioner must find the answers to the following questions: What tasks do the learners need to be able to do by the end of the course? Why is it important for them to perform these tasks in English? Why do learners want or need to learn these skills? [4] The questionnaires given to learners must comprise in itself the questions that help the ESP practitioner to find out their needs. Having analyzed the Sample Needs Assessment questionnaire intended for EAP Learners at ESP Centre of Alexandria University we found that the questions in the questionnaire were carefully constructed and designed to discover the students' needs. The questions in the questionnaire were as follows:

1. *For what immediate purposes do you need to learn/improve your English?*
2. *What activities do you, or will you soon have to, carry out in English?*
3. *Please specify these activities in more detail. Put a check (✓) beside those activities you have to do, or will soon have to do.*
 - a. **Reading:** *What do you have to read, and why?*
 - b. **Listening:** *What do you have to listen to, and why?*
 - c. **Writing:** *What do you have to write, and why?*
 - d. **Speaking:** *What kind of speaking do you have to do, and why?*
4. *Do you have longer-term purposes for learning English? If so, what are they?*
5. *What are your interests, hobbies, etc.? Would improved English help in any of these?*
6. *What aspects of English would you like your English course to cover?*
7. *Describe in 2-3 paragraphs what problems you have in English and what you would like to learn in an English course.*

For the questions 1,2,3,6 possible answers are provided in the questionnaire

and the learners are asked to put them in the rank order of priority. If the answers to these questions are not in the list the learners are asked to specify another answer. Additional questions may be added to the questionnaire and it can be adapted to the context of the higher educational institutions of Uzbekistan. The TSA must be conducted before designing a course and an ESP teacher must meet the learners before the classes start and design the ESP course after careful examination of the results of TSA.

PSA (Present Situation Analysis) is one of the components of Needs Analysis and it is conducted in order to analyze the current state of the learners' English language mastery. If target situation analysis tries to establish what the learners are expected to be like at the end of the language course, present situation analysis attempts to identify what they are like at the beginning of it. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 125) state "a PSA estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, learning experiences." If the destination point to which the students need to get is to be established, first the starting point has to be defined, and this is provided by means of PSA. [2;10] Without analyzing the level of the learners' knowledge it is not possible to design an effective course syllabus. The syllabus designed without TSA can be too easy for the learners with a high level of language mastery or it can be too complex for those who are not very good at it. If the materials in the course syllabus do not match with the learners' current state of language mastery they may lose their interest in the course and demonstrate no motivation. In order to avoid it an ESP practitioner must conduct TSA in the form of placement tests, surveys, interviews and examination of written samples.

The results of the PSA must answer the following questions according to Westerfield (2010)

What are they able to do now in the target language?

What are their strengths and weaknesses in language and skills, and what are their past language learning experiences that can affect how they learn?

Westerfield states that the questions to ask in this process include:

What is their current level of English?

What strengths and weaknesses do they have in speaking, listening, reading, and writing?

What do the learners who will use the curriculum already know about the content area or about the job?

What is their background knowledge in this area?

Which key job skills do they have or lack?

What are their past language learning experiences and expectations?

Why are they attending the course and what are their personal goals? [4; 2] These questions given to the learners together with the analysis of their written and oral speech can help the ESP practitioner to determine their present level of language mastery as well as their knowledge of the area of study or job. The ESP practitioner can interview the teachers who teach the students' major and find out what they have been taught and what is their level of theoretical and practical knowledge and take it into consideration while designing a course.

Another component of Needs Assessment is Content Analysis that analyzes the environment in which the learning will take place. Content Analysis gives the ESP practitioner a chance to analyze the resources of the course such as textbooks, teaching materials, the place where the classes will be conducted, the amount of time given for instruction and many other factors that have an influence on the result of teaching. Westerfield (2010) points out the following factors that have to be considered when defining the context. They include: people, physical setting of the course, nature of

course, teaching resources and time. Sample question for Content Analysis suggested by Westerfield are:

Who are the stakeholders in the proposed course? Why do they want this course to be developed?

How will the training be delivered –traditional face-to-face instruction, online, computer-based, or a combination?

Describe the room used for the course: size, furniture, light, noise.

Is this a new course or one to be revised? Is learner attendance mandatory or optional?

What potential materials are already available to use or adapt for the course?

What day/s of the week and at what time of day will the course be held?

How many total hours will the course be offered? Over what period of time?

List the equipment available: black/whiteboard, overhead projector, CD/ audio cassette player, DVD/videotape player, photocopy machine, computers (how many?), Internet access (What kind: high speed direct connection or dial-up modem), printer.

In conclusion, we can say that success of the language teaching program , especially in ESP largely depends on the course program that meets the requirements and needs of stakeholders of the proposed course. If the ESP teacher conducts Needs Assessment and finds out information about the expectations to the course, the current level of the learners' knowledge, the environment the course will be held and its content, he will be able to design a course program that can be effective, beneficial and yielding expected results.

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