

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' NEEDS OF RELEVANT LANGUAGE SKILL MATERIALS AND FACILITIES : A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE SKILLS CONDUCTED AT THE FACULTY OF LETTERS OF SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY¹

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Abstract : The idea to conduct needs analysis is motivated by the rapid development in English Language which causes many demands of English in the field of education, jobs and careers. Such development motivates the emergence of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which has a great relation to the students' future jobs and careers. As a result, every faculty of letters should equip its students with appropriate language skills, language skill materials and facilities to prepare them in facing their future jobs and careers. Based on such a situation, needs analysis is worth conducting in order to find out what is actually needed by the students. Several factors which will be explained in this study are as follows: the concept of needs, the definition of needs analysis, the general overview about the importance of conducting needs analysis, the right time for implementing needs analysis, the contribution of language skills, etc. The results of all the analysis show the students' opinions on the language skills, language skill materials and facilities. Therefore, they will be useful for improving the teaching and learning processes in every faculty of letters, especially the Faculty of Letters Soegijapranata Catholic University.

Key Words : needs analysis, language skill, Faculty of Letters.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In response to the increasing demands of English language in the field of education, society, jobs and careers, Nababan (1994:132) comments that nowadays, English must be taught in different areas or purposes which are commonly called ESP. The general aim of teaching English is the mastery of a restricted variety of English. Based on such a phenomenon, the teaching and learning of English at every faculty should involve ESP. Since the needs of students become the most important thing, needs analysis should be conducted.

Following Brown (2001:237), for more than six decades now, research and practice in English language teaching has identified the 'four skills', listening, speaking, reading, and writing as paramount importance. Therefore, the emphasis of this study is put strongly on the four language skills.

To be more specific, this research focuses on needs analysis, the evaluation of the four types of language skills, language skill materials, and the available facilities at the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University of Semarang. The purpose of this study is to find out the relevance of the language skill materials taught by the faculty to the students' needs in preparation for their future jobs and careers.

THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF NEEDS

Brindley (1984, cited in Nunan 1988:44) differentiates two types of needs. i.e. "objective" and "subjective" needs. According to him, objective needs are 'those which can be diagnosed by teachers on the basis of analysis of personal data about learners along with information about their language proficiency and patterns of language use' whereas the "subjective needs are often 'wants, desires, expectation, or other psychological manifestation of lacks, cannot be diagnosed as easily, or in many cases, even stated by learners themselves. Based on the concept of needs, there are several students' needs that motivate and support their study. Therefore, every faculty should know about what motivate the students in learning English, especially in relation to their future jobs and careers.

THE DEFINITION OF NEEDS ANALYSIS

As many linguists have different perspectives about needs analysis, there are many definitions about it. One of the definitions as proposed by Nunan (1988:45) is : "needs analysis is a set procedures for specifying the

parameters of a course of study. Such parameters include the criteria and rationale for grouping learners, the selection and sequencing of course content, methodology, and course length, intensity and duration. In the new trend of teaching and learning English, it is now widely accepted as a principle of program that needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives.

A GENERAL OVERVIEW ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CONDUCTING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Some linguists such as Brindley (1984), Richard (1984), Hutchinson and Waters (1986), Nunan (1988), and Jordan (1997) highlight the importance of conducting needs analysis. Brindley says that needs analysis is an essential element in curriculum design (Brindley, 1989). Thus, it is suggested that curriculum development should ideally start with a thorough needs analysis before progressing through another step.

There are some goals in conducting needs analysis. Firstly, it provides a means of obtaining wider input into the content, design and implementation of language program. Secondly, it can be used in developing goals, objectives and content. Thirdly, it can provide data for reviewing and evaluating an existing programme. There are some other goals in conducting needs analysis. However, the writer only focuses on the above mentioned ones.

THE RIGHT TIME FOR IMPLEMENTING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Up till now there is still much controversy about the ideal time to implement needs analysis. Hutchinson and Waters (1986) emphasize needs analysis as a continuing process, in which the conclusion can be checked and reassessed constantly, whereas Jordan (1997:22) states that needs analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabi, courses, materials, and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place.

Facing such a view, the writer has the opinion that needs analysis should not only be conducted at the beginning of syllabus, course, or material design but it has to be done as a continuing process because of the development of the teaching and learning activities that happen all the time. In order to keep up with such development, the students have to be equipped with relevant syllabi, materials, courses, etc.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:685) defines the word skill as the "special ability to do something well especially as gained by learning and practice. Since there is a trend to study English for vocational / professional purposes, the language skills is important for the students to prepare their future jobs and careers.

The ability to use the English language skills is essential in international communication. Students who do not have enough English language skills cannot express themselves clearly even though they have much knowledge in a special field. Tubtintong (1994:127) overviews that skills play a big role to transfer the students' own knowledge into English. He explains "...the use of English refers to linguistics activities or skills, especially reading, speaking, and writing". He further expresses that students have to improve their productive skills as written here : "To achieve the goal of being a competent user of the language, the students should be given every opportunity to practice the four skills in a real communicative context and in an integrative framework". Keeping such a view in mind, this research also attempts to investigate the macro and micro skills offered to the students.

Robinson (1980:68) also emphasizes that: "a skill has to be mastered; it can not simply be explained but must also be extensively practiced". If the students can master their English language skills well, they will not get difficulties in finding their future jobs and careers. This view is also supported by Sandeford (2000:18) who states, "...workers are popular targets for overseas employers as their English skills are good and they have a sound education background."

THE IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALS

The teaching materials play a very important role. In connection with the existing materials used in the jobs and careers, Nababan (1994) says that ESP materials should be appropriate to the specific body of learners. The materials should be suitable to our students, namely their level and age, their language background and culture. Nababan further defines that there should be two major sets of factors that should be taken into account in designing materials.

1. The specific areas in which the language will be used.
 2. The types of learners who will be learning the language.
- In line with this opinion, another linguist (Khoo, 2000) also states that the course syllabi are designed to provide training which is relevant to students' future careers. To keep pace with the technology, regular revisions of syllabi are necessary.

As a conclusion, designing materials is a complex process. It must be preceded by analysis, followed by evaluation, feedback and modification to suit the students' needs and society's demands

There are three items analyzed for this research, namely the language skills, the existed and suggested language skills materials, and the available facilities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FACILITIES

Tubtimtong (1994:127) mentions that facilities are very useful in teaching and learning processes, such as; practising the students' skills, supporting the success and failure of ESP programs, enabling the students to practise their skills in real communication, and becoming the key areas of global growth.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research is descriptive in nature and attempts to achieve the following goals:

1. To identify what is exactly needed by the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata catholic University students in learning English for their future jobs and careers.
2. To find out to what extent all of the needs of the students have been fulfilled so far.
3. To give suggestions to the Faculty of Letters about what English Language Skills, materials for English Language Skills and facilities suit the students' needs.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Several methods of study were applied to obtain some factual information about the students' needs, i.e:

1. administrating questionnaires,

2. interviewing subject coordinators and students, and
3. conducting classroom observations.

The respondents of the questionnaires were the students of the 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 academic year. There were sixty respondents altogether out of the total population of 198 students. The results of all the data from the questionnaire were processed by descriptive statistics methods using the program called SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

In conducting this research, the following procedures were taken. Firstly; some questionnaires which consist of some questions about language skills materials (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) and some questions that deal with the facilities needed by the students were distributed. The questionnaires also asked about the respondents' suggestions in connection with all of the above mentioned questions, and some questions about the students' choices of future jobs.

Secondly; some interviews with the subject coordinators and the Head of the Department were conducted to obtain the language skills' syllabi.

Thirdly; some classroom observations were also conducted to enrich the researcher's understanding about language learning and teaching in the skill courses under investigation. From the classroom observations, certain inferences about what is going on in class can be made (Nunan, 1989:76) The choices in each question were measured on the level of ordinal scale, such as : one, two, three, and four. The numbers show the degree of response. The smallest number was one and the highest number was four. Number four means very important, number three means quite important, number two means important and number one means not important.

The materials of language skills are divided into two parts. They are the existing language skill materials and the Suggested language skill materials.

A sample of the questionnaire items is presented below:

SPEAKING

Existing Speaking Materials

Menurut anda seberapa pentingkah pelajaran Speaking / Berbicara yang diberikan di Fakultas Sastra di bawah ini :

1.	Poetry Reading	4	3	2	1
2.	Games : permainan	4	3	2	1
3.	Story building / strip stories : menyusun suatu cerita	4	3	2	1
4.	Discussions / berdiskusi	4	3	2	1
5.	Debates / for and against : berdebat	4	3	2	1
6.	Projects, mis ; presentasi proposal	4	3	2	1

Suggested Speaking Materials

Menurut anda seberapa pentingkah pelajaran-pelajaran berbicara di bawah ini, jika diberikan di Fakultas Sastra ?

6.	Projects, mis ; presentasi proposal	4	3	2	1
7.	Speaking at Conference : berbicara dalam suatu konferensi	4	3	2	1
8.	Speaking at Seminars : berbicara dalam suatu seminar	4	3	2	1
9.	Speaking on telephone :berbicara dalam telepon	4	3	2	1
10.	Speaking at meetings :berbicara dalam suatu pertemuan	4	3	2	1
11.	Speaking in formal situations : berbicara dalam situasi formal, misalnya : memberi sambutan pada suatu pesta	4	3	2	1

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The descriptive statistics method (SPSS) consists of four concepts, they are the Mean (M), Maximum (Max), Minimum (Min), and Standard Deviation (SD). The Mean is the average value of each variable. It is used to give some general impression about the level of importance of each variable. The Maximum means the highest score of the respondents' choices of answers, for instance "sangat penting" (very important) and the Minimum

is the lowest score of the respondents' choice of answer, for example; "tidak penting" (not important) The Standard Deviation is a measure of how far items in a data set are from their means. As the actual values become more widely scattered about their means, the standard deviations becomes larger and larger. If all the items in a series are identical in value, there is no spread or scatter of values about the mean, the standard deviation is zero.

Some examples of the results of data analysis can be seen in the following table:

The Existing Language Skill Materials

	Name of subjects	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev.
Reading	Word Study	2	4	3,65	0,54
	Reading for General Inf.	2	4	3,41	0,59
	Pronoun Reference	2	4	2,94	0,75
	Purpose	1	4	2,67	0,84
	Scanning	1	4	3,05	0,88
Listening	Listening to TOEFL	1	4	3,59	0,65
	Listening to Lectures	1	4	3,47	0,71
	Listening to Information	2	4	2,84	0,81
	Listening to friends	1	4	2,71	0,95
Speaking	Prepared Speeches	2	4	3,64	0,55
	Dialogue	2	4	3,49	0,57
	Debates / For and Against	1	4	3,54	0,66
	Poetry Reading	1	4	2,84	0,81
	Singing and Discussions	1	4	2,74	0,81
Writing	Research Proposal Writing	2	4	3,46	0,60
	Coherence	2	4	3,44	0,60
	Writing Technique	2	4	3,39	0,65
	Classification Writing	1	4	2,95	0,82
	Certainty Writing	1	4	2,98	0,88

The Suggested Language Skill Materials

	Name of subjects	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev.
Reading	Reading Company Regulation	2	4	3,25	0,66
	Reading Legal Documents	1	4	3,16	0,83
	Reading Short messages	1	4	2,97	0,84
	Reading Authentic Materials	1	4	2,71	0,86
	Reading University Catalogue	1	4	2,52	0,88
Listening	Listening to Conversations	1	4	3,36	0,70
	Listening to Class Discussion	1	4	3,10	0,74
	Listening to the news from Radio/TV	1	4	3,26	0,79
	Listening to Conference	1	4	3,03	0,86
	Listening to Telephone Conversations	1	4	3,05	0,87
Speaking	Speaking at Seminars	1	4	3,37	0,72
	Speaking at Meetings	1	4	3,33	0,74
	Speaking at Conference	1	4	3,19	0,83
	Speaking in Formal Situation	1	4	3,12	0,93
Writing	Legal Document Writing	2	4	3,39	0,62
	E-mail Messages Writing	2	4	3,33	0,64
	Report Writing	2	4	3,30	0,66
	Internet Writing	2	4	3,18	0,72
	Company Brochures Writing	2	4	3,15	0,76

The Available Facilities

Name of Facility	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev.
Faculty Library	2	4	3,61	0,56
OHP	2	4	3,60	0,59
Language Lab	2	4	3,54	0,61
VCD_Player	2	4	3,41	0,70
Central Library	2	4	3,14	0,74
Radio	1	4	2,96	0,84

The Suggested Facilities

Name of Facility	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev.
More periodical Journal	3	4	3,53	0,50
Clipping	2	4	3,54	0,61
More Novels and Text Books	2	4	3,49	0,66
Open Access Center	2	4	3,35	0,67
Wall Magazine	1	4	3,23	0,71

Even though the results of the analysis show that in general, all the existing and suggested language skill materials and facilities are well accepted by the students and most of them are considered important, there are still some drawbacks in every language skill, language skill materials and available facilities. This is indicated by some of the comments about the materials, such as monotonous, boring, uninteresting, etc whereas some of the facilities are rather out of date, damaged and need to be renewed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, the Faculty of Letters should pay attention to the students' suggestions, especially those concerning the Existing Language Skills materials which are considered the most important, i.e Word Study, Listening to TOEFL, Prepared Speeches, and Research Proposal Writing. Those which are considered not so important, are Purpose Reading, Listening to Description, Poetry Reading, and Certainty Writing.

The very important language skill materials should be given more frequently whereas the less important materials should be further evaluated. Some of the language skill materials, which seem to be monotonous, boring and rather out of date should be renewed and changed. There should be interesting topics for all the language skill materials to arouse the students' desire to learn. The Suggested Language Skills materials, which are considered very important should be added, i.e Reading Company Regulation, Listening to Conversation, Speaking at Seminars, and Legal Document Writing. Lastly, the research also finds that almost all of the available facilities are considered very important, i.e Language lab, OHP, and VCD Player. Therefore, they should be maintained, improved, and updated. Besides, some new and modern facilities should also be added.

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