

Assessment of ITP Learners' English: A Needs Analysis

Nguyen Minh Nhut

The International Collaboration and Project Promotion Department, Tra Vinh University, Tra Vinh province, Vietnam

Abstract—This study is to seek out learners' needs of International Training Program (ITP) English course (batch 58) at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in India. Thirty participants involved in the survey come from nine different countries. The questionnaire-based survey is designed with a focus on two main categories: Target situation analysis (TSA) and Present situation analysis (PSA), which is based on the adaptation of the theoretical frameworks of Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and of Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The result of TSA has shown that Office job and Social communication are learners' main purposes for this English course. Two most important elements that the learners expect to develop from this course are oral communication and listening skills, and linguistic knowledge of grammar and pronunciation. Meanwhile, the finding of PSA has indicated vocabulary as their most difficult element. The majority of learners perceive that they are at the third current level of English proficiency, whereas speaking skills are most frequently used in the workplace. Finally, this study has indicated the proportional relation of PSA to those of TSA. The overall finding contributes to the design for a proper English specific course for learners' needs in the future.

Index Terms—learners' needs, present situation analysis, target situation analysis, English course, ITP

I. INTRODUCTION

The demand of English for the pursuit to a specific purpose is increasingly high. For example, students who wish to undertake their overseas study have to meet a certain standard of English proficiency in academic purpose, or those who wish to work in a company need English for business purpose in the workplace. Therefore, while the demand of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is increasing and the proficiency of English to meet an individual's purpose is necessary in the workplace, educational settings and so forth, an assessment of learners' need is regarded as a necessary initial step towards a proper ESP course. Despite this crucial part, an assessment of learners' actual needs in connection with their current backgrounds is a new aspect at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in India where it hosts international students to join short English courses. Therefore, a research study on needs analysis to these subjects at EFLU is worth doing.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which was developed in the 1960's, has aroused scholars' interests over the past years. Hutchinson and Waters indicate three reasons for the emergence of ESP, which originated from the demand for English as an international language in the economic settings. For the demand of an English course, the study of linguistics at grammatical level in connection with reality has emerged. The author's core idea is that the features that English are used in a particular situation should be included as part of the course design for learners. This has brought English into different purposes (Swales, 1985) in which learners' need plays a key role and the educational psychology is one of the main factors (Rodgers, 1969). This whole development forms ESP.

There are different stages associated with the development of ESP. In the 1960's, register analysis was focused in order to identify the characteristics of grammar and vocabulary, on which it was then developed into teaching materials. However, the second stage looked at its development in the contact of discourse analysis in order to gain insight into a specialised field. If the first two stages examined the ESP development at language level, the third stage found out the reason that learners learn, which led to a closer examination about target needs as their main purpose. In the 1980's, the fourth stage drove to a higher level; that was the application of skills and strategies of learners into language use, which led to the development of materials in order to meet this demand. However, a learning-centred approach in the fifth stage was broader as it emphasised the process of language learning. In this final stage, an ESP course is designed towards meeting learners' needs. In order to reach this aim, the important elements of language description, learning models and needs analysis need to be taken into consideration as they constitute an approach to course design. This is as important as how a course is developed; that is, it examines syllabus and material designs including theories of learning in relation to the process of course and learner evaluation. The final point in the learning-centred approach to ESP is the role of teachers who get involved in all factors of course design and have to adapt to a new environment with a group of learners from diversified backgrounds.

During the course of development, the aspect of needs analysis in ESP is one of the central points for discussion. In fact, on the theoretical backgrounds of ESP, numerous studies have been investigated on different aspects of ESP that emphasize the importance of relating ESP course design to learners' current needs. Despite of their contributions to ESP

field, some gaps need to be filled. Indeed, although many research studies have indicated the importance of learners' goal and examined their present needs for a proper course design, little empirical research has shown evidence of the proportional relation between the elements of Present Situation and those of Target Situation in order to prove that such a careful examination will drive an ESP course to be designed more properly. Furthermore, in Indian context, little research on ESP has been found in an international learning perspective; that is, learners of English who come from diversified backgrounds. Therefore, this research aims to identify the proportional correlation between the elements in Present Situation and in Target Situation. This study expects to provide future researchers with a reference of data source for an examination of a proper ESP course design.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definitions and Classifications

Scholars have defined ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in different ways. Strevens (1988) examines ESP on its characteristics, i.e. proper design in order to meet learners' specific need including proper content to a particular activity and its appropriate language at different aspects, and in contrast with General English. According to Robinson (1991), ESP is defined on two key criteria and a number of characteristics. The former characterizes goal-directed that ESP courses are developed from a needs analysis, whereas the latter considers the element of time bound, in which activities and goal have to be attained with a specific period of time. Moreover, Crocker (1981) looks at ESP course as a means that a learner uses for their future career. In order to make this point clear, the author compares general English courses with ESP courses, in which the former focuses on language proficiency as the main goal while the latter has no ends but rather a medium or an approach to learning teaching.

ESP is classified by category. According to Robinson (1991), ESP consists of two branches, i.e. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes or English for Educational Purposes (EAP/EEP). However, these two branches are then divided into smaller branches by experience rather than by profession. In a different way of classification, ESP consists of two main branches by professional area: EAP and EOP; however, each of which is then divided into smaller branches (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

B. Needs Analysis

Different concepts of needs and needs analysis are brought into discussion in ESP field. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) examine needs under necessities, wants and lacks; whereas it is described as objective and subjective, target situation/goal-oriented and learning, process-oriented and product-oriented (Brindley, 1989); perceived and felt (Berwick, 1989). Robinson (1991) states that learners' needs will be affected by analysis team, which means that needs will possibly be categorised into different sets based on different viewpoints of the analysts. Regarding needs analysis, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) conclude all these approaches including target situation analysis and present situation analysis; objective needs, subjective needs and learning needs; wants, means and lacks; and linguistic analysis.

Needs analysis is also examined in relation to syllabus. According to Hawkey (1980), needs analysis is the foundation for a course design, which is similar to that by McDonough (1984). This means that the information about the learners' need will help create a profile that consists of crucial elements such as objectives of their language needs. Similarly, Schutz and Derwing (1981) place the importance of learners' goal against a program, which is further explained that if there is a close examination of learners' goal, this will help include it as a learning objective into the teaching program. Furthermore, a study by Sasikala (2012) indicates that some of the students in ESP course felt dissatisfied with the ESP course they were taking since their learning needs were not met.

Moreover, Nunan (1988) establishes strong connection between the syllabus of learners and teachers; that is, both should involve in information exchange. This process is important because the goal of learners may not align with that of the teachers as Riddell (1991) states "...the course designer becomes equipped to match up the content of the program with the requirements of the student." Similarly, Crocker (1981) explains that the learning objectives should be involved in a process of negotiation between teachers and learners. This stresses the central importance of learners during the learning process, in which teachers take role as a facilitator rather than directly transmitting knowledge to learners. One more important point that Swales (1980) adds is to incorporate the learners' cultural backgrounds and habits into the program in order to maximize the learning results and arouse learners' interests.

With regard to ESP, some recent research studies have been investigated. Francisco (2018) indicates the effectiveness of designing a lesson plan for engineering English course by applying content and language integrated learning approach as part of the syllabi of ESP courses in bilingual context. Erandi Kithulgoda et al. (2020) examine the development of materials for a business English course, in which it focuses on lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features. The result suggests an effective design of the materials in L2 classroom. In Indian context, a few research studies on ESP have been investigated. Mortaza (2012) stresses the importance of the crucial factors such as learner, setting, means and situation to localizing ESP materials design; however, it does not deal with statistical analysis of the elements and their relations in learners' specific present situation and target situation. From another angle of ESP, Smrutisikta Mishra (2014) indicates that teacher is an important factor in ESP course that requires a high competence in English language and expertise. Another study by Clement and Murugavel (2015) identifies a big gap between

professors' competence in teaching English class of engineering and the need of their professional development. This study focuses more on teachers' than on learners' need. Similarly, Biswanandan Dash (2015) points out that students' competency should be needs-oriented with a further suggestion on a design of an ESP-based course.

Although a review of literature has indicated that the studies have dealt with ESP issues, they do not truly touch on correlation between the elements of Target Situation and of Present Situation. Therefore, this research study attempts to fill this gap by identifying to what extent the elements of Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and of Target Situation Analysis (TSA) has proportional relation. To address this issue, the study applies TSA and PSA as two main approaches for needs analysis. By doing this, this study focuses on making assessment of learners' present situation, expectation and goal of an International Training Program (ITP) English course. In order to reach this objective, the study attempted to address three questions:

(1) What is the most important element of Target Situation that the learners are expecting to improve from the ITP course?

(2) What is the most difficult problem of Present Situation that the learners are facing?

(3) To what extent are the elements of Present Situation proportionally congruent with those of Target Situation?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This study was conducted through a questionnaire survey on 30 International Training Program (ITP) learners who took English course-batch 58 at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in India. They obtained qualifications of diploma, bachelor's and master's degrees and gained experience in English learning with various years from 2 to 22 years and above.

The participants' age ranged from 25-38 and came from different countries (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Niger, Coast D'Ivoire, Malaysia, Palestine, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Myanmar). The number of male and female participants in this survey is 17 and 13, respectively. However, the consideration of gender element is random as it was assumed not a decisive factor to the study result, and the participants were selected on the objective basis of the available number in ITP English course. They were all officials in their home countries and were taking different job positions including English teacher, Air traffic controller, Diplomat, Accountant, Official, Assoc. Director and Translator.

The technique of random sampling was applied in the study as the participants joined the same ITP English course and came from diversified backgrounds.

B. Instrument

Overall, the questionnaire was designed on the adaptation of the theoretical frameworks that consisted of learners' present situation and target situation by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), and target needs and learning needs by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). On this basis, twelve questions were written with two open questions and ten closed questions of various types including checklist, rating scale and ranking order. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts. Part 1 was to find out the learners' personal and professional backgrounds. Part 2 was designed for Present Situation Analysis (PSA). To be more specific, a present situation assessment of learners' English comprised the elements: English background, present level of English, English skills mostly used in the workplace, skills-based tasks performed in the workplace, and learners' difficulties in English. The last part dealt with Target Situation Analysis (TSA) that focused on three main points. The first point was to understand the main purpose and the expectation of the learners from this International Training Program (ITP) English course. The second point sought out the tasks and activities that they wish to do in such this English course and the third point was the time bound related to their convenience to take part in the course.

Prior to the survey, the questionnaire was sent to the learners of ESP course in order to check its clarification including language use. More importantly, the relevance of the questionnaire contents was examined and suggested for improvement by an ESP expert before the official survey was conducted.

This study was undertaken on the basis of the participants' consensus. Prior to the survey, a clear guidance was provided to the participants including the purpose and their voluntary rights to this research study. The questionnaire content was understandable to the participants of various diversified backgrounds. The participants completed the survey on a given time. The data was then collected, processed and analyzed on the statistical software system.

The questionnaire is also SPSS-based checked for its reliability. With regard to the participants' difficulties in English, the indicator of Cronbach Alpha is 0.933 and all the indicators of the corrected Item-Total correlation of five items are ≥ 0.3 , which shows the reliability of these variables in this category. For the category of the main purpose of learners' English improvement, Cronbach's Alpha is 0.867 and all the six items are ≥ 0.3 . The index of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.880 for the category of learners' expectation by skill and all the observed variables are higher than ≥ 0.3 . Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha reaches 0.785 in the category of learners' expectation by linguistic and all the items is ≥ 0.3 . Therefore, the results ensure the reliability of the questionnaire questions.

However, one challenge during the process of data collection was that some expected participants refused to involve in the study. Some reasons were due to their unpreparedness for both the availability of time and interest. In order to

deal with this problem, the questionnaire was then given to other participants as planned; therefore, this problem did not basically affect the study process.

IV. RESULTS

The findings of the assessment of participants' needs in English are discussed by each category.

A. Present Situation Analysis

TABLE 1.
CURRENT LEVEL OF ENGLISH PERCEIVED BY LEARNERS AND SKILLS MOST FREQUENTLY USED IN THE WORKPLACE

Current level of English (%) From 5 to 1 (From least to most proficiency)					Skills	Most frequently used in workplace (%) From 1 to 4 (From most priority to least priority)			
5	4	3	2	1		1	2	3	4
11	22	56	11	0	Listening	0	50	25	25
11	33	45	11	0	Writing	50	25	12.5	12.5
22	22	45	11	0	Reading	25	25	25	25
33	33	12	22	0	Speaking	50	0	12.5	37.5

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the learners perceived that they were at the 3rd current level of English proficiency. Whereas speaking and writing skills were their priority in the workplace with equal number of 50%, reading skills were also necessary for their jobs (25%). However, listening skills was least required by the participants.

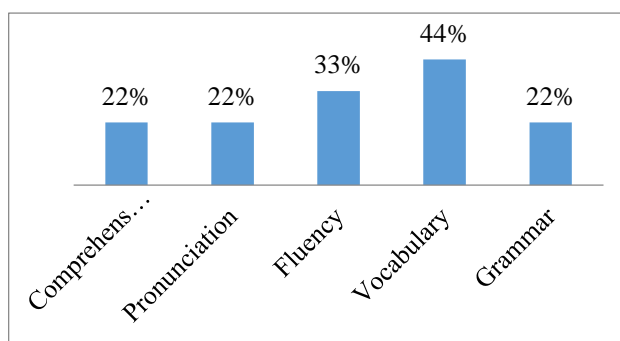


Figure 1. Learners' Difficulties in English

With regard to their difficulties in English as in Figure 1, vocabulary was the biggest barrier to the learners (44%) along with fluency (33%), whereas three elements (comprehension, pronunciation and grammar) were equal with 22%.

B. Target Situation Analysis

TABLE 2.
THE MAIN PURPOSE OF LEARNERS' ENGLISH IMPROVEMENT (N=30)

Purpose	Percentage (%)
Office job	29
Social communication	23
Research	18
Teaching	18
Translation	6
Higher education	6

Overall, among all the learners in the survey, the most important purpose was to improve English for Office job with the highest number of 29%, which was followed by Social communication (23%). While Research and Teaching shared the equal figure (18%), the elements of Translation and Higher education did not receive much of their concern with the lowest percentages (6%).

TABLE 3.
LEARNERS' EXPECTATION BY SKILL (N=30)

Expectation by skill	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Oral Communication	.33	.479	.088
Listening	.23	.430	.079
Written Communication	.17	.379	.069
Reading	.17	.379	.069
Translation skills	.10	.305	.056

TABLE 4.
LEARNERS' EXPECTATION BY LINGUISTIC (N=30)

Expectation by linguistic	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary	.30	.466	.085
Pronunciation	.27	.450	.082
Grammar	.27	.450	.082
Spelling	.17	.379	.069

In Table 3, Oral communication (mean=0.33) received the highest expectation about English improvement among the learners, followed by listening with a fairly high figure (mean=0.23). Written communication and Reading skills were less required with the equal figure (mean=0.17) and the least expectation about this course was Translation skills (mean=0.10).

With regard to linguistic elements illustrated in Table 4, the learners expected to increase vocabulary (mean=0.30), and grammar and pronunciation was in their second list of expectation (mean=0.27). However, they did not pay much attention to Spelling element that showed the lowest mean. The comparative figures in table 3 and 4 also indicated a close correlation between oral communication and vocabulary; that is, vocabulary is the most significant element that the learners need for oral communication.

Apart from the current situation, main purpose and expectation, three more elements that were included in this questionnaire were classroom tasks, activities and time. In particular, Listening and Fluency in speech were the most two important things that the learners wish to include in class. While Group work is preferred by the majority of the learners during the learning class hours, the remaining learners opted for Topic presentation, Play role and free discussions. Regarding Time, the most convenient time that the learners could take part in the class was morning and afternoon on weekdays while none of them was free in the evening or weekends.

Some learners also provided some additional information in the opened questions. For instance, most learners pointed out English activities that they usually do in free time such as listening to music, audio/video, watching English movies, speaking English and reading English books. Meanwhile, a few learners also left some comments, e.g. the selection of students for an ITP course should emphasize more on their actual need instead of documentational need.

V. DISCUSSION

The research study has reached its objectives of the learners' needs in two aspects of Target situation and Present situation. Regarding learners' need, Oral communication is the most important skills for their improvement. This result is consistent with Abdelgawad et al.'s (2012) study that the students expect to improve their speaking skills among the four skills. Their aim of the improvement in oral communication is proportional to their expectation. To be specific, Fluency in speech should be an important element in class. The expectation for this skill is in line with the improvement in vocabulary which is the most expected linguistic aspect, so that they will be able to use it for oral communication in reality. This is again consistent with Biswanandan's (2015) study that language activities should focus on lexicon and pronunciation.

Their expectation is also in connection with the necessity of English use when vocabulary is the biggest challenge in their present situation. Moreover, the possibility that the learners' expectation for their main purpose and improvement in skills and linguistic features is associated with their personal and professional backgrounds. This result supports the conclusion by Alderson and Urquhart (1983) that further research should be carried out in order to get more in-depth understanding about the correlation between linguistic proficiency and other factors, especially background knowledge.

As mentioned, although they were taking different job positions, most of which require good command of social communication such as diplomat and English teachers, and many learners were taking office jobs such as accountant and official. This result is consistent with study by Mohamed Benhima et al. (2012), which indicated that communication with other people is the top factor with the highest percentage (63.5%).

With regard to classroom activities, the learners expect to include fluency and listening in class. This strengthens the result of PSA that fluency is their weakness (which ranks second as their learner's difficulties) and in TSA that oral communication and listening skills are put in their first and second priority for their expectation. From the PSA and TSA, it is clearly seen that despite their different backgrounds, they mostly encounter the same problems and meet the same purpose for their plan of English study. This increases the data reliability and validity that the elements of vocabulary and oral communication are the most prominent and urgent as their expectation for an ESP course. This finding is supported by Alderson and Urquhart's (1985) conclusion that there is an interaction between knowledge backgrounds and linguistic proficiency.

Moreover, the participants from the diversified cultural backgrounds contribute to the significance of designing an ESP course in the era of global education. Indeed, Swales (1980) mentions that the aspects of culture and habits of learners play important role in ESP program.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has answered the three questions through the analysis of the learners' present situation and target situation. From PSA, the study has identified the learners' difficulties in English learning, their current level of English

proficiency and the role of English in their workplace; meanwhile, TSA has indicated their main purpose and expectation from this ITP English course. Moreover, it shows proportional relation of the elements in learners' present situation to those in their target situation about their aim and expectation. Furthermore, it has evaluated the learners' needs in English at three important aspects, i.e. necessities, wants, and lacks on the basis of two main categories of present situation analysis and target situation analysis. Finally, this study has depicted a more overview picture of learners' needs that hopes to contribute as theoretical reference source to developing an English specific course based on their needs in a next study. From the overall analysis of all the elements of learners' needs, the scope of this study has developed an ESP course as a future plan (as illustrated in the annex).

Nevertheless, this research study still leaves some limitations. First, the methodological approach to this research is questionnaire as the main tool for the understanding of learners' perception about language learning and teaching. Therefore, future research should apply another methodology in order to elicit more data on learners' need. Another challenge is with the number. For each batch, the number of learners who join ITP course is limited as it is allocated against the enrolment regulation of the university and their home institutions. This resulted in the small-sized sample which was taken in this survey. Therefore, more studies on ITP learners of next consecutive batches could be conducted in order to get more data for analysis. Finally, time is another challenging factor. Since each batch of ITP learners lasts only approximately three months, this survey on each participant has taken their available time into consideration. Therefore, the questionnaire was used as the main tool in my research in order to ensure sufficient time for the involvement of the participants.

APPENDIX. ENGLISH SPECIFIC COURSE DESIGN PLAN

English course plan (as per need)	Class activities	Time
ORAL COMMUNICATION - Pronunciation - Fluency in speech - Speaking with grammatical correctness - Increase vocabulary	- Group work - Topic presentation - Play role - Discussion	Weekdays afternoon
LISTENING - Understanding new vocabulary, grammar - Join seminar/conference - Video/audio	- Group work - Topic presentation - Play role - Discussion	Weekdays morning

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Nguyen Minh Nhut is a staff member and a lecturer at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam. In 2016-2018, the author did master's degree in India, in which he conducted a research on ESP field. He holds a Master's degree in Linguistics. Email address: nguyenminhnhut74@gmail.com or nguyenminhnhut74@tvu.edu.vn