Defining Needs Analysis and Stakeholders' Perspectives

Language for Specific Purposes
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What is Needs Analysis?

- Should be the first step in the course-design cycle
- “The systematic analysis of what learners need in order to operate in the target communicative situation”
- Based on the gap/difference between the learners’ current and target abilities
- Differentiation between current and target needs

Defining Needs Analysis

“The systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining and validating a defensible curriculum”

Experience with needs analysis

All language courses are informed by a needs analysis to a greater or lesser extent.

If you have teaching experience, give an example where you tried to accommodate learners' needs in your teaching.

If you do not have teaching experience, how do you think you might be able to reflect student needs in your teaching?

To what extent do you think the needs of the student can be reflected in an ESP course?

Whose needs are important?

How do you think needs can be assessed?

When do you think needs analysis should be carried out?

Need Analysis Research

- In the 1970s, the Council of Europe's work was driven by the language needs of the European Union.
- Needs were considered a "target situation analysis"--referring to the language required to function in the discipline setting.
  - Ex) in EBP—a textual and vocabulary analysis of a business report

Needs Analysis Research

- John Munby's communicative needs processor (CNP) model is a text-based model that identifies parameters of processing to produce a profile of needs.
- It analyzes needs with a high level of precision by considering factors such as setting, attitude, etc.
- However, the micro-focus of CNP makes it complex and difficult to apply to real-life situations.

A Shifting Focus

- Early work in needs analysis tended to focus on language analysis for the target situation, which continues today in a more contextualized manner through genre, discourse analysis, and corpora.
- Hutchinson and Waters were the first to focus on learner rather than exclusively on the discourse of the target situation, making ESP more personally relevant to learners.

https://youtu.be/VWq6vOKgZks

Learners' Current Levels

- We must consider the learners' current language competence–this is also referred to as "present situation analysis."
- "Lacks" focus on the difference in skills between the current and target situations.
- West (1994) considers learners' pedagogic needs: the learning strategies required for ESP.

Considering Learners' Needs

- What do learners want or think they need?
- A learner's analysis may not be accurate since the student may not be fully aware of what the target situation requires.
- Finally, we must also consider the "constraints," or limitations; this is also called "means analysis" and considers resources like staff, materials, and classrooms.

Synonyms for Needs Analysis

adapted from Brown (2016)

- Wants
- Desires
- Necessities
- Lacks
- Gaps
- Motivations
- Deficiencies
- Requirements
- Requests
- Pre-requisites
- Essentials
- x+1 (x= what the learner already knows)

Stretch Break!

Learners' Current Levels

- Early views considered needs analysis to be objective and neutral, but any ESP situation has many stakeholders, such as:
  - Students
  - Teachers
  - Governing bodies/administrators
  - Sponsors
  - Employees

Differences

- The perception of needs, wants, lacks, and constraints may differ between the stakeholders' views and the actual requirements of target communicative situations.
- For example, Jasso-Aguilar's 2005 study on the needs of hotel cleaning staff in Hawaii demonstrated that the stakeholders had different perceptions of the target situation.

Important Research

- This study highlighted the critical perspective in ESP, which considers students' rights.
- Stakeholders may not be aware of students' needs.
- Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguished needs from wants
  - Needs are…
  - Wants are…

Needs and Wants

- In the Hawaii study, the staff did not NEED much English, but the hotel wanted them to speak it to improve their image.
- The communicative system: “a network with all members impacting on the needs.”
  - All stakeholders impact the system.
  - “An immediate network of interlocutors”

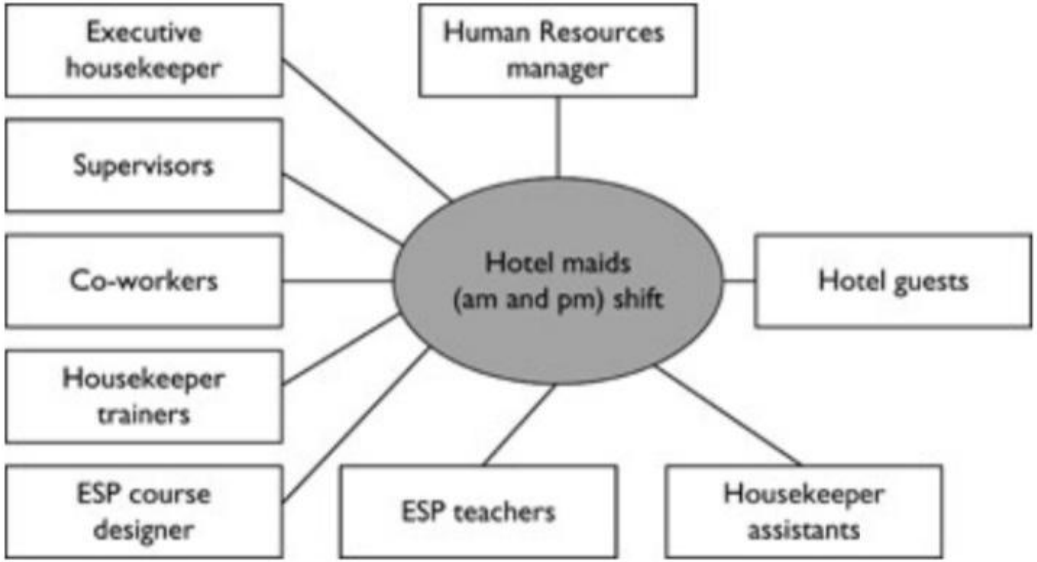

Figure 2.2 Network of stakeholders in ESP course: needs analysis

Source: based on Jasso-Aguilar (2005).

Additional Stakeholders

- Current practitioners, domain experts, past students, and past teachers may assist course designers.
- Current and past research methodologies and literature should be taken into account.
- Consider needs and data from a large range of sources to ensure the needs identified for analysis will be met.

Summarizing Today

- What is needs analysis?
- What research has been done?
- What is a corpus?
- What are synonyms for needs analysis?
- Give examples of stakeholders.
- Compare and contrast needs and wants.

Questions

?

Collaborative Activity

Design an ESP class for a group of indigenous tour guides from the Pulinguí community.

Most learners are at an A1-A2 level.

You do not have a projector, only a whiteboard.

Teach vocabulary related to mountain trekking.