PROS AND CONS OF NEED ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

Would English for specific purpose (ESP) accomplish all needs of its learners? Mostly ESP is stereotyped as a concern to make English language courses relevant to lecturers' needs. In 1950s, it emerged with the need to prepare a growing number of non-English oriented programs such as English for nurses, engineers, doctors and scientists who had already mastered General English (Rechards, 2001, p.28; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987 cited in Clapam, 1996, P.2) From 1960s, it was realised that such learners needed "Advance English" or "Colloqial English" or "Specialised English", whatever that was, but training in the kind of English that learners would use or encounter in their specific occupation and situations" (Richards,2001,p.29). Many ESP text books of 1960s were based on special varieties of English such as "Scientific English", "Business English", "Technical English" and "Special Purposed English" (Richards,2001,p.29). ESP is identified as different from General English due to its emphasis on training in specific purposes than on education. However, it has been criticized on the fact that it trains learners to do only specific tasks in vocationally related English. Moreover, ESP focuses much on utility of language than on education. Consequently, some learners are competent in using English in Management, Science or Law. They do write reports or make presentations in those subjects domains well, but they fail to fulfill simple language requirements such as telephoning or even greeting a person. ESP course designers should take in to account that an ESP learner should not merely have training in vocationally specialized English, but he should also be competent in General English and Basic Communication Skills(BICS), most of all with "All Purpose English".

It is emphasized that need analysis should focus not only on the existence of needs' but with an awareness of the target learning situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, pp.53-63). Since 1970s, in the first generation of ESP, it was only based on register analyses and discourse analysis. Later on, the view that a syllabus should be restricted to the specific needs of learners that can be identified and that should determine the content of any course became prominent (Richards, 2001, pp. 32-33). A needs analysis includes procedures for collecting information of learners' needs through interviewers, questionnaire surveys etc. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, pp.53-63). The focus on real-life needs of learners is motivating. English would be a part of learners' lives than in teach General English, in which language structures on grammar would be presented in isolation. It is believed that the expectations of the learners and their demands can be satisfied.

Katherine Graves claims that a needs analysis is seen by many teachers as an ongoing part of teaching, as it builds a rapport with students and their needs, mostly it would meet their needs (1996,pp.14-15). It is mostly conducted prior to a planning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmed in order to understand the purposes for which learners need a language. However, it can also be conducted in three stages such as in 1) the planning stage, 2) the teaching stage and 3) the re-planning stage (Graves, 1996, p.14; Richards, 2001, p.33). Is it only learners involved in needs analysis? Richterich and Chancery proposed that learners, teachers and employers could all be involved in determining learners need (1978 cited in Richards, 2001, p.33).

ESP pays a great emphasis on the content and activities of syllabus (Nunun, 1988, p.11). "Assumptions about learners' purpose in understanding a language course, as well as the syllabus designers ' benefits about the nature of language and learning have a marked influence on the shape of the syllabus, on which the course is based " (Nunun , 1988, pp.13). In that sense, needs analysis has reflective effect on the success of a course (Dudley Evans and St. John 1988, pp.9). According to Stevens (1988), advantages of needs analysis in ESP include 1) a focus on the learners' needs, it wastes no time, 2) relevance to the learners, 3) effectiveness in imparting knowledge and 4) cost effectiveness(in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1988,pp.9).Moreover, it would reflect how learners as well as course designers prefer to learn or teach subjects-specific materials (Dudley Evans and St. John 1998,p.9). When subject specialized materials are used the learners would not feel that they are wasting time on learning General English, and the time is efficiently utilized 9 (West, 1994 cited in Basturkmen, 2006).

Munby's (1978) model of needs analysis: Communicative needs Processor (CNP) include a highly detailed set of systematic procedures for discovering targets situation needs. However, it is criticized by many as it only produces a subjective and arbitrary list of linguistic features of learners' needs of the target situation. According to Hutchinson and waters, the main problem with Burnaby's model is that it did not take account of the students themselves. Their excising skills, interests, language learning wishers and psycholinguistic elements, and it is impractical (Mead, 1982, cited in clapham, 1996, p.5). It producers profiles of imaginary students (Richards, 2001, p.36), and it has not been supported by a sound theoretical precepts or empirically verified (Clapham, 1996, p.5).

What is the validity of analyzing learners' needs? It can be limited only to the learners' point of view, prior knowledge or stereotypical views of learning English. On the contrary, learners' views are heterogeneous, so it would be really difficult to come to a compromise with different needs. Therefore, lack of a criterion for assessing the validity of needs analysis is a main disadvantage of it. In a repots on needs analysis, Craig Chadron presents a sample need analysis conducted in the University of Hawaii with a group of learners learning Korean as a foreign language. The study depicted how the group has no real need of learning Korean beyond satisfying a college language requirement. "Needs assessment is clearly a sensible undertaking when students have real-life language needs and a context for using the language skills gained in the class (Graves, 1996, p.15). It would reveal what linguistic elements the learners need. However, the problem is that are those elements the only requirements of them, and wont' the other elements needed Although passive voice is common in ESP, the learners still need both active and passive voices (Hutchinson and Waters, pp 157-167).But it is identified that the language needs of learners vary little with different subjects.

How can an ESP teacher move beyond the needs analysis in designing a course? Hutchinson and Waters present a model for the ESP syllabus designer: to find text from different specializations and get the learners to analyze the language, and findout what makes one subject text different from another. Also, the harmonious corporation between the ESP teacher and the subject specialist would solve the loop holes in need analysis, as the ESP teacher can make the subject specialist more aware of the language problems that the learners face, and on the other hand, the subject specialist can help the ESP teacher about the language requirements in the learners' target situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, pp.157-167).

In need analysis, questionnairs are mostly used. However, a problem with such a method is that teachers have to be careful not to used subjective questions which can impose their view on learners, which would make the needs analysis a result of the teachers' view of a course and its content. In that sense, need analysis can be used to support a political or economical agenda of a "monolithic supremacy" (Richards, 2001, p.144). Different stakeholders will want different things from a curriculum. In foreign language teaching the debate over skill-based sullabus versus academically based instructions in language teaching shows how most of the English language courses move away from academic studies towards socio economical value of learning.

In conclusion, needs analysis is helpful to a certain extend to understand the degree of knowledge, skills are to be developed, participants' perspective, motivation, ability and expectations. Yet, learners' view can be limited and subjective on economical or policitcal grounds. In designing a course, curriculum developers should draw their understanding on learners' need as well as basic communication skills outside the subject domains and should strike a balance between diverse and subjective perspectives of the learners, teachers and stakeholders.

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