Research Paper　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Open Access**

Needs Analysis in ESP Course Design for Staff Of Samsung Company

Do Thi My Lan
(Basic Science Division, Thuy Loi University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)

I.　　DESCRIPTION OF THE ESP TARGET GROUP

The ESP target group consists of 30 Samsung salespeople who have been employed for at least 2 years. They are all Vietnamese natives aged 22 to 35, with the majority (70%) being 25-30 years old. 67% are female and 33% are male. They all hold university degrees, with 36% having studied English as a major. English is a critical part of their job, as they need to communicate with international superiors and customers and read English texts, catalogues, and letters. They all passed the English-language interview to work at Samsung. Their English proficiency ranges from elementary (42%), to intermediate (51%), to advanced (7%). They are motivated to attend English classes to enhance their oral skills and improve their English language proficiency to an advanced level.

II. APPROACHES TO NEEDS ANALYSIS

The issues relating to introduction of needs analysis and review of need analysis approach are presented in this section.

1. Introduction of Needs Analysis

Needs analysis (also known as needs assessment) play a vital role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course, either in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or general English course. All of them seem to share the same implied characteristics: needs analysis is based on their concept of needs analysis around the terms "necessities," "lacks," "wants," and "gaps " but needs analysis has been defined in a number of different ways.

Why we should conduct needs analysis is the first question which is often stated when we carry on designing a course. The main reason for this, As Nunan (1988) provides, it is to provide the input which is relevant to the need of a particular group of learners. As Kathleen (2000) defines this, needs analysis is "a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about students' needs and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs" when she mentioned to the role of needs analysis in the development of the course. In fact, the needs of learners do not remain all the time; thus, analysis the learners' needs is not a once-for-all activity. It should be a continuing process, in which the conclusions drawn are constantly checked and re-assessed (Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p 59). Thank to needs analysis, learners are able to reflect their own learning, identify their needs, gain a sense of ownership and control their learning. In brief, being aware of the learners needs, the course designers' role are both determining the content of the language course and exploring the potential problems arising through the course also.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p 54), the cornerstone of an ESP approach to course design is needs analysis. They maintain that it is the recognition of the target situation, or the specific need to communicate in English, that distinguishes ESP learners from those studying General English. In addition, in view of Soriano (1995) needs analysis collects and analyzes data to determine what learners "want" and "need" to learn, while an evaluation measures the effectiveness of a program to meet the needs of the learners.

Hutchinson & Waters (1992) consider needs analysis from the perspective of "necessities" and "wants" in order to classify between what the learners have to know and what the learners feel they need to know. It shifts the focus on the "lacks" that represent the gap between the required proficiency in the target situation and the existing proficiency of the learners. This definition views language needs as a process of negotiation between the learners and their society.

According to Witkin and Altschuld's definition (1995), needs analysis should fill the "gap" of needs between the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs. The above definitions base their concept of needs analysis around the terms *"necessities," "lacks,"* "*wants*," and "*gaps*." However, all these terms have been defined differently from one individual to another. Therefore, it is hard to come to a mutual agreement on the definition of the term "needs" itself among linguists in the ESP field.

There have been two questions: "What do we mean by needs?" and "What kind of information should a needs analysis tell us?" that Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54-63) attempted to answer deeply when reviewing this issue. Needs, from their standpoint, could be clarified into "target needs" (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and "learning needs" (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn). To each type of needs, the kinds of information which should be gathered are partially not the same.

As a result, needs analysis is an indispensable element in the process of course design because it provides the course designers with the essential information of the learners. This will be followed by an overview of the aforesaid approaches to needs analysis.

2. Review of Needs Analysis Approaches

This section will present an overview of needs analysis approaches defined by a number of professional researchers in this ESP field. The most popular approaches of needs analysis consist of Target situation analysis stated by Chambers (1980), Present situation analysis produced by Richterich & Chancerel (1977), Learning needs analysis given by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), etc. The three outstanding models in needs analysis studies, target situation analysis and present situation analysis, will be discussed in detail.

2.1. Target Situation Analysis

As being firstly introduced in Chambers' article in 1980 this *Target situation analysis (TSA) approach* has still remained its greatest influence on the field of ESP needs analysis. As cited in Robinson's, TSA is defined as "a needs analysis which focuses on students' needs at the end of a language course." (1991: 8-9). In addition, the target needs is considered as "what the learner needs to do in the target situation". The best known framework for TSA approach of needs analysis is proposed by Munby (1978). On his Communicative Syllabus Design publication (1978) a detailed set of procedures for investigating the target needs of learners is presented. As defined by Hutchinson and Waters, this set of procedures, known as the Communication Needs Processors (CNP), includes "a range of questions about key communication variables" (1987). With the development of the CNP it seemed as if ESP had come of age. The machinery for identifying the needs of any group of learners had been provided: all the course designers had to do was to operate it. (cited in Hutchinson & Waters' publication, 1987: 54).

In Munby's CNP, the target needs and target level performance are]established by investigating the target situation, and his overall model clearly establishes the place of needs analysis as central to ESP, indeed the necessary starting point in materials or course design (West, 1998).

According to Munby, CNP requires information on the eight elements which are participant, purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key. Obviously, he explored thoroughly every aspect relating to learner's needs, such as purpose, medium/mode/channel of communication, sociolinguistic aspects, linguistics, and pragmatics. He took language, culture and communication purpose into his consideration, but ignored the implementation (activities, resources, and classroom dynamics). That is the reason why Munby's model has also received criticism for its "impractical, inflexible, complex and time-consuming" feature (West, 1994). Furthermore, the model's limitation is that he did not specify any priorities for his model of activities. This creates difficulties when applying the profile to different language situations. As cited in Kaewpet, (2009), West emphasized that "this model focuses to collect data about the learner rather than from the learner" therefore, some human variables are not taken into consideration. The analysis of target needs is supposed to involve with "identifying the linguistic features of the target situation".

Although there was existence of these weaknesses, the first needs analysis model is on the concept of communicative competence. Accordingly, most studies continue to follow this model in relating communicative needs to analysis of communication in the target situation. For example, a list of questions that the analyst should find answers is provided in a comprehensive target situation analysis framework of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as listed below.

1. Why is language needed?
   - for study;
   - for work;
   - for training;
   - for a combination of these;
   - for some other purposes, e.g. status, examination, promotion
2. How will the language be used?
   - Medium: speaking, writing, reading, etc.;

- Channel: e.g. telephone, face to face;
- Types of text or discourse: e.g. academic text, lectures, catalogues, etc.
3. What will the content areas be?
- Subjects: e.g. medicine, biology, commerce, shipping, etc.;
- Level: technician, craftsman, postgraduate, etc.
4. Where will the language be used?
- Physical setting: e.g. office, lecture theater, hotel, workshop, library;
- Human context: alone, meetings, demonstrations, on telephone;
- Linguistic context: e.g. in own country, abroad.
5. When will the language be used?
- Concurrently with the ESP course or subsequently;
- Frequently, seldom, in small amounts, in large chunks.

In addition to the shortcomings noted by previous authors, Hutchinson and Waters criticized Munby's model for not considering learning needs or making a distinction between ***necessities, wants, and lacks***. The Target-Situation Analysis and the Present-Situation Analysis are the two main models in needs analysis research. Researchers often choose one of these models as their theoretical foundation based on the nature of the study. As such, the Present-Situation Analysis will be discussed in the following section.

2.2. Present situation analysis

The second major model in needs analysis is present situation analysis (PSA) proposed by Richterich and Chancerel (1980). According to Robinson (1991), a present situation analysis is encouraged to establish what the students are like at the start of their language course, investigating their strengths and weaknesses.

Although Present situation analysis may be posited as a complement to target situation analysis (Robinson, 1991; Jordan, 1997), the difference here is that target situation analysis attempts to set up what the learners are expected to be like at the end of the language course while present situation analysis tries to identify what they are like at the beginning of it.

As stated by Jordan (1997), in this approach the sources of information are the students themselves, the teaching establishment, and the user-institution, e.g. place of work. In detail, the aim of the approach is search for information of students' levels of ability, their financial and technical resources, their views of language teaching and learning, and their attitude towards English learning. Needs analysis may be seen as a combination of TSA and PSA. As noted, within the realm of ESP, one cannot rely either on TSA or PSA as a reliable indicator of what is needed to enhance learning and reaching the desired goals.

Despite how little criticism this approach received, two limitations should be in our concern: lack of attention to learners' real-world needs (Jordan, 1997) and over-reliance on learners' perceptions of their needs (Long, 2005).

2.3. Strategy Analysis or Learning Needs Analysis (LNA)

It cannot be denied that Allwright is "the pioneer in the field of strategy analysis". Songhori (2007). It is Allwright who makes a distinction between *needs* (the skills which a student sees as being relevant to himself or herself), *wants* (those needs on which students put a high priority in the available, limited time), and *lacks* (the difference between the student's present competence and the desired competence). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) adopted his ideas and offered an often-cited learning-centred approach to ESP. They argue that other approaches give too much attention to language needs, whereas more attention should be given to how learners learn. They made a suggestion that the best way to convey learners from the starting point to the target situation is following a learning needs approach direction. As it can be seen from this standpoint, learner needs are approached from two directions; target needs and learning needs. Target needs are defined as "what the learner needs to do in the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987,: 54). They are classified into three categories: *necessities, lacks and wants*. Necessities are defined as "what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 55). Lacks are described as the gaps between what the learner knows and the necessities (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 56). Wants are considered to be "what the learners think they need" (Nation, 2000: 2). The second focus in this approach is on learning needs, referring to numerous factors, including who the learners are, their socio-cultural background, learning background, age, gender, background knowledge of specialized contents, background knowledge of English, attitudes towards English, attitudes towards cultures of the English speaking world and studying English. Learner needs also involve:

- Teaching and learning styles with which the learners are familiar
- Appropriate or ineffective teaching and learning methods
- Knowledge of specialized contents that teachers should have
- Suitable instructional materials and study location

- Time of study and status of ESP courses
- Expectations about what learners should achieve in the courses
- How necessary the courses are for the learners

To analyze learning needs, the following checklist is recommended to be used:

1. Why are the learners taking the course?
2. How do the learners learn?
3. What resources are available?
4. Who are the learners?
5. Where will the ESP course take place?
6. When will the ESP course take place?

As far as it concerned, LNA is ascertained based on three elements which are *"necessities", "wants" and "lacks".* As presented on Hutchinson and Waters (1987), "*Necessities*" refer to what the learners have to know; "*wants*" represent what the learners think they need to know; more importantly, "*lacks*" is the gap between what the learner knows and what they have to know.

Beside the three approaches to needs analysis discussed above, there should be referred to Discourse Analysis, Deficiency Analysis, Genre Analysis, Register Analysis, and Mean Analysis. In brief, discourse Analysis investigates how sentences combine into discourse; Deficiency Analysis considers learners' present needs and wants; Genre Analysis focuses on the regularities of structure that distinguishes one type of text from another; Register Analysis focuses on vocabulary and grammar of the text; last but not least, Mean Analysis discusses around the environment in which the course will be run.

III.   RATIONALE FOR ADAPTING TO THREE APPROACHES - TSA, PSA, LNA

In my course design, I utilize a combination of the three approaches presented and discussed in the second section for needs analysis. While TSA and PSA are the main perspectives in needs analysis research, and many researchers rely on them to achieve their objectives, it is also necessary to incorporate LNA for the reasons outlined below.

First of all, in term of the course features, it can be seen that the analysis of learners' needs cannot be implemented either at the beginning of the course or at the end of the course. Because the learners' progress in language skills would be different in different periods, their needs should be identified during the course so as to satisfy the student's proficiency level. The TSA approach and PSA approach, therefore, should go together to help the researcher determine what the salespersons already have before the course and what they provide after finishing it.

Furthermore, with this target group, the needs assessment is hypothesized not to focus only on the aspect of language but also on perspective of the participants, or the learners in this case. In other words, it is very necessary to analyze both the required linguistic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in different activities and the learners' perception of communication competence towards their English language preparation.

Last but not least, there should be a tight combination of linguistic, learner, and learning needs to help the learners reach their goal of both improving their oral competence and meliorating their English linguistic competence to advanced level in a small multiple-level target group of salespersons. The worthy thing of drawing attention to combine these three kinds of needs is that learners are required to have an advanced level of competence if they want to follow the language course with little difficulty; thus, the effectiveness of the language course may be improved if the researcher can comprehend, combine skillfully and successfully all the elements effecting the learners such as the linguistic needs, the personal background, the learners' beliefs in learning English and so on.

IV. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

With regards to data collection methods, the classroom observation, interview and questionnaire are frequently adapted to investigate the target needs and learners' needs. First of all, the classroom observation has a weakness that is its inability to capture internal and mental strategies or to observe the process of mental association in learners' minds. According to Cohen (1998), researchers probably collect data only from the students who are more verbal, and this may limit the data to only a subset of language learners- namely, the outspoken or extroverted (Cohen, 1998). Last but not least, the students' strategy use is estimated by the observers on the basis of their observational scale or checklist; therefore, the results sometimes are affected by the observer's expectation (Cohen, 1998).

Interviews are another method to apply in a language needs investigation. Interview protocols usually include open-ended questions aimed at guiding the subjects' responses. These give the researcher a wide variety of different responses that give a sense of the perceived language needs. The weakness of interview is that interviews are hardly used in a wide range of subjects but almost used in small sample. However, the

disadvantage of this approach is that the interpretation of the open-ended questions might not represent the intention of the subject. Furthermore, interviews are usually less useful for identifying an individual's "typical" needs depending on how interviews are conducted. Lastly, the subject also might be influenced in a face to face interview to give answers that satisfy the researcher.

Of the methods discussed above, the use of questionnaires appears to be the most favored and relevant due to its several advantages. Firstly, questionnaires can be given to a large group of individuals, resulting in the collection of a vast amount of data. According to Cohen (1998, p. 29), "large-scale surveys offer the potential for generating and testing hypotheses due to the large number of respondents". Secondly, well-designed questionnaires facilitate faster data processing. Finally, using questionnaires can reduce the cost in terms of researcher time, effort, and finances.

V.   SAMPLE QUESTIONS

As discussed above, the questionnaire will be used to grade the English language needs of salespersons in Samsung Company. By giving specific help the researcher enhance language programs designed to teach English to learners in the communication field. This also helps in filling the gap between the needs of business professionals and the language course offered to the business learners enrolled in the language course at the advanced level. These are some sample questions taken from the questionnaire.

Part 1: Subject's Background Questionnaire
Please tick (√) in the appropriate square (tick ONLY ONE that true of you most) or provide brief answer to certain question.

1. Name: …………………………………………………..
2. Specialty: ………………………………………………...
3. Education:
    University ☐   Post-graduate ☐   Master ☐
3. Age:
    20-25 ☐   25-30 ☐   30-35 ☐
4. Work experience
    1-3 years ☐   3-5 years ☐   5-7 years ☐
5. English language learning background
    Beginner ☐   Elementary ☐
    Intermediate ☐   Advance ☐

Part 2: Your Expectations and Needs
1. The course of English for Specific Purposes should be
    Compulsory ☐   Optional ☐   Excluded ☐

2. What percentage of your work is conducted in English? ....
Please write down a percentage in the space
3. How important is it to have a high level of English proficiency to perform your job effectively? *Please circle one answer.*
    Very important ☐   somewhat important ☐
    Little important ☐   Not important ☐
4. The most adequate of the ESP course is
    6 months ☐   9 months ☐   1 year ☐

Part 3: Your Assessment of English Language Skills

1. Which level of the English language skill enables you to perform your job effectively? Please tick one answer	Excellent level	Good level	Satisfactory level	N/A
Listening				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

2. Rank the following English language skills in terms of importance in conducting your job? *Please rank using numbers from 1 to 4, with 1 being most important and 4 being least important.*

Listening ………....... Speaking………….. Reading…………. Writing…………..

3. How did the intensive English language courses that you studied at the college level help you in the following tasks?

Please look at the scale below and circle the appropriate number accordingly.

1= a lot 2 = somewhat   3 = a little   4 = did not help all

	1	2	3	4
Understanding other people's speech				
Using English in business professionals				
Reporting/Making presentation				
Interpreting				
Writing letters, faxes, emails				
Being aware of cultural differences between nations				
Reading for English books or magazines of economics and business etc.				

4. How would you rate your knowledge of English after you accomplished the course? *Please circle one answer.*

Very good ☐   Satisfactory ☐   Poor ☐   Very poor ☐

REFERENCES

[1]. Alharby, M. (2005). Esp target situation needs analysis: The English language communicative needs as perceived by health professionals in the Riyadh area. Athens: The University of Georgia. Retrieved June 20th, 2011 from http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/majed/Documents/alharby_majid_200505_phd.pdf

[2]. Chambers, F. (1980). A re-evaluation of needs analysis. *ESP Journal, 1*(1), pp. 25-33.

[3]. Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language.* London: Longman.

[4]. Graves, Kathleen. (2000) *Designing Language Courses: A Guide For Teachers.* Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning, 200.

[5]. Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1992). *English for specific purposes : A learning centered approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[6]. Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for academic purposes : A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved June 16th, 2011 from http://books.google.com/

[7]. Kaewpet, C. (2009). A Framework for Investigating Learner Needs: Needs Analysis Extended to Curriculum Development. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. *6*(2), pp.209-220. Singapore: Centre   for   Language   Studies National University of Singapore.

[8]. Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design : A sociolinguistic model for defining the content of purpose-specific language programmes*. England: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved June 16th, 2011 from http://books.google.com/

[9]. Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved June 20th, 2011 from http://books.google.com/

[10]. Richterich, R., & Chancerel, J.-L. (1978). *Identifying the needs of adults learning a foreign language*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved July 5th, 2011 from http://books.google.com/

[11]. Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP today: A practitioner's guide*. Prentice Hall, UK: Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.

[12]. Songhori, M. H. (2007). Introduction to Needs Analysis. *English for Specific Purposes world*. No4. Retrieved July 2nd, 2011 from http://www.esp-world.info

[13]. West, R. (1994). Needs analysis in language teaching. *Language Teaching, 27*(1), pp.1-19.

Do Thi My Lan
(Basic Science Division, Thuy Loi University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)