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Needs Analysis of English Language Learners at Language Centers of Quetta

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Abstract:

The current study analyses the needs of language learners enrolled in the English for General Purpose (EGP) course at language centers in Quetta city. The study presents the obstacles faced by learners in achieving their goals in the language learning process and learners' suggestions for improvements in their curriculum. Data was collected through Questionnaires. In this study, 70 students (38 males and 32 females) participated from different language centers of Quetta city. The study's findings reveal that students learn a language for higher education and a suitable job. They do not have complete command over the use of grammar, pronunciation, and listening skills. Along the way, they are interested in improving their English language skills, with a particular focus on writing skills. They desire more strategies to be adopted for a richer vocabulary in the classroom. It is proposed that to establish a successful curriculum for EGP, the goals and difficulties of EGP learners in the learning process should be considered. In this regard, a needs analysis should be conducted regularly for EGP learners.

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1. Introduction:

The concept of Need Analysis (NA) in language learning was introduced to meet the needs of learners. Needs Analysis took its place in the ESP moment in the 1960s, which was neglected earlier, but now has been taken into account based on the needs of learners in English teaching West (1994). Language teaching survey report by Michael West was first published in 1926, introducing the Need Analysis process (White, 1988). In the 1970s, the structural gradation of syllabus design project was launched by the Council of Europe Modern Language with the reintroduction of the notion of Need Analysis. This syllabus design was deficient in learners' needs and faced criticism (Fatihi, 2003). Then, in 1978, it was developed by Munby with the inclusion of learners' needs (Munby, 1978, as cited in Nunan, 1988). In the 1960s and 1970s, Needs Analysis was based on communicative needs for special purposes as time went by. NA is a source of information in the target situation (Otilia, 2015). Different needs have to be considered for improvement in the overall learning process. NA is helpful in language learning. Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaline (2003) define Need Analysis as a process that follows curriculum designing, the collection of resources for the course, and assessment practice. Need Analysis is defined by different authors. Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992) articulate the Needs Analysis process, bringing forth learners' needs; additionally, these needs are placed on the basis of their importance. Therefore, NA identifies the difficulties faced by the learners and helps

design a curriculum of language teaching/learning according to the needs of learners (Bastukmen, 1998; Xiao, 2007).

1.1.Types of Needs

Widdowson (1981) defines basic needs as goal-oriented and process-oriented needs. Goal-oriented needs are related to the target situation, and process-oriented needs are the learning process needs of learners (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998; Li Juan, 2014). Classifications of needs are as follows.

1.1.1. Perceived Needs and Felt Needs

Berwick (1989) differentiated between perceived needs and felt needs. Perceived needs are drawn from others' experiences of learning, whereas felt needs are drawn from learners' own experiences of learning, which comprises their desires.

1.1.2. Target Needs and Learning Needs

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define target needs as the requirements and difficulties of the learner in a learning process in a target situation. Contrastingly, the learning needs are the learning process that involves learners' motivation and learning strategies.

1.1.3. Objective Needs and Subjective Needs

The difference between objective and subjective needs is presented by Brindley (1989) and Robinson (1991). Objective needs are the factual information that consists of proficiency, difficulties, and the learner's perception. On the other hand, subjective needs entail the subjective aspects such as personality, emotions, and expectation of the learner (Brindley, 1989).

1.2 Needs analysis and English for General purposes

Needs Analysis is generally considered appropriate in ESP, though other educational enterprises can also make use of it (Robinson, 1991). NA was a common analysis process in ESP for a long period of time. It was considered less critical in other contexts (Brindley, 1984; Ferris, 1998). In the 1970s, the team of European Council introduced the term "common core," which suggests that language learners have some common traits that they share with other foreign language learners, though the goal might be different (Johnson, 1982). Therefore, the "common core" concept is supported for the conduct of NA in the EGP context. Similarly, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) determined the important role of need analysis in all language courses.

It was the common practice to conduct needs analysis of teachers, parents, and policy makers for the development of curriculum design. Yet the needs of the learners were always neglected (Seedhouse, 1995). The importance of the English language in a globalized world has inclined the researchers to analyze the EGP learners' needs, which are identified by learners themselves, and consider them for course design (Mehrdad, 2010).

In terms of English language use, Pakistan is the third largest Asian country; in Pakistan, almost 11% of the population speaks English (Bolton, 2008). English is the official language, medium of instruction in higher educational institutes, and considered gate way to success in Pakistan (Mansoor, 2005; Rahman, 2005). English is taught and learned widely due to its prestige and importance. Buriro and Soomro (2013) conducted a study at Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering Science and Technology, Pakistan (QUST). The study found that the major focus of the students was on writing and speaking skills, whereas reading and listening skills were ignored. Students showed a lack of interest in the traditional way of teaching/learning grammar. They were more interested in learning technical vocabulary rather than general vocabulary.

In Pakistan, English language centers are the main source of language teaching for learners in various fields and educational backgrounds. The English language is taught for general purposes. Almost no study of NA is conducted in these centers, where the present study is conducted on EGP learners of language centers in Pakistan.

The study is focused on the needs of language in Quetta city. The study is to explore goals, hardships, and suggestions of the EGP learners in the English learning process.

2. Literature Review

Needs Analysis has been conducted to identify ESP learners' needs; however, Needs Analysis has been rarely conducted for EGP learners. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), EGP learners' needs are specifiable in the same way as ESP learners' needs are. Therefore, NA can be piloted to identify the needs of EGP learners in a similar manner to the learners of ESP. The 'local needs' of the students can be achieved through Needs analysis (Gillett & Hammond, 2011; Tarone & Yule, 1989, as cited in Iwai et al., 1999). This supremacy of NA tempted researchers to conduct Needs analysis for the learners of EGP and identify their needs (Mehrdad, 2010).

In India British Council regulated the Need Analysis for the 9th and 10th grade students of English for General Purpose in Maharashtra schools. Multilayered sampling was done for this study. Students, teachers, principals, parents, and educational officers participated in the study. All the participants were motivated because in India, English language proficiency is highly appreciated, and the government aimed to train 20000 English subject teachers; consequently, after this study. A Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) based test was conducted to assess the 404 English subject teachers' proficiency in the English language. They found out that teachers' comprehension of text was limited, and they depended upon rote learning to pass exams. The study found that

a learner-centered approach should be taught through training to teachers. The importance should be given to students' participation in classrooms. The teachers must be trained annually, and language learning resources should be provided to them. Khansir and Pakdel (2014) also enquired about the difficulties faced by the Iranian students of EGP in the classroom. A needs analysis was conducted for the investigation. Information about students' difficulties was gathered by means of f questionnaire. Furthermore, it was also investigated which of the four major skills of language which one is given more importance. Students demonstrated basic knowledge of the English language. Importance was given to reading skills among the four major skills of languages. The study suggested that in universities, learning experience can be improved in the ELT classroom using strategies based on NA.

A survey was conducted based on NA for EGP learners by Mehrdad (2010). He focused on perceived needs, which were neglected in previous studies. As a sample, 52 participants (students) were selected from Islamic Azad University of Hamedan, Iran. The preference was given to subjective needs in the study. The study was conducted for general purposes, unlike other studies conducted on students of ESP courses. Questionnaires were made to find out students' needs, wants, and preferences for class management. The students explored that writing skill was superior to reading skill. The correct pronunciation was considered the most important. Memorizing words and rules was considered the wrong concept in learning English. The EGP course should be modified according to the needs of learners, as the study showed.

Wei (2017) investigated the general English language learning needs in the colleges of China. This study concluded that teachers failed to bridge the gap between the students' abilities and their future working needs; therefore, ESP courses should be supplemented. The study summarizes that for a profound and effective college course, learners' needs analysis is essential.

3. Methodology

Quantitative approach has been used to investigate the English language learners' perceived goals and difficulties in Quetta city. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool from the participants; the quantitative data were analyzed and interpreted.

4. Participants

A total of 70 students participated in the present study. Respondent's age range was between 18 to 29, among which 38 were males and 32 females. Respondents were enrolled in a general English language program in 3 different English language centers in Quetta city. The minimum qualification of the participants was matric.

4.1 Instrument

Data collected through a questionnaire based on 5 5-point Likert scales. The questionnaire includes 25 statements constructed on previous research in the field of Needs Analysis by Al-Hamlan & Baniabdelrahman (2015) and Yahya (2012). Questionnaires were distributed among the 70 participants. The questionnaire consists of 4 parts. Part A comprises 8 items, gathered demographic information of the participants, Part B comprises 12 items, measured the goals of the language learners, Part C

comprises 7 items, investigated problems of the English language learners in the learning process, Part D comprises 6 items, assembled suggestions of learners regarding their wants. A point Likert scale is used to rate the 25 items in a questionnaire. A Likert scale ranging from point 1 (Strongly agree) to point 5 (Strongly disagree).

4.2. Theoretical Framework

The concept of Target Situation Analysis and Present Situation Analysis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) has been taken for the present study. This concept is based on the learner-centered approach. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that to analyze the students' needs, Target Situation Analysis and Present Situation Analysis are more suitable, as learners are more concerned about the learning process rather than the end product of learning.

4.3. Target Situation Needs Analysis

Target Situation Needs Analysis examines the requirements and deficiencies of the learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Thus the present study explores the perception of the Undergraduate English language learners about their needs. According to Hutchinson and Water (1987) wants and needs of the learners are parallel to one another, which helps to identify the goals of the learners. Part B of the questionnaire helped to identify the goals of the learners, and Part D assembled the suggestions that identified learners' wants.

4.4. Present Situation Analysis

Present Situation Analysis (Richterich & Chancerel, 1980) based on the perception of the learners about their needs (Jordan, 1997). According

to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), language learners' weaknesses and strengths in language skills can be identified through the present Situation Analysis. The need analysis includes both approaches (Target Situation Analysis and Present Situation Analysis). Need analysis cannot be performed in the absence of any one of the approaches (Songhori, 2008). Therefore, the present study is constructed on the notion of the Target and Present Situation Analysis. Strengths and weaknesses of language learners in different language skills were identified in Part C of the questionnaire.

4. Analysis of the Responses for the First Question

S. No	**Statement**	1 **Strongly agree**	2 **Agree**	3 **Not sure**	4 **Disagree**	5 **Strongly disagree**	mean	St.D.
1.	English learning helps me in communication.	8%	23.5%	1.6%	2.9%	0%	1.3	0.66
2.	English to be a key to success in finding jobs,	48.2%	32.9%	11%	4%	1.4%	1.7	0.92
3.	English learning helps me in studying abroad	48.3%	25.9%	15.6%	8%	3.1%	1.9	1.09
4.	English learning helps me in travelling abroad.	26%	41%	17%	11.8%	4.8%	2.2	1.11
5.	English learning helps me in passing my exams	45.4%	42.7%	3.0%	8%	1.9%	1.7	0.93
6.	English learning helps me to speak fluently.	51.1%	32%	8%	6.4%	1.6%	1.7	0.94
7.	English learning helps me in dealing with technology	43.7%	39.1%	6%	7.9%	1.4%	1.9	1.09
8.	English learning helps me feel confident.	49%	32.7%	9%	8.1%	1.6%	1.8	0.99
9.	English learning helps me in using the Internet.	53.3%	31%	1.8%	16%	0%	1.8	1.05
10.	I need English to be able to read original variants of books by English writers.	42.1%	36.9%	4.7%	14%	3.3%	2	1.13

11.	I need English only to meet the desires of my parents	11%	14.%	11.2%	44.7%	21%	3.4	1.25

Language learners' goals were measured in Part A of the questionnaire. The statements of Part A identify the perception of language learners. Table 4.1 shows the perception of English language learners at the language center in a quantified manner.

Table 1: Perception of the English Language Learners at the language Center

Analysis

The mean value 1.3 calculated for the first statement clarifies that most of the participants strongly agree with the statement of the importance of English in helping communication, which is one of the targeted aims of the participants in learning the English language.

Responding to the second statement with a mean of 1.7, a considerable number of students consider English to be a key to success in finding jobs, as most of the tests and interviews, both in private and Government sectors, are structured in English. Owing to this reason, the participants opt for learning English to secure prestigious positions in the future.

Due to the effective role of English, the participants show a very strong consent to the thirst statement, carrying 1.9 a mean. It shows most of the participants' consideration towards English as a supportive skill in getting employed. The current policy situation of Pakistan is following the colonizer's pattern of administration; the documentation process for employment in both private and government sectors is in English. So the employees aspiring for a job must have proficiency in English.

The mean value 1.9, grasped from the third statement, shows the firm agreement of the participants declaring that learning English redoubles the hope of the students to get enrolled abroad for higher Education. They think that English is the very reason for reserving seats in leading Universities of the world. The fourth statement goes on with a mean of 2.2 makes strong agreement of the participants clear and worth observing. The participants are of the notion that learning English is, to a considerable extent, helpful for travelling abroad.

Considering the fifth statement, mean value 1.7, shows that a massive number of participants work hard to learn English to pass through exam with good marks. It reveals that English plays a pivotal role in the educational sector. Due to which learners have a sustained interest in learning English.

According to the sixth statement the noted mean value is 1.7, there is strong agreement among the participants. Their responses to the statement show that they are committed to increasing their fluency in English. It reveals that teachers and stakeholders should take speaking skills into consideration and design courses that include more speaking drills, and more time should be allocated to speaking practice. The means value 1.9 for the statement seventh elucidates a major portion of the participants believing that learning English is extremely prolific or helpful and facilitate in dealing with technology. It seems that the command of English pacifies the use of technology in a very convenient manner.

The examined mean for the eighth statement is 1.8. It shows that a huge number of participants believe English to be a confidence-building

block. As English is spoken throughout the world on a higher scale provides the learners with a sense of being confident. Use of the English language is considered prestigious and connected to an elite familial background. This also makes the students or learners motivated to learn the English language. The above value, as calculated at 1.8 for the ninth statement, demonstrates a strong consent of the participants. It explores that English is a supportive tool in surfing the internet and browsing sites because all the applications are in the English language. Nonetheless, there are few surfing sites in languages other than English. People are inclined to English-speaking sites and feel very comfortable while using them.

The mean value of 2.0 for the statement tenth reveals students' interest in devoting their time to reading literature-oriented books and plays written by renowned authors. It gives a sense that the participants are eagerly motivated to know about English literature. Disagreement with the statement of a few participants may be a lack of awareness of reading literature. Consulting the mean value 3.4 for the eleventh statement shows a beam of disagreement from the respondents that they are self-motivated to learn English. It reveals that the participants know how needful it is to learn English and they are not learning it for the sake of their parents. It shows the emerging exposure of learners from their interest in learning English.

4.3. Analysis of the Responses for the Second Question

Linguistic difficulties of the language learners during the learning process were investigated in Part B of the questionnaire. Part B comprises 7 items

that estimate the response of learners about language components. Table 4.2 presents findings of the language learner's difficulties.

Table 2: Which language components do students find difficult to learn?

S no	Statements	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Not sure	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	mean	St.d
12.	English language listening skill is a challenge for me	11. 2%	32.3%	7%	48.2%	3.2%	3	1.16
13.	Grammatical errors are a serious problem for me.	23.4%	51.3%	9.7%	15%	1.1%	2.2	1.06
14.	Speaking in English is difficult for me.	2%	31%	11.1%	42.8%	14%	3.3	1.10
15.	The Interference of the mother tongue and English language makes me confused.	7.9%	42.8%	8%	31.2%	11.4%	2.9	1.22
16.	Writing is a major problem for me.	3.4%	14.7%	9%	61.8%	11.7%	3.6	0.97
17.	Pronunciation of words in English is difficult.	9%	43.5%	5.1%	34.2%	9%	2.9	1.22
18.	Reading and understanding English text is not easy.	5.1%	18%	1.8%	63.7%	10.9%	3.5	1.05

In this part, the ratio between those participants who agree with the twelfth statement and those who reject the statement is 1; half of the respondents consider listening (one of the fundamental skills and components for learning English) to be a usual activity. On the other hand, half of the participants consider it a tiring task and feel very numb while listening and comprehending it. The recorded mean for the thirteenth statement is 2.2, which literally shows the participants' agreement to be weak enough in grammar skills. Lack of proper guidelines and teaching/learning methods resulted in poor performance of learners in grammar. Their accuracy in English can't be exempt from errors.

The summed up mean for the fourteenth statement is 3.3, which reveals that learners go against the statement. It seems that learners are actively able to

speak English fluently and don't come across any threat while speaking. It is clear that in Language learning institutions, great focus is given to speaking due to what learners are good at, speaking as compared to any other skills of the English language.

Most of the learners go with the fifteenth statement with a mean of 2.9, which suggests that the participants' mother tongue interference is an obstacle in processing and acquiring the English language. The speed or rate of learning English is directly or indirectly affected by the interference of their mother tongue.

The mean calculated for the sixteenth statement is 3.6 presents most of the responses in disagreement. The majority of the learners have command of writing skills to some extent. With few exceptions majority of the learners remain able to write and refuse to feel any kind of agony or anxiety that can prevent them from writing.

Answering the seventeenth statement, most of the learners agree that they face a problem in the accurate pronunciation of English. The mean calculated for the eighteenth statement as 35, shows strong disagreement among the participants. It seems that reading text and extracting a comprehensive meaning out of it is not a difficult task for them. The majority of the learners have exceptional reading and comprehension ability or skill.

Analysis of the Findings for the Third Question

Part C of the questionnaire assembled suggestions from the language learners. Part C consists of 6 statements, meant to collect suggestions that lead to the needs of language learners in the language

process. Findings of the wants of English language learners are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: What do students want for better English learning?

S No	Statements	1	2	3	4	5	mean	St.D.
		Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Not sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**		
19.	I wish more practice in language skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening).	61.8%	26.9%	1.8%	9%	0%	1.5	0.90
20.	I wish to learn more new words in the different fields.	54.2%	30.1%	6%	9%	0%	1.7	1.02
21.	Learners shows the use of technology in class regularly.	26.6%	37.3%	8.9%	17.8%	7.7%	2.4	1.27
22.	I suggest the addition of English literature in the course.	23.1%	45.1%	20.5%	8%	3.5%	2.2	0.98
23.	I need to communicate more with other students and teachers in class in English.	56.3%	31.3%	3.2%	9%	0%	1.6	0.91
24.	I wish to know more about English culture.	37.4%	34.3%	9%	13.2%	5.1%	2.0	1.17

Analysis:

The mean calculation for the above statement is 1.5, which demonstrates learners' strong agreement with the statement. The learners agreed that practice in the four fundamentals of English is important to be proficient and skillful in all aspects of English.

The findings of the twentieth statement, with a mean value of 1.7, show that the majority of the learners strongly agree with the statement to learn an enriched amount of words and vocabulary from multiple resources that are helpful in different fields and disciplines, as English is used in every sphere of life. Hence, students are more persuaded to learn more vocabulary.

With the mean value of 2.4 for the twenty first statement, learners show their inclination towards the use of Technology in the classroom, showing their cognizance of how effective the use of technology in every field is. Almost 26% students refuse the use of technology in the classroom, which may be lack of awareness about the productivity of technology in the field of Education

The extracted value from the twenty-second statement shows participants' strong agreement with the statement. They desire that the addition of literature in the English language will motivate them to read books authored by influential writers. Of them, 21.5% show their least exposure, responding that they are not sure about the statement.

The scaled value for the twenty-third statement came out to be 1.6, considering that a multitude of the learners are keen to pontificate with their teachers and fellows in English so as to gain fluency and to strong command of the English language. They thought it was a tool that could modernize them on the verge of competition and help them secure jobs. Furthermore, this statement confirms the learners' inclination towards speaking skills. The mean outcome of the twenty fourth statement is 2, the majority of the students' desire for diversity in their knowledge regarding English and its culture. It also modifies their level of understanding that Language and culture are mutually connected.

Conclusion

Needs Analysis identifies the needs and wants of the learners in a second language learning process. Learning process meets the needs and

requirements of the learners, which motivates them and doubles their interest. Students become more ambitious in learning.

This study was set with the purpose of knowing the very essential requirements of learners, learning language for general purposes, and it provided a definite sketch of the needs that learners come across in language centers.

English is of paramount importance when pontificating with international fellows, something the learners knew and is a general sense derived from the study. Knowledge and use of the English language is a prolific factor that elevates in securing good grades in academics and in maintaining technological matters. Need analysis identifies learners' needs that are perceived by learners themselves, and it is revealed from the study that students are well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. According to Mehrdad (2010), it is enormously productive and fruitful to conduct Needs analysis so that the learners get their needs met and have a course designed according to their level of understanding and perception rather than a course based on the perception of the teachers and educational officers. Additionally, several students considered grammar errors and weak pronunciation as fatal issues prevailing among them. It indicates a clear deficiency in ESL teaching methods or process, as most of the learner, despite being part of the school for approximately a decade or twelve years, have a fluctuating ability to produce grammar and pronunciation in their literal ways. It discovers the fact that traditional or domestic methods of teaching grammar have to be standardized and improved so that the learners become competent and self-contained in grammatical rules and

pronunciation. Hinkel and Fotos (2001) suggest that form form-based teaching approach is the ultimate source to get appropriateness in grammar, or the students have to encounter and perceive grammatical errors themselves (Thompson, 1996).

The study concluded that learners desire to practice language skills with special focus on communicative skills. They feel the need to memorize newly established words. If learners' wants are incorporated in a course designed for them, this may motivate learners, and their keen interest may result in great achievement (Al-Hamlan, 2015).

Recommendations

This study proposes that need analysis should be set up regularly for learners, such as ESP, EAP, and EGP. A needs analysis should be conducted for all stakeholders, including curriculum developers, the course designing authority, teachers at schools, parents at home, and learners. The course for a safe and gradual learning process needs to be designed in an understandable pattern and comprise content according to the perception of the learners. To make all this happen, multiple surveys must be conducted for teachers and m learners. Moreover, the needs of new learners may be addressed by identifying the difficulties they confront in the learning process of a language.

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