ESP Needs Analysis for Syllabus Design in Communication Science Study Program: A Learning-Centred Approach

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Abstract

English subject learnt by students of Communication Science Study Program is, of course, different from English for other study programs. English learning has to be in line with the needs of Communication Science students that are considered from the target needs (necessities, lacks, and wants) and learning needs. This research focuses on the needs analysis by applying learning-centred approach and syllabus outline that will be constructed based on the result of the needs analysis. It is a qualitative research that uses questionnaire and interview as the instruments. There are 30 students as the respondents and 2 lecturers in Communication Science Study Program as the interviewees. The collected data were reduced, displayed, and concluded. The syllabus outline resulted from the need analysis emphasized on speaking skill as expected by the students even though they still have more problems in writing and pronunciation. Therefore, the materials that will be designed based on the students' need have to pay attention to the activities for speaking performance. In addition, it also has to address the students' lack by assigning tasks on writing and pronunciation exercises. The learning centered approach allows the syllabus designers to adjust the learning activities that are favorable for the students. Thus, the syllabus outline can be flexibly used to adjust students' learning needs.

Key Words: *ESP, needs analysis, English for Communication Science.*

Introduction

In AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) era that emerged since 2015, the competence of foreign language mastery has become a primary need. Graduates of higher level education are expected to be able to communicate by using at least one foreign language like English. University graduates with good English competence are required to able to adapt themselves in wider scope of global networking like ASEAN without being hindered by communication problem among people with different language backgrounds. Therefore, English is stated as one of compulsary subjects in universities.

In line with the development of communication, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal founded a new study program in 2015 named Communication Science. The learning outcome states that after the students graduate from this study program, they are able to use English in the context of global communication. However, as a new study program, it has to focus on the teaching and learning process to achieve the goal.

English is a compulsary subject taught in the first semester. The course content will, of course, be different from English taught for students of other study programs. English for Communication Science students have to be relevant with the needs of the students. The English course falls in the category of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). To address the specific needs of the students, it is necesary to conduct a need analysis. The information gathered from the analysis is important to construct a course syllabus. In the mean time, the syllabus for English subject taught is not specifically defined. It is

constructed only based on the teacher's intuition, knowledge, and experience in teaching English but the learners as the subject who actively involve in the learning process has not been taken into consideration.

Based on the above elaboration, this study focuses on the needs analysis by applying learning-centred approach and syllabus outline that will be constructed based on the result of the needs analysis.

Review of Related Literature

a) Previous Study

A previous study has confirmed the use of learner centered approach to syllabus design (Hossain, 2013). The purposes of this study were to identify the needs and demands of the learners of Azimur Rahman School of Engineering in improving their English writing and speaking proficiency and accordingly develop teacher content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching Business or Advanced English Communication.

The second related study was the one conducted by Miyake and Tremarco (2005). They explained that the aims of their study were to explore the needs of undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional nurses through questionnaires and interviews based on a needs analysis and discuss the implications for EFL teachers. The focus of the investigation was on the balance between social and technical English in terms of syllabus design, classroom activities and professional requirements. The result of this study, further, showed that most of the students attending the university felt that the social English was actually more important to them as it enabled them to communicate with patients and enriches them as individual.

b) English for Specific Purposes

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of English Language Teaching (ELT) that is seen by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as an approach which is based on the learner need. Unlike General Purpose English (GPE) which provides learners with a general capacity to enable them to cope with undefined eventualities in the future, ESP provides learners with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with certain clearly-defined tasks (Nunan: 1991).

ESP initially emerged in 1960s when specific register of language use was required in a particular area such as Electrical Engineering and Biology. Then, it is developing until now where teaching ESP pays more attention to the process of language learning instead of mere language use. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that eventhough language use will help to define the course objectives, we cannot simply assume that describing and exemplifying what people do with language will enable someone to learn it. In understanding the process of language learning we, therefore, should look at the needs of the learners.

c) Needs Analysis

ESP course seems to be characterised by its specific content like Science, Medicine, Commerce, Tourism, etc., but it is actually only a secondary consequence after the learners' needs are already specified. It is an awareness of the need not the existence of the need that makes ESP different from GPE (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

To find out what the learners need to learn in ESP, it is necessary to conduct a needs analysis. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divides needs into target needs and learning needs. Target needs are what the learner needs to do in the target situation. Target needs include necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities are what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Lacks are what the learner knows already, so a decision can be made about which of the necessities the learner lacks. Wants are what the learners wish to learn. Learning needs are what the learner needs to do in order to learn. In addition, learning needs are what the learner needs to do in order to learn. The outcomes of need analysis, then, will give useful information for syllabus design.

d) A Learning-centred Approach and Syllabus Design

A learning-centred approach is an an approach to course design which considers methodology as an important aspect to consider right from the start. In this approach Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest that the syllabus be used in a more dynamic way in order to enable methodological considerations, such as interest, enjoyment, learner involvement, to influence the content of the entire course design. The role of the syllabus in a learning-centred approach is shown in the following figure.
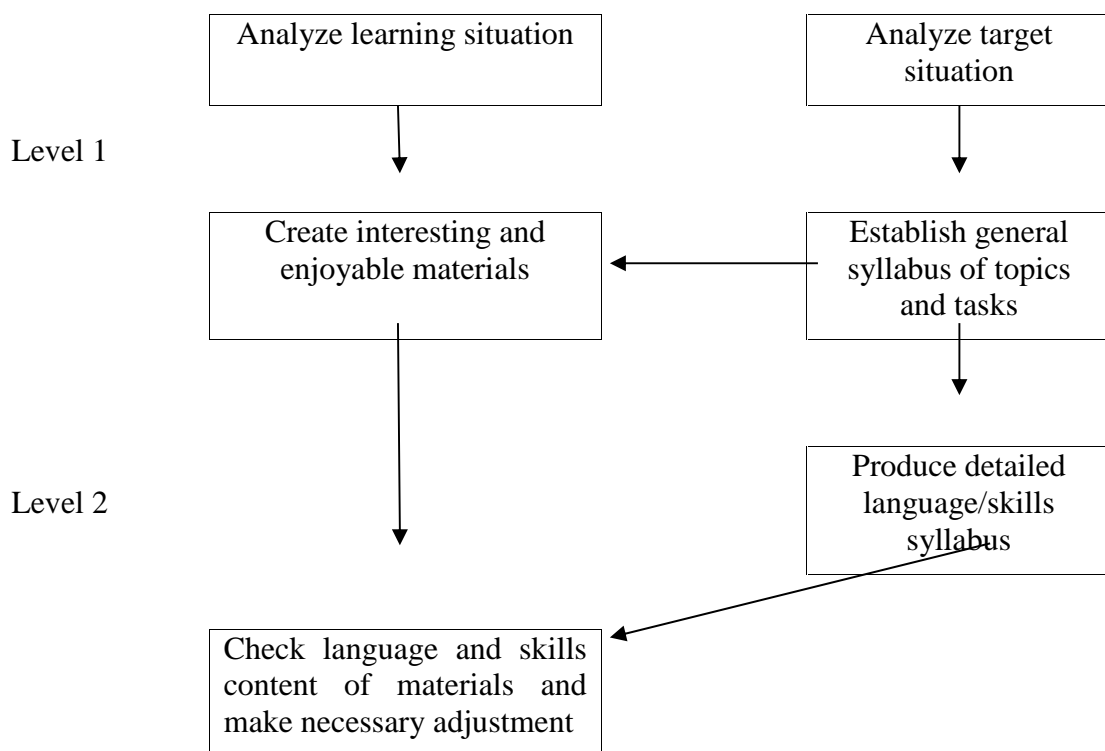

Figure 1. The role of the syllabus in a learning-centred approach

In this model, the result of target situation analysis is used for establishing general syllabus of topics and tasks that gives influence on the methodology. In this way, the syllabus is used creatively as a generator of good and relevant learning activities and maintains relevance to target needs. It, therefore, serves the needs of the students both as users and learners of the language.

Research Method

The methodological approach adopted in this study is a case study. According to Isaac and Michael (1987: 48) there are some stages in doing case study research. First stage is stating the objectives. It explains the unit of study, its characteristics, relationships, and processes will direct the investigation. Second one deals with designing the approach. It includes the way units are selected, source of data and data collection method. Moreover, third stage is collecting the data, while fourth stage is organizing the information to form a coherent, well-integrated reconstruction of the unit of study. The last stage deals with reporting the results and discusses their significance.

In addition, the subjects of this research are 30 students of first semester students and 2 lecturers of the communication science study program, Faculty of Social and Politic Sciences, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal. Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, we use two methods of collecting the data: a) Questionnaires, and b) Interviews. Qualitative data are obtained from the interview. In contrast, questionnaire is used as the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics are used to analyze the data in the questionnaire.

Result and Discussion

There were eight parts provided in the student questionnaire, namely Respondent, English Skills, Overview of Skills Needed and Difficulties Encountered, General Statement, Students' Obstacles, Students' Expectation toward the Teacher, and teaching activities.

English skill part has four sub-parts. They are speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Those sub-parts, further, cover the target needs. The questions facilitated "what to learn" matters for the students. There are five speaking activities provided in this sub-part. According to the result of the questionnaire, there are three learning activities which are highly-rated by students because they consider them as very useful activities. Those speaking activities are:

1. Delivering oral presentation on project design

2. Talking in daily life situation

3. Giving opinion, asking for clarification and bringing discussion back to the point

Furthermore, there are also two listening activities which are needed by the students on the following:

1. Listening to English-speaking boss's instruction or advice

2. Listening to presentation and discussion in a meeting, seminar or conference.

In addition, there are three highly-rated writing activities based on the questionnaire result:

1. Writing literature reviews on professional topics

2. Writing job aplication letter

3. Communicating through emails

Another important skill is reading skill. The result of the questionnaire, furthermore, can be inferred as students' need. These are the three top list of reading skills:

1. Reading textbooks

2. Reading manuals/ safety rules/ warning sign

3. Guessing unknown word in a text

Furthermore, to find out the skills needed and difficulties encountered by the students, there are two questions proposed. The first question is about overview of skill needed by the students. Based on the questionnaire result above, the most macroskill needed by them is speaking. Then, it is followed by writing, listening, and reading. The second question deals with difficulties encountered in the course of study. Students indicated that the most difficult skills was listening followed subsequently by writing, reading and speaking.

Two more questions, further, are provided to gain the information about macroskill the students think it gives the greatest contribution to their course of study and their future job. Based on the questionnaire result, speaking is the skill considered very important in their course of study. They feel that they will pass the course of study well if they have a good ability in speaking. In addition, most of students also believed that speaking is also the main useful skill for their future job.

In the sub-part of the questionnaire, we also provided several reasons why the students did not continue their previous English course. The result, however, implicitly reflects the learning needs. These are the five common reasons for not continuing study English:

1. I found writing and grammar are too difficult to master.

2. I found the pronunciation is too difficult to master.

3. I felt that I was not making any progress at speaking.

Those most common reasons, further, can be one of the important considerations in redesigning the syllabus, particularly the ones which deal with the teaching material.

The questionnaire of need analysis also shows fifteen activities that the students would like to improve in teaching learning process. In other words, this result of the questionnaire presents the target needs to be improved in order to succeed in their course of the study. Here are several activities the students really need to improve:

1. Imitating pronunciation

2. Translating sentences

3. Engaging in discussion and conversation

4. Free writing

5. Watching the learning video

After finding out the students' wants through need analysis questionnaire, the next step is establishing general syllabus of topics and tasks.

Topics	Tasks	Language Features
Greetings and Introductions	- Listening tasks - Speaking tasks - Role plays - Discussion	- Useful expressions and vocabulary - Keys steps of an Introduction
Describing trends	- Reading and - writing tasks - Group tasks	Useful expressions and vocabulary

Topics	Tasks	Language Features
Presenting Information	- Presentation Skills - Presenting to Groups - Listening skills - Use of presentation equipment	- Presentation expression - Sequencing - Summarizing and Concluding Conditional ''if'' Clause
Presenting selling Points	- Group task activities - Role plays - Presentations	- Superlatives - Engaging the customer - Giving opinions

The feedback from the students regarding from the questionnaire shows that their wants are mainly for speaking skill that can be used for interactive situation like greeting and introduction in daily or business situation, presenting information in a presentation and presenting selling points. However, most of the students felt that lack of writing and pronunciation. So that it is necessary to have more practice on writing and pronunciation tasks. In addition, we designed the tasks that cover their necessities. The feedback of the questionnaire also gave information about materials that can be arranged for the ESP that can be adjusted to interesting and enjoyable as well as relevant learning activities.

Conclusion

The syllabus outline resulted from the need analysis emphasized on speaking skill as expected by the students even though they still have more problems in writing and pronunciation. Therefore, the materials that will be designed based on the students' need have to pay attention to the activities for speaking performance. In addition, it also has to address the students' lack by assigning tasks on writing and pronunciation exercises. The learning centered approach allows the syllabus designers to adjust the learning activities that are favorable for the students. Thus, the syllabus outline can be flexibly used to adjust students' learning needs.

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