

A Needs Analysis of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Course For Adoption Of Communicative Language Teaching :(A Case of Iranian First-Year Students of Educational Administration)

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ABSTRACT: *English language teaching has become very important because of the global status of English and people all over the world are learning this language (Mackey, 2002). Communicative Language Teaching Methodology, being a modern and effective method of language teaching, has been implemented in many contexts of EFL/ESL teaching including ESP classes (Richards, 2007). This implementation has not been without problems in many Asian countries as CLT has been in clash with local cultures of teach (Ali Khan, 2007). Iran is still following a traditional approach to English language teaching. This study was an effort to discover the learning needs of Iranian university students to assess the implementation of CLT in ESP context. To fulfill such an aim, two different questionnaires were used as instruments of data collection. The students' questionnaire was arranged in multi-option question pattern and where the assessment of attitude and beliefs was required a limited number of scaled questions were included to achieve this end. The teachers' questionnaire had only scaled questions. 90 first-year students and 30 university professors of educational administration of different universities answered the questions. The results of the data analysis revealed that students' learning needs and styles supported the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching and Method. Professors' attitude towards CLT was also investigated and the presence of a positive attitude was established. Subsequently, certain factors which do not allow the practice of CLT in ESP classes are identified and recommendations are made which can help in initiating a shift towards CLT.*

KEYWORDS: *Needs Analysis, ESP class, Communicative Language Teaching, Educational Administration Students.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This study of students' learning needs in Iranian state universities is probably the first of its kind as despite the best efforts and use of all means of search no published literature related to this specific context could be discovered. The aim of the study was to establish the presence of a favorable environment for modernizing English language teaching in these universities by implementing CLT as a method of language teaching. This modernization is important to make ELT more effective in different fields of study to make students competent in English language. This is because of the role of which English plays in material achievements of an individual. A person with good English language skills can hope for a better start in practical life.

1-1: English as an International Language

Communication is the basic attribute of human life [11] and language is the main tool of human communication (Clark et. al., 1994). Initially this communication was within societies and communities at local level but it took a new dimension as people from various societies, communities and nations started interacting with each other. The period following the 1950s saw a tremendous increase in the need for communication among the people of the world in various spheres of international contact like politics, academics, economics, technology and culture. The world has started becoming a global village. This gave birth to the need and pressure of adopting a common lingua franca for this global village to facilitate communication and make it more practical for the people of various linguistic backgrounds [3]. This phenomenon led to the emergence of an international language. English was accorded this privilege and it became the language of international communication or international language. Whatever may be the political or economic reasons and factors responsible for entrenching English in this position, the reality is that these reasons and factors can not diminish the importance of English and its pervasive use in international affairs. Presently, English is the language of international economic system. It is a language which has secured a place for itself alongside local languages in multilingual communities and is also learnt by all classes of the society. Its acquisition can guarantee the availability of opportunities to employment, travelling, higher education, and even better life. These are some of the characteristics which according to Brutt-Griffler (cited in [6]) make an international language.

Following are some of the evidence which can be presented to support the position of English as a global language and a language of wider communication. The researcher states that over 85 per cent international organizations in the field of international relations make some official use of English. In Asia and the Pacific 90 percent of the organizations use only English for their official proceedings (ibid). Thus English is playing a vital role in political, social, educational, and economic concerns of the nations. English is the language of popular culture in the form of being the language of English films and music which entertain people all over the globe (ibid). The travel and tourism industries also rely on English as a common language of communication. The knowledge of English is also essential to access printed and electronic information and higher education as higher education is dependent on English in many countries. Thus “knowledge of English is necessary for accessing many discourses at a global level from international relations to popular culture to academia [6]. A huge industry of language teaching exists in many countries of the world. This includes private language teaching institutions as well as private and state schools (Mackay, 2002:14 [6]).The number of the people who have some familiarity with English is growing and macro-acquisition of the language is also increasing (MacKay, 2002 [6]).Macro-acquisition means acquisition of the language by various levels of society both at individual level and in groups. Individually more and more people are learning it, and it is also finding a place in the academic curricula in various countries. The phenomenon can be explained by citing [3] who states that English is now taught over 100 countries and is emerging as the chief foreign language being learnt and displacing other language in the process.

Graddol (1997) specifies the following domains of English in the international area:

- 1) English is the working language of international organizations and conference.
- 2) English is the international language of science and technology.
- 3) English is used in international banking, economic affairs and commerce.
- 4) Advertising for global brands is done in English.
- 5) English is the language of audio-visual and cultural products.
- 6) English is the language of international tourism.
- 7) English is the language of tertiary education.
- 8) English is the language of international safety in the fields of aeronautics and sea.
- 9) English is the language of international law.
- 10) It is a relay language in interpretation and translation.
- 11) It is the language of technology transfer.
- 12) It is the language of internet communication.

It is an ample indication that English is being used as a lingua franca in all spheres of international activity and it can be claimed that, internationally English has developed a ‘special role that is recognized in every country’ (Crystal 1997).

Regarding all this fact, it can be seen mandatory for students of numerous fields of study to learn English. It can help them to easily communicate with other peoples around the world, having access to the new-developed scientific knowledge of other countries and, as a result, having a better practical life.

1-2: Situation of ELT in Iranian ESP courses

Teaching English in ESP courses of Iranian universities seems far from satisfactory, not conducive to learning the language. In most cases, it shows characteristics of traditional approaches [9]:

- ▶ Lack of deep approaches to learning; meaning, thereby, lack of connection to personal, experience of the learner, conceptualization and integration. For language learning it has the implication of memorizing facts about language and lack of contextualized, authentic use of the target language with a focus on meaning.
- ▶ An emphasis on rote memorization.
- ▶ Emphasis on transfer and assessment of factual knowledge rather than assessment of critical thinking and analytical skills.

This, by implication, means a traditional approach to English language teaching. The elements of a traditional approach to English language teaching are mentioned below (Nunan, 1999 [7]):

Area	Model
View of learning	Transmission of knowledge
Power relation	Emphasis on teacher's authority
Teacher's role	Providing frontal instruction
Learner's role	Passive / individual work
View of knowledge	Presented as 'certain'
View of curriculum	Static; predefined content and product
Learning experience	Knowledge of facts, concepts & skills; focus on content and product
Control of process	Teacher structured learning
Motivation	Extrinsic
Evaluation	Product oriented: achievement
Testing	criterion referencing

This approach has a focus on the view of language as a structured system of grammatical patterns, with a trend for formal and bookish language, with the aim to have students producing formally correct sentences and in terms of skills, an emphasis on reading and writing (Nunan 1988). Whereas there has been a surge of research and development in ELT world in the areas of language acquisition and teaching methodology, it seems that Iran could not benefit from these developments and modernization grammar translation method is still being adopted by most language programmers and language teaching programs have aspects which are not relevant to the needs of learners/students. There is a requirement, emerging as a consequence of international and national role of English and the developments in English language teaching methodology, to make ELT more relevant and meaningful for Iranian students by understanding their needs. Thus ELT in Iran should be more directed towards satisfying the present and future needs of learners and in this manner they can be well equipped for the future challenges of life where role of English is involved.

1-3: Needs Analysis

Needs analysis (NA) is an information gathering process. Its emergence in language planning can be traced back to the 1970s and its widespread proliferation in the domain is attributable to its adoption by The Council of Europe's modern language project [7]. Tudor (1996 [12]) opines that the development of a perception of need within communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s had a widespread influence on needs analysis work. NA is considered as a basic principal of ESP (Robinson 1991) and most of the information on NA initially came from ESP [13]. This is probably due to the fact that an NA approach is more useful when learners' needs are linked to a 'discrete set of communicative situations' [12]. All these uses of NA refer to the fact that NA can be used for a range of purposes. It can be helpful in determining whether a program should be implemented by finding out if it matches the goals and objectives of the learners for learning a language and at the same time used as part of a program can help in improving various components of the program and making these more oriented to the needs of the learners. NA can also help in evaluating an existing program and if found deficient can help in establishing the need for introducing a change and what kind of change may appropriately match the needs of the learners and simultaneously be acceptable to teachers. This is the type of utilization of NA which can help in determining whether a positive attitude towards implementation of CLT exists among teachers and learners and whether CLT is more attuned to the kind of existing learning needs. Needs analysis can be limited to gathering information about the attitudes, beliefs and opinion of the learners and teachers and concurrently a more comprehensive NA can be conducted to gather information about all contextual factors.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

Participants of the study were students and teachers of educational administration. 90 first-year students of different universities, aging from 19-20, answered the questionnaire. 30 teachers, also, invited to participate in the study. They possess postgraduate degrees in Educational Administration and have teaching experience ranging from three to ten years.

2.2. Material

The data collection instrument was two questionnaires for the students and teachers, both of them were adopted from Ali Khan, 2007. The students' questionnaire was arranged in multi-option question pattern and where the assessment of attitude and beliefs was required a limited number of scaled questions were included to achieve this end. The teachers' questionnaire had only scaled questions.

The students' questionnaire aimed at gathering information related to the following areas:

- the present and future domains of language use and thus reasons for studying English
- The students' attitude towards the place and role of English in the school curriculum
- Learning preferences in terms of language skills
- The importance of particular language skills
- Preferred learning styles and strategies
- Patterns of learner to learner interaction
- Role relationship
- Preference for teaching activities

The aim of this NA is also to establish the need of a change in the way learners experience the learning process and the proposed change aims at introducing a modern approach, which is CLT, as an alternate to traditional approach which is currently in practice. Correspondingly, the questions in the students' questionnaire had choices ranging from elements of the traditional approach to the elements of the modern approach. The intention was to explore their choices between the elements of modern approach and traditional approach related to the areas of role relationship, learning preferences, skills, pattern of interaction and activities [1]. The questionnaire for the teachers aimed at investigating the attitudes, perception, and beliefs of the teachers about the elements of modern approach and the prevailing traditional approach. The purpose was to establish the ownership and acceptance of CLT, as in the case of any ELT innovation the successful adoption, apart from other factors, requires the support of teachers and it is difficult for people to accept something they do not feel involved in (Stephenson, 1994).

2.3: Analysis of Students' Need

The analysis of responses is organized area-wise related to areas of present and future domains of language use, their attitude towards the place and role of English in universities, learning preferences, classroom interaction and learning activities.

2.4. Domains of Language Use

The questionnaire contained questions with multiple-choices to help in determining the present and future domains of language use. The questions related to this area and the responses are presented below:

► Question 1 (Why do you need to study English?): The intended purpose of this question was to discover the students' perception of their reasons for studying English as part of a university curriculum. A majority of the students, which is about 64.03% consider higher education as their reason for studying English.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. the Reason for Studying English

Higher education	64.03%
Success for future profession	31.06%
Speak to foreigners	3.01%
Speak to friends and family	1.07%
others	.83%

► Question 2 (when do you use English?): These questions aimed at eliciting response from the students about their present domain of English language use. The present domain of language use, opted by 68.15 % in question no 2, is for academic purposes.

Table 2. When do You Use English?

When studying	68.15%
When socializing	26.11%
At home	3.8%
Others	1.99%

► Question 3 (In future I shall be using English more for?): The aim of the question was to establish the future domain of English language use. 40.96% thought it will be in the domain of their higher education.

Table 3. Future Use of English?

Higher education	40.96%
Job/career	38.23%
Socializing	18.43%
At home	2.38%
Others	00.0%

3.2: Role of English in University and Future Life

The questionnaire contained questions which intended to judge students' attitude towards the role of English in the present university curriculum and in future life.

► Question 4 (Would you like English to be taken away from school curriculum because you do not find the present syllabus and the way of classroom teaching helpful in fulfilling your needs of English?). Question 20 aimed at probing the opinion of the students about the place of English in the university curriculum. The question was in the scaled form and the percentage of students who 'strongly disagreed' and those who 'disagreed' is 29.32 % and 35.4% respectively. Thus 64.72 % opposed the idea of removing English from the school curriculum even if it is not fulfilling their needs.

Table 4. Removal of English from the Universities Because It Does not Fulfill Students' Needs

Strongly disagree	29.33%
Disagree	35.4%
Neutral	15.29%
Agree	12.02%
Strongly agree	7.96%

► Question 5 (Do you think if a student's level of English is not good it can have.....). The purpose was to know the possible role of English in the present academic and future life of the students. Question 4 tried to determine the effect of English language proficiency on the academic performance of the students. 75.91 % thought that it can have a detrimental effect on students' academic performance if the proficiency level in English is not good.

Table 5. Question 5

A good effect on his academic performance	5.98%
A bad effect on his academic performance	75.91%
No effect at all on his performance	18.11%

► Question 6 (Do students in your class face difficulty in studying subjects like management theories, and organizational behavior because of their poor English?). It was also considered necessary to know the students' beliefs about the association between performance in science subjects and proficiency in English. Following are the results which give an indication of the beliefs of the students:

Table 6. Question 6

Many face a lot of difficulty	31.02
Many face a little difficulty	45.44
They face no difficulty	23.54

3.3. Learning Preferences in Language Skills

Questions 7 and 8 were focused on finding students' learning preferences for language skills.

► Question 7 (Which skills are emphasized more in your English classes?): Question 5 intended to investigate the skills which students are developing more.

Table 7. Which skills are emphasized in the class?

Skills	percentage
Reading	53.02
Grammar	22.78
Vocabulary	12.67
Writing	5.85
Speaking	3.41
Listening	2.27

► Question 8: Question 8 intended to investigate the skills which students want to develop more. Majority of the students expressed their desire for improving their speaking skills.

Table 8. Preference Pattern of Students for Various Language Areas

Skills	percentage
Speaking	63.89
Listening	18.78
Reading	10.4
vocabulary	3.21
Writing	2.31
Grammar	1.4

The responses in favor of ‘speaking’ can probably be interpreted as a result of the reaction against the prevailing traditional approach which does not prioritize the development of learners’ speaking skills, and Robison’s (1995) explanation regarding the importance of speaking skills for students that ‘in many students’ opinion oral proficiency is the best indication of mastery of a language’ seems to be very valid in this context also.

3.4. Classroom Interaction and Learning Activities

► Question 9: Question 9 intended to find out students’ preferred learning styles. 86.45 % of the students preferred their active role in the class room by participating in a lot of learning activities, pair work/group work, games and projects as compared to 13.55 % who preferred a passive role and a class with no activities.

Table 9: Students’ Preferred Learning Styles

A class with lot of activities, pair/group work and projects	86.45
Teaching only by the teacher & no activities by the students	13.55

► Question 10: Question 10 investigated the preference for classroom interaction patterns. 78.98 % of the students preferred pair and group work interaction pattern as compared to working alone.

Table 10: Preference for Doing Learning Activities in the Class

Preference for working in pairs or groups	78.98
Preference for working alone	21.02

► Question 11: Questions 11 examined students’ preferences for the role of the teacher in the classroom. A total of 64.02 % respondents to question 10 opted for the role of teacher as guide and facilitator.

Table 11: Pattern of Preference for the Role of Teacher

Preference for the role of teacher as a facilitator and guide	64.02
Preference for traditional role of teacher as someone in control of everything in class	35.08

► Question 12: Question 12 was aimed at knowing students perception of improvement or otherwise of their English proficiency. 54.46 % thought that it is not improving. This proved the assumption that present English syllabus is not improving the desired proficiency students to their desired level.

Table 12. Students’ Perception of Improvement in Their Level of English

English level is not improving	54.46
English level is improving	35.47
Not sure	10.07

IV. RESULTS OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Interpreting the response patterns of the questionnaire, we can come to the following conclusions:

- It can be inferred that the ‘mastery of language’ is considered instrumental in making good progress in studies (thus present needs) and in getting a good job in future and also making good progress in future career.
- The students need to learn all the four skills of language as compared to grammar and vocabulary. Speaking is more preferred as compared to the skills of listening, reading and writing.
- Students need a classroom environment which is supportive to their active participation by introducing pair and group work, and activities like games, role play, and projects.
- They need a class where they are at the center and the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator and guide.
- Students attach great importance to the study of English. They believe that present approach and course material is not contributing to the improvement of their English.

4.1: Teachers’ Attitudes to CA

Teachers and their attitude play a crucial role in determining the implementation of any approach (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Thus in the context it is suitable to present the results of the survey conducted among the teachers of universities to get an insight in their attitudes and beliefs about CA. The questions related to CA tried to investigate the attitude of the teachers in various areas like error correction, group and pair work, fluency and accuracy, and role relationship.

4.2. Teachers’ Response Pattern

The following presentation, though brief in nature clearly demonstrates the attitude of the majority of the teachers to communicative approach.

Table 13. Question 1

<i>Teaching should focus on fluency rather than accuracy.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25.12	43.62	7.21	24.45	24.72

Table 14. Question 2

<i>Student should be at the center of knowledge transmission. Teacher should be their facilitator.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
43.07	30.74	10.65	10.78	4.76

Table 15. Question 3

<i>Teacher should spend a lot of time on role play/ games for learning/ group and pair work instead of just teaching and students only listening.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.12	69.5	15.9	7.27	1.33

Table 16. Question 4

<i>ELT syllabus should focus on developing all four skills.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
53.22	44.3	4.78	2.9	1.33

Table 17. Question 5

<i>Communicative language teaching is the best approach for your students.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
54.65	35.66	1.42	6.3	1.97

The responses of the teachers lead to a conclusion that majority of them favors the features of communicative approach and one can assume that CLT if implemented in universities will find the kind of ownership among these teachers necessary for successful initiation of implementation of any change or innovation.

V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of data collected through a sample group of university students and teachers of educational administration has clearly indicated that there is strong and homogeneous bias towards CLT. The students desire the kind of learning culture which CLT can provide and teachers also favor the elements of CLT. However, these conclusions are limited to a specific group of students and teachers in a specific field of study, therefore the conclusion may not take as an indication of acceptance and ownership by students and teachers in other systems of education in Iran.

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Appendix A

Students' questionnaire

Please read the questions and response options carefully and put a cross in front of your response.

1-Why do you need to study English?	
Higher education	
Success for future profession	
Speak to foreigners	
Speak to friends and family	
others	

2-When do you use English?	
When studying	
When socializing	
At home	
others	

4-In future I shall be using English for	
Higher education	
Job/career	
socializing	
At home	
others	

4- Would you like English to be taken away from school curriculum because you do not find the present syllabus and the way of classroom teaching helpful in fulfilling your needs of English?	
Strongly disagree	
disagree	
neutral	
agree	
Strongly agree	

5- Do you think if a student's level of English is not good it can have	
A good effect on his academic performance	
A bad effect on his academic performance	
No effect at all on his performance	

6- Do students in your class face difficulty in studying content subjects like management theories and organizational behavior because of their poor English?	
Many face a lot of difficulty	
Many face a little difficulty	
They face no difficulty	

7. Which skills are emphasized in the class?	
skills	percentage
reading	
grammar	
vocabulary	
writing	
speaking	
listening	

8. Which of the following areas do you wish to develop more?	
skills	percentage
speaking	
listening	
reading	
vocabulary	
writing	
grammar	

9. What kind of English class do you like?	
A class with lot of activities, pair/group work and projects	
Teaching only by the teacher & no activities by the students	

10. How do you prefer to do learning activities in the class?	
Preference for working in pairs or groups	
Preference for working alone	

11. What kind of role do you like your teacher to have?	
Preference for the role of teacher as a facilitator and guide	
Preference for traditional role of teacher as someone in control of everything in class	

12. What do you think about the improvement of your English knowledge?	
English level is not improving	
English level is improving	
Not sure	

Appendix B

Teachers' Questionnaire
Please Encircle Your Response

<i>Teaching should focus on fluency rather than accuracy.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

<i>Student should be at the centre of knowledge transmission. Teacher should be their facilitator.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

<i>Teacher should spend a lot of time on role play/ games for learning/ group and pair work instead of just teaching and students only listening.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

<i>ELT syllabus should focus on developing all four skills.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

<i>Communicative language teaching is the best approach for your students.</i>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree