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NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN NON-LINGUISTIC UNIVERSITIES OF UZBEKISTAN: A PRACTICAL MODEL

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Abstract. English is taught to students of engineering, medicine, economics, agriculture and other non-linguistic specialties in Uzbek universities, usually under the label of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In practice, many such courses follow general English textbooks with a few specialist texts added, and course content is rarely based on an analysis of what students will actually need to do in English. Needs analysis has been the foundation of ESP since the late 1970s, yet few needs analyses of Uzbek ESP courses have been published. This article reviews the main approaches to needs analysis, including target situation analysis, present situation analysis, learning needs analysis and task-based needs analysis, and proposes a five-step model suited to the resources of Uzbek university language departments. The model uses triangulated sources (students, subject teachers, graduates and employers), short questionnaires and interviews, and analysis of authentic texts, and it ends with the translation of findings into course objectives and tasks. The model is illustrated with a course for civil engineering students.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, needs analysis, course design, target situation analysis, task-based needs analysis, higher education, Uzbekistan

O‘ZBEKISTONNING NOFILOLOGIK OLIY TA’LIM MUASSASALARIDA MAXSUS MAQSADLAR UCHUN INGLIZ TILI BO‘YICHA EHTIYOJLAR TAHLILI: AMALIY MODEL

Annotatsiya. Maqolada O‘zbekistonning nofilologik oliy ta’lim muassasalarida maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili (ESP) kurslarini ehtiyojlar tahlili asosida loyihalash masalasi ko‘rib chiqiladi. Ehtiyojlar tahlilining asosiy yondashuvlari sharhlanib, til kafedralari imkoniyatlariga mos besh bosqichli model taklif etiladi va u qurilish muhandisligi talabalari uchun kurs misolida ko‘rsatiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: maxsus maqsadlar uchun ingliz tili, ehtiyojlar tahlili, kurs loyihalash, oliy ta’lim

АНАЛИЗ ПОТРЕБНОСТЕЙ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ДЛЯ СПЕЦИАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ В НЕФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ВУЗАХ УЗБЕКИСТАНА: ПРАКТИЧЕСКАЯ МОДЕЛЬ

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проектирование курсов английского языка для специальных целей (ESP) в нефилологических вузах Узбекистана на основе анализа потребностей. Предлагается пятиэтапная модель анализа потребностей, соответствующая ресурсам языковых кафедр, и пример её применения к курсу для студентов-строителей.

Ключевые слова: английский язык для специальных целей, анализ потребностей, проектирование курса, высшее образование

INTRODUCTION

Since the language education reforms of the 2010s, English has become a required subject for students of all specialties in Uzbek higher education. In non-linguistic universities, such as institutes of engineering, medicine, economics and agriculture, it is usually taught as English for Specific Purposes. The intention is simple enough: an engineer should learn the English of engineering, a doctor the English of medicine.

In practice, though, the “specific” part is often thin. Courses may follow a general English textbook for most of the year and add specialist texts for reading and translation. Students learn vocabulary lists of technical terms but rarely practise the tasks they will perform in English: reading equipment manuals, writing e-mails to foreign partners, presenting a project, or understanding a conference talk. Language teachers are usually philologists who may know little about the specialty, while subject teachers are rarely involved in course design.

The ESP literature has a standard answer to this problem: needs analysis. Hutchinson and Waters [1] described ESP as an approach in which all decisions about content and method are based on the learner’s reasons for learning. Needs analyses of ESP courses in Uzbekistan, however, are seldom published, and teachers have no practical model that fits their workload. This article proposes one.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of needs analysis

West [2] traced needs analysis from its early focus on the target situation, the language learners need to use in their future jobs or studies, to broader approaches that also consider learners’ present abilities, learning preferences and constraints. Hutchinson and Waters [1] distinguished target needs (what learners need to do in the target situation) from learning needs (what learners need to do in order to learn). They further divided target needs into necessities, lacks and wants: what the situation demands, what learners currently cannot do, and what learners themselves want.

Contemporary approaches

Dudley-Evans and St John [3] proposed a comprehensive model of needs analysis that includes professional information about learners, personal information, language information, the gap between current and required abilities, learning needs, and the means of communication in the target situation. Long [4] argued for task-based needs analysis: rather than identifying language items, the analyst

identifies the real-world tasks learners must perform and studies how they are carried out, using multiple sources and methods. He emphasised triangulation, since learners themselves may not know what their future jobs will require. Basturkmen [5] and Brown [6] provide practical guidance on conducting needs analyses with limited resources, including choice of sources, design of questionnaires and interviews, and analysis of authentic texts.

Sources and methods

The literature identifies several sources: current learners, former learners and graduates, subject teachers, employers, and documents such as job descriptions and authentic workplace texts. Methods include questionnaires, structured and unstructured interviews, observation, and analysis of texts and recordings. Long [4] stresses that combining sources and methods produces more valid results than relying on learner questionnaires alone.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is conceptual and design-oriented. Approaches to needs analysis in the ESP literature were reviewed and compared with the conditions of ESP teaching in Uzbek non-linguistic universities: limited time for course design, teachers without specialist subject knowledge, large student numbers, and limited contact with employers. A five-step model was designed to retain the essential features of task-based, triangulated needs analysis while remaining feasible within one semester. An illustrative application to a civil engineering course was constructed to show how the model works; it is an example, not a report of completed research.

RESULTS: A FIVE-STEP MODEL

Step 1: Define the target situation

The language teacher, together with the head of the specialty department, defines where graduates will use English: in further study, in local workplaces with foreign partners, or abroad. This step requires one meeting and a short written description of three or four target situations.

Step 2: Collect information from four sources

Information is collected from four sources using short instruments (Table 1).

Table 1. Sources and instruments

Source	Instrument	What it reveals
Current students (whole cohort)	Short questionnaire (15–20 items)	Present level, self-assessed lacks, wants, learning preferences
Subject teachers (3–5)	Semi-structured interview (20–30 min)	Specialist texts and tasks in English; terminology
Graduates (5–10)	Interview or online questionnaire	Real use of English at work; tasks they struggled with
Employers (2–3)	Interview or written questions	Required tasks and standards of performance

Step 3: Collect authentic texts and tasks

The teacher collects samples of authentic texts that graduates actually use: manuals, technical specifications, standards, e-mails, project reports, conference presentations. Subject teachers and

graduates are asked to supply them. These texts show the genres, vocabulary and structures the course must cover.

Step 4: Analyse and prioritise

Findings are organised into a list of target tasks, each with its frequency, importance and current difficulty. Tasks that are frequent, important and difficult receive the highest priority. The analysis also notes learning needs: for example, whether students prefer group work, what resources they have, and what their current proficiency allows.

Step 5: Translate into objectives, tasks and materials

Each high-priority target task is turned into a course objective and one or more pedagogic tasks. Authentic texts collected in Step 3 are adapted into materials. The course is then reviewed by a subject teacher before it is taught.

Illustrative application: civil engineering

Table 2. Example of target tasks and course objectives (illustrative)

Target task	Frequency / importance	Course objective	Pedagogic task
Read technical specifications and standards	High / high	Extract key requirements from a specification	Groups find and summarise five requirements for a given structure
Write e-mails to foreign suppliers	Medium / high	Request information and clarify details in writing	Write and reply to a supplier e-mail about delivery of materials
Understand site safety instructions	High / high	Understand and give safety instructions	Pairs explain safety rules for a site area from a plan
Present a project to clients	Medium / medium	Present a design with visuals and answer questions	Five-minute group presentation of a small project
Read professional articles	Low / medium	Read for gist and specific information	Jigsaw reading of short articles on new materials

In this example, reading specifications and understanding safety instructions turn out to be priorities that no general English textbook would cover, while e-mail writing and presentations are skills that general courses address only in non-specialist contexts.

Practical considerations

The model is designed to be completed in about eight to ten weeks of part-time work by a language teacher. Questionnaires can be administered online at no cost. Interviews can be short and done by phone. The most time-consuming element, collecting authentic texts, can be shared among teachers of the same specialty across universities.

DISCUSSION

The model targets a central weakness of many ESP courses in Uzbekistan: content that is chosen from textbooks rather than from analysis of learners' needs. By involving subject teachers, graduates and employers, it compensates for language teachers' limited specialist knowledge and gives subject departments a stake in the English course.

Two difficulties can be expected. First, access to graduates and employers may be difficult. Alumni networks, internship supervisors and professional associations can help, and even a handful of informants can tell the teacher a great deal. Second, curricula in Uzbek universities are often fixed at the institutional level, leaving little room for change. In this case, the needs analysis can guide the selection and adaptation of materials within the existing curriculum, and its findings can support proposals for curriculum revision.

The model has not yet been tried systematically in Uzbek universities. Applying it to several specialties and publishing the results would build a shared base of ESP needs information. Comparing the outcomes of courses designed with and without needs analysis, in terms of students' performance on target tasks, would provide evidence of its value.

CONCLUSION

ESP courses in Uzbek non-linguistic universities often lack a basis in learners' actual needs. Needs analysis, the foundation of ESP, can provide this basis, and it does not have to be an expensive research project. The five-step model proposed here, combining a defined target situation, four sources of information, authentic texts, prioritisation and translation into tasks, offers a feasible route for language departments. Applied across specialties, it would make English courses more relevant to the professional futures of Uzbek students.

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