Analysis of Language Needs of English Literature Majors: A Non-native Context Study

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Abstract—The present research was conducted to investigate the language needs of English literature students in Iran. In this study two groups of participants filled in the related questionnaires which dealt with the investigation of their language needs. The first group (N=224) was junior and senior students of English literature from Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Razi University of Kermanshah, and Azad University of Kerman. The second group (N=52) was former English literature students who were teachers and/or translators in Kerman and Kermanshah at the time. The second group was chosen to verify if the expectations of the current students as regards their future needs were realistic. The results of the analysis of the data revealed that the current English literature students used English for academic purposes mostly. The most important future function of English language for current English literature students was for teaching purposes. Results revealed that the future expectations of the current English literature students were in accord with reality.

Index Terms—English for specific purposes, needs analysis, target situation analysis, English for academic purposes

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest contributions of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to language teaching has been its emphasis on careful and extensive needs analysis for course content (Johns, 1991). Needs analysis has figured notably in the literature of language teaching for 30 years. Richterich (1987) notes the difficulty of reaching an agreed definition of needs analysis in that the notion of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous.

The diversity of needs of English language learners has long been acknowledged (Tarone and Yule, 1989). The analysis of these needs is instrumental in determining course content, materials selection, teaching/learning processes, assessment/evaluation in EAP, ESP (see Benesch, 1996; Fulcher, 1999; and Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998), and in GE (see Seedhouse, 1995). Also, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest that learners' needs should be considered in the process of the content of a language program. This study, thus, aims at investigating the target needs of the English literature majors and specifically their views of their needs, that is, their language wants. English teachers and departments may have implicit views on what students need to know in order to function effectively in academic settings, but they know very little about the purposes English literature majors use the target language for outside the university.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The simplified conventional definition of needs is offered by Berwick (1989) as the "discrepancy between a current state of affaires and a desired future state" (p. 52). Other researchers to date have introduced various dichotomies on needs which appear to be complementary: perceived (prescribed)-felt needs (Berwick, 1989; Robinson, 1991), objective-subjective needs (Brindley, 1989; Quinn, 1985, quoted in Brindley, 1989; Robinson, 1991), target-learning needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters' target needs is comprised of necessities, lacks, and wants. Learning needs, on the other hand, is an umbrella term for all factors connected to the process of learning like attitude, motivation, awareness, personality, learning styles and strategies, etc. (Kormos, 2002). Peck (1991) categorizes the concept of needs analysis in terms of academic, social, and emotional needs.

In an EAP setting students are expected to acquire receptive and perceptive skills in line with developing learning strategies and study skills (Jordan, 1997). Kormos (2002) states that a large body of materials have been written for specific fields of study such as business, science, technology, or English for academic purposes. However, English majors in non-native contexts are representative of a group unlike any of the others. Being an English student in a non-native context is usually a prerequisite for becoming an English teacher and being an authority in it; therefore, the language needs of English majors in non-native contexts are often neglected under the assumption that they have to know everything anyway (Kormos, 2002).

There are various models and approaches through which needs analysis can be considered. The oldest model was proposed by Munby (1978) in his book "Communicative Syllabus Design." In this model, Munby presents a Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) which is composed of a set of parameters within which information on the

students' target situation can be plotted (Robinson, 1991). These parameters are: participant, purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key. Munby has presented a thorough list of microfunctions in CNP; what he has not included is how to prioritize them or any affective factors which today we recognize as important (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). The Munby model is a good example for Target Situation Analysis (TSA) type of needs analysis. Robinson (1991, p. 8) defines TSA as "A needs analysis which focuses on the students' needs at the end of a language course."

Tarone and Yule (1989) cover the same ground with a four level framework. These four levels are: i) global level (situations in which learners will need to use the language and language related activities which typically occur in those situations); ii) rhetorical level (the typical way in which information is organized in any language related activity); iii) grammatical-rhetorical level (those language forms which realize the information structure of the language activity); iv) and grammatical level (the frequency with which language forms are used in different communication situations).

Target-learning dichotomy, offered by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), is still another framework through which needs analysis can be conducted. Target situation needs are understood as "what the learner needs to do in the target situation" (p. 54). Target needs analysis framework has three parameters: necessities (what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation), lacks (the gap between target and existing proficiency of the learner), and wants (the learners' view on their needs) (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, pp. 55-57). Learning needs are what the learner needs to do in order to learn. Quite clearly, therefore, the analysis of target situations needs is concerned with the area of language use (Kavaliauskiene and Upaliene, 2003), that is, the use of language in those situations where learners are supposed to function and effectively. In this study Hutchinson and Waters' target needs analysis (1987) will be taken into account, and among its components wants will be specifically stressed. Richterich (1984, p. 29, quoted in Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) comments:

"…a needs does not exist independent of a person. It is people who build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment."

Learners' perceptions of their needs may be at odds with the needs perceived by curriculum developers, course designers, teachers, etc. Therefore, if these people and especially English departments have reliable data on the language use of English students during and after their studies, they can modify or restructure the curriculum or syllabus so as to fulfil the needs of these students during their studies and later in their job-related situations and professional life. The study, thus, attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the present language needs of English literature majors?
2. What are the future language needs of English literature majors?
3. What are the language needs of former English literature majors in their present private and professional life?

This last question is provided to verify if the expectations of students as regards their future needs are realistic.

III. METHOD

Participants

Participants of this study were from two groups. The first group was 250 male and female juniors and seniors of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Razi University of Kermanshah, and Azad University of Kerman. The rationale for choosing junior and senior students was that these students had completed at least two years of study in the university and were relatively more aware of their needs and could indicate them more accurately. Three universities were selected for the purpose of this study so that the researcher could have a representative sample of the whole population, notwithstanding the fact that due to the constraints of time and expense, factors of accessibility, ease of questionnaire administration and data collection had also been taken into consideration.

Out of the 250 collected questionnaires, 224 had been properly completed which were included in data analysis. Other incomplete questionnaires were discarded.

The second group of participants was 60 former English students who were now working as English teachers and translators. These subjects were chosen from high school teachers, teachers in English language institutes, and translators. Like the previous group, out of 60 filled-in questionnaires, 52 were complete and other incomplete questionnaires were excluded in data analysis.

Instruments

The required data of this research was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study had originally been developed by Kormos (2003) to investigate the language wants of English majors in a non-native context. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire had been determined through the techniques of verbal reporting (thinking aloud interviews), test-retest reliability, and internal consistency analysis by a group of university professors in Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary. The questionnaire intended for current and the former students was adapted to meet the requirements of the present study.

The first questionnaire, which was intended for the current students, was composed of two parts. Part one asked questions related to students biographical data: their permanent/part-time job, the job they expected to take after graduation, the number of completed terms in the university, their age and gender. Part two, which was the main body of the questionnaire, consisted of three sections. The first section included 47 questions which asked students about the situations in which they used the English language. These questions had been divided into four domains: 1) private

domain (questions 1-18), 2) academic domain (questions 19-28), 3) teaching domain (questions 29-35), and 4) business domain (questions 36-47).

In the second section, students had to indicate their answers on a five-point Likert scale. On this scale value 1 represented 'never'; 2 stood for 'occasionally, once or a few times a year'; 3 came for 'sometimes, once or a few times a month'; 4 represented 'frequently once or a few times a week'; and 5 represented 'very frequently, on daily basis'. This column pertained to the answers to the present situations of English language use. The third section was like the second column except in the choice X 'don't know'. This choice was added to make sure that students are not forced to choose their answers from 1-5 and also to assure that they have answered carefully. This choice was not considered in the data analysis because it was considered a neutral answer which would not influence the results.

The questionnaire for the former English students (see appendix B) was also changed a little. The third section, that is, the answers for students' future use of English language was removed because this group was in their present private and professional life. Also, in the academic domain, three questions were excluded for the simple reason that they were graduated students and would almost never use English in those situations. The three excluded questions were items number 19, 20, and 24. Other questions in this domain remained because this group would use English in these situations in their present private and professional life.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of analyzing the data, the data were computer-coded and then, by the use of SPSS software, the data were analyzed. In the analysis, descriptive statistics was used and for each item in the questionnaire 'median', 'mode', 'frequency', and 'percentage' were computed. In order to compare the future situations of English language use by the current students with those of the former students' responses, nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test were used. In the comparison, the significance level was assumed 0.05.

IV. RESULTS

1. Current Students' Biodata Analysis

In the first phase of the research, 224 completed questionnaires were collected from the students of English literature in three universities, namely, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman (N=75), Razi University of Kermanshah (N=91), and Azad University of Kerman (N=58).

Of all the 224 subjects, 153 (68.3%) were females and 71 (31.7%) were males.

Almost all of the subjects were junior and senior students majoring in English literature. The age range of the subjects was from 20-40 years old. 89.3% of all the participants were 20-25 years old.

As for the students present permanent or part-time job, the analysis showed that 82.1% of the subjects did not have any jobs. 12.9% were teachers and 2.7% were translators. (Table 1.1)

TABLE 1.1

Present Permanent or Part-Time Job	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	29	12.9
Translator	6	2.7
Teacher and Translator	1	.4
Work in a Bank	1	.4
Shopkeeper	2	.9
Veterinarian	1	.4
Have No Job	184	82.1
Total	224	100.0

About their future job, 38.4% of the participants had no idea what job they were going to take after graduation. 34.8% of participants expected to become teachers and 4.9% of participants expected to work as translators. (Table 1.2)

TABLE 1.2

Future Job	Frequency	Percent
I Don't Know	86	38.4
Teacher	78	34.8
Translator	11	4.9
Teacher and Translator	13	5.8
Continue Studies	6	2.7
Become a University Professor	15	6.7
Tourist Guide	4	1.8
Work in a Bank	4	1.8
Work in a Company	7	3.1
Total	224	100.0

2. Present Situations of Language Use

After analyzing the students' answers to the questions related to their present situations of language use, it was found that the most frequent situations in which the subjects used English were related to their academic studies. This finding was in accord with the requirements of the university curriculum, in which these students are required to use the English

language mostly in their studies. In Table 2.1, the situations in which students currently use English are shown. In the table, all four domains have been shown separately.

TABLE 2.1

	Questions	Ss' Present Situation of language use			Current Ss' future expectations			Former Ss' situation of English Use		
		N	Median	Mode	N	Median	Mode	N	Median	Mode
	Private Domain									
1	Conversing with natives	224	1	1	160	3	2	52	2	2
2	Conversing with non-natives	224	3	3	172	4	4	52	3	2
3	Reading newspaper	224	2	2	192	4	3	52	3	3
4	Reading stories	224	3	3	197	4	4	52	3	3
5	Writing emails	224	2	1	177	4	5	52	3	4
6	Writing traditional letters	224	1	1	153	2	2	52	2	2
7	Chatting on the Internet	224	2	1	173	3	5	52	2	1
8	Watching news on TV	224	3	3	194	4	4	52	3	3
9	Watching documentaries	224	3	3	179	3	3	52	3	3
10	Watching films	224	3	3	196	4	5	52	4	4
11	Watching entertainments programs	224	3	2	187	4	4	52	3	3
12	Listening to radio programs	224	2	2	181	3	4	52	3	3
13	Reading texts on the Internet	224	3	3	183	4	4	52	3	2
14	Reading instructional manuals	224	3	3	169	3	3	52	3	4
15	Using computer games	224	2	1	173	3	2	52	3	4
16	Translating for family	224	3	3	190	4	4	52	3	4
17	Interpreting for family	224	3	3	188	4	4	52	3	3
18	Activities related to hobby	224	2	1	151	3	2	52	3	3
	Academic Domain									
1	Listening to teachers	224	5	5	143	4	5	52	3	5
2	Listening to student presentations	224	4	4	138	4	4	52	3	2
3	Reading professional books	224	3	4	167	4	5	52	5	5
4	Reading professional journals	224	2	2	167	3	4	52	3	2
5	Using English-English dictionary	224	4	5	184	5	5	52	4	4
6	Taking notes while listening	224	4	5	145	4	5	52	3	4
7	Taking notes while reading	224	3	3	154	3	3	52	2	2
8	Expressing opinion	224	3	3	180	4	5	52	5	3
9	Giving presentations	224	3	3	145	3	4	52	3	3
10	Writing papers/essays	224	2	2	149	3	2	52	2	2
	Teaching Domain									
1	Correcting translations as a teacher	224	1	1	55	3	2	52	3	3
2	Correcting homework as a teacher	224	2	1	57	4	5	52	4	5
3	Writing tasks as a teacher	224	1	1	55	4	5	52	4	4
4	Writing tests as a teacher	224	1	1	56	4	5	52	4	4
5	Asking questions as a teacher	224	1	1	59	4	5	52	5	5
6	Giving instructions as a teacher	224	1	1	54	4	4	52	5	5
7	Giving explanations as a teacher	224	1	1	54	4	5	52	5	5
	Business Domain									
1	Conversing in job-related situations	224	1	1	128	4	5	52	4	4
2	Interpreting in job-related meetings	224	1	1	115	3	4	52	3	1
3	Using English at conferences	224	1	1	111	3	1	52	2	1
4	Interpreting at conferences	224	1	1	107	3	1	52	1	1
5	Writing business letters	224	1	1	96	2	1	52	2	1
6	Reading business letters	224	1	1	98	2	1	52	2	1
7	Translating business letters	224	1	1	92	3	1	52	2	1
8	Reading business documents	224	1	1	91	2	1	52	2	1
9	Writing business documents	224	1	1	86	2	1	52	2	1
10	Translating business documents	224	1	1	87	2	1	52	2	1
11	Reading public documents	224	1	1	87	2	1	52	2	1
12	Writing official letters	224	1	1	83	1	1	52	1	1

Ss = Students

3. Current Students' Future Expectations

As stated before, participants' responses to their future situations of English language use were conjectural. Hence, they might underestimate or overestimate their frequency of English language use in some situations. In table 2.1, the situations of English language use in future have been shown.

4. Former English Students' Biodata Analysis

In the second phase of this research, 52 completed questionnaires were collected from the former English students. In table 4.1 the former English students' first job is presented.

TABLE 4.1

Job	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	50	96.2
Teacher and Translator	2	3.8
Total	52	100.0

In table 4.2, the information regarding the former students' second job is shown.

TABLE 4.2

Another Job	Frequency	Percent
Taxi Driver	1	1.9
Working in a company	1	1.9
Shopkeeper	1	1.9
No Job	49	94.2
Total	52	100.0

5. Situations of English Language Use by the Former Students

The analysis of the former English students' responses to their English use in different situations revealed that these participants used English most frequently in the field of teaching. This finding was quite normal because almost all the participants in this phase of the research were teachers. In table 2.1, the situations of language use by the former English students are shown.

6. Comparing Current Students' Expectations with the Actual Use of Language by the Former Students

In order to see if the current students' future expectations were in accord with what the former English students' responses showed, the data obtained from the current students and the former students were compared by means of nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test. The significance level in this study was set for $P < 0.05$.

The comparison revealed that in the private domain, except for four items, the statistical difference was meaningful, i.e., P value for these items was lower than 0.05. Those four items whose answers were the same for both groups were: conversing with non-natives (P=0.107), writing e-mail messages (P=0.340), writing traditional letters (P=0.134), and using English in computer games (P=0.428).

As instances of those items for which P value was lower than 0.05, current students seemed to converse with natives more frequently than the former students (P=0.000). They seemed to read newspapers more frequently (P=0.007), and read stories more than the former students which sound ideal activities for the students in their future life. They also would listen to radio (P=0.021) and read texts on the Internet (P=0.000) more frequently than the former students. These again seem to be suitable activities to be done frequently by the students in their future life.

Regarding the academic domain, the comparison showed that in all the items the responses of both groups were the same, i.e., P value was higher than 0.05. For instance, significance level for reading professional books was 0.317, for using monolingual dictionaries, it was 0.504, and for expressing opinions, P value was 0.094.

Likewise, in the teaching domain the answers of both groups were the same. Instances of the items for which P value was higher than 0.05 are: correcting translations (P=0.372), writing tests (P=0.690), and giving explanations as a teacher (P=0.159). This sameness of the answers seems ideal except for one item, that is, writing tasks as a teacher. This may be some sort of over-estimation since writing tasks seems to be done rarely in our country and almost all the teachers use books in their teaching practice.

As for the business domain, for seven items the significance value was higher than 0.05. Instances are: conversing in job-related situations (P=0.218), reading business letters (P=0.137), reading business documents (P=0.071), writing business documents (P=0.262), translating business documents (P=0.198), reading public documents (P=0.074), and writing official letters (P=0.347). The items for which P value was lower than 0.05 are: interpreting orally in job- related meetings (P=0.001) which indicates students use English more frequently than the former students. This seems to be an over-estimation on the current students' part, because, to our knowledge, in our country and in the field of business there might be few meetings in business in which students interpret after graduation. There might be such meetings, but the chances for the students to interpret in those situations seem to be very rare. Students seem to use English at conferences (P=0.004), interpret at conferences (P=0.000), write business letters (P=0.000), and translate business letters (P=0.006) more frequently than the former English students. These also seem to be over-estimations on the current students' part due to the earlier stated fact that, in business, there might be few chances for the students to use their English knowledge.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate the language needs of English literature students in Iran. Majoring in English in a non-native context is usually a means to becoming an English teacher; consequently, in such a context the language needs of English students are given little thought because the assumption is that they have to know everything anyway (Kormos, 2002). But carrying out needs analysis in language curriculum plays a crucial role (Brown, 1995; Seedhouse, 1995; Berwick, 1989), and the English language curriculum at universities is not exempt from needs analysis.

The results of the present study had several implications. The first implication was that of current English literature students' awareness of their present needs. The results showed that, at the present and due to the requirements of the

English language curriculum, students use English mainly for academic purposes (the field of EAP). This finding was quite normal because students need English for their academic studies. Therefore, study skills are the major areas in which students use their existing knowledge of English. What seems important to be stressed by English departments and English professors is mainly the skill of note taking while reading. On the one hand, students are required to read their professional books, and to some extent, English stories almost everyday, on the other hand, they take notes when reading on a monthly basis. As a result, this very important skill should be stressed.

In the business domain, participants' responses seemed to be normal. As stated earlier, job opportunities in the field of business are not many; therefore, participants did not see any need to use English in those situations.

Regarding the former English students, what seemed an over-estimation on their part was that they indicated that they wrote tasks as teachers (30.8%) on a weekly basis. In our country, teachers at school and in language institutes are bound to the existing books. To our knowledge, teachers almost always use books for teaching. Very few teachers may try their hands at writing tasks as teachers.

The comparison of the current students' responses with those of the former English students revealed that in 24 items (out of 44 items), responses were the same. This shows that the current students' views regarding their future situations of English language use are in accord with the reality, i.e., what the former English students do with their English knowledge.

All in all, emphasizing EAP at the universities seems very important. English departments, professors and students themselves should pay special attention to study skills such as, note taking, note making, using dictionaries, etc. because students indicated that they need and use study skills along with receptive and productive skills more frequently.

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