THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP COURSE DESIGN AND EVALUATION

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Abstract: A lot of researchers have investigated the role of Needs Analysis Questionnaire in English for Specific Purposes Courses. The main purpose of this paper is to prove the importance of the Needs Analysis Questionnaire in enhancing the learning outcomes in English for Specific Purposes courses, which are core subjects and offered to students studying at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, department of Public Management and Public Policy and the department of Political Sciences at South East European University, Republic of North Macedonia. It also shows how important is needs analysis in course design, materials selection, evaluation and the proposed topics for the course project. The participants in this study were 64 students from both full time and part time study programmes, second and third year attending ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. The survey was done at the beginning of Summer Semester 2021. The evidence was gathered in the form of student needs analysis questionnaires. The results show that students would rather work on an individual projects were the topics will be proposed by them. The majority of Public Management and Public Policy students would like to write about one of the existing Ministries within the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. On the other hand the Political Science students would rather have a debate on certain political topics, so according to the results they would focus more on the speaking skills. The newly designed ESP1 and ESP 2 syllabi finally showed that during the semester the students were more motivated, and at the end of the semester students' results and final grades were improved comparing the previous Fall Semester 2020.
Keywords: ESP, Needs Analysis, Course Design, Evaluation, Students

1. INTRODUCTION

A lot of researchers have investigated the role of Needs Analysis Questionnaires in English for Specific Purposes Courses. The main purpose of this paper is to prove the importance of the Needs Analysis Questionnaire in enhancing learning outcomes in ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses, which are core subjects and offered to students studying at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, department of Public Management and Public Policy and the department of Political Sciences at South East European University in the Republic of North Macedonia. It also shows how important is the needs analysis in course design, materials selection and the proposed topics for the course project. The participants in this study were 64 students from both full time and part time study programmes, second and third year students attending ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. The survey was done at the beginning of Summer Semester 2021. The evidence was gathered in the form of student needs analysis questionnaires. The results show that students would rather work on an individual project where the topics will be proposed by them. The majority of Public Management and Public Policy students would like to write about one of the existing Ministries within the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. On the other hand the Political Science students would rather have a debate on certain political topics, so according to the results they would focus more on the speaking skills. The newly designed ESP1 and ESP 2 syllabi finally showed that during the semester the students were more motivated, and at the end of the semester students' results and grades were better than the previous Fall Semester 2020.

English for Specific Purposes is a core subject at South East European University in North Macedonia, which is offered to second and third year students after they complete their Basic English Skills. One of the five ESP courses offered is English for Specific Purposes aimed to students studying at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences. Since there is a lack of textbooks for teaching ESP in these Social Science fields, as an ESP lecturer the author of this paper has to compile Course Packs for students based on their needs, and each semester there are changes in the course syllabus, add materials according to students' needs analysis questionnaire. So ESP lecturers have multiple roles since they are course designers, material providers, researchers and collaborators, and at the end of each semester they are evaluators, as well.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are many researchers who have shown that Needs Analysis Questionnaires play a crucial role when designing syllabi for different courses in academia. According to MacMillan dictionary when talking for academia we mean for: the people, activities and institutions that are connected with education, especially in colleges and universities (www.macmillandictionary.com). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) see ESP as an approach rather than a product.

According to Dudley-Evans & St John, M. (2003, p.3) they suggest that 'the foundation of ESP is the simple question: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?' The South East European University students studying Public Management and Public Policy, as well as Political Sciences need English as a foreign language for their future careers. The majority of our students after graduating are employed in state administration offices or agencies. Robinson's characteristics (Robinson, 1991) are that ESP courses are generally constrained by a limited time period, in which their objectives have to be achieved, and are taught to adults in homogeneous classes in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in. Various authors have done research and written about the classification of ESP courses, but ESP for Public Management and Policy and ESP for Political Sciences are rarely found in these classifications. Dudley-Evans & St John (2003, p.6) conclude that in Robinson's classification of ESP in English for Academic purposes and English for Occupational Purposes, ESP for Political Sciences is not listed among the other specifications. That is why the author of this paper proposes to add this to that classification.

Analyzing the branches of ESP, previous studies have been done for types of syllabi used in ESP classes as well. According to Dinçay (2010, p.15-16) one of the classifications is as follows:

2.1.Types of Syllabi:

1. A Structural (Formal) Syllabus **-** A structural syllabus is a collection of the forms and grammatical structures of the language being taught such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses, and so on.

2. A Notional/Functional Syllabus **-** A notional/functional syllabus is a collection of the functions to be taught such as informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting, and so on.

3. A Situational Syllabus **-** A situational syllabus is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the situations such as seeing the dentist, complaining to the landlord, buying a book at the book store, meeting a new student, and so on.

4. A Skill-Based Syllabus **-** A skill-based syllabus is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language. The primary purpose of skill-based instruction is to learn the specific language skills and to develop more general competence in the language.

5. A Task-Based Syllabus **-** A task-based syllabus is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students want or need to perform with the language they are learning such as applying for a job, talking with a social worker, getting housing information over the telephone, and so on.

6. A Content-Based Syllabus **-** The primary purpose of this syllabus is to teach some content or information using the language that the students are also learning. An example of content based language teaching is a science class taught in the language the students need or want to learn. While doing this, we also make linguistic adjustments to make the subject more comprehensible.

Another classification divides the syllabi into traditional or holistic categorizations. A comparison of the traditional and holistic views of syllabus may be outlined as in Table-1 which is adapted from the book titled "The Learner-Centred Curriculum" written by David Nunan (1988).

Table 1: A Comparison of Traditional and Holistic Approaches

TRADITIONAL VIEW	HOLISTIC VIEW
Focuses on language as a sequence of grammatical patterns.	Focuses on communication rather than grammar
Selects language items on the basis of complexity of linguistic criteria.	Selects on the basis of what language items the learner needs to know.
Tends to be more formal and bookish in language	Emphasizes genuine everyday language.
Aims to have students produce formally correct sentences.	Aims to have students communicate effectively in order to complete the task.
Emphasizes reading and writing skills.	Gives speaking as much time as reading in order to complete the tasks.
Tends to be teacher-centered in teaching.	Tends to be student-centered in teaching.
Focuses on the form of expression rather than the content.	Resembles the natural language learning process by concentrating on the content / meaning of the expression rather than the form.

2.2 Needs Analysis

A combination of pre-course, mid-course and post-course analysis is conducted in order to see what students need to learn and improve upon through this course. The following table shows the structure of the needs analysis:

Table – 2: The structure of the Needs Analysis

Pre-course Needs Analysis	Student Questionnaires Informal Discussions with students
Mid-course Needs Analysis	Feedback from learners' performance and assignments The Project Results
Post-course Needs Analysis	Final Exam and Final Grade Results

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this research paper is to prove the importance of the Needs Analysis Questionnaire in enhancing the learning outcomes in English for Specific Purposes 1 and English for Specific Purposes 2 courses, which are core subjects and offered to students studying at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences at South East European University in the Republic of North Macedonia. It also shows how important is the needs analysis in course design, materials selection and the proposed topics for the course project, as well as course evaluation.

4. METHODS, PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The methods the author used for this research represent the use of a scientific and statistical methodology, where the data is presented in quantitative ways given in statistical tables. A questionnaire was prepared with the following questions:

1. Do you want to choose a topic for a project offered by the lecturer or propose your own?
2. Propose a topic for a project!
3. Which language skills would you like to practice more?
   a) Reading b) Writing c) Speaking through debates d) Listening

The participants in this study were the students studying at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, the Department of Public Management and Public Policy and the Department of Political Sciences. The participants were 64 students from both full-time and part-time study programmes that South East European University offers in both campuses in Skopje and Tetovo. 30 students were attended ESP 1 course and 34 students attended ESP 2 course. The survey was done at the beginning of Summer Semester 2021. The evidence was gathered in the form of student needs analysis questionnaires.

5. THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

In the following figure 1 is the result of question 1. The result from the questionnaire showed that 48 students out of 64 -75% would rather propose their own topics, while 16 students out of 64 – 25% would prefer to choose one of several topics offered by the lecturer.

Figure 1: Question 1: Do you want to choose a topic for a project offered by the lecturer or propose your own?

Q1: Do you want to choose a topic for a project offered by the lecturer or propose your own?

25%

75%

■ OT
■ LT
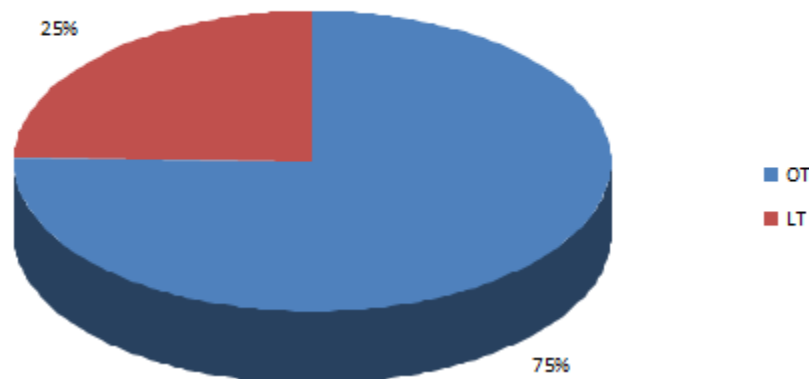
The following list of topics gives the answer to Question 2: Propose a topic for a project!
List of topics proposed students:
1. Economic Development in the Republic of North Macedonia
2. Local Government in the Republic of North Macedonia
3. The Future of Macedonia is the European Union
4. Social Problems in North Macedonia
5. NGOs in Macedonia
6. The UN Charter of Human Rights
7. The Role and Position of Women in the Political Sphere in North Macedonia
8. Corruption in North Macedonia
9. The Political Parties in the Republic of North Macedonia
10. The European Union
11. The European Union Parliament
12. Political Institutions in North Macedonia
13. The NGO –MCIC -Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (Case Study)
14. One of the existing Ministries within the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia

Figure 2: Which language skills would you like to practice more?
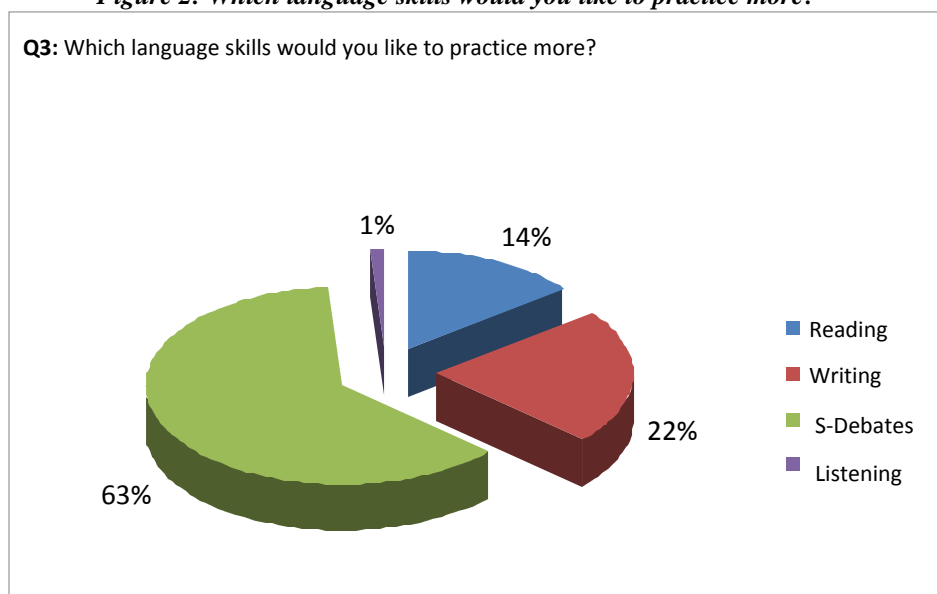
The results from question 3: Which language skills would you like to practice more?, given in figure 2 shows that 63% of the students, most of them studying Political Sciences would rather practice their speaking skills through debates.

Since students chose topics related to the actual political and economical situation in North Macedonia, the Balkan Region and in Europe, in the Course Syllabus there is a Debate Rule that students should follow. Moreover, it is a fact that the number of SEEU graduates employed in the Government is increasing, this is a good practice on public speaking. This means that students prepare themselves for their future career. With the support of our founders-States of the big European family and the USA, followed by an intensive exchange of the best international experiences and practices on higher education, SEEU have created the infrastructure that is necessary to compare with prestigious universities where the students and the society's contribution is in first place.

6. CONCLUSION

After gathering the data and the results from the Needs Analysis Questionnaire that the author conducted with students at the beginning of the Summer Semester 2021, the author designed a new ESP 1 and ESP 2 Syllabus. The Needs Analysis Questionnaire was of great help to select materials from the topics that students proposed for the projects. Even though the topics were proposed for the writing assessment, since there is a lack of text books for teaching English for Specific Purposes to students at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, the Course Packs

for ESP 1 and for ESP 2 were prepared, as well. The Course Packs materials are taken from ELT Books, different websites, pod casts, etc. The newly designed ESP1 and ESP 2 syllabi finally showed that during the semester the students were more motivated, and at the end of the Summer Semester 2021 students' results and grades were better than the previous Fall Semester 2020.

It is also important to emphasize that the author highly recommended the use of communication skills and helped students improve their speaking skills by debating in groups on topics they chose, mainly in the field of Public Management, Public Policy and Political Sciences, which motivated them to write Report Projects and present them in front of their colleagues and enhanced the course objectives and learning outcomes.

There are five Learning Outcomes that are set at the University level (www.seeu.edu.mk)

1. Knowledge and understanding
2. Applying knowledge and understanding
3. Making judgment
4. Communication skills
5. Learning skills

And the Learning Outcomes the students of the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences achieved through the four basic skills in ESP 1 and ESP 2 courses are:

- Express themselves more extensively and fluently in topics in public policy and political sciences (Applying knowledge and understanding);
- Recognize certain parts of speech (such as adjectives, prepositions, verbs and nouns), and use them correctly in given situations (Knowledge and understanding & Applying knowledge and understanding);
- Extend their abilities to read effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes (Learning skills);
- Extend their abilities to assess strengths in listening and set goals for future growth (Learning skills);
- Master new vocabulary related to public administration, human resources and management, political sciences and the Ministries within the Government of RM (Knowledge and understanding);
- Write and orally present a progress report in fifteen minutes using technology in class such as laptops, as well as Microsoft Suite (Office, Windows and the Internet) and be ready to answer to their colleagues' questions in order to defend their report (Making judgments & Communication skills).

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