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Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (ELT)

M.A Students/ Methods of Teaching English

BY

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Needs analysis in ESP

An important principle of ESP approaches to language teaching is that the purposes for which a learner needs a language rather than a syllabus reflecting the structure of general English should be used in planning an English course. Rather than developing a course around an analysis of the language, an ESP approach starts instead with an analysis of the learner's needs.

The content of [ESP] courses are thereby determined, in some or all of the following ways: (i) restriction: only those "basic skills" (understanding speech, speaking, reading, writing) are included which are required by the learner's purposes; (ii) selection: only those items of vocabulary, patterns of grammar, functions of language are included which are required by the learner's purposes; (iii) themes and topics: only those themes, topics, situations, universes of discourse, etc. are included which are required by the learner's purposes; (iv) communicative needs: only those communicative needs … are included which are required for the learner's purposes.

The student of ESP is usually studying to perform a role. The measure of success for students learning English for hotel waiters, or the English for food technology, is whether they can perform convincingly as hotel waiters in English or whether they can act appropriately as food technologists in English (and pass exams in food technology, rather than exams in English).

Munby (1978), in an influential book of the time, describes a systematic approach to needs analysis in ESP course design and focuses on two dimension of needs analysis: the procedures used to specify the target-level communicative competence of the student, and procedures for turning the information so gathered into an ESP syllabus. The Munby model describes the kind of information needed to develop a profile of the learner's communicative needs and is summarized by Schutz and Derwing (1981, 32) as follows:
Profile of Communicative Needs

1. Personal Culturally significant information about the individual, such as language background
2. Purpose Occupational or educational objective for which the target language is required
3. Setting Physical and psychosocial setting in which the target language is required
4. Interactional Such as the role relationships to be involved in the variables target language use

5. Medium, mode, Communicative means and channel Dialects Information on dialects to be utilized
6. Target level of competence required in the target Language
7. Anticipated Micro- and macro-activities Communicative events
8. Key the specific manner in which communication is actually carried out

An example will illustrate how the model could be applied in carrying out a needs profile. If one were profiling the needs of restaurant staff such as waiters and waitresses, the following information might be revealed through applying the Munby model:

1. Personal Who the employees are, their age, nationalities, sex, educational background, work experience
2. Purpose The kinds of outcomes expected, such as the types of communicative skills the clients need to develop
3. Setting The type of restaurant in which the employees work and the kinds of customers who use the restaurant
4. Interactional variables The role relationships, such as waiter/waitress to customer, waiter/waitress to restaurant manager, waiter/waitress to kitchen staff
5. Medium, mode, and channel Whether spoken or written; face to face
6. Dialects Whether both formal and casual styles
7. Target level Whether basic, intermediate, or advanced level
8. Anticipated For example, greetings, taking requests, clarifying Communicative information, describing menu items events

9. Key For example, unhurriedly, quietly, politely

The skills taxonomy appears to be little more than a compilation of then-current opinion about the components of the different language skills. When it was published, the Munby model was welcomed as a systematic and ob-jective set of processes for arriving at a specification of student needs and selecting language to match them. However, those who attempted to use the model soon discovered that it depended on subjective and often arbitrary judgments and decisions at almost every level.

Communicative LANGUAGE TEACHING

Communicative Language Teach-ing (CLT) is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the language. The 1970s was a period when everyone was "going communicative," although precisely what was meant by that varied considerably. CLT was not so much a change in method as a set of changes in assumptions about the nature of language, the nature of goals, objectives, and the syllabus in language teaching, and a search for an appropriate methodology in the light of these changes.

CLT was a response to changes in the field of linguistics in the 1970s, as well as a response to the need for new approaches to language teaching in Europe as a result of initiative, by groups such as the Council of Europe. Linguistics moved away from a focus on grammar as the core component of language abilities to a consideration of how language is used by speakers in different contexts of communication. The capacity to use language appropriately in communication based on the setting, the roles of the participants, and the nature of the transaction was referred to as communicative competence.

Wilkins proposed a notional syllabus as a new type of syllabus that meets these criteria. A notional syllabus would contain three kinds of categories of meaning: semantico-grammatical meaning, modal meaning, and com-municative function.

Semantico-grammatical meaning describes the mean-ing underlying grammatical contrasts and concepts such as:

Time:
a) point of time
b) duration
c) time relations.
d) frequency
e) sequence

Wilkins suggested that modal meaning includes the following categories of meaning: modality

This means that if we now wish to make up the deficit in earlier syllabus types, and ensure that our learners acquire the ability to communicate in a more appropriate and efficient way, we have to inject a larger number of components into the make-up of the syllabus. These components could be listed as follows:

1. as detailed a consideration as possible of the purposes for which the learners wish to acquire the target language;

2. some idea of the setting in which they will want to use the target language (physical aspects need to be considered, as well as social setting);

3. the socially defined role the learners will assume in the target language, as well as the role of their interlocutors;

4. the communicative events in which the learners will participate: everyday situations, vocational or professional situations, academic situations, and so on;

5. the language functions involved in those events, or what the learner will be able to do with or through the language;

6. the notions involved, or what the learner will need to be able to talk about;
7. the skills involved in the "knitting together" of discourse: discourse and rhetorical skills;
8. the variety or varieties of the target language that will be needed, and the levels in the spoken and written language which the learners will need to reach;
9. the grammatical content that will be needed;
10. the lexical content that will be needed