Pedagogic Needs Analysis

The term “pedagogic needs analysis” was proposed by West (1998) as an umbrella term to describe the following three elements of needs analysis. He states the fact that shortcomings of target needs analysis should be compensated for by collecting data about the learner and the

learning environment. The term ‘pedagogic needs analysis’ covers deficiency analysis, strategy analysis or learning needs analysis, and means analysis.

**Deficiency Analysis**

What Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define as lacks can be matched with deficiency analysis. Also, according to Allwright (1982, quoted in West, 1994), the approaches to needs analysis that have been developed to consider learners’ present needs or wants may be called analysis of learners’ deficiencies or lacks. From what has already been said, it is obvious that deficiency analysis is the route to cover from point A (present situation) to point B (target situation), always keeping the learning needs in mind. Therefore, deficiency analysis can form the basis of the language syllabus (Jordan, 1997) because it should provide data about both the gap between present and target extralinguistic knowledge, mastery of general English, language skills, and learning strategies.

**Strategy Analysis or Learning Needs Analysis**

As it is apparent from the name, this type of needs analysis has to do with the strategies that learners employ in order to learn another language. This tries to establish how the learners wish to learn rather than what they need to learn (West, 1998). All the above-mentioned approaches to needs analysis, TSA, PSA, and to some extent deficiency analysis, have not been concerned with the learners’ views of learning. Allwright who was a pioneer in the field of strategy analysis (West, 1994) started from the students’ perceptions of their needs in their own terms (Jordan, 1997). It is Allwright who makes a distinction between needs (the skills which a student sees as being relevant to himself or herself), wants (those needs on which students put a high priority in the available, limited time), and lacks (the difference between the student’s present competence and the desired competence). His ideas were adopted later by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who advocate a learning-centered approach in which learners’ learning needs play a vital role. If the analyst, by means of target situation analysis, tries to find outwhat learners do with language (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987)learning needs analysis will tell us "what the learner needs to do in order to learn" (ibid: 54). Obviously, they advocate a process-oriented approach, not a product- or goal-oriented one. For them ESP is not "a product but an approach to language teaching which is directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 16). What learners should be taught are skills that enable them to reach the target, the process of learning and motivation should be considered as well as the fact that different learners learn in different ways (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). Jordan (1997: 26) quotes Bower (1980) who has noted the importance of learning needs:

If we accept…that a student will learn best if what he wants to learn, less well what he only needs to learn, less well still what he either wants or needs to learn, it is clearly important to leave room in a learning programme for the learner’s own wishes regarding both goals and processes.

Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) definition of wants (perceived or subjective needs of learners) corresponds to learning needs. Similar to the process used for target needs analysis, they suggest a framework for analyzing learning needs which consists of several questions, each divided into more detailed questions. The framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) for analysis of learning needs is the following:

1. Why are the learners taking the course?

• compulsory or optional;

• apparent need or not;

• Are status, money, promotion involved?

• What do learners think they will achieve?

• What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want to

improve their English or do they resent the time they have to spend

on it?

2. How do the learners learn?

What is their learning background?

• What is their concept of teaching and learning?

• What methodology will appeal to them?

• What sort of techniques bore/alienate them?

3. What sources are available?

• number and professional competence of teachers;

• attitude of teachers to ESP;

• teachers' knowledge of and attitude to subject content;

• materials;

• aids;

• opportunities for out-of-class activities.

4. Who are the learners?

• age/sex/nationality;

• What do they know already about English?

• What subject knowledge do they have?

• What are their interests?

• What is their socio-cultural background?

• What teaching styles are they used to?

• What is their attitude to English or to the cultures of the English-

speaking world?

Finally, as Allwright (1982, quoted in West, 1994) says the investigation of learners’ preferred learning styles and strategies gives us a picture of the learners’ conception of learning.

**Means Analysis**

Means analysis tries to investigate those considerations that Munby excludes (West, 1998), that is, matters of logistics and pedagogy that led to debate about practicalities and constraints in implementing needs-based language courses (West, 1994). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 125) suggest that means analysis provides us “information about the environment in which the course will be run” and thus attempts to adapt to ESP course to the cultural environment in which it will be run. One of the main issues means analysis is concerned with is an “acknowledgement that what works well in one situation may not work in another” (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998: 124), and that, as noted above, ESP syllabi should be sensitive to the particular cultural environment in which the course will be imposed. Or as Jordan (1997) says it should provide us with a tool for designing an environmentally sensitive course.