NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR OPERATORS OF PETROCHEMICAL COMPANIES STUDYING AT ENGLISH TRAINING CENTER, BONTANG, EAST KALIMANTAN

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Abstract: Needs analysis is central to the teaching material selection or even development of curriculum. This study is to find out the needs of English for petrochemical companies’ operators who are studying English. This case study is aimed at revealing target needs data and learning needs data by using a set of questionnaires and interview guide for the subjects of the study. The target needs data wrap up the subjects’ necessities, lacks, and wants, while the learning needs data concern with attitude, preference, and learning habit. The subjects of this study were the stakeholders of operators’ English class program in ETC (English Training Center) Bontang; they are the operators studying at ETC Bontang, the teacher of the program, ETC Bontang, and the petrochemical companies. The findings of the needs analysis provide a clear consideration of what and how to teach English materials that precisely answer the operators’ need. It is of a paramount expectation that the result of this study will give significant insight for tutors of companies’ training center, teachers of vocational schools, and lecturers teaching English relates to petrochemical field in selecting teaching materials and develop syllabus that match with the needs.

Keywords: English Training Center, petrochemical companies, EOP, needs analysis

This study took operators studying English at company class program of ETC (English Training Center) Bontang, teacher of the program, ETC Bontang, and petrochemical companies whose operators participated at the program as the subjects of this study since these parties are considered as the major stakeholders in the English teaching-learning process in the program. Johnston and Peterson (1994:66) argued that the main stakeholders in teaching-learning process are the students, teacher, teaching institution, funding provider, and user institution because stakeholders are those directly engaged in the program. In this study, a half of the stakeholder is PT. PKT (Pupuk Kalimantan Timur) and PT. KPI (Kaltim Parna Industri), Bontang which play role as the funding provider as well as user institution in the language program. These companies, reputable Asia-wide as highly qualified companies in agro-chemical and petrochemical business accordingly, need to improve their operators’ performance at work to keep up with the most up-to-date technology by assigning their operators to study English in ETC Bontang. The other half of the stakeholder is ETC Bontang as the teaching institution and the program’s teacher. ETC Bontang provides English training to employees of many companies in Bontang since 1992. Thus, as an institution, it is trustworthy to prepare, to run and to provide qualified and experienced English teacher to teach English for specific purposes program based on needs analysis conducted prior the program.

Needs analysis is fundamental to the selection as well as the development of materials to be further stated in a syllabus or curriculum. Needs analysis is a central aspect which directly influences the goals, input for material designing and grading and the teaching-learning process (Nunan, 1985) and one of fundamental principles underlying learner-centered systems of language learning (Brindley, 1989) as needs (along with principles and environment) is an influential factor contributing a realistic list of language, ideas or skills (Nation, 1996). Teacher-learner needs analysis involves negotiating role: identifying what learners expect and what responsibility teacher expect learners to assume for their development (Nunan, 1990). It can be very formal, extensive and time consuming, or it can be informal, narrowly focused and quick (Strong-Krause, 2008). Yet, it is never enough to only depend on the teacher’s and course designer’s beliefs and assumptions. In addition, the needs analysis framework should cover information answering questions of why the language is needed, how the language will be used, what the content areas will be, who the learners will use the language with, where the language will be used, and when the language will be used (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:59-63).

Needs assessment is needed to collect all necessary information related to participants’ needs and the sponsor’s requirements. It covers all information about the students’ needs, wants, wishes, and many more. In gathering those information, Widdowson (1981:2) put the needs into two categories: ‘goal oriented’ needs which deals with the students needs on using the language once they has learned it, and ‘process oriented’ needs which concerns what the students do to actually acquire the language. The former category of needs relates to program aims, while the later category focuses on the pedagogical objectives. Similar categorization is also proposed Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54-60) by grouping the needs into ‘target needs’ and learning needs’. Indicated by the name, the target needs touch on the use of the language mastered by the students and the learning needs refer to what the students need to do to learn the language. The target needs is further divided into necessities, lacks,
and wants which respectively refers to what the students have to know in order to function effectively in the target situation, the discrepancy between the necessity and what the students already know, and what the students actually want to learn or what they feel they need to learn. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:58-60) add that analysis of target needs concerns with language use and what people do with language, yet it will not be complete without analyzing the learning need as the need analysis should be a learning-centered approach.

Method

In concept, needs analysis is simple; the linguistic and communicative material that students will need is determined, and the teaching syllabus is developed accordingly (Krahnke, 1987:81). In order to do so, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54-60) grouped the needs into ‘target needs’ and ‘learning needs’. Thus, there are two categories of data in this study, target needs data and learning needs data. As both data are qualitative data, instruments aimed to result on qualitative data are put into use. Since the basic principle of the development of all the instruments applied is the precision and effectiveness of the instruments to really get the intended data. Therefore, blueprints of the instruments are constructed and the instruments are developed accordingly. As the instruments are set, they are consulted to an expert to assure their validation. Necessary revisions are made based on the expert’s feedback. Prior to employing the instruments, they are tried-out to a small sample of the population to get feedback from the field. Then the instruments are analyzed to sort out items that result on ambiguous answer or items that are difficult to be understood which lead to unclear answer. The instruments are then revised and ready to be used.

The learning needs data deal with attitude, methods, place, time, media and assessments that are needed by the operators to learn English during the program. The data are gathered by putting classroom observation sheet and a set of questionnaires and interview guide into use. The classroom observation is meant to collect information on classroom activity, teaching methods, media and assessment when the program was being carried out; while the questionnaires and interview guide are aimed at getting information relates to the operators’ attitude toward English, their learning habit and learning type as well as their preference of teaching methods. Questionnaires and interview guide are also given to the teacher of the program to find out the teacher’s consideration in preparing the class, classroom activities related to material delivery and comprehension, teaching techniques employed, the use of teaching media, and teacher’s method in evaluating the students’ progress and achievement.

The target needs data cover the necessity, lacks, and wants of the operators’ proficiency in English once the program is completed. The data are collected from the result of interview with the operators, the personnel of HRD (Human Resource Department) of PT. PKT and PT. KPI Bontang, the teacher of the program, as well as with the manager of ETC. The target needs data are also collected from the answers to the set of questionnaires given to the operators. The basis of the development of the questionnaire for the operators is to disclose the students’ view and purposes of learning English.

Findings and Discussion

Target Needs Data

Data related to the operators’ target needs reveal the operators’ necessities, lacks, and wants. The result of the set of questionnaires as well as the interview guide for the operators find out that the operators’ necessities are everything related to machinery, maintaining and operating machines, analyzing process, communicating orally especially to deal with expatriate colleagues, executing business negotiation, delivering presentations, reading manuals and journals related to their job, and writing job report. Those necessities are mentioned from the first rank to the last respectively. The operators’ wants are also disclosed; showing that in terms of language skills, the operators put speaking as their most wanted skill to master, followed by reading, listening, and finally writing. Besides that, the operators also want that the topics for the program varied such as casual conversation topics, topics related to their job, reading manuals, business conversation, job report, business letter, meeting note, memo, article, and documents to vendor. These topics are inline with the operators’ goal in learning English. Those goals are to improve their personal quality, to get promotion in their work place, and to fulfill the demand from their job to keep up with the global world respectively. Considering the operators’ necessities and their competence in English, their lacks are indicated. These operators should work hard on improving their vocabulary, have more knowledge of English that relates to their job, improve their confidence in using English orally and in written form, and do more practice to use their English.

Target needs data gathered from PT. PKT and PT. KPI Bontang as one of the stakeholders display the same necessities like what the operators state, that is for all operators to master English that relates to machinery for all machines used in the factory and all processes involved in the production are in English. The goals of the companies by sending their operators to take an English program in ETC reflects the companies’ wants, that is to equip all operators with the knowledge of English related to machinery, fertilizer, and its production process as well as English for daily conversation so that eventually English speaking atmosphere is in the workplace.
everyday. The companies add that operators who are high school graduates need to improve their English to perform better in their job and improve their personal quality. On the other hand, the companies admit their lacks by stating that there is no certain policy or target set after the completion of a certain English program. This situation does not help in anyway to make their wants to have English speaking atmosphere in the workplace comes true.

ETC as the teaching institution who holds some of the share in the English program states that it is of their paramount expectation to be able to help the operators to at least have some knowledge on English relates to machinery and to make them comfortable in using English in their daily conversation. Yet, there is a gap between ETC’s wants and the reality as -from its experience- the operators have low attendance due to their busy schedule that makes them have not much time to learn the language. ETC should also have a more intense communication with each department and unit of work to find out the needs of the employees and provides the English accordingly. Provision of qualified teachers to teach ESP (English for Specific Purposes) as needed is also a challenge.

Learning Needs Data

Learning needs refer to what the students need to do to learn the language. They focus on the pedagogical objectives. Thus, this study grouped the learning needs data into nine categories that are useful consideration in planning the teaching-learning process. Those nine categories are stakeholders’ attitude toward English, the operators’ preference relates to methods and media of teaching, assessment to their learning process, and their learning habit that covers their preference of place to study, frequency in using their English, and their preference of partners in using their English.

The set of questionnaires as well as the interview guide for the operators unearth that all of the operators have a positive attitude toward English as all of them believe that English is very important for them. The same findings are also obtained from response of the set of questionnaires and the interviews with other stakeholders; teaching institution and companies. Furthermore, most of the operators prefer to practice their English at home with their family to seek the comfort and confidence they need. Yet, some others prefer to use their English at work with their colleagues and with their teachers in ETC because they want to use it in a real context as demanded by their job and to get feedback for the sake of their better English. What is interesting is that these operators said that they use their English everyday although it is only in a short time.

Data about the teaching methods, media, time allotment and assessment technique indicate that the three parties of stakeholders have similar ideas. It is just the way they rank the ideas that is different. About the teaching methods, the operators argue that discussion is their top most favorite method, followed by watching movie/video, presentation, role-play, lecturing, and error correction respectively. Though the same methods are also stated by ETC as the most methods they use as these methods are believed to effectively improve the operators’ English proficiency, it is presentation that becomes the first in rank, followed by lecturing, role-play, discussion, and watching movie/video. On the other hand, have no idea of what methods, media, and assessment technique are used. They leave the decision to the teaching institution. It is only the time allotment that they air their view, which is 100 minutes per meeting, twice a week. This idea is just perfectly suits the idea from the operators and ETC.

The operators also have different ranking for the media used to help them learning. The operators argue that audio visual media helps them more than tape players, white board, LCD projector and books; whereas ETC believes that book helps the operators learn better than LCD projector, whiteboard, audio visual media and tape players. Finally, the assessment technique preferred by the operators as it is assumed to really evaluate their learning process is in form of essay. Assignments, multiple choice and direct error correction comes after in that order. Yet, ETC believes that multiple choice test and essay only are enough to measure the operators’ proficiency and competence in English.

Conclusion

Exploration on ESP and ESP teaching really needs to be kept conducting as the demand of English in work place is no longer only English as means of communicating everyday issues to build a good social interaction, but it has been moving ahead to specific English for enhancing knowledge to keep up the pace with the world’s rapid development. Therefore, provision of qualified work force mastering English demanded by work place is a must, and university is one of the best places to start it.

ESP should already have been taught in vocational schools and university level as students have already decided the major they want to take. Thus, English taught should have been specified to their major and materials are adapted from the ones used in the real work place. In this way, the university students get knowledge of technical terms and hints of what happen in actual work place. In addition, university also needs to consider the ESP teacher. It should have practitioners having good command and knowledge of English playing
the role as the ESP teachers instead of English teacher having no experience and knowledge in the specific field needed.

References


