

## A Study For The Needs Analysis of Preparatory Students at Language Departments

### Dil Bölümlerindeki Hazırlık Öğrencilerinin İhtiyaç Analizi Çalışması

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This study aims at finding the needs of the preparatory school students' at the departments of Language at Hacettepe University by informal interviews and questionnaires in order to see whether the existing syllabus meets the needs of the students. To determine valid and reliable results, the questionnaire was administered to 103 fourth grade Language departments students (American Culture and Literature, English Language and Literature, Linguistics, Translation and Interpretation, English Language Teaching) and 18 teaching staff at these departments at Hacettepe University. Informal interviews were done by the teaching staff. These two questionnaires are parallel to each other so that the results can be compared to identify the needs of the students. Before administering the questionnaire to the students and to the teaching staff the pilot administration was done to see the possible problems which might occur.

*Key Words:* Needs Analysis, informal interview, curriculum

#### Abstract

Bu çalışma, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Dil Bölümü hazırlık öğrencilerinin ihtiyaçlarını belirlemek ve mevcut programın bu ihtiyaçlara cevap verip vermediğini, ihtiyaç analizi anketi ve informal görüşmelerle ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Geçerli ve güvenilir sonuçlar elde etmek için anket Hacettepe Üniversitesi 103 dil bölümü dördüncü sınıf öğrencisi (Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı, İngiliz Dil Bilimi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı, İngilizce Mütercim Tercümanlık) ve 18 öğretim elemanına uygulanmıştır. Öğretim elemanları ile informal görüşmeler de yapılmıştır. Bu iki anket de öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarını belirlemek üzere, verilerin karşılaştırılması için paralel hazırlanmıştır. Anket, öğrencilere ve öğretim elemanlarına uygulanmadan önce olabilecek problemleri görebilmek için pilot denemesi yapılmıştır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* İhtiyaç analizi, anket, informal görüşme, program.

#### Introduction

In learner-centered systems of language learning, the teaching-learning programmes should be responsive to learners' needs. It is now accepted as a principle of syllabus design that needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives.

Nunan (1993:75) states that needs analysis refers to a family of procedures for gathering information about learners and about communication tasks for use in syllabus design.

Robinson (1991:7) also defines needs as follows; .

- needs can refer to students' study or job requirements, that is, what they have to be able to do at the end of their language courses,(This is a goal-oriented definition.)
- needs are objectives,
- needs can mean what the user- institution or society at large regards as necessary or desirable to be learnt from a programme of language instruction,
- needs are acquiring the language, (This is a process- oriented definition.)
- needs are what the students themselves would like to gain from the language course,
- needs are what the students do not know or can not do in English.

If we examine the existing situation in Turkey, we see that the content of the present course books has become the curriculum or syllabus for the ELT teachers. Naturally, the authors of those course books who have made decisions and choices about the contents of the books do not or can not consider the needs, wants, goals or interests of our students. The present course books are general since they have not been written for our students but, they have been written for a large audience which cover average students to increase the potential sales. As a result, they generally don not meet the needs of our students and sometimes a serious gap appears between the course books and the students.

It is important, however, to stress that in a learner-centered system needs analysis and setting of learning objectives is not something which happens only once at the beginning of the course. It is quite unrealistic to expect learners to be able to participate fully in such an enterprise at this stage for the simple reason that people can't make a valid choice until they have experienced whatever options are being offered. In other words, if learners are asked about their preferred methods of learning materials and language content at the beginning of a course before they have tried them out, they will most likely give vague or even meaningless answers which are useless to teacher trying to plan appropriate learning activities.

At this point, what the teacher can do is to use the pre-course information she or he has about the learners' objective needs, such as their goals, social roles, interaction patterns and language proficiency, to plan preliminary learning activities. When the learning completed methods such as surveys, group discussions, interviews, communication awareness activities and learning contracts can be used to assess needs (Johnson, 1989 :77). Objectives can thus be modified in the light of feedback from learners.

In order to develop a curriculum, teachers need to know the expectations of their students. Despite this fact course books' syllabus have been accepted in most of the schools as teachers don't have enough experience to develop a curriculum which meets the needs of their students. Curriculum development is mostly ignored in too many universities.

We need students who are not away from the technological, cultural, social, political, industrial and economical development in the world. Any innovation in the world bears a new term. The English lessons should not be incompatible with or away from those changes in the world. Therefore, there is a great need to be able to change or improve the curriculum every year, every month or even every week. As a result, we are in a position to develop a dynamic and flexible program which facilitates the attempts to insert any new incident or terminology into our course.

In short, the realities that are faced at different universities brings us to the point of deciding to make use of an alternative syllabus which has an objective and meets the needs and expectations of the students. It is highly needed to have programs which allow for maximum use of time, flexibility and progress at individual rate. To reach this aim, a needs analysis should be done as a first step.

The study reported in this article addressed the following question.

- What are the needs of the students at the Language departments (English Language and Literature, American Culture and Literature, English Language Teaching, Linguistics and Translation and Interpretation) at Hacettepe University?

It aims at achieving the following;

1. to find out the needs of the students by needs analysis questionnaire and informal interviews,
2. to find out whether the existing syllabus meets the students needs,
3. to make suggestions for a better syllabus.

### Methodology

In this study a questionnaire and informal interviews were used as a data collection instrument. To determine valid and reliable results, a questionnaire was administered to the teaching staff and to the students at Language departments at Hacettepe University. The questionnaire which was applied to the students and the one applied to the teaching staff are parallel to each other, so that the results can be compared to identify the needs of the students.

Before administering the questionnaire to the students and to the teaching staff the pilot administration was done to see the possible problems which might occur.

The researcher was with the students while administering the questionnaire to see the drawbacks of the questionnaire. To fill in the questionnaire the students only needed 15 minutes. This time was very suitable because if a questionnaire takes too much time the students are generally not willing to fill in so, a questionnaire should not be too long but it also should not be too short, which means failing to get enough information. The aim of the pilot study is to identify whether this questionnaire is a satisfactory tool to determine the needs of the students.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts as writing, reading, speaking and listening and the questions are placed according to these headings. In order to reach content reliability the questions were discussed by three English Language Teaching professors.

The results were analyzed by the help of SPSS package programme. In order to test structural reliability of the questionnaire, factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be 0.76. This value shows that factor analysis can be done to this questionnaire when the component matrix values were examined. It is realized that this questionnaire has four factors. Listening 24,7%, reading 20.5%, writing 10.4%, speaking 9.8% and total 65.4%. For the first factor, alpha is .77, for the second factor .74 and for the third and the fourth factors .97. The total alpha value is .97. As a result, in the pilot study it is found that, this questionnaire has .97 reliability so, it can be said that the questionnaire has high reliability.

The data collection was carried out at Hacettepe University. In this study, sampling method is used while choosing the number of the participants. The number of the students who were given the questionnaire is 103 in total. They are as follows; American Culture and Literature: 20 students, Linguistics: 20 students, English Language Teaching: 33 students, English Language and Literature: 20 students and Translation and Interpretation: 10 students. These numbers were determined according to the students number at the departments and their ratio. The number of the teaching staff who were given the questionnaire is 18. The students and the teaching staff

were chosen randomly but the students who were given the questionnaire were in their last year as it is assumed that those students can evaluate their needs at their departments better than the students at their first or second year.

In this study to reach valid and reliable results 103 students and 18 teaching staff were administered the questionnaire and also informal interviews were conducted with the teaching staff.

### Findings

The interpretation of the informal interviews conducted with the teaching staff demonstrate that the students can not speak English fluently and most of the teachers mentioned that their students need to improve their speaking ability.

The analysis and the interpretation of the questionnaires are done by comparing the students' and the teaching staff's questionnaires according to their parts.

Table 1.

Participants	Frequency	%
Students	103	85,1
Teachers	18	14,9
Total	121	100,0

103 students, 18 teaching staff answered the questionnaire so totally 121 participants filled in the questionnaire.

As it is seen the students find reading whereas, the teaching staff pinpointed speaking as the most important

Table 2.

Participants	Skills	Frequency	%
Students	Listening	4	3,9
	Reading	39	37,9
	Writing	25	24,3
	Speaking	26	25,2
Teachers	Listening	1	5,6
	Reading	5	27,8
	Writing	3	16,7
	Speaking	7	38,9

skill. Both the students and the teaching staff mentioned that the least important ability for them is listening.

The information about listening is found in part 3 in the questionnaire and the interpretation of this part is as follows;

- both the students (46.6%) and the teaching staff (50%) stated that the students can understand not only what they have listened in general but also the important information,
- both the students (54.4%) and the teaching staff (66.7%) pinpointed that the students' grammar and vocabulary are adequate to understand what they have listened,
- both the students (48.5%) and the teaching staff (44.4%) mentioned that the students have difficulty in guessing the unknown words and the parts that they could not hear while listening,
- both the students (48.5%) and the teaching staff (55.6%) stated that the students have difficulty in keeping up with the pace of listening,
- both the students (43%) and the teaching staff (44.4%) mentioned that the students can answer the questions or summarize what they have heard after listening, but they have difficulty in taking notes while listening,
- the interpretation of the questionnaires demonstrate that the teaching staff use some of the techniques very often such as giving instructions, asking questions, answering questions and lecturing whereas, they rarely use cassette, CD or video in their classrooms,
- both of the participants stated that the students often need to use some of the techniques such as listening and explaining, oral presentations, summarizing, translation, listening for the gist of information, listening and asking and answering questions whereas, they rarely do repeating, giving instructions and filling in tables.

The information about reading is found in part 4 in the questionnaire and the interpretation of this part is as follows;

- both the students (74.8%) and the teaching staff (44.4%) stated that the students can understand the main idea of what they have read,

- both the students (83.5%) and the teaching staff (72.2%) mentioned that the students' grammar and vocabulary are adequate to understand what they have read,
- both the students (48.5%) and the teaching staff (50%) stated that the students have difficulty in guessing the unknown words while reading,
- both the students (56.3%) and the teaching staff (66.7%) stated that the students have no difficulty in answering the questions, summarizing or taking notes after reading,
- both the students (51.5%) and the teaching staff (33.3%) stated that the students can use dictionaries properly,
- the interpretation of the questionnaires demonstrate that the students often use some of the reading techniques at their departments such as finding the main idea of a text, making inferences after reading, reading for the gist of information, doing class discussions related to the texts, reading and summarizing, reading in details, oral presentations, guessing vocabulary and answering questions but the students marked that they rarely translate the texts after reading,
- the analysis of the questionnaires demonstrate that the students often use story analysis techniques such as explaining the title, finding the predominant element in the story, analyzing the author's characterization (description, conversation of characters, actions of the characters.....etc.), analyzing the point of view used (first person, omniscient), describing the rising action of the story, discussing the close of the story, finding the theme of the story, finding the examples of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification), finding the moral in the story and finding the symbolisms (irony, satire...etc. in the story).

The information about writing is found in part 5 in the questionnaire and the interpretation of this part is as follows;

- both the students (61.2%) and the teaching staff (94.4%) stated that the students grammar and vocabulary is adequate to write in English,
- the teaching staff (61.1%) marked that the students are bad at making outlines whereas, the students (33%) stated that they are good at making outlines,

- both the students (42.7%) and the teaching staff (66.7%) stated that the students can write formal or informal writings but they are bad at using academic language,
- both the students (30.1%) and the teaching staff (50%) pinpointed that the students have difficulties in writing CV and filling in application forms,
- both the students (43.7 %) and the teaching staff (66.7%) mentioned that the students are good at writing cause effect and comparison contrast paragraphs,
- the teaching staff (44.4%) pinpointed that the students have problems about using the appropriate punctuation, conjunctions and abbreviations whereas, the students (43.7%) marked that they have no difficulties.,
- both the students (47.6 %) and the teaching staff (50%) mentioned that the students are good at peer-correction, taking notes and writing the appropriate topic and supporting sentences.

The information about speaking is found in part 6 in the questionnaire and the interpretation of this part is as follows;

- both the students (43.7 %) and the teaching staff (66.7%) marked that the students can speak English in the classroom,
- both the students (45,6%) and the teaching staff (66.7%) stated that the students grammar is adequate to speak in English whereas, they have difficulties in using the appropriate vocabulary,
- both the students (39.8%) and the teaching staff (66.7%) mentioned that the students have difficulties in pronunciation, stress and intonation of the words,
- both the students (44,7%) and the teaching staff (61,1%) mentioned the students have difficulties in choosing appropriate style and conjunctions while speaking,
- the teaching staff (66.7%) stated that the students have problems in answering the questions while speaking whereas, the students (39.8%) marked that they are good at answering questions.

### Conclusion

One of the basic aims of education is language teaching and learning. As it is a necessity to know at least one foreign language in order to keep pace with recent developments many universities in Turkey have also been subjected to this process and they have Language departments such as American Culture and Literature, English Language Teaching, Linguistics, English Language and Literature and Translation and Interpretation. The importance of curriculum and syllabus design has increased but no method, no single activity or no single book can, in itself, be sufficient to meet the needs and wants of the students. Designing courses which will be used by other teachers or writing text books for a wide and unknown audience is different from planning one's own teaching.

The production of teaching and learning materials is an unbroken and essentially private loop between the teacher, the writer and the learner where the processes of needs analysis, syllabus design, course planning, implementation, feedback, and evaluation are linked to each other. Needs analysis is one of the most important steps of curriculum development.

Hacettepe University is one of the Turkish Universities which have Language departments and these departments have preparatory classes. First of all, the students who get a right to register at one of these departments at Hacettepe University are given an exam on entry and it consists of writing, reading and use of English parts. This exam is designed to measure whether the students' language proficiency is sufficient enough to be able to deal with the content subjects in English efficiently or not. The successful students are registered for phase one and expected to follow their courses in English in the following years. Those whose entry test results imply that they are below the suggested level are directed towards the preparatory classes.

In order to develop a curriculum, teachers need to know the expectations of their students. Despite this fact, course book syllabuses have been accepted in most of the schools as teachers do not have enough experience to develop a curriculum which meets the needs of their students. Curriculum development is often ignored in many school and universities in Turkey.

In Turkey, the contents of the course books followed often serve as the curriculum or syllabus for ELT teachers, although these materials generally do not meet the needs of the students. The realities that are faced at different universities bring us to the point of deciding to adopting an alternative syllabus with well-defined objective that meets the needs and expectations of the students. To reach this aim, a needs analysis should be done as the first step.

This study aims to determine the needs of the students at Hacettepe University Language departments and to see whether the existing syllabus at the preparatory school meets the needs of the students. In this study a questionnaire and informal interviews are used to determine the needs of the students. To reach valid and reliable results, questionnaires were administered to the students and to the teaching staff at the departments. The participants were chosen randomly and 103 students, 18 teaching staff administered the questionnaire. The students are in their fourth year at their departments as it is assumed that these students know their needs better than the students who are in their first or second year.

These two questionnaires are parallel to each other so that the results can be compared. The interpretation and the analysis of the questionnaires were determined by the percentage and the frequency values. Before administering the questionnaires the pilot study was done and the reliability has been found as .97.

The informal interviews conducted to the teaching staff demonstrate that the speaking ability of the students is not sufficient to deal with the content subjects at their departments so the students need to be trained in speaking.

The analysis and the interpretation of the questionnaires by comparing the two groups demonstrate those;

1. The students need to be trained in guessing the unknown words while listening and reading.
2. The students generally need to practice taking notes while listening.
3. The students have difficulty in keeping up with the pace of listening.
4. The students need to practice these listening techniques such as listening and explaining, oral presentations, summarizing, listening for the gist of information, listening and asking and answering questions as they often use them in their departments.

5. The students need to practice these reading techniques such as finding the main idea of a text, making inferences after reading, reading for the gist of information, doing class discussions related to the texts, reading and summarizing, reading in details, oral presentations, guessing vocabulary and answering questions as they often use them in their departments.
6. The students need to practice these story analysis techniques such as explaining the title, finding the predominant element in the story, analyzing the author's characterization (description, conversation of characters, actions of the characters.....etc.), analyzing the point of view used (first person, omniscient), describing the rising action of the story, discussing the close of the story, finding the theme of the story, finding the examples of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification), finding the moral in the story and finding the symbolisms (irony, satire...etc. in the story.) as they often use them in their departments.
7. The teaching staff mentioned that the students need to practice making outlines while writing.
8. The students need to be trained in using academic language.
9. The students need to practice how to write CV and filling in application forms.
10. The students need to be trained in using the appropriate punctuation, conjunctions and abbreviations while writing.
11. The students need to practice pronunciation, stress and intonation.
12. The students need to practice asking and answering questions while speaking.

As a result, one could conclude that the failure of the present syllabus results from the fact that it does not emphasize academic skills and speaking. Besides some of the reading techniques, listening and writing skills need to be practiced more however, it is seen that grammar points, functions, situations and tasks have been properly introduced.

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