

The Role of Needs Analysis in EFL Teaching Design

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Abstract: English as an international Language is important for students to learn about the world and cultivate their core competences. In China, most people learn English through school education and usually be instructed by English teachers. Therefore, the effectiveness of English learning much depends on teacher's instruction. However, a good teaching design guides teachers to teach effectively. So how exactly do teachers design a good instructional design, needs analysis will give us a lot insights. This paper will explore the importance of needs analysis in EFL teaching design.

Keywords: Role; Needs Analysis; EFL Teaching Design.

1. Introduction:

New English curriculum Standards for Senior High school (2022) emphasized that the curriculum should follow the principles of diversity and selectivity to meet the different needs of students' personality development. Meanwhile, *New English curriculum standards for compulsory education (2022)* also advocates that educators should pay attention to the different needs of students and follow the rules of language development to use variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' learning interest. Nowadays, China has become deeply involved in the process of globalization. China and other countries are becoming more closely linked. Accordingly, the demand for talent has become international. The talents cultivation in China is mainly achieved through school education. Many studies have examined how to improve the quality of English teaching and talent in terms of the teachers' dimension. As a subject of education, the students can't be ignored. Students are different in terms of English proficiency, learning attitudes, goals and motivation that leads to students' different needs. Therefore, it's essential to analyze the learning needs of students from their point of view, so that teaching can be better tailored to meet their needs and thus better achieve educational goals.

2. The Contents of EFL Teaching Design.

EFL is the abbreviation of English as a Foreign Language. From the Founding of New China, foreign language education has developed rapidly. The effectiveness of foreign language teaching is closely related to teacher's instruction.

2.1. Needs Analysis of Learning

Needs analysis is the starting point for teaching design. They are relevant for specifying objectives, procedures, content, materials, methods, and outcomes assessment at the task, course, or program level (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Extensive research about needs analysis of learning has been done by researchers from home and abroad. Wang(2023) pointed out that needs analysis should include analysis of national needs, social needs, the match between disciplinary needs and high-quality foreign language talents, students' analysis and so on. Hutchinson and waters divided needs into Target Needs and Learning Needs.

2.2. Analysis of Learning Contents

In China, people think textbooks are teaching and learning contents. This conception ignores teaching and learning contents at the macro level. Huan and Zhong(1988) believed that textbook is just a part of teaching contents. In addition to the textbook, the teaching contents include guiding roles, motivational roles, methodological instructions, value judgements and so on. English teachers choose the diverse contents based on the students' needs. Teachers should study the text carefully and choose diversified teaching contents according to the themes, nurturing values and students' needs in the text.

2.3. Determination and Clarification of Learning Objectives.

Learning objectives will lead teacher to carry out teaching. Without learning or teaching objectives, there is no direction to follow and no standard to evaluate the effectiveness of students' learning and teachers' teaching. Determinate and clarify learning objectives are not an easy task, which is done based on a deep study of teaching materials and analysis of students. Sometimes, teachers' experience is also a matter. Learning objectives is ideal results after students learning. Students needs can't be ignored. Otherwise, the motivation will be demotivated and teaching will be ineffectiveness,

2.4. Students' Analysis

As the subject of teaching, students should be the master of learning rather than teacher. So, teacher need to know the students' level and needs, analyze the problems on learning and establish a good relationship between learning contents and students needs. Learning really happens when students actually learn based on their needs.

2.5. The Choice of Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategy is an integral part of teaching design, which is the planning of teaching procedures and the implementation of teaching measures. Teaching procedures is to achieve teaching objectives and to meet the needs of students in a particular teaching context(Zhang & Yu, 1996). It includes the planning of teaching procedures, the arrangements of teaching contents, the choice of teaching methods, steps and organization ways. Therefore, choosing teaching strategies is complex.

2.6. The Choice and Teaching Media and Resources

Teaching media are the basic tools for communicating and transmitting teaching contents(Liu, 2009). Choosing appropriate teaching is the most important part in teaching design. It will cause effects on others parts. In addition to traditional media like blackboard, books, pictures, modern media such as projector, computer are also welcome in today's classroom. When choosing media, not only different aspects of the teaching task, such as teaching objectives, content and methods, but also to student aspects, such as level of knowledge, ability base, intelligence level, should be considered.

2.7. The Assessments of the Results of Teaching Design

Assessment is a basic judgement about teaching effectiveness(Niu, 2018) Only through assessments, can students know their learning effectiveness and teacher know their teaching effectiveness. Through assessments both teachers and learners know their problems so that they can improve.

All in all, needs analyses are integrated throughout the teaching and learning process.

3. Needs Analysis and English Teaching.

3.1. The Definition of Needs Analysis

Chen(2019) pointed out that needs analysis refers to the techniques and methods of studying needs through introspection, interviews, observations and questionnaires, which is widely used in education, trade, manufacturing and services. The emergence of needs analysis can be traced back to 1920s, which was produced by Michael West. Later, this concept has been introduced in ELT. With the development of science and technology, needs analysis is gradually used in ESP. In 1972, Ruchterish firstly put forward Needs Analysis in foreign language teaching and he discussed how to meet the communicative needs of learners in future language-using environments. He defines needs analysis as a process that prioritize the needs of learners according to their individual or group learning needs. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) stated that any curriculum is based on some kind of student needs, which can be divided into learning needs and target needs. Target needs means that "the learner needs to do in target situation and learning needs refers that "what the learner needs to do in order to learn. Brindley (1989) thought needs can be categorized into subjective needs and objective needs. Graves (1996) gave the concepts of needs analysis, who introduced that needs analysis involves finding out what the learners know and can do, what they need to learn or to what extent the course can bridge the gap. In China, Shu(2004) pointed out that an important content of needs analysis is to analyze the learner's needs, such as their knowledge, skill, strategies, learning conditions, motivation and so on.

3.2. The Importance of Doing Needs Analysis

Focusing on learner needs is important. Richards agreed that needs analysis should have a central guiding role in foreign language curriculum development. Before a course syllabus or policy is written, a needs analysis should be carried out by the relevant personnel. Similarly, Shu(2004)

holds the same view that needs analysis should be emphasized in the current syllabus development and design for foreign language teaching. In addition to these roles, Guo and Wu(2012) argued that the centrality of needs analysis in foreign language teaching is also due to its important role in the design of the curriculum as well as in the selection of teaching materials. Each part of the teaching and learning process relies on the guidance of the needs analysis. Ideal teaching is always in a virtuous cycle of "needs analysis → teaching evaluation → improvement of teaching → needs analysis". Domestic research on needs analysis has mostly focused on ESP, and few have explored the relationship between needs analysis and EFL design, let alone the role of needs analysis in EFL teaching design.

4. The Role of Needs Analysis in EFL Teaching Design

4.1. Selecting and Optimizing Teaching Materials.

The first step of teaching is needs analysis. The first role of needs analysis shown in the selection and optimization of teaching material. In China, most teacher use textbook as their first teaching, materials, which gives students a misconception that the textbook is the teaching contents and that learning the textbook is all enough. Actually, teaching material is not merely textbooks. It also includes tacit knowledge, for example, culture, attitudes and values, etc. Teacher needs to add or reduce the textbook based on needs analysis. Through needs analysis of students, teacher will know their basic knowledge, ability, attitudes of learning and emotions. All these factors have an impact on students' learning. Basic knowledge guides teacher to choose the teaching materials matching the students present levels. For example, if the class is in a lower level, the selection of teaching material should be simple and some general knowledge of life. Teaching materials stimulating learner's interest is the first choice. Present ability makes teacher pays attention to what student can do and what they can't do, then, teacher finds the materials that can bridge the gap. There is a pattern to the development of the human mind, from image thinking to abstract thinking to creative thinking. This rule should also be followed when choosing teaching materials. Attitude refers to students' feelings about learning English, such as positive one, negative one, neutral one and so on. Attitudes is one important factor influencing learning effect. The more positive the attitude, the better the learning, vice versa. Understanding students' learning attitudes, teacher can talk to them promptly and choose varied materials. Students' cultural background, values and emotions affect the choice of learning materials, and teachers should do a good investigation, so that teaching materials can truly meet students' needs and thus promote students' active learning.

4.2. Identifying Student Deficiencies and Optimizing Learning Objectives

Setting teaching objectives is a major part of teaching design. The determination of learning objectives should be based not only on the teaching content, but also on the analysis of students. Every student has different characteristics, which leads to different levels of learning. One of the ways to find the reasons of different students' level is to analyze their needs. Teachers should find out the different problems and needs of students at different levels.

For example, top students need more challenging tasks to improve their abilities in all aspects, and backward students encounter problems in learning, such as psychological factors and family factors, then teacher should find out the learning needs of these students. The design of teaching objectives should be in different levels, and try make the objectives meet the needs of different students. In teaching, we will find that some teachers can't reach an ideal teaching effect. The great reason is that they ignore students' interests and needs. Students' interests and needs should be regarded as the key points to realize the teaching objectives, so that students' enthusiasm for learning is high and the learning effect is naturally good. Only by setting corresponding learning objectives based on students' needs can the teaching objectives really target to the development of students' core competences.

4.3. Giving Guides to Design Teaching Activities and Methods

Teaching activities are key factors of classroom teaching. Teachers set up a variety of teaching activities to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning. Yang and Huang (2007) argued that teaching activities should be humanistic, and teachers should take into full consideration the individual differences and different learning needs of students when designing activities. Some students prefer independent learning, some prefer group work, and some prefer teacher-directed learning. Then, teacher can use a variety of activities to meet the needs of students. In any case, the ultimate goal of teaching activities is to effectively promote the development of students. Therefore, when designing teaching activities, difficulty should be moderate which enables students at different levels, including upper, middle and lower levels, to have opportunities to participate in classroom activities and to learn something. Based on needs analysis, diverse activities can be present in the classroom, such as individual learning, group work, role play and so on, in that way, students will be more focused when learning. According to students' needs, teachers should also vary in their teaching methods, for example, some students like to explore knowledge actively, and some students like the teacher to help her acquire knowledge. For the needs of different students in the class, teachers can encourage students to learn independently, and help those who have difficulty in independent learning.

4.4. Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness from Students' Needs.

Teaching evaluation refers to the evaluation of teachers' "teaching" and students' "learning" in order to detect the achievement of teaching objectives. Through teaching evaluation, it not only enables students to know and improve their own learning, but also helps teachers to improve their teaching. Since the teaching objectives are determined on the basis of analysis of students' needs, evaluation should also aim at whether students' needs are met. As early as 2001, the Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform (for Trial Implementation) emphasized that "assessment should not only focus on students' academic performance, but also discover and develop students' potential in various aspects, understand students' needs in development, help students know themselves, build up their self-confidence, and promote students' development at their original level". In the process of forming assessment, Li and Hong(2023) advocated that

teachers should pay attention to students' learning situation and listen to their voices. From this, we can see the importance of students' needs in evaluation. Due to the different needs of students, the way of teaching evaluation should be diversified. Hong (2024) believed that flexible and personalized assessment can fairly meet the needs of different students, thus achieving differentiated assessment. In traditional evaluation, the evaluation is usually carried out in the form of questions and answers, however, such teaching neglects the evaluation of students' ability. For example, in oral teaching, in addition to grammatical correctness, teachers can also evaluate the students' pronunciation, fluency, and language expression ability, so that the evaluation can cover a number of aspects of the students. Secondly, teachers can also evaluate students from their classroom performance, homework completion, independent learning ability, learning habits and other aspects. Only with a full understanding of students can evaluation truly serve the needs of students, thus promoting the overall development of students.

5. Conclusion

Needs analysis not only gives students a chance to know themselves also helps teachers learn more about situation about students. Needs analysis can help teachers select and optimize teaching materials. Secondly, it can help teachers to further recognize students' deficiencies so that they can develop more appropriate learning objectives. Thirdly, it can help teachers choose activities which students are interested and desired. Fourthly, it makes teacher rethink the evaluation of students. The current research on needs analysis is not sufficient, but needs analysis does have a great effect on English teaching. In the future, related research will become a hotspot. They will provide new sights for educators, thus better promoting the overall development of students.

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