

# **A Critical Study of the Principles and Approaches to Needs Analysis**

**Maryam Barghamadi**

Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

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## **Abstract**

English language materials and courses are developed to cover the skills that learners require to master. In the domain of English language teaching, Needs Analysis (NA), also known as Need Assessment, is a process that aims to investigate the present level of English language learners and identify what they need to know. The NA process is unanimously accounted for as a crucial feature of English language learning, especially for teaching materials, learning activities, testing, and developing assessment programs. Due to its vital role, a great deal of research has been conducted on this process, and several approaches have been suggested for it in the literature. This paper aims to provide an overview of the needs analysis as well as its fundamentals and concepts. This paper also presents a review of previous research methods developed for NA and their strengths and limitations.

**Keywords:** *Curriculum, English Language, Needs Analysis, Needs Assessment*

## **Introduction**

The term analysis of needs or needs analysis (also called needs assessment) first appeared in India in the 1920s (White, 1988, West, 1994) and little research was done in its area until the 1970s (Cowling, 2007). At first, English Occupational Purposes was dominant for needs analysis researchers then changed to English Academic Purposes or English for Specific Purposes (see West, 1994 for more information about the history of needs analysis), and it has been neglected in the general English classroom (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Due to the significance of needs analysis (NA), the Council of Europe Modern Language Projects during the 1970s in the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) formally used NA to analysis grammatical complexity of sentence structures to design materials, but this came under criticism because of lack of consideration to the learners' needs (Fatihi, 2003). The existence of different approaches and replace them with some new approaches, is related to teachers who

investigate the needs of their students during their learning (Songhori, 2008). For example, needs analysis was introduced by Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978) and focus on identifying the learners' needs. Later this term has been redefined by Task-based Needs Analysis (Long, 2005b).

NA as a 'pragmatic activity' (Schutz & Derwnig, 1981) plays a central role in the process of designing or developing a curriculum (Munby, 1978; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Berwick, 1989; Brindley, 1989; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Robinson, 1991; Johns, 1991; West, 1994; Seedhouse, 1995; Jordan, 1997; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Finney, 2002, Brown, 2009). More specifically, Johns (1991) noted that the first step in curriculum development for any courses is needs analysis provides validity to all course design activities. Also, NA provides the facilities for the development of teaching materials, learning activities, tests, and program evaluation strategies (Brown, 2009). Several perspectives have been proposed for the definition of NA. Some of the definitions of the needs analysis are in Table 1.

Table 1. Definition of needs analysis

Name of Linguists	Definition
Brown (2009)	"The systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum" (p.269).
Fatih, A. R. (2003)	"A device to know the learner's necessities needs and lacks"(p.39).
Iwai <i>et al.</i> (1999)	Gathering information basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs
Nunan, D. (1988)	"Techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design" (p.42).
Brindley, G. (1984)	"Learner's wants, desires, demands, expectations, motivations, lacks, constraints and requirements."(p.28).

More specifically, Iwai *et al.* (1999, p.6) refer to needs analysis as the activities included in gathering data that will serve as the basis for creating a curriculum that addresses a specific group of learners' learning needs. Brindley (1984) defined needs analysis based on different types of needs and accounts of issues and restrictions in utilising this concept, counting ways in which we might usefully distinguish between needs recognised by materials developer or learners. The definition of NA was divided into several pieces by Brown (2009). The author notes that a "defensible curriculum" is one that meets the language learning and teaching needs in the sense of a specific institution(s) involved (P.269). The researcher claims that the information needed to accomplish this included all subjective, objective, and all other information to achieve the defensible curriculum. West (1994) notes that NA is including two aspects. First, what students need to do with the target language is the gap between the target proficiency and the students' per cent proficiency, second, how the students could be the best master in the target language during the time of training.

However, the terms needs analysis and needs assessment are often interchangeably used; in contrast, some researchers defined them differently. For example, Graves (1996, 2000) refers to

needs assessment as obtaining data and needs analysis as the process of assigning value to those data. In a similar view, Stefaniak (2020) notes that when referring to need assessment, collecting sufficient information from their client to understand the situation, and needs analysis refers to identifying the performance gap.

According to Nation and Macalister (2010), a good needs analysis involves asking the right questions and finding the answers in the most effective way. Stefaniak suggests that the target of any needs assessment is to provide an opportunity for the client to help them cross the gap and achieve the objective. Thus, the needs analysis can generate an amount of information that must be stored and utilised in some way within the curriculum. One way to use this information is to apply what to learn in needs analysis to formulate program goals and objectives (McDonough & Shaw, 2012). Therefore, needs analysis is mainly direct to the goals and contents of a course—this analysis investigates the present level of English language learners and identifying what they need to know. Finding the answer related to learners' needs could provide a useful facility for course designers to develop significant materials. In another way, finding the problem and identify the solution could be the goal of needs analysis. This paper aims to provide an overview of the needs analysis concept as well as its basics and principles along with a summary of the methods proposed for NA in previous research and their limitations

### **Significance of needs analysis**

Needs analysis may help understand students' needs, development materials, and teaching methodology. Byram and Hua (2013) emphasis the significance of NA for the “development of language curriculum” (p.503). West (1994) believes that needs analysis can enable the syllabus designer to find out the discrimination among various types of learners and design courses based on their needs. Therefore, the goal of needs analysis is “to know learners as people, as language users, and as language learners; to know how language learning and skills learning can be maximised for a given learner group” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p.126).

Richards (2001) claims that NA provides three major purposes in language teaching program: i) to find out the required language skills for a student to perform a particular role, ii) to identify a difference between the current level of proficiency and requisite proficiency, iii) to find out problem areas of the students. Nunan (1988) noted that collect information through NA utilises for a range of purposes. First, NA can set the objective of the course and direct the selection of its content. Secondly, teachers can utilise it to adjust the syllabus and methodology to minimise the gap between teachers' and student's expectations. Thirdly, the data can recognise the gap between teachers' and students 'expected teaching and learning approaches. Brown (1995) developed a curriculum model and placed needs analysis as the logical first step in the curriculum approach followed by goals and objectives, language testing, material development, language teaching, and program evaluation. This view indicated that needs analysis has an essential role in curriculum design.

By considering this statement that this process is not limited to only specific discipline' (Stefaniak, 2020, p.5), the needs analysis's significant role could be clear. Moreover, needs analysis is a central role for any course design, but some scholars emphasised NA as a crucial

factor for developing English tests and assessments (Fulcher,1999; McDonough, 1984; Brown,2009). Therefore, the needs Analysis can be accounted for as a crucial feature of English language learning and should receive sufficient attention to providing teaching materials, learning activities, tests, and assessment programs.

### **Various categories of needs analysis**

Several scholars developed different categories related to this topic to investigate the best way to find learners' needs. One of the famous categories of NA was developed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.54-58). They divide needs into target needs (what students require to do) and learning needs (what the students need to do to learn). The target needs are subdivided into three categories *necessities*, *lacks*, and *wants*. Necessities or objective needs refer to catering to the demands of the target learning situation. Lacks refers to the gap between the target proficiency and what generally learners already knew. Wants or subjective needs are what the learners feel they need. Brindley (1989) lists some concepts of needs, as follow:

- a) Necessities or demands of the programs (also called objective, product-oriented, perceived needs).
- b) Learners' wants (subjective or felt needs).
- c) The methods of filling the gaps between these two (process-oriented needs).

Nunan (1988) and Berwick (1989) stated that objective and subjective information are certain factors that are essential to determine the needs of learners. Objective information gives the learner the current proficiency level, educational background, age-previous language courses, and nationality. On the other hand, subjective information provides information about learning goals, preferences of methodology, and learning strategies. A distinction between felt needs (those the learners have)and perceived need, which refer to the way the needs are viewed by the teacher, the institution, and other stakeholders was explained by Berwick (1989, p. 55). Also, Berwick suggested that objective needs are collected from real data about the student, and subjective needs focus on the learners' mental and emotional needs.

Brown (2016, p.12-17) developed a new category of needs in terms of views:

- a) Democratic view (what the majority of learners want)
- b) Discrepancy view (deficiencies and requirement)
- c) Analytic view (elements that they should learn next based on theory and experience)
- d) Diagnostic view (elements that cause the most harm if missing)

More recently, the term needs to become more complex by adding stakeholders such as parents, school principals, future professors, and deans (Gollin-Kies, Hall & Moore, 2015; Brown, 2016). In reality, keeping and pay attention to all items or stakeholders to the NA process provide more complex and ambiguous situations (Kossakowska-Pisarek, 2017). Brown (2016) states that "stakeholders tend to be students, teachers, and local administrators" (p.41). Therefore, by considering the various categories, target needs and learning needs could be the simple items for providing teaching materials, and other criteria could make the process complex and ambiguous, then mastering the process may be impossible for all course designers.

### Needs analysis approaches

In this area, various approaches have been developed and focused on needs analysis. West (1994) states that target analysis was the first approach, and others have been introduced as *Present Situation Analysis*, *Deficiency Analysis*, *Strategy Analysis* or *Learning Needs Analysis*, *Means Analysis*, *Register analysis*, *Discourse analysis*, and *Genre Analysis*. This research provides a brief definition of different needs analysis approach (for more information about the history of needs analysis approaches see West (1994), and Songhori, (2008).

- *Target Situation Analysis (TSA)* identifies the necessities of what the learners require to know to function effectively in the target situation and includes an objective, perceived, and product-oriented needs.

- *Present Situation Analysis (PSA)* “focuses on the students’ proficiencies at the outset of instruction” (Brown, 2009, p.272). The placement tests follow this approach to find the present level or proficiency of learners.

- *Deficiency Analysis* -It analysis the gap between the present knowledge of learners and what the learners need to achieve. It could be fundamental in needs analysis due to the present situation and target situation analysis.

- *Strategy Analysis* - It identifies the learner’s preferred learning styles, strategies (Allwright, 1982), and includes subjective, felt, and process-oriented needs. In other words, this approach tries to find out how the learners want to learn instead of what they need to learn (West,1998) and focuses on methodology (Nunan, 1988).

- *Means Analysis* -Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 125) noted that it provides the setting details about the environment in which the course will be run. The issue relates to means analysis because it could be difficult to obtain information about the environment and require different details. After all, one view could not work in another position, or every environment requires individual needs.

- *Language Audits* - “It is used to form the basis of strategic decisions on language needs and training requirements” (Haque, 2014, p.3). Also, Brown (2016) states that language audits “may be used to promote bureaucratic, language policies and standards” (p.26).

- *Register analysis* focuses on the vocabulary and grammar of the text (Songhori, 2008). The assumption behind this approach is that the needs of learners can identify by analysing the linguistic features. The criticism on register analysis involved is limited to the analysis of structural and lexical features of text (West, 1998), and it is not explanatory but descriptive (Robinson, 1991).

- Discourse analysis*- It focuses on how sentences are used in communications (West, 1998). Considering communication in this approach is the main factor to get a significant role. This approach’s shortcoming focuses on spoken and written text, and another factor is ignored.

The variety of needs analysis approaches attempt to meet the learners’ needs in teaching new skills and assessment processes. Brown (2009) noted that all approaches have overlap with one another. Songhori claimed that each of them is similar to one piece of the jigsaw to complete the needs analysis process. Gollin-Kies et al. (2015) noted that “integrated approaches predicted with accuracy” (p.89). In contrast, Ali (2011) notes that Target Situation analysis (TSA) and Present

Situation Analysis (PSA) are the most important. By considering the limitation and the significant role of each approach, the combination or integrated approach could relieve individual approaches' limitation. It is also clear that TSA and PSA are fundamental approaches and could be selected in all needs analysis, selecting only deficiency analysis that covers both TSA and PSA, and then selecting other approaches to cover the limitation of target and present situation. Combining a variety of approaches relies on the goal will increase the reliability and enhance the chance to reach the desired goals and cover the limitation of them.

### Needs assessment steps

Similar to different needs analysis approaches, some scholars developed steps to assessment needs that seem to be “an absolute minimum” for any attempt to determine needs worthy of the names (Schutz & Derwing, 1981, p. 35). The basic steps included making decisions, gathering information, and using them. According to Graves (2000), the process of needs assessment involves seven steps and a set of decisions, actions, and reflections that are cyclical (Figure 1).

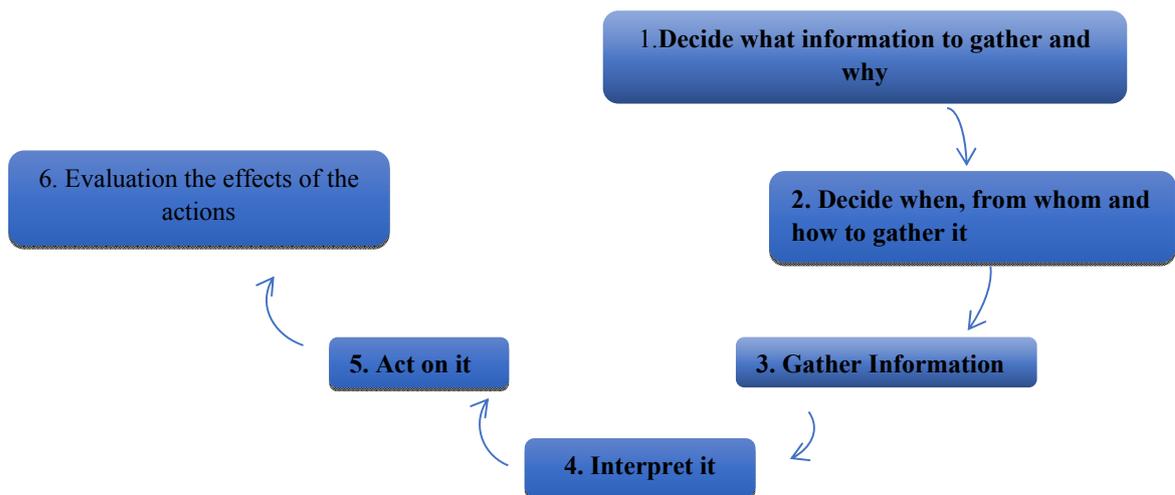


Figure 1. Needs assessment cycle (Graves, 2000, p.100)

This process typically consists of the following successive steps:

- Step 1. Deciding what data to collect and why
- Step 2. Deciding the best way to obtain it: when, how, and from whom
- Step 3. Collecting data
- Step 4. Interpreting the data
- Step 5. Acting on the data
- Step 6. Assessing the effect and effectiveness of the action
- Step 7. (Back to Step 1) Deciding on further or new information to collect (p.100).

Brown (2009) claimed that he combined Schutz and Derwing's (1981) eight steps, and Jordan's ten steps (1997, p. 23), and Graves's seven steps (2000, p.100) and developed three

general steps with some subcategorise. This process typically consists of the following successive steps (Brown, 2009, p.266-277):

### **Get ready to do NA**

1. Define the purpose of the NA
2. Delimit the student population
3. Decide upon approach(es) and syllabus(es)
4. Recognise constraints
5. Select data collection procedures

### **Do the NA research**

6. Collect data
7. Analyse data
8. Interpret results

### **Use the NA results**

9. Determine objectives (assessments, materials, teaching strategies)
10. Evaluate and report on the NA project (Brown, 2009, p.266-277).

As seen in this step-by-step procedure, data collection is a crucial aspect of the Needs Analysis. Stefaniak (2020, p.30) states that need assessment is similar to research study; both include asking the questions and data collection. Therefore, in needs analysis to select the right questions and the data collection process are fundamental to develop materials or syllabus design accurately.

### **Information required for needs assessment**

The previous studies have proposed a range of information required for assessing the present condition. One of the most substantial and widely-known works on needs analysis is John Munby's *Communication Syllabus Design* (1978). Munby's work could be a revolution to develop the NA process and provide a new movement in needs analysis history. Munby's model was divided into two phases: First, Communication Needs Processor (CNP) provides a highly comprehensive collection of the process consisting of eight variables about key communication variables that can be utilised to define any group of students in the target language.

By looking at the CNP, the participant's identity is the first step to find information, and then it needs to achieve information about the *purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key*. The second phase focuses on micro-skills and micro-functions to develop activities.

Although Munby's model is considered as a well-developed model of needs analysis it has been criticised for being too mechanistic, and for paying less attention to the perception of the learner (Mead,1982; Frankel, 1983; Hutchinson & Waters,1987; Nunan,1988; West,1994; Al-Husseini, 2004; Ha, 2005). More specifically, West (1994, p.9) criticised the shortcomings of Munby's model through four aspects, as follows:

- *Complexity*– This model is inflexible, complicated, and time-consuming. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) also address this issue and emphasised that it is too time-consuming to write a target profile for each learner, as proposed in Munby’s Model.
- *Learner-centeredness* –This model collects data about the learners instead of from the learner. So it is not learner-centred (Nunan,1988) is a teacher-directed method (Ha,2005).
- *Constraints* -Many researchers (Frankel, 1983; Ellis& Sinclair,1989) agreed that the practical constraints should be considered at the beginning of the needs analysis process but in this model considered after the procedure.
- *Language* – Munby’s CNP fails to offer a procedure by which the learner profile can be converted into a language syllabus.

Another development was introduced in NA by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Hutchinson and Waters emphasise the Learning-Centred Approach to teach students how they learn language by investigating learners’ needs in the language use situation and the language-learning situation. They proposed a list of questions that need to be answered in needs assessment data collection, as shown in Figure 2.

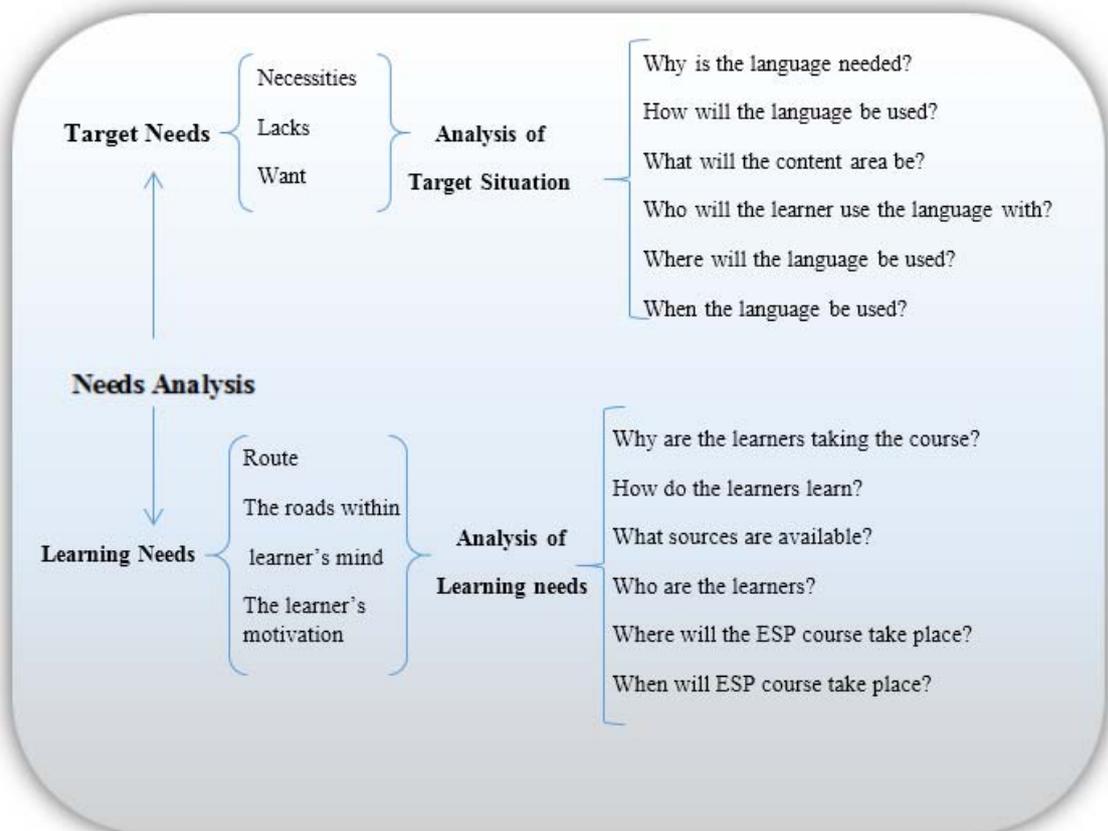


Figure 2. List of the questions used for collecting needs assessment information (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.54)

Graves (2000, p.103) classifies this kind of information into present and future aspects and includes ten categories, as follows:

- *Who the learners are*—It contains some questions related to the learner’s history (their age, gender, educational background, profession, first language, and nationality). This information can help provide the background for the other questions.
- *The learners’ level of language proficiency*—It related to their four skills in the target language (speaking, listening, reading, writing)? What are their abilities concerning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functional skills? Such information could help program designers select the kinds of texts to develop different skills and grammar.
- *The learners’ level of intercultural competence*— This information focus on socio-cultural and socio-linguistic aspects of the target language to make choices about the kind of material to use.
- *The learners’ interests in topics or issues*—This information enables teachers to devise the course under students’ experience and interests. This information can help teachers design the course around the learners’ topics in the absence of specific target needs.
- *The learners’ learning preferences* - This information could be very useful for teachers to realise whether the learners are comfortable with certain kinds of activities or need to be taught how to perform their activities (e.g. how to efficiently cooperate).
- The learners’ attitudes - This information reveals the learners’ feeling about using the target language and shows whether they are comfortable making mistakes.

The following steps emphasis the information about what the learners need to learn, want to change in the future:

- The learners’ goals and expectations*- This part of the information could help course designers shape goals by answering what they expect to learn.
- *The target context: situation, roles, topics, and content*- This item focuses on what situations are needed for learners to use English, such as university, industry, or immigration processes.
- Types of communicative skills*—This is related to the learners’ goals who use the language.
- *Language modalities they will use*— The question about the learners’ need to speak, read, listen, and write in the target language should be addressed

In another study, Murcia, Brinton, and Snow (2014) listed the type of information collected in needs assessment as *demographic information, educational background, language proficiency level, interests and life experience, purposes for study, and target situation*. Patton (1987) defines types of questions to address in NA should relate to *behaviours/experiences, opinion/values, feeling, knowledge, sensory, demographic/background*.

Besides different approaches, we will face a variety list of questions. “These questions with their possible answers are a prerequisite to all identification methodology” (Richterich,1983, p. 1). The information gathered for this purpose is typically classified into present and future information (Graves, 2000). The present information is mainly about: Who the learners are, what is their level of language proficiency, what is their level of intercultural competence, and also what are the learners’ interests, learning preferences, and attitudes. On the other hand, the future information is more associated with the learners’ goals and expectations, the target contexts including situations, roles, topics, and content, the types of communicative skills that the learners need, and the tasks they perform as well as the language modalities they use. To date, the literature, the role of teachers is neglected in needs analysis, and Brown (2009) and Mafiyah and

Sumardiono (2020) support this view. Brown points out that the previous research focused on the learner's needs and ignored the teachers "is to doom the resulting curriculum to failure" (p.286) and Mafiyah and Sumardiono note that the teachers 'role is the main collaborate in needs analysis. Therefore, the students' views could be modified and negotiated under the teachers' supervision, and the combination of data from students and teachers may provide useful information to design the curriculum.

### **Data collection instruments in needs analysis**

Several researchers identify various procedures that can be utilised to gather information as a part of need analysis (e.g. Berwick, 1989; West, 1994; Richard, 2001; Brown, 1995, 2009; Purpura et al., 2003; Long, 2005a). More specifically, West (1994, p.7) claims that "selecting the information-gathering instrument" is a fundamental NA stage. Purpura et al. (2003, pp. 9–11) noted that "situation-specific, learner-centred, pragmatic, and systematic" should be considered in the collection data process. Several researchers note that questionnaires, observations, interviews, and authentic resources analysis could be selected as an instrument in the NA process (Basturkmen, 2010; Brown, 2001; Long, 2005a). Graves (2000) states that gathering information should be done in three-time frames pre-course, initial, and ongoing. Some of these procedures are summarised and briefly explained, as below:

**-Existing information** - A large amount of relevant information can usually be acquired from sources like books, journal articles, reports, and surveys. Brown (1995, 2001) puts Email, letter writing, phone calls in this type of data collection.

**Questionnaires**- This instrument method could be the most common or fixed tool to utilise in the process of needs analysis. Questionnaires can be used to gather information on a larger scale (Brown, 1995; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Graves, 2000) and to obtain information about many different kinds of issues, including communication issues, analysis learning style, preferred task in classroom, motivation, attitude, and beliefs. They can also cover a variety of questions such as bio-data, self-rating, and judgmental rating (Brown, 2009, p.279). Self-ratings consist of scales that students or others use to rate their knowledge or abilities and could be a close or open response.

**Interviews** - Interviews can be conducted through different methods. Generally, teachers can interview their students, and students can also interview each other or their teachers. They are utilised to ask open-ended questions and provide 'real opinion' (Brown, 1995) and "private information from individuals" (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 3). Due to the time-consuming, this method is used to follow up another method, such as a questionnaire and should be recorded (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

**Meeting**- Through meetings, a large amount of information can be collected in a short time.

**Observation** - It is a specialised skill, and analysts may require to have special pieces of training to learn how to observe, what to look for, and how to make use of the information obtained. Brown (1995, 2001) listed *Case studies*, *Diary studies*, *Behaviour observation*, *Interactional analysis*, and *Inventories*, and Long (2005a) puts *Diaries*, *Journals*, *Logs*, *Non/Participant*, and

*Classroom observation* in this category. Case studies involve following a single student or a selected group of students through relevant work or educational experience to identify the situation's characteristics. Learners' diaries and journals provide insider accounts of language learning. However, they are not systematic or comprehensive and may be time-consuming to produce and analysis. The inventory is utilised for physical objects (how many students in one class or how many books they will need in the course).

**Tests**- Test is a crucial factor for data collection (Fulcher, 1999; McDonough, 1984; Brown, 1995, 2009). The different tests, such as proficiency, diagnosis, achievement, and placement test, provide useful information about the students' abilities (Brown, 1995).

**Shadowing**- This method involves following an individual over a while to monitor their natural interaction, behaviour, and language use.

**Portfolios**- Portfolios refer to collections of students' work selected based on certain criteria to demonstrate their progress and achievement (Graves, 2000).

**Task analysis**- Task analysis is the process of analysing the tasks. In a potential professional or educational environment, learners could perform in English and evaluate their linguistic characteristics and specifications.

**Review of reading materials** - In this method, an instructor spreads out a range of reading materials on a table such as newspapers, magazines, books, comics, and other authentic materials, and then ask students what they want to read and select one to focus on in the class activities (Weddel, 1997).

By increasing several NA studies, the concept of '*triangulation*' was defined (Long, 2005a; Brown, 2001; Richards, 2001). This term is not a new method and refers to using more than one method of data collection or "a research strategy" (Brown, 2009, p.283). As Long (2005a, p. 28) defines it "*Triangulation* is a procedure used by researchers . . . to increase the credibility of their data . . . .to increase the credibility of their interpretations of those data." Stefaniak (2020) notes that the benefits of triangulating results are to make a sustainable decision. Serafini, Lak, and Long (2015) point out two or more insider, and outsider sources should be used for data collection to provide the concept of reliability and validity.

In contrast, using multiple instruments could increase error (Fielding & Fielding, 1986) and not guarantee the NA procedure (Brown, 2009). The goal of needs analysis is a crucial factor to select the instrument to collect data. For instance, when a large scale requires time, the observation and interview are not appropriate for time-consuming. By definition, the goal of NA in the first step, select the instrument could not be a difficult task.

### **Evaluating needs analysis**

More recently, researchers are interested in general English learners and "has expanded into corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis" (Kossakowska-Pisarek, 2017, p.168) but several scholars believe that needs evaluation could concentrate on the learner, 'not the target discourse' (Johns & Makalela 2011, p.197). Long (2005a, p.22) argued that all new or old NA approaches could benefit from work on reliability and validity. From this perspective, needs analysis is a sort

of assessment; it can evaluate by considering its reliability, validity, and practicality. In contrast, Serafini et al. (2015, p.11) argue that most of the research published from 1984 to 2014 has ignored the discussion of reliability and validity of the methodology. Moreover, there is little information on the instruments' validity and reliability and the NA process's result (VanHest & Oud-de Glas, 1990, p. 13).

*Reliability* is defined as “the consistency with a procedure obtain the information” (Brown, 1995, p.51). It means that any instrument to collect data should provide the same result or very similar. Reliable needs analysis is associated with using well-thought-out, standardised tools that are systematically applied. Instead of just observing people performing tasks that learners will have to do after the course, it is better to systematise the observation using a checklist. Alternatively, it is possible to record and apply standardised analysis procedures. The more observation records and the more people studied, the more reliable the results.

*Validity* is “measuring what it claims to measure” (Brown, 1995, p.51). Valid needs analysis involves looking at what is relevant. It is vitally important to consider the type of need that is being looked at and the type of data collected. For example, if the questioner's target is to measure students' proficiency, the NA process only focuses on this topic.

*Practicality* or ‘Usability’ (Brown, 1995) refers to the degree to which a procedure is practical to use. In this step, the cost of the process, the times of teachers and students, ease to use, to score, and to interpret the result could be essential to consider. There is always a tension between reliable, valid, and practical needs analysis. Brown (1995) believes that reliability, validity, and usability should consider equally. On the other hand, Nation and Maclister (2010) claims that validity should always be prioritised. Since “triangulation” is accepted as the main factor to obtain validity in data collection, it could be possible to assess and analyse the data by two or more experts. Consequently, their view may enhance the validity and decrease the weakness of the process as well.

### **Limitations of needs analysis**

Despite much criticism toward NA approaches, there is a debate over *learners*, *instruments*, and *evaluation* of needs analysis. According to West (1994), it is also difficult to anticipate the needs in a homogeneous group of learners in many circumstances since the needs of the learner in a group may not be identical and may differ considerably from one to another in many cases. Norton (2014, p.76) notes that every individual can play more than one role in the communities due to different identities and culture. Therefore, this more prominent consideration of learners' multilingual cultural identity may contribute to understanding their needs.

In the needs analysis, the selected instrument and method to collected data is another issue. Serafini et al. (2015) state that data should be collected from two or more sources and used qualitative and quantitative methods. Also, Kossakowska-Pisarek (2017) points out few scholars used polite-test in questioners, and lack of information regarding the validity or reliability of the tools utilised and the results obtained are another limitation (West, 1994; Serafini et al. 2015). Moreover, West believes that needs analysis may come up with a range of functions and concepts. However, when turned into language forms, it cannot organize into a coherent teaching

sequence. Therefore, the same as all processes, needs analysis suffers from some limitations. If the researchers and materials developers are familiar with the needs analysis process and limitations related to this activity, it could help them investigate the learner's needs in a special context. In brief, selecting correct approaches and useful data collection in needs analysis rely on the NA process's mastering.

## Conclusion

This article provided an insight into the definition of needs analysis (NA) by reviewing the literature and investigating the steps and approaches typically used in the NA process. The needs analysis can be accounted for as a crucial feature of English language learning and should receive sufficient attention in providing teaching materials, learning activities, tests, and assessment programs. Using steps and stages in NA, we can find out the different views of learners, teachers, and other stakeholders.

This review indicated that NA is similar to research studies in terms of data collection and identifying questions. The first step of the needs analysis involves the definition of the goal. The NA process's goal is a critical factor and provides the facility to create a list of questions, select the participants, and choose the best instruments to collect data. Setting a clear goal for the NA process provides an opportunity for developing special and individual frameworks, instead of using the frameworks developed by others, which could bring benefits due to the differences between participants, and environments.

Selecting approaches and data collection instruments are the next step in the NA process. Both TSA and PSA are fundamental approaches in the NA process, and consideration of other approaches relies on the NA's goal. For instance, if the NA's goal is to enhance language learning's commutations aspect, discourse analysis could be considered. The followers of any framework or study should be aware that they need to investigate the selected frameworks, as one could work for one case but does not work in another position. Regarding data collection instruments, the Triangulation method enhances the validity and reliability of the NA process. Also, on a large scale, the pilot study could be recommended to test the NA process.

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