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**NEEDS ANALYSIS AND ENGLISH FOR  
BUSINESS PURPOSES**

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Final course assignment presented to the Language Arts English/Portuguese College of the Academic Department of Modern Foreign Languages – DALEM – and the Academic Department of Language and Communication – DALIC – of the Federal University of Technology – Paraná, as a requirement to obtain the Teaching degree.

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## **TERMO DE APROVAÇÃO**

### **NEEDS ANALYSIS AND ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES**

por

**GABRIELLA STRAPASSON**

Este Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (TCC) foi apresentado em vinte e três de junho de 2015 como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de licenciado em Letras Português/Inglês. A candidata foi arguida pela Banca Examinadora composta pelos professores abaixo assinados. Após deliberação, a Banca Examinadora considerou o trabalho aprovado.

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I dedicate this work to my beloved parents,  
Vilson and Eloir (in memorian)

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## RESUMO

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Inglês para fins específicos é uma abordagem de ensino de línguas na qual as necessidades dos estudantes são essenciais para o estabelecimento dos rumos do processo de ensino/aprendizagem, seus conteúdos, atividades e materiais didáticos. Tais necessidades podem ser divididas naquelas que concernem à língua alvo, de aprendizagem e linguísticas. Nesta pesquisa, cada tipo de necessidade representa um eixo a ser pesquisado, isto é, empresas que oferecem Inglês para negócios para seus funcionários, institutos de idiomas e alunos que fazem uso da língua inglesa dentro do ambiente de trabalho, os quais serão investigados através de questionários. A partir disso, o objetivo desse trabalho é investigar o processo de 'análise das necessidades' a partir das três perspectivas acima mencionadas, numa tentativa de entender de que maneira empresas e escolas de idiomas concebem as 'necessidades' de seus estudantes e através de quais procedimentos elas coletam informações sobre tais necessidades. Por fim, os resultados de cada eixo são confrontados tendo-se em vista a correspondência da necessidade relacionada à língua-alvo. Acredita-se que as discussões levantadas podem contribuir para uma adequação no que diz respeito ao ensino de Inglês para negócios, seja na modalidade *in-company*, *one-to-one* ou mesmo grupos, no sentido de que observando e atendendo as necessidades dos alunos, é possível direcionar melhor o processo de ensino-aprendizagem.

**Palavras-chave:** Inglês para fins específicos. Análise das necessidades. Inglês para negócios

## ABSTRACT

STRAPASSON, Gabriella. **Needs analysis and English for Business purposes**. 2015. 60 pages. Language Arts English/Portuguese College Final course assignment - Federal University of Technology - Paraná. Curitiba. 2015.

English for Specific Purposes is an approach to language teaching in which students' needs play a central role in the process of establishing the way classes and content are put into practice. These can be divided into target situation, present situation, and learning situation needs. Hence, in this research needs are depicted through the interface of business companies, language institutions and students, respectively. They are assessed through specific surveys within English language institutions that offer business English courses, as well as companies and professionals who use English within their working settings. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate 'needs analysis' from the three perspectives aforementioned. It intends to discuss what language institutions and companies understand by 'needs' as well as the procedures used to gather information from learners. Also, it seeks to understand what business English learners expect regarding Business English classes. Along with that, the results from each axe are confronted aiming to identify whether they match one another in terms of target situation needs. Results indicate that companies are more likely to apply informal procedures to find out employees' target situation needs, while language institutions address so through placement tests, indicating a disharmony between the two axes. Regarding learners, the survey carried out highlights their profile and expectations concerning Business English classes, which provides evidence on how companies and language institutions have to work so as to meet learners' needs. Such discussion aim to add to the improvement of in-company, one-to-one and also groups in language institutions business English classes by focusing on the relevance of students' needs within the teaching/learning process.

**Key words:** ESP. Needs analysis. Business English.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

BE	Business English
CEFR	Common European Framework Reference
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAMP	English for Academic Medical Purposes
EBE	English for Business and Economics
EBP	English for Business Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGBP	English for General Business Purposes
EGP	English for General Purposes
ELP	English Legal Purposes
EMP	English for Medical Purposes
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EPP	English for Professional Purposes
ESBP	English for Specific Business Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ESS	English for Social Sciences
EST	English for Science and Technology
GE	General English
LANA	Language Needs Analysis
LSP	Language for Specific Purposes
MBA	Master's Degree in Administration
NNS	Non-native Speaker
NS	Native speaker (someone who was born in the country)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As English has become fundamental for business professionals to interact and negotiate with people from all over the world, and as new business barriers have been created by cultural differences, for instance, company cultures and degrees of formality, some employees might have been pushed to learn English due to its relevance in the business scenario. A course that aims to prepare them faster has to take into account their needs and reasons for learning the language, so that what is offered within the course length fulfills their goals more precisely.

When it comes to Business English, and by briefly exploring language institutions sites at the Internet, one can easily perceive that such modality is widely offered as a branch of general English language for learners. Thus, it seems that the main differences among General and Business English is vocabulary (as well as its situational use) and the learners' ultimate purpose for learning it, which in most cases, is merely keeping their job. It is known that most learners only face an English class, as it is a professional requirement, almost as an imposed task by the company where they work in. Therefore, language teaching takes a different approach in terms of teacher's attitudes in class (adult learners only), classroom configuration (in-company groups, one-to-one) and clearly linguistics features (focused on working situations). In other words, the language being taught and learned has to be meaningful to meet specific professional requirements.

Within that context, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to teach a foreign language which comes from a more general branch of language teaching called English as an Additional Language (EAL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). ESP, in turn, can be divided into three main branches, classified according to what the specialism of the learner is: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for the Social Sciences (ESS) and English for Business and Economics (EBE).

Theoretically and in practice, ESP has many similarities to other approaches to language teaching, since they are primarily concerned with communication and learning. However, the most important difference in ESP is the relevance given to learners' reasons for learning. This is a fact that plays a central and initial role when it comes to designing syllabuses/courses and also selecting materials for such

audience. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1991, p.8) “ESP is an approach to language teaching, in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reasons for learning”, which offers us a north for the discussion in this paper.

Bearing in mind the role of learners' needs and reasons for learning and teaching a foreign language, we shall ask ourselves: What do language institutions and sponsors understand by 'needs'? What are the situations, within the working environment, in which a foreign language is used? What kind of procedures schools and sponsors carry out in order to identify such needs and consequently meet them? To what extent learners' needs play a central role when sponsors/companies choose a school to provide business English classes for their employees?

ESP courses have some stages<sup>1</sup> in their elaboration that might clear up the way teachers and schools should meet learners' reasons and needs for learning more effectively. The first one, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p.121) is 'needs analysis' which is basically described as an attempt to understand and gather as much information as possible about learners, their working environment, expectations about the course, as well as their learning preferences. In other words, 'needs analysis' establishes the 'how' and 'what' should be taught in an ESP course. Its data and ongoing evaluation should be the basis of a course design or at least, a support to adapt the pedagogical practice towards attending learners' needs. This being said, 'needs analysis' and its implications for the teaching/learning process, along with my own experience as a Business English teacher not only raised the questions aforementioned, but also explains the title of this research.

Taking these aspects into consideration, this study seeks to investigate 'needs analysis' within English Business courses, from the perspective of three complementary axes: companies, language institutions, and learners. To do it, specific goals were designed so as: i) to apply a questionnaire in English business institutions in Curitiba to find out if 'needs analysis' is used to collect data about learners' needs and how it is carried out; ii) to apply a questionnaire in companies in order to find out if employers apply 'needs analysis' to their personnel as well as what professional requirements and procedures used to gather such information are, and;

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<sup>1</sup>A discussion about the steps involved in ESP course design is provided at the end of Chapter 2.

iii) to carry out a survey with business English learners so as to find out their own needs and expectations regarding Business English classes.

The relevance of this research is claimed in terms of the lack of academic research in the field of Business English (ESP) within the Brazilian scenario, (RAMOS, 2008; CELANI 2008; CELANI, HOLMES, RAMOS, SCOTT 1988) and predominantly regarding 'needs analysis', in spite of its relevance in the field of Applied Linguistics worldwide. Furthermore, learners' needs are rarely discussed in either foreign language teaching methodology or second language acquisition areas, though ESP represents a field in which those who hold a degree in teaching may act as professionals. Another aspect is that teaching a foreign language has taken on different facets, Business English being only one of them. Hence, being qualified by pursuing a teaching degree could be a way to better qualify professionals in the field, through the studying of different ESP teaching modalities and approaches. I also consider my own experience as a business English teacher, which has arisen questions related to how learners, school and companies understand 'needs' and if/how each of these axes match one another. Not to mention that learners represent the core of companies and language institutions, thus justifying the focus of needs on them, without setting aside two places they have to fit in: the work and the language institution. Eventually, this investigation is expected to improve what has already been offered by language institutions in terms of Business English classes as well as to shed some light on a relatively unexplored field in foreign language teaching and learning.

With this being said, this work is organized as follows: Chapter 2 briefly explains the origins of ESP. Its focus lays on ESP characteristics contrasted to those of General English, as well as the relevance of 'needs analysis' to the former. Chapter 3 discusses 'needs analysis' by firstly contextualizing the concept in other areas, for instance, administrative, human resource training and introduces main authors in this field such as Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998), Hutchinson & Waters (1991) understand by 'needs'. Finally, this chapter ends up with a discussion on 'needs analysis' itself within ESP. Chapter 4 describes the methodology used in this research whereas Chapter 5 exposes and discusses the results obtained through the surveys, confronting such findings from the perspective set by the specific goals

designed for this study. Finally, the last chapter comments the results obtained and presents suggestions for further research.

## 2 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AND GENERAL ENGLISH

This section provides a brief overview of the aspects that have led to the origins and development of ESP as well as its main features. Such characteristics are highlighted by contrasting to those of General English, seeking to facilitate the reader's comprehension. Besides that, it introduces the topic of 'needs analysis' as it is paramount in such approach.

English for Specific Purposes has arisen as a modality of teaching after the Second World War, when society was experiencing a huge expansion of technology, science and commerce. Along with the economic power of United States, such expansion has created the need to communicate beyond geographical borders. This has turned English into an international language for Business, being spoken and learned by people (native and second language speakers) all over the world within international organizations, in diplomatic relations and for academic issues. Consequently, it also created a different kind of language learner who would demand tailored and efficient courses, in less time. In other words, learning a foreign language shifted its purposes as it moved from a leisure activity (a hobby) to a professional or academic requirement.

Another aspect that contributed to the development of ESP emerged from new linguistic theories, especially those related to language variation, in which it was possible to identify how language is sensitive to different contexts. Indeed, when it comes to teach ESP it was possible to identify, for instance, aspects of the English language used for engineering, commerce and science. According to Hutchinson & Waters (1999, p. 8), this shift in linguistic theories made ESP's courses be guided by the principle: "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need". As it is exposed in this research, it is not as simple as it seems.

Additionally, new developments in educational psychology have also made its way into ESP by placing learners as the central part of the teaching/learning process. By focusing attention on learners, English courses designers have shed light upon what students already bring into class, their interests and specific needs, as well as their motivation to learn a foreign language. As it is discussed in forthcoming sections, such relevance devoted to learners has been understood as an important feature in ESP.

So far, three aspects that have influenced the origins of ESP have been pinpointed: i) internationalization of the English language and its demand for specificities when it comes to teaching and learning it; ii) development of linguistic theories and iii) development in educational psychology. These aspects offer grounding to discuss how ESP has developed and which its features are. However, before summarizing ESP development and its impact in ESP's classes, it is important to point that each trend has kept abreast of linguistic developments, which has been conceived as language, as well as the notion of what is teaching and learning a foreign language. These concepts are not fully explored in this section, as they do not represent the focus of this research. Anyway, some aspects are pointed out to provide a wider understanding of ESP's advancement.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1999) ESP has experienced five trends since it has arisen. The first one took place in 1960 and early 70's, whose main concern of researchers was to identify the grammatical and lexical features of specific registers, that is, the language specificities that could be encountered in each field of study, for instance, Biology, Electrical Engineering, or Finances. In practice, ESP's course syllabuses were designed according to those features, aiming to provide learners with language structures they would meet in their fields of study. As a result, ESP was believed to comprise a special language.

Although there have been many variations on register analysis research and its application in classrooms, such an approach was rapidly overtaken by one that considered the sentence level, but shed attention to rhetorical and discourse analysis. In this second phase, in mid-70's, ESP courses took into account the learner's performance in different communicative acts, seeking to understand textual patterns, since they differed from one field to another. In classes, students were taught to recognize them, as well as the discourse markers, mainly through text-diagramming exercises.

The third phase took place in late 70's and early 80's. Differently from the former two, its main aim was to systematize a range of target situations, that is, specific communication situations in which the learner would have to perform, as well as the micro-functions and the types of possible language forms typical to the communicative situation. For instance, waiters attending customer's orders would have to suggest, advise and describe items and they could show those intentions



through different language forms, such as the modal verb 'may' or 'can'. As expected, course syllabuses were designed upon these features. Such stage is then considered a milestone in ESP studies as the usage of language in specific situations in working or studying environments became relevant. Munby (1978), in his Phd thesis presents a highly detailed set of procedures intended to identify target situation needs. Munby's Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) consists of a set of questions whose purpose is to specify target situation needs of any group of learners. As it is discussed later, designing an ESP course only by identifying and analyzing target situations might be too simple, as learners' needs are reduced to those related to their performance in specific contexts. For this reason, an entire section of this work is addressed to discuss 'needs' within the Theoretical Framework, which goes far beyond the linguistic features used in certain situations.

In the mid 80's, ESP underwent its fourth phase receiving influences from cognitive learning theories as it emphasized the thinking process underlying language learning. For this reason, ESP's classes focused on reading or listening skills and strategies. Concerning this, Hutchinson and Waters (1999, p. 13) state the following:

The principal idea behind the skilled-centered approach is that underlying all language use there are common reasoning and interpreting processes, which, regardless of the surface forms, enables us to extract meaning from discourse.

Usually taught in the mother tongue, such proposal considers unnecessary the usage of specific subject registers from every student's specialism field, since the underlying interpreting process is regarded as the same. The most common classroom exercises are those of analyzing meaning through context, as well as how meaning can be produced in and recaptured from written or spoken discourses. It is also important to mention that such approach had great influence within the Brazilian scenario in the late 70's. The so called National ESP Project<sup>2</sup> aimed at teaching specialized reading skills at universities throughout Brazil.

Similarly, English teaching methodologies had never seen such a remarkable time in terms of research. The gradually shift from the audiolingual method into new attempts to bring communication and affection into classroom through methods such

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about National ESP Project, see Ramos (2008) and Celani *et al* (1988).

as Community Language Learning, the Physical Response, Suggestopedia, as well as Krashen's Natural Approach have probably influenced ESP later development, which focus attention on learners.

It is possible to see that these four stages have paid too much attention on language descriptions. In other words, their core represents language-centered approaches. Conversely, the fifth way of looking into ESP offers a learners-centered approach to the teaching/learning process, as its main concern is with learning instead of the mere identification of linguistic features of the target situation or its micro functions.

As Hutchinson & Waters (1999, p. 19) describe, "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning". In the learner-centered approach the process of identifying learner's needs and reason for learning, called Needs Analysis, represents a starting point to syllabus design, to the selection of materials to be taught. Consequently, it drastically affects the directions of the pedagogical practice. As this research explores the process of Needs Analysis, chapter three is dedicated to discuss what is 'needs', 'needs analysis' and its implications to the teaching/learning process.

Bearing in mind the importance of understanding and focusing learners' needs within a learner-centered ESP course, we are able to single out characteristics from this approach by contrasting them with some of the General English. The examples used to carry out such comparison derive from Business English, so that besides discussing general features of ESP, we can also highlight some specificities of this field.

Under such circumstances, the first question we shall ask ourselves is: what are the differences between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes (EGP)? As Hutchinson and Waters (1999, p. 53) observe: "in theory nothing, in practice a great deal". The authors argue that one of the peculiarities of ESP approach is the emphasis on 'needs analysis', that is, the process of identifying students' needs. So, an English course should ask itself: "Why do these learners need to learn English?" Although EGP learners also have needs, for instance, to pass an examination, to be able to read entertainment websites,

watch movies, sing songs etc, it is usually taken for granted that such needs are harder to be specified as stated by Hutchinson & Waters (1999).

From what has been said about needs, one may associate such assumptions to those observed at public schools in Brazil. Such teaching/learning environment, however, certainly has other needs that deriving from the demands of the Brazilian society rather than from learners themselves. According to Brazilian official documents that set the methodological basis of the country's primary and secondary education, the foreign language teaching and learning processes should be organized by discourse genres, in which learners are able not only to learn socially contextualized linguistic features, but also exercise their citizenship with autonomy (DCE's, 2000). Therefore, only by briefly analyzing such a document, one can perceive that although learners' needs are seen in terms of different learning styles and learning strategies, the goals of each environment set different approaches to work with the language.

Thus, if all learners have needs of some sort, one can distinguish ESP from EGP in terms of learners' needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1999, p. 53) provides us a point:

What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need. If learners, sponsors and teachers know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course and, on the positive side, what potential can be exploited (...).

Summarizing, one of the distinctions between ESP and EGP courses resides in the awareness of the 'need'. ESP courses emphasize 'needs analysis', while EGP may not consider that, as the nature of 'needs' is mostly a matter of education *per se*, thus becoming more difficult to forecast learners' future needs, according to Widdowson (1983).

One last distinction to be pointed out is between English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) as each of them interferes in the way the role of the teacher is understood, a fact that can be considered the second contrasting point between the two approaches, EGP and ESP.

In EGBP learners are usually starting their careers as well as their language learning. The materials used are much similar to those in GE, although they are set in business contexts. The role of the teacher resembles that of General English, as the nature of the interaction between teachers and students remains even, in a sense that students may not bring their working background into classroom. In contrast, still following the authors, ESBP is taught to experienced professionals who have already had the knowledge of a foreign language. These courses are supposed to be tailored, aiming at training learners in specific skills such as listening or writing, as well as in specific business events, for instance, conferences or presentations. The materials used to this modality are chosen from a range of textbooks and class configuration may be one-to-one, groups trained by company staff, or even by external trainers, as in the case of the companies that have been surveyed to this paper.

Consequently, as the audience is different in each modality of Business English classes (see figure 1, page 21), the role of the teacher is also peculiar. According to Ellis and Johnson (1994), the general features of an ESP teacher are flexibility, outgoingness when dealing with students, and a genuine interest for business issues. For ESBP classes, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) recommend that apart from these qualities, an ESP teacher should have an understanding of how language functions in communicative business contexts along with an ability to understand business people's expectations regarding the language course. They must also have some knowledge of cross-cultural setting interactions and a basic awareness of management theories. Despite such uniqueness, the authors do not claim that business specialists become teachers. The role of the Business English teacher is that of a language consultant, since learners contribute with their own expertise in their specialism field.

It is worth mentioning that due to interaction teachers and learners have in ESBP classes, Dudley Evans and St. John (1998) suggest an ESP multi-disciplinary methodology as they believe its research stems not only from Applied Linguistics but also from other subjects. Since ESP has occasionally moved away from the trends of English Language Teaching (ELT), "the teaching of English for Specific Purposes has generally been seen as a separate activity within English Language Teaching (ELT), and ESP research as an identifiable component of Applied Linguistic

research" (DUDLEY-EVANS AND ST. JOHN, 1998, p. 1). Despite that, ESP focus still remains on practical outcomes such as needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing its learners to communicate effectively in situations they are required to.

As the role of ESP teacher has been already discussed, we can now move to other aspects of the approach itself. Another diverging feature between ESP and EGP is the way both deal with culture. Traditionally, EGP textbooks focus on either the American or the British culture by presenting topics such as the American way of life, customs, cultural social conventions and social values, in order to raise the awareness of cultural differences so that learners would perform accurately in several communicative situations. On the other hand, Business English emphasizes corporate culture rather than commonly social manners. Texts and materials highlight corporate world situations as a way to prepare learners to daily working tasks they have to carry out, as well as companies' policies, marketing and financial strategies. It is also worth mentioning that although business materials focus on corporate culture, they may also comprise aspects of social culture, which directly illustrates the way business routines are conducted in different countries.

Another equally important aspect that differentiates ESP from EGP deals with the nature of the English language itself as well as the interactions among its users. It is widely accepted that English works as an international business language, as it enables a businessman from South Korea and Russia to communicate and do business transactions despite their distinctive native languages.

As long as General English textbooks are concerned, the interlocutor is commonly a native speaker (NS i.e. someone who was born in the country) whose accent is the model to be imitated by the learners. Consequently, students are not exposed to accents such as the Australian or the Irish, being possible to infer that learners study the language to (idealistically) communicate with (ideal) native speakers. In ESP, however, the nature of the interactions is likely to happen among non-native speakers (NNS). This is a well explored feature in several BE textbooks, as listening activities are designed to introduce learners to a variety of accents, enabling them to have access to different business spoken contexts. Along with the kind of interaction, NNS may avoid some language forms in order to be comprehended, such as phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions.

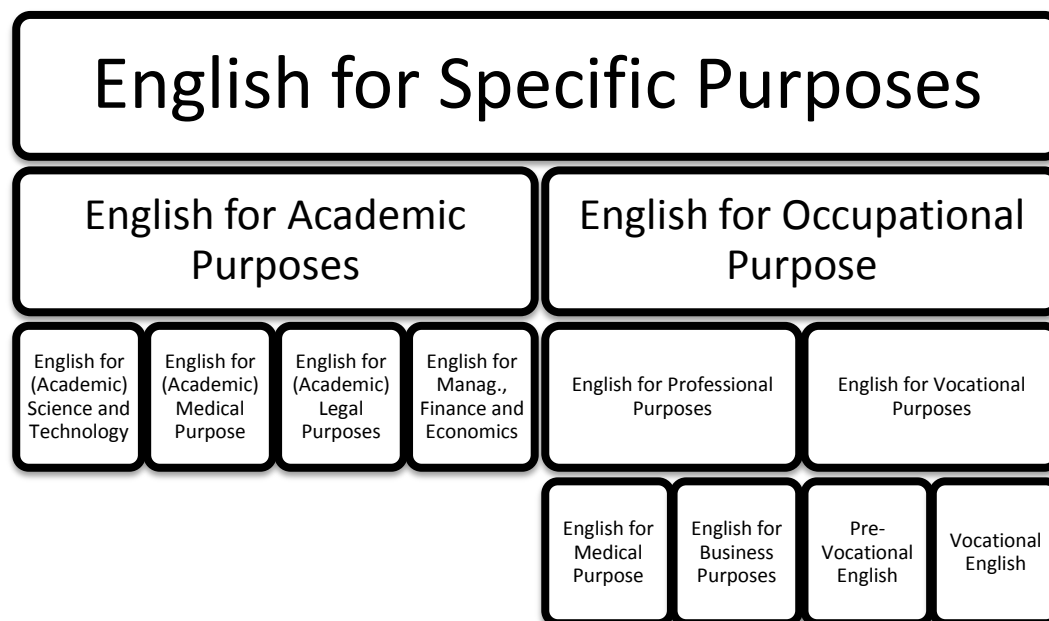
Thus far, some aspects of ESP have been highlighted by contrasting them to those of General English mostly by showing what ESP is like. It could be seen that ESP differs from EGP in four main aspects: i) ESP focus its strength on learners needs and their identification along the process of 'needs analysis'; ii) the role of teachers is quite distinctive since they have to be a researchers of other fields and hold a minimum knowledge of other areas; iii) ESP privileges corporate culture over general culture, and iv) it differs in terms of the nature of language itself as well as the communicative interactions.

Furthermore, it is relevant to explain that ESP comes from a broader area of language teaching known as Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), which includes other languages such as French and German. It is considered an umbrella term divided into two main areas: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

EAP, in turn, can be split into four main categories: i) English for Science and Technologies (EST), the most remarkable area in terms of research and teaching; ii) English for Medical Purposes (EMP); iii) English for Legal Purposes (ELP) and iv) English for Management, Finance and Economics. Such areas have become significant due to an increase of Masters Degree on Administration (MBA) courses provided by universities, as well as to the interest in academic studies.

On the contrary, EOP focuses on professional purposes and it can be divided into English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and English for Vocational Purposes. Within EPP, one can find other two types which are English for Medical Purposes and English for Business Purposes. It is important to distinguish at this point that, for instance, a learner who takes English for Academic Medical Purposes will probably be a medical student, differently from an experienced professional who takes English for Medical Purposes as the content and specificities of each course are alike. The other subcategory of EOP is Business English and it is the area of major growth within ESP nowadays.

Finally, English for Occupational Purposes splits into Pre-Vocational English, whose aim is to improve job-seeking skills, while English for Vocational Purposes targets training in specific trades or occupations. In order to better illustrate ESP' categories, see Figure 1 next:



**Figure 1 - ESP classification by professional area<sup>3</sup>.  
Source: Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998)**

Having described ESP branches, it is possible to set attention back to ESP stages concerning its application into classroom. The steps proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 121) are known as: ‘needs analysis’, ‘course and syllabus design’, ‘teaching and learning’, and ‘evaluation’. All of them seek to clear up the way teachers and language institutions should meet learners’ reasons and needs for learning more effectively. The same authors state that they “are not separated, linearly-related activities, rather they represent phases which overlap and are interdependent” (p. 21). Although these steps help contrasting ESP and EGP, this study draws attention to ‘needs analysis’ and its relevance for a better understanding of the ESP professional, pedagogical and academic field.

In this chapter we have discussed features of ESP by introducing facts that have influenced its origins and secondly by describing the developments ESP has undergone. Also, ESP was contrasted to English for General Purposes which asked for an explanation about its main categories and subcategories. With that background, we may move forward to the next chapter that discusses “needs” and “needs analysis”.

<sup>3</sup> Other areas may be inserted and explicit within this model such as computer science, engineering, teaching, translation, aviation in order to have it updated.

### 3 LEARNERS' NEEDS AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses learners' 'needs' and the process of 'needs analysis' within the ESP approach. At first, the concept of 'needs analysis' is introduced and mapped within foreign language teaching methodology as well as in other domains. Then, a discussion on different conceptions of 'needs' is provided. Finally, the process of 'needs analysis' is disclosed along with approaches to collect data and alternatives to interpret it.

#### 3.1 NEEDS ANALYSIS AND THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In the previous chapter, it has been understood that not only the ESP learner has needs, but also every other learner no matter the language being studied. For this reason, it is worth mentioning how some works which deal with language teaching methodology bring up the topic of 'needs' and 'needs analyses'.

Richards (1989), Lightbown & Spada (2006), and Larsen-Freeman (1992) do not present explicit discussions about learners' needs, although the topic seems to be diluted along their studies by covering students' different learning styles and learning strategies. In other words, the authors emphasize the ways students learn a foreign language, and consequently the strategies and alternatives teachers must find to facilitate the learning process.

Brown (2001) goes beyond learning needs as he advocates the relevance of collecting information about setting, audience and students' reasons for learning a foreign language when it comes to design syllabuses/courses. According to Brown, the relevance of researching on or applying 'needs analysis' does not seem to address the students themselves, it follows that there is no such a thing of focusing directly the needs of the adult business learner. Instead, Brown (2001, p. 152) states such data might guarantee the effectiveness of the course as well as its goals:

A needs assessment (needs analysis) is an important precursor to designing the goals of a course in that it can identify the overall purposes of the course, "gaps" that the course is intended to fill, and the opinions of both course designers and learners about their reasons for designing/taking the course.



Despite having some similarities, such as the concern with both the environment where learning takes place and the attentiveness to learners' learning preferences, the process of gathering data within an ESP approach is more meticulous than the one proposed by Brown (2001) for General English courses, as its content and audience have more specificities, resulting at a more focused course. This being said, it can be easily understood the close relationship between 'needs analysis' and syllabus/course design. Notwithstanding, since this study does not intend to focus on course design, we shall return to its main discussion, that is, 'needs' and 'needs analysis'.

By briefly searching on the Internet, one can realize that 'needs analysis' is a term found not only in Linguistics, but also in other domains such as administrative and military training<sup>4</sup>. Although each of these areas may have specific aims, 'needs analysis' in the administrative area points to the idea of efficient cost-benefit training for companies' personnel. According to Hicks and Hennessy<sup>5</sup> training needs analysis "is a series of activities to define the gap between the current and the desired individual and organizational performances". All data collected from activities help prioritize future actions regarding staff training. Moreover, its ongoing application also works as a guidance towards a more adequate annual planning. In spite of the fact that the process of 'needs analysis' sets different goals to each area, its main features concern identifying the needs of an environment and its participants, so that actions can be taken to meet such needs. As it has been previously discussed, 'needs analysis' within ESP is devoted to quite similar ambitions.

### 3.2 CONCEPTIONS OF NEEDS WITHIN ESP APPROACH

Before advancing on ESP approaches to 'needs analysis', it is relevant to understand the notion of 'needs' and how such a concept is used in this research.

Several different studies have already introduced and discussed the concept of 'needs'. In fact, the term 'needs' can be defined "as a gap or measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state" as stated by Berwick (1984, p. 54). This definition may be quite simple when applied to ESP,

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<sup>4</sup>Although 'needs analysis' may also be addressed within military training domains, any additional information seems to be confidential, restricting research possibilities.

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/HennessyHicks\\_trainingneedstool.pdf](http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/HennessyHicks_trainingneedstool.pdf)

as many aspects may affect the filling of a specific gap, for instance, reasons why learners are taking the course, sponsor's requirements, conceptual and ideological beliefs lying under the concept of 'needs' itself as well as the personal values of those who interpret data collected through 'needs analysis'.

On account of it, Berwick (1984) distinguishes 'felt' and 'perceived' needs, so as to clarify the very notion of 'needs' which underlines approaches derived from data collected through 'needs analysis'. According to Berwick, 'felt needs' are those expressed by learners, that is, their expectations, reasons for taking the course, and purposes to be achieved by the end of the course, for instance. On the other hand, 'perceived needs' are those perceived by experts or teachers, including judgments based on their experience and assumptions on learners' 'felt needs'. Based on that, Berwick (1984, p. 55) mentions an issue that may arise from these definitions: this author points out to the inevitably authoritative character curriculums may take:

(...) the problem with the defining needs then, lies in the specification of who needs what, as defined by whom- and a clear understanding by clients or prospective learners that the syllabus will inevitably represent a collection of authoritative, informed opinions about what should be taught.

By accepting such consequences, the author criticizes the supremacy of 'perceived needs' (external to the learner) over 'felt needs' since the first one is most common in curriculum elaboration and design, and claims for a more committed approach to meet learners' felt needs.

As spotted by Berwick (1984) the definition of 'needs' is quite subjective, since it refers to all sorts of topics raised from the field of learning and education. By dealing with assumptions and beliefs from stakeholders on what should be the best way to meet learners' needs in classrooms, the course designers as well as teachers are likely to face difficulties on how to measure and apply such data if they bear in mind the meeting of students' needs. That suggests how important learners have become within ESP scope, differently from reducing 'needs' as only a matter of contextualized language functions or structures.

Within such conceptual development, researchers have attempted to cover not only 'needs' related to language *per se*, but also those referring to the subjectivities of the learner. Hutchinson & Waters (1991), for instance, conceive 'needs' as both target and learning needs, given the former one considered as an

umbrella term that can be broken down into three other sub-divisions: necessities, lacks and wants.

‘Necessities’ refer to the type of ‘needs’ demanded from a target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to perform effectively in the target situation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991, p. 55). ‘Lacks’ are basically what one already knows when compared with what one must be able to perform in the target situation, in other words, the target proficiency needs that can be confronted to the learners proficiency (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991, p. 56). Conversely, ‘wants’ are presented as the role learners play in the process and what they expect from the course. Bearing in mind this subjective level, an issue may possibly arise when dealing with ‘wants’ when they do not match the perceptions of those in the process, for instance sponsors, teachers or language institutions. Such fact is similar to what has been pondered by Berwick (1984) about how learners' 'felt need' are quite disregarded by those involved at designing courses, as well as its implications in establishing what should be taught in an ESP course. About this, Hutchinson & Waters (1991, p.57) state:

(...) there is no necessary relationship between necessities as perceived by sponsor or ESP teacher and what the learners want or feel they need. Bearing in mind the importance of learner motivation in the learning process, learner perceived wants cannot be ignored.

Taking ESP as a journey metaphor and considering what has been discussed above, the authors (1991, p. 60) explain that so far discussions have approached ‘needs’ on two independent axes : ‘lacks’ (the language institution) against ‘necessities’ (the company demands), setting aside ‘wants’ (the learner). Since learners are central to the teaching/learning process, attention to their wants and preferences may indicate an effective route to their final destination, that is, to achieve what it is demanded from them in accordance to the way they prefer to be taught. This is what generates ‘learning needs’:

What we have done so far is to consider the starting point (lacks) and the destination (necessities), although we have also seen that there might be some dispute as to what that destination should be (wants). What we have not considered yet is the route. This indicates another kind of need: learning needs.

Concisely, 'learning needs' is about the way students reach the target situation, i.e. the strategies and activities that most effectively fit the process of teaching/learning.

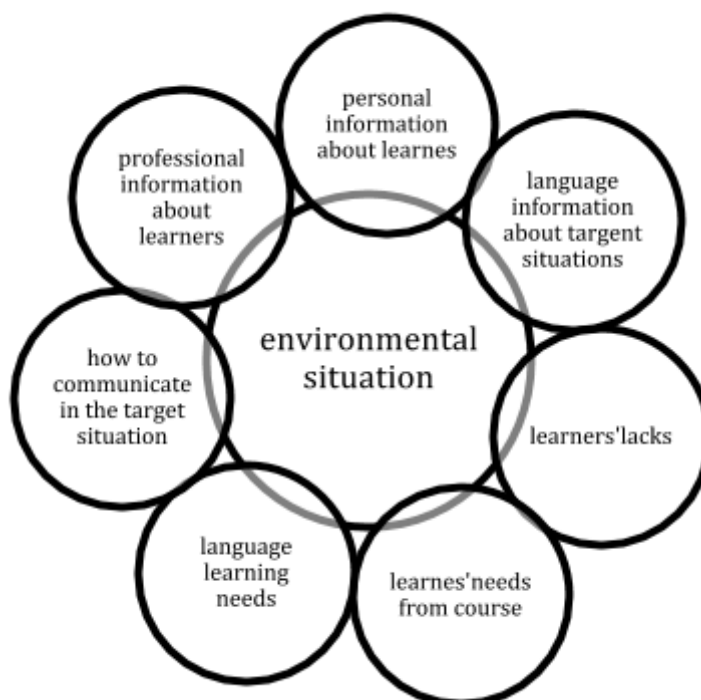
Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 125), in turn, have also investigated what had been discussed about 'needs'. Based upon the notions aforementioned, they expanded the meaning of 'needs' by coining the terms: target situation, learning situation and present situation needs. '**Target situation needs**' are the tasks and activities learners will be using English for and how language and skills are used in the target situation. On the other hand, '**learning situation needs**' refer to learners' personal information, such as previous experience with English classes, reasons for attending them, attitude towards English and their expectations. It also comprises learners' opinion about teaching methods, preferences and styles, for instance, discussions, problem-solving, study cases, etc. Put differently, as stated by the authors, those are all factors that may affect the learning process. Finally, '**Present situation needs**', means the linguistic features often represented by placement tests and language use so as to address the need for an efficient performance in a given target situation.

The authors also include an assessment of the environment where classes take place as an important aspect to be considered since it may affect the direction of the learning/teaching process in terms of what, why, how, where and when language suits specific communicative situations. By calling it 'means analysis', Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 124) state:

It is an acknowledgement that what works well in one situation may not work in another. While hotel staff around the world may share some similar language needs, how they learn the language, the conditions in which they are learning and where and how they apply the language are not the same. So the needs and how they are prioritized, ordered and then met will be different.

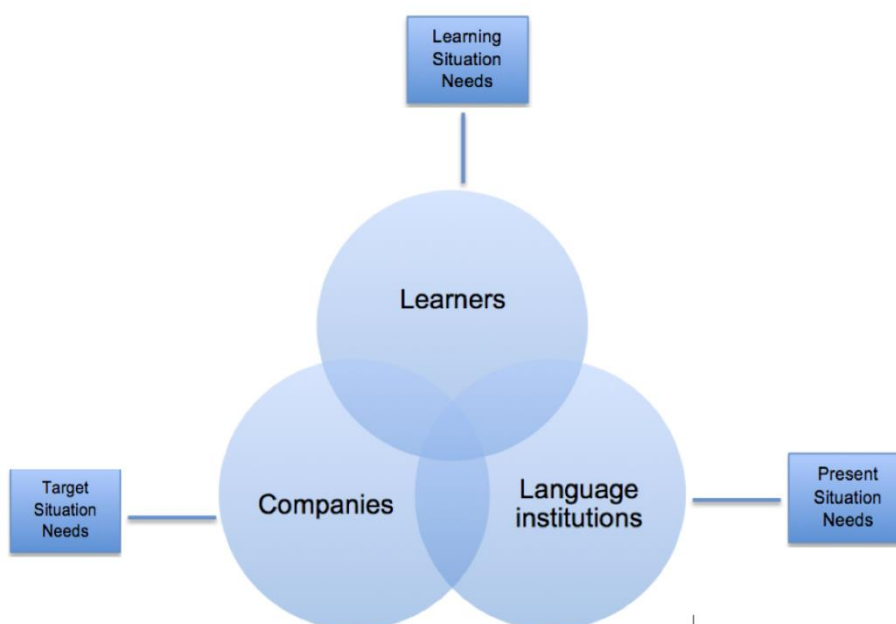
Considering all types of 'needs' that have been described, it becomes evident that they are quite similar to those established by Hutchinson & Waters (1991). Both authors try to gather as much information as possible about the learner as a mean to design specific courses. Regardless their similarity, Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 130) approach seems to be more attentive to learners' subjectivities, which plays a

decisive role in motivation. In order to better visualize what it has been discussed about 'needs', Figure 2 illustrates what needs analysis seeks to establish:



**Figure 2 - What needs analysis establishes.**  
Adapted from Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 125)

Indeed, these concepts represent the three axes- learners, language institutions and companies/sponsors - that are adopted and investigated within this study. The 'target situation needs' explain the usages of language demanded by companies, while 'learning situation needs' deals with learners and, consequently, with the teaching-learning process and finally, 'present situation needs' that address language institutions as the part responsible to provide classes. In other words, given the fact that not only students' needs are involved in the process of establishing what and how should be taught in an ESP course, through 'needs analysis', but also the companies where such students work, as well as language institutions, this research proposal has chosen to address all parts, as they are all intertwined. Figure 3 represents the three complementary axes this research investigates, and the concepts of 'needs' each of them embodies:



**Figure 3 - The three complementary axes**

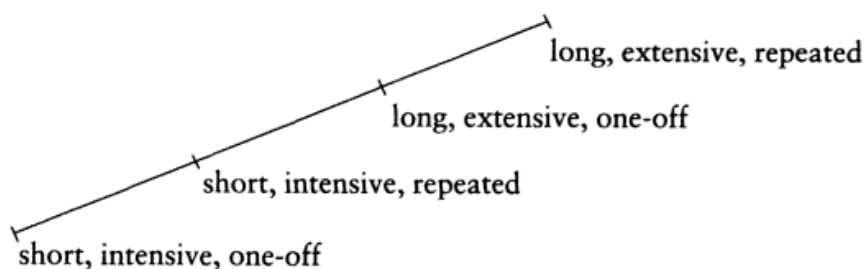
Bearing in mind the discussions drawn up to this moment, it is possible to state that 'needs' stands for a central topic regarding ESP courses as it represents the first step towards its specificities. An additional remark to be made is the essential role learners play (DUDLEY-EVANS & ST. JOHNS, 1998, p. 126) when it comes to establish what will be taught and how it will be taught.

Such aspect seeks to acknowledge learners as both language users and language learners, that is, an issue that had not yet been looked into. In addition, we shall focus on 'needs analysis within ESP approach hence forward. To open such discussion, two questions are worthy of notice i) what kind of procedures should be carried out for 'needs analysis', and ii) how stakeholders can make sense of data so as to implement the results and meet learners' needs in classroom.

There might be a great difference between what 'needs analysis' theoretically stands for and how it is in fact implemented (DUDLEY-EVANS & ST. JOHNS, 1998). Ideally, it should be carried out at the beginning of the course so that its results would serve as a basis to the teaching and learning process, coursebook choices and other resources. In practice, however, 'needs analysis' is implemented distinctively according to each situation, that is, the environment, learners, stakeholders, allotted time, and so forth. As Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 126) state 'needs analysis'

and courses are not mounted in a vacuum and must be developed around available human and material resources". Besides that, there might be other variables to influence data implementation and that may be represented on a course cline, according to

Figure 4:



**Figure 4 - 'Need analysis' course cline**  
**Source: Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998, p. 126)**

When 'needs analysis' is placed (at the beginning or ongoing) as well as the amount of data to be collected is different for each end of the cline. Moreover, it is primarily influenced by the length of time available for each case and also by its recurrence.

For regular ESP courses, with large numbers of learners, information may be gathered at the very beginning and it can be useful for both revising and devising a new course (DUDLEY-EVANS & ST. JOHNS, 1998). For one-off short courses, in most cases offered for fewer people, some pre-course information provides a framework for designers. However, sometimes it is not possible to have any kind of information in advance. At such settings, "trawling for as much background on the Target Situation as possible, asking pertinent questions on arrival and evaluating and adapting throughout the course is the practical approach" (DUDLEY-EVANS & ST. JOHNS, 1998, p. 127). Along with that, it is relevant to state that every teaching/learning context will inevitably have to change, and details have to be negotiated in cooperation with learners, since they mostly have to be heard.

Another aspect about 'needs analysis' pointed out by Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) relates to people who collect data, in practical words, teachers, course designers. The authors suggest either an insider or outsider as an alternative, since they offer different insights to the same context. Outsiders frequently have a more

objective view; however, as they lack knowledge of the environment and those involved in it, they might miss or misinterpret data. Insiders, on the other hand, have to be aware of the possibility of becoming too close to the process. In this regard, Alderson and Scott (1992) propose that both an insider and an outsider work together for a more accurate assessment and opinion. As data collection is crucial to investigate and study the way needs analysis is understood, applied and considered by companies, language institutions and learners, it is relevant to highlight some of the suggested research methodologies in the field of ESP.

### 3.3 APPROACHES TO 'NEEDS ANALYSIS'

Taking into account data that data has to have a source, Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) suggest that the main sources are the learners, people working or studying in the field, former students, documents relevant to the field, clients, employers, colleagues and ESP research in the field. From such options, the authors (1998, p. 157) suggest data collection methods for 'needs analysis'. It intends to find out the methods language institutions and companies use to gather information about learners' needs in Business English field, as stated in its specific aims. From now on then, we shall look at each of them more closely.

Questionnaires are valuable to deal with a great amount of information, for instance, a wide range of learners with different levels of English or distinctive working positions. The method is usually employed for quantitative information, and it takes time and neatness to be designed in order to avoid ambiguous questions and/or responses. This is why Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) advocate for a pilot questionnaire and statistical techniques to analyze results as well.

Another technique proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) is named 'structured interviews'. Such procedure consists of a range of questions previously and carefully thought, which enables the interviewer to compare the answers and ask follow up questions for clarification and more details. Structured interviews are beneficial as they may reveal information that otherwise could not be obtained, due to the fact of being spontaneous and personally performed. There should also be a limited time to carry it out, while the interviewer must be an skillful and active listener so as to summarize information and ask open questions. There is also the possibility



to record the interview so that, instead of focusing on taking notes, interviewers are able to concentrate on his audience and may ask additional questions.

Observation is also a helpful technique and it covers a range of activities, from shadowing individuals at work to watching a task being performed, for instance, conference calls, meetings or negotiations. When it comes to shadowing at work, people may feel uncomfortable by having someone watching their movements and noting/recording their words all the time. Therefore, Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) insist on clarifying the purposes of the activity to those being observed, by assuring the confidentiality of personal information or by showing the results of previous observation and eventually gaining people's confidence. Although observations may not serve to provide language data for material production, in most cases they help to delineate features of the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) or work patterns. The procedure can also be executed for Present Situation Analysis (PSA), by observing how learners perform in English within their working environment.

In addition to such methods, the authors propose the analysis of authentic spoken or written texts. As Business practice has its own discursive domain, it is crucial to understand how genres work in that context. The analysis may be carried out through written documents, video recordings of communicative events such as meetings or telephone calls; oral samples are more difficult to obtain, though. Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) state that text analysis "may be for TSA purposes, to determine the key linguistic features of a communicative event or genre that is new to us. Alternatively, the texts may be samples of participants' language and help us to carry out a PSA". One more time, the authors (1998 p. 136) claim for confidentiality, as some documents may reveal numbers, figures, company name, as well as negotiation strategies. It is fundamental that the researcher leave out such information from the documents, as they can also be used as class materials.

A more spontaneous method, which does not demand so much preparation and planning as those that have been described, is that of informally discussing with learners over coffee or by taking a few minutes before classes, to get to know their difficulties, the effectiveness of the activities, and similar issues. Regarding such method, Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998, p. 137) alert that "discussions can pave the way in both needs analysis and evaluation to other methods such as interviewing and observing or be an end in themselves". By being informal, discussion can give

great insights to teachers and can also help to build up confidence in students as well as in the relationship between them and the teacher.

As it could be seen, there are many methods to gather information from those involved in the teaching/learning process. Although such procedures have been described separately, Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) claim for the use of more than one of those methods, so that information may be reassessed.

In this regard, it is worth warning the non-uniqueness of 'needs analysis'. In other words, what is found out from it is not absolute but relative since it depends on who asks what questions, and even more important is how the answers are interpreted. The interpretation relies "on a particular view of the world, on attitudes and values" (DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHNS, 1998, p. 126). Berwick (1984, p. 56) also recognizes such feature of data interpretation: "our perceptions of need develop from what we believe is educationally worthwhile, that needs are not simply out there waiting to be counted and measured". From such a premise, we are able to associate it with Berwick's (1984) discussion on the inevitably authoritative feature of syllabuses, resulted in different ideologies and people's idiosyncrasies when it comes to interpret data. Those factors also interfere on 'perceived needs' over 'felt needs' within syllabuses, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Considering the relativity of 'needs analysis', interpreters should ponder it, and ensure their view is compatible with the situation being analyzed rather than in conflict with it.

As 'needs analysis' represents an important aspect to be taken into account when interpreting data, from now on it is shown how stakeholders can make sense of data collected through 'needs analysis'. The first step is to convert the raw data into information and the methods will depend on the amount of data to be analyzed. For small amounts of data, manual methods may be the most appropriate, for instance a tally system (DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHNS, 1998). In this case, written comments from descriptive questions may be more subjectively processed.

On large scale 'needs analysis' for business, for example, questionnaires can originate great amount of data, requiring statistical analysis and the help of a computer software. (DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHNS, 1998). This is the case of Jones (1991) who carried out a 'needs analysis' for the France Telecom employees who had to perform technical assignments abroad. By using what he calls Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a computer software, 400 completed questionnaires,

containing 70 questions about skills and functions on a four-point scale, it was possible to determine clusters of variables. By discussing his findings to management, he could then, match each cluster with a speech event.

Nelson (1994) has projected a computer system for Business English course, which functions firstly with a placement test and next it carries out a 'needs analysis' that covers both the TSA and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) through a questionnaire answered by learners and sponsors. From the data collected, the system draws charts showing the needs and wants from both stakeholders. Apparently easy to use, the program gives teachers the opportunity to use manual override.

The most remarkable system is the LANA (Language Needs Analysis) as it carries out interviews, modeling and a computer-based questionnaire. In addition to those, individuals respond inquires about their tasks at work, language functions and preferences for topics, and as a result the system creates three-dimensional histograms. The system was created by Reeves and Wright (1996), and intends to carry out 'needs analysis' for both individual or as for part of an audit.

Although all methods aforementioned seem to be quite sophisticated for some teaching/learning realities, they are attempts to meet learners' and sponsors' needs. One does not necessarily need to have softwares to understand learners' needs, so a claim should be made for a more responsive attitude towards meeting them. What has to be understood by those who are involved with matching 'needs' to specific teaching/learning contexts is that language functions differently according to each context. As Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998, p. 138) point out:

(...) needs analysis must result in an understanding of a target situation such that we, ESP practitioners, could be efficient communicators on it. If we do not know how to communicate in the target situation, we run the risk of passing on misconceptions or false information.

On account of it, ESP courses are not just a matter of using specific textbooks for specific working fields, but a wider comprehension of discourse domain. Besides that, an awareness that the 'needs analysis' concept includes how language and skills are actually used as well as that our view of the world affects how we interpret information that comes from others.

In this chapter we have discussed 'needs' and 'needs analysis': we have presented the concept of 'needs' adopted by this study as well as some specific approaches to analyze data from 'needs analysis'. Bearing such a frame in mind, the following chapter clarifies the methodology defined for this investigation as well as the surveys carried out with learners, institutions and companies which encompass the *corpus* of this research.

## 4 METHODOLOGY, STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS/FINDINGS

This chapter presents a detailed account of the treatment given to the data collected for this study, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. As a first step, I would like to point out the reason which made me choose for such research format.

According to Creswell (2003), a **qualitative research** aims at making sense of a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction and it is mostly used to understand the subjectivities of those involved in the study, in other words, their beliefs, ideas and values. The researcher takes the role of an interpreter by comparing, contrasting, replicating, cataloguing and classifying a specific object of study, seeking to comprehend the informants' perspectives. On the other hand, the **quantitative method** attempts to explain a phenomenon by collecting data and analyzing it by numerical based methods. Consequently, it emphasizes objective measurements and its findings permit the researcher to predict outcomes. This research has features of both methods since it uses a questionnaire to collect data which, in turn, involves learners' subjectivities and is analyzed numerically.

The choice for such procedure can be justified as it is widely used in quantitative approaches as well as in 'needs analysis' itself as asserted by Dudley and Evans (1998) in the previous chapter. From the findings of the three questionnaires developed for this study, we are able to cross and compare the results that were obtained, so that the relationship among the three surveyed axes is better understood and disclosed, which represents a feature connected to the qualitative method.

### 4.1 DATA COLLECTION - SOURCES ANALYSIS

In order to meet the research specific objectives, three questionnaires have been elaborated and designed by Survio<sup>6</sup>, an online survey software that provides graphics for questions. Each questionnaire corresponds to one of the three complementary axes of this research and they can all be consulted at the end of this study (Attachment, pg.53). All questionnaires follow the 'check all that apply' type of

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<sup>6</sup> [www.survio.com](http://www.survio.com)

questions and include the option “others” so that respondents may add comments. Such kind of answers, with given alternatives, facilitate and reduce answering time, which respondents usually appreciate due to their regular busy schedules. It is worth mentioning that all questionnaires were elaborated in Portuguese<sup>7</sup> and translated into English for the purposes of this study. Thus, the complete survey comprises three main questionnaires, which are discussed as follows: companies; language institutions and, finally, learners.

The **companies'** survey comprises 10 questions and it primarily intends to find out the communicative situations in which English is required within working environment, along with the procedures companies apply to address the three 'needs' employees/learners have and in which this research is based on: 'target situation needs', 'learning situation needs', and 'present situation needs'. For each kind of 'need', one specific question was made so as to avoid misinterpretations. Another relevant aspect consists of detecting factors that may influence the selection of the language institution which is going to offer business English classes for the employees and if the company usually establishes a level of language knowledge employees have to reach. Initially, the study did not aim at a direct survey with companies; however as the theoretical readings demonstrate this axe could not be set aside as it could eventually provide reasons for employees to take Business English classes (Target Situation Needs).

The **language institutions** questionnaire, in turn, encloses 11 questions. Its aim is to detect the perspective of schools when it comes to communicative situations in which learners use English in their working environment. Similarly, three questions are to meet each type of need as well as the procedures to gather information about each one. Other two attempts explore the extent to which such data may interfere in pedagogical adjustments.

Lastly, the **learners'** questionnaire holds 15 questions aiming at finding out their preferences regarding their Business English classes, as well as their motivation to learn the language, learning styles and situational use of English at work.

#### 4.2 DATA COLLECTION - SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND INVESTIGATED

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<sup>7</sup> It was thought of submitting the survey directly in English at first; however, the respondents' English level would be hard to predict and could represent a reason for avoiding answering the survey.

The corpus of this research comprises five companies that have offered Business English classes for their employees, five language institutions which provide Business English classes and twenty five employees/learners.

The **companies** are located in Curitiba and its metropolitan area. Their names are kept confidential as it was a prerequisite for them to participate in the survey. All of them offer Business English classes for their employees, matching the profile set by the researchers. Likewise, the **language institutions** are also located in Curitiba and they provide Business English classes for people in general as well as for companies. Some are specialized in BE, while others also offer General English and other modalities, such as English for travelling and for Cabin crew. A total of five, out of 6 companies and language institutions have been selected for this study.

Regarding **learners**, all of them need, use or occasionally work with English at work. This helped to discarded 23 questionnaires, out of 42 for two main reasons: the respondents did not use English professionally or had not answered the survey appropriately, totalizing 25 selected questionnaires. Learners general profile consists of 52% female and 48% male. Out of this amount, 64% between 20 and 30 years old, 28% between 30 to 40 and 8% between 40 to 50. All of them have a higher education degree and work as interns, directors, managers, analysts, and university professors.

#### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION - PROCEDURES

The data was collected at the same time for the three axes. Companies were contacted by email sent to the Human Resources personnel, while Language institutions were addressed personally. In exchange for their answers, an ethical term containing a brief summary of the research was signed in order to ensure the confidentiality of information provided. Contrary to researchers' assumptions, both language institutions and companies were willing to cooperate.

Learners have also been reached mainly by emails sent through the internal broadcast of the Federal University of Technology – Paraná (UTFPR). This kind of contact replaced the answering of several questionnaires, since some who had accessed the survey did not fit the learner's profile aimed at by the study, that is,

people who were studying or had taken business classes. The questionnaires were devised seeking to mirror information regarding the use of English within working environment, in other words, the target situation. As a result, some questions were repeated for the groups in order to obtain three different perspectives concerning 'target situation needs'.

The survey analysis is carried out in the following chapter through and it trails a specific sequence, considering the three axes: **first** the **companies**, as they point out the demand for Business English classes; **second**, the **language institutions** as they are the ones contacted by companies and which holds business courses; finally, **learners** are spotted as they represent the final aim for companies and institutions. Information gathered from each questionnaire are arranged in tabular forms, such as graphics, provided by Survio web platform, and tables created by the author<sup>8</sup>. All of them are found in the attachments section of this study.

The next section discusses the answers obtained from the three axes of the survey, that is, companies, language institutions and employees/learners. The information is analyzed through what is apparently common sense and in what seems to be contradictory within each axe. A fourth stage crosses such data and discusses about possible divergences in it.

#### 4.4 FINDINGS FROM THE COMPANIES' SURVEY

Regarding the location where Business English classes are conducted, 80% of companies have reported classes to take place in language institutions. It seems to be rather contrasting in relation to the next question in which 40% have equally reported flexible hours along with the possibility of in-company classes as key factors to define the choice for a specific language institution. Other relevant influential factors that impact the choice of a 'school' are: cost (40%) and commitment to learners' needs (other 40% of companies). It is important to restate that all respondents ticked more than one answer as figures 8 and 9, on page 53, show.

When it comes to 'needs analysis' procedures companies may apply to find out 'learning situation needs', (see figure 10, p. 54) 60% have answered to be questionnaires; 40% learners' interviews; 40% placement tests, and 40% observation

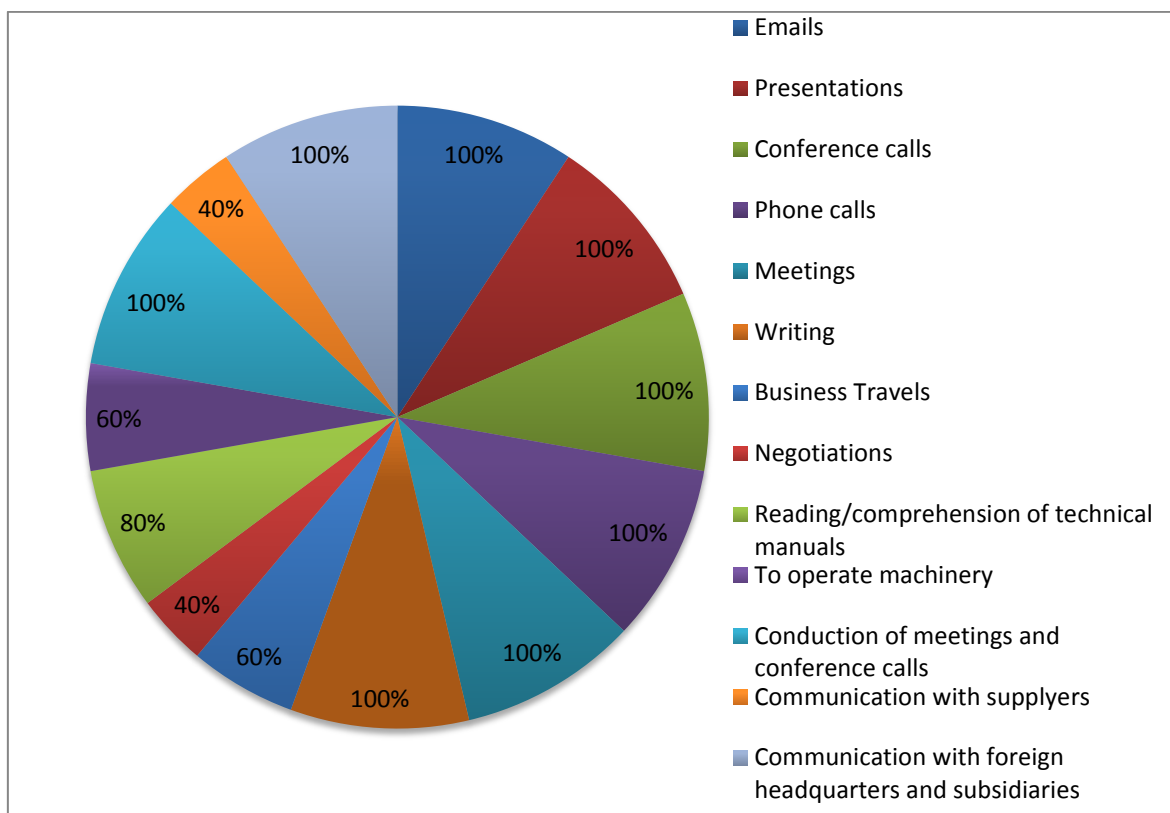
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<sup>8</sup>All the charts mentioned within the text are available in the Attachment section. From now on we only mention chart number and page.



on employees working routines. The results may imply more than one method to determine this kind of need per company, since 40% have answered they do not apply any of the suggested modes. Although there was an explanation about 'learning needs' in this question, those companies that reported placement tests as a means to identify 'learning situation needs' may acknowledge this kind of need as 'target situation needs'.

Regarding the procedures to identify 'target situation needs', 60% of the companies, apparently, do not carry out any method aiming such purpose. Nevertheless, companies seem to be aware of the situational use of the English language within working environment since all of them (100%) highlight phone calls, emails, presentations, conference calls, meetings, reports, conduction of meetings, communication with foreign headquarters and subsidiaries among currents situational needs for English use. Moreover, 80% have reported employees use English to read technical manuals, 60% on Business travelling, and 40% to communicate with foreign suppliers by reports and interpersonal negotiations. When asked if those situational settings influence the choice for a language institution, 40% reported that as being entirely relevant, other 40% as partially relevant, while 20% highlighted that these needs do not represent any influence at all. Figure 5 on next page, illustrates what has been aforementioned:



**Figure 5 - What are the situations in which employees mostly use Business English?**

Another aspect to be pointed out concerns whether companies set up proficiency levels for their employees: 60% do not establish any proficiency target, while 40% request employees to reach an advanced level (C2, according to CEFR) a specific level defined by the employees' position in the company (see figure 11, p.54).

The last spot worth pondering is the coherence and recurrence observed in 40% of the companies' answers. They provide their employees in-company classes; they seem to apply procedures to verify employees' 'learning situation needs' and 'target situation needs' by observing tasks that are to be accomplished in the working scenario; the 'target situation needs' plays an important role when choosing language institutions and lastly, they set language proficiency levels for employees. Although such an assumption apparently conveys to 'needs analysis', this study itself is not able to guarantee that as: i) respondents may have tried to adapt the answers to an ideal context and ii) the number of companies surveyed represents only a sample of a broader context. In other words, we understand that a more detailed and extensive survey and, perhaps, direct observation of in-company routines should be carried out

in order to verify whether companies apply 'needs analysis' within the theoretical framework discussed in this study. After all, if companies aim better results in terms of language acquisition, they would highly benefit from 'needs analysis' improving their personnel qualification.

#### 4.5 FINDINGS FROM THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTIONS SURVEY

Business English courses are offered by language institutions in different modalities, that is, 100% offer classes in language institution branches and 80% also offer classes in-company. Out of this amount, 20% provide specific training according to the needs of companies' departments and/or workers' position (see figure 12, p. 55). As more than one modality is offered by each language institution, it somehow implies readiness and willingness to attend one of the companies' most important requirements: flexible hours.

Regarding the 'target situation needs', 100% of language institutions have informed being presentations, seminars, emails, memos and reports what learners need the most in terms of language learning (100%), followed by using English in online conferences (80%). In addition, they have equally reported 60% of learners seek fluency<sup>9</sup> in the target language and aim at mastering technical terms related to their area of expertise, to negotiate with suppliers and to understand different accents. (See figure 13, on page 55).

When it comes to the procedures to gather information about uses of English in working environments, that is, 'target situation needs', 100% of language institutions reported having carried out interviews (80%) and applied questionnaires to learners (80%) and companies (20%) as well as observed the companies' working routine (20%). (See figure 14 on page 56). Again, it is likely that more than one procedure is indeed applied by the institutions as they ticked more than one option. That may explain some additional comments (60%): "assessment tests (CEFR) "discussions between teacher and student about their learning purposes, personal needs and difficulties" and "partner companies previously inform employees' needs", taking into account their working routine (phone and conference

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<sup>9</sup>Fluency is understood as full competence in the target language considering the 4 abilities (speaking, reading, writing and listening), as stated by Larsen-Freeman for the communicative approach (1986, p.135).

calls, emails, meetings, reports, negotiation with foreign headquarters and subsidiaries, among others).

The procedures to gather personal and professional information from learners (see figure 15, on page 56), that is, 'learning situation needs' and 'target situation needs', along with their 'wants', is mainly obtained by personal interviews with the students (100%). Other methods are online interviews (40%), proficiency tests such as TOEFL and TOEIC (40%), and working routine observation (20%).

Taking only 'learning situation needs' into account, we found that 40% of the language institutions informed not having carried out any procedures. Despite that, 100% of schools seem to have them identified by the teacher and throughout the Business English course through placement (60%) and proficiency tests (40%) such as TOEFL and/or TOEIC. Other 60% carry out personal interviews (60%) and classroom questionnaires (20%). (See figure 16, on page 57)

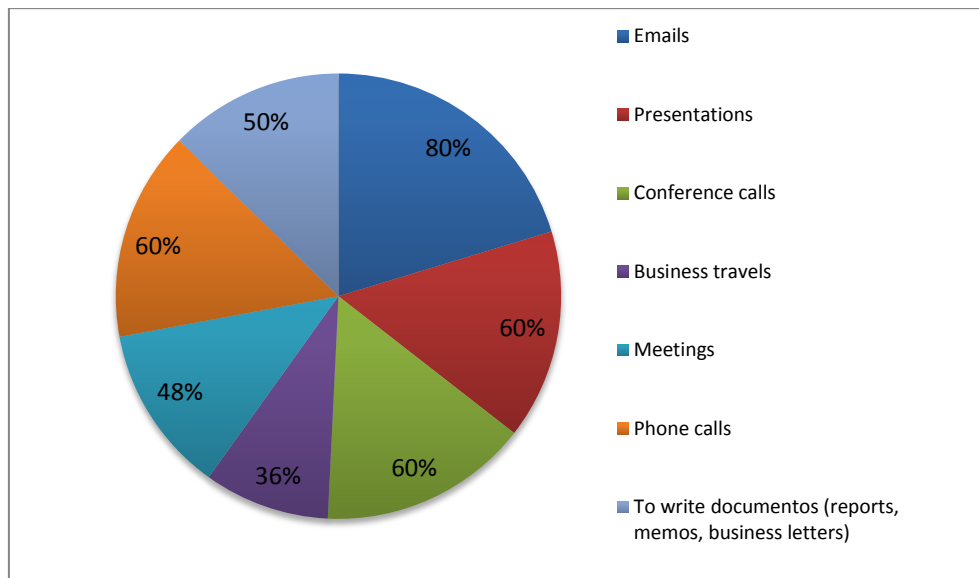
The last relevant factor (see figure 17, on page 57) concerns adjustments to pedagogical material and content to meet learners' needs based on the information institutions collect and what is provided by the companies. The answers reveal that 60% of all language institutions state that it partially contributes for such adjustments; 40% state it alters classes and teachers' practice, while 20% stated that there is no direct pedagogical influence, which may suggest employees are likely to be placed in General English classes.

#### 4.6 FINDINGS FROM THE LEARNERS SURVEY

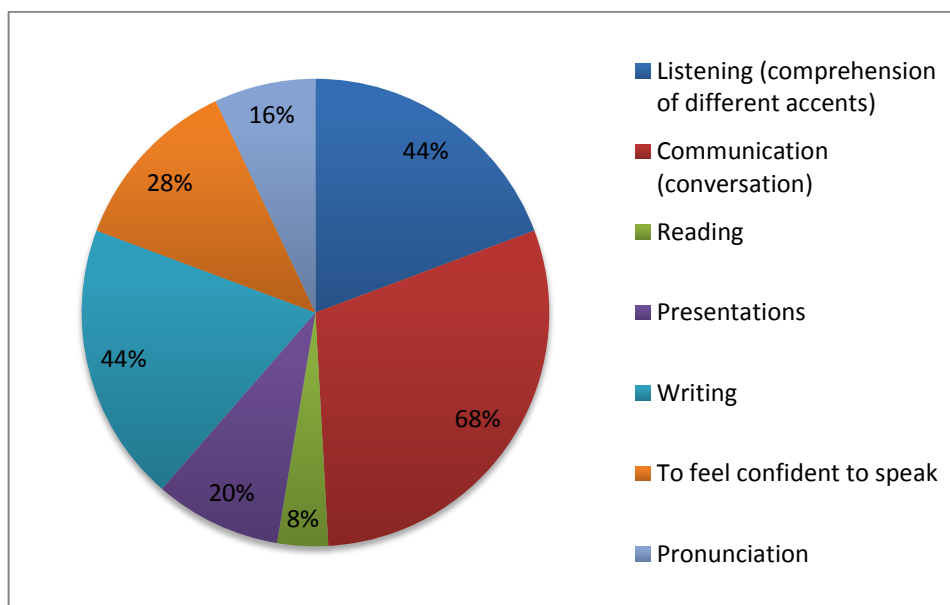
The majority of learners reported they enjoy studying the language. There has been 88% affirmative answers and most learners reported having already studied Business English (60%). When inquired about the time they have studied such specific modality, 73,3% chose 'for more than one year', while 20% 'more than one semester'. Although most learners enjoy studying the language, they seem to be motivated by their careers (48%), as only 36% reported it to be a personal choice, while fewer (16%) joined professional and personal needs.

Considering 'target situation needs' from the learner's perspectives, the events in which English makes a difference are: emails (80%); presentations (60%); phone calls (60%); conference calls (48%); meetings (48%); written reports (52%)

and Business travelling (36%). When inquired what they would consider as the most challenging aspect regarding learning, answers varied: communication/conversation (68%); listening/comprehension of different accents (44%); writing (40%), confidence to communicate (28%), presentations (20%) and pronunciation (16%). By crossing answers, it seems learners' 'target situation needs' demands several circumstances in which oral skills have to be performed, matching what they reported as being their main challenge: conversation, confidence to communicate, presentations, and, consequently, listening and pronunciation. Figures 6 and 7 below illustrate the participants' answers for the aforementioned aspects:



**Figure 6 - How do you use English in your daily working routine?**



**Figure 7 - What do you consider to be the most challenging aspect when it comes to learn English?**

The following questions intend to map learners' profile regarding their classroom preferences, learning styles and activities developed in class. Therefore, they were questioned about their aims within a Business English course. The analysis highlights that 56% seek for dynamic classes, while 52% seek for technical terms; interactive classes in which students are allowed to participate, fluent teacher who understands business contexts, and classes in which fluency is developed. Other significant results pointed to classroom discussions to develop confidence in speaking (36%) and the analysis of business cases in which they are able to share professional experiences and that stimulate fluency through authentic material (28%). (See figure 18, on page 58)

Conversely, they reported about the negative aspects of business English classes. Among the answers, it is worth mentioning the uneven levels of language (68%) altogether, that is, different levels of fluency among students; teachers who do not have knowledge on business contexts (48%); difficulties to attend classes due to personal and professional busy schedules (36%); teachers that treat them as teenagers (28%), which match the very last results from item 5.2 that suggest business students may have not only been enrolled into General English classes, but also some institutions do not apply any 'needs analysis' methodology, and finally

24% report they do not enjoy the coursebook or some other materials that such institutions use. (See figure 19, on page 58)

Regarding the activities learners consider as meaningful and suitable to their learning style, they highlighted the simulations of professional routine tasks (72%); the case studies (64%); the discussions about working routines (56%); the specific writing activities, reading and discussions about doing business in other countries and brainstorming (44%), and the interactive exercises aiming at solving problems (40%). (See figure 20, on page 59).

Given such circumstances, it seems that learners are more likely to use oral skills in the working environment, this being one aspect they consider to be challenging in terms of language learning. Additionally, they are likely to enjoy and profit from classes in which they are able to participate by sharing business experiences and working routines, which suggests why uneven levels may not be challenging for these students in terms language proficiency, working background and age level.

Once more their answers suggest that companies and institutions do not apply any sort of 'needs analysis'. As a consequence, business English learners seem to be enrolled into General English classes in which ordinary learners certainly do not have the same aims, professional backgrounds or professional targets. Also, they point out the need to have teachers aware of the business world and in-company routines, in other words, professionals who are able to treat them not as teens but as adults, professionals who are not likely to hamper the effectiveness of the learning process.

#### 4.7 CONFRONTING RESULTS

From the juxtaposition of the three axes under analysis, it is possible to highlight aspects that may help us understand the relationship among companies, language institutions and learners when it comes to 'needs analysis' in the teaching/learning of Business English.

Regarding 'target situation needs', results may indicate that although some companies and language institutions seem not to apply any procedures to identify learning 'needs', they are aware of business working contexts in which English is

used and demanded. Such an assumption is drawn by the information from both axes, since they match when compared to what learners have reported being their target situations.

In general, contexts that demand the use of oral skills are likely to be those in which English is frequently used, for instance, presentations, phone calls and conference calls, and that present real challenging scenarios. Along with 'target situation needs' and the procedures used to understand them, there is the fact that language institutions seem or prefer to primarily obtain information from students (questionnaires) rather than from companies, perhaps due to innate difficulties to level directly with Human Resources personnel or to the fact such personnel do not have any relevant information about learning needs that match professional business demands. As observed by the survey, only 20% of language institutions apply questionnaires and/or are informed about business learners needs. That may entail a mismatch of what the company needs and what the learners want, as stated by Dudley Evans and St. Johns (1998). Such imbalance, however, was not perceived through the samples analyzed for this study.

In relation to 'learning situation needs', results suggest companies are likely to consider exclusively their own needs when it comes to hiring a language institution to cater classes to their employees. (See chart 2, within attachments). As for language institutions, teachers are the ones empowered to identify this kind of need, and this seems to be common sense as they are the ones in contact with learners every class. On the other hand, if they are part of a language institution, they should be offered support from the pedagogical area so to carry out such surveys, thus they would have time to invest in personal qualification so as to suit a general demand from students: a teacher who knows their professional reality. Maybe that would allow language institutions to meet one more demand from business learners which is having classes in which the language suits professional (technical language, for instance) and occasional personal needs and aims. Moreover, the very fact some language institutions apply personal interviews and questionnaires to determine learning needs is undoubtedly a positive aspect. However, we understand this study lacks a thorough investigation on how they are conducted, despite that not being one of its aims.



Finally, the notion of 'learning situation needs' and 'target situation needs' may be conceived in terms of 'present situation needs' by companies and language institutions, once placement tests and proficiency tests permeate their answers even though questions were placed separately for each kind of need.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the connection among companies, language institutions, and learners regarding the process of 'need analysis for the teaching and learning of Business English. In order to achieve it, this work carried out a survey using questionnaires which were addressed to the three different axes – companies – language institutions – employees/learners – each one representing one type of 'needs' that was investigated. Thus, considering discussions from the previous chapters and the topic of this investigation, 'needs' are split into three specific types (DUDLEY-EVANS AND ST. JOHNS, 1998): 'present situation needs' which involves language institutions; 'learning situation needs' which concerns learners, and finally 'target situation needs' which comprises companies.

The specific aims of this study were to explore whether companies and language institutions apply any sort of procedures to identify learners' needs. On one hand, as data suggests, institutions seem to be minded to understand learners' needs since most of them report to have carried out interviews and applied questionnaires to determine 'target situation needs' and 'learning situation needs'. Despite representing a positive aspect, as they might be familiar with the specificities of such modality of teaching, other institutions which do not take needs analysis into account may enroll learners into classes that are far from addressing any personal or professional needs or challenges.

On the other hand, although a small percentage of companies apply procedures to identify them, criteria such as cost, flexible hours and possibility of in-company classes seem to be more influential when contracting language institutions rather than learners' needs or companies' interest for the improvement of their personnel skills. Bearing those assumptions in mind along with the context of this research we may be able to state that the process of 'needs analysis' seems to be an informal procedure instead of a systematized one, as Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998) suggest. This is yet corroborated the lack of communication between language institutions and companies, which implies a certain mismatch between these two axes. Consequently, it may affect the teaching/learning process of employees/learners, that is, resulting on nonproductive classes, goals that are not satisfactorily achieved, partial fluency, students who start but never complete the

courses, pedagogical sources that do not fit learner's reality. Therefore, courses are likely to be offered by language institutions which provide English classes for general Business Purposes (EGBP) as such modality seems to claim for less specificities from the surroundings of learners.

This study also investigated how language institutions and companies conceive learners' needs<sup>10</sup>. Results suggest that 'target situation needs' (companies), and 'learning situation needs' (learners) are likely to be understood in terms of 'present situation needs' (institutions), since several reports presented placement and proficiency tests as means to identify the three kinds of needs. Regardless such a fact and although it is not clear whether and how language institutions and companies apply needs analysis procedures, there seems to be an attempt from schools to understand employees' working contexts and what they expect from English business courses.

As for learners, this study was only able to draw a profile of their preferences regarding Business English classes. It is quite clear that students demand for interactive classes in which they are offered the opportunity to participate and share their experiences and develop their oral skills, which according to the survey represent one of their major goals concerning language learning. Furthermore, as business learners may tend to pursue busy schedules, uneven levels of English within the classroom and teachers who are not aware of business contexts are aspects that may be time-consuming in terms of course length and lack of motivation to be committed in classes. Nevertheless, such conjecture deserves a deeper investigation, perhaps by systematic observations of Business English classes so that a more effective conclusion may be reached concerning whether language institutions address classes according to the preferences of learners.

That being said, 'needs analysis' can be understood as a hard working process, which demands efforts from stakeholders so that all those who are part of the process (companies, institutions, learners) can benefit from it. As a starting point to discuss such an issue, this work may aid those who hold a degree in teaching so that they would be aware of the role of learners' needs and the requirements of employers to teach such modality of English.

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<sup>10</sup>See: Chapter 3 for "The three complementary axes", pgs: 26, 27, 28.

Furthermore, it is expected that this investigation may improve what has already been offered in terms of Business English classes, 'needs analysis' as well as shed some light on a relatively unexplored field of foreign language teaching and learning, especially within the Brazilian scenario.

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### ATTACHMENTS

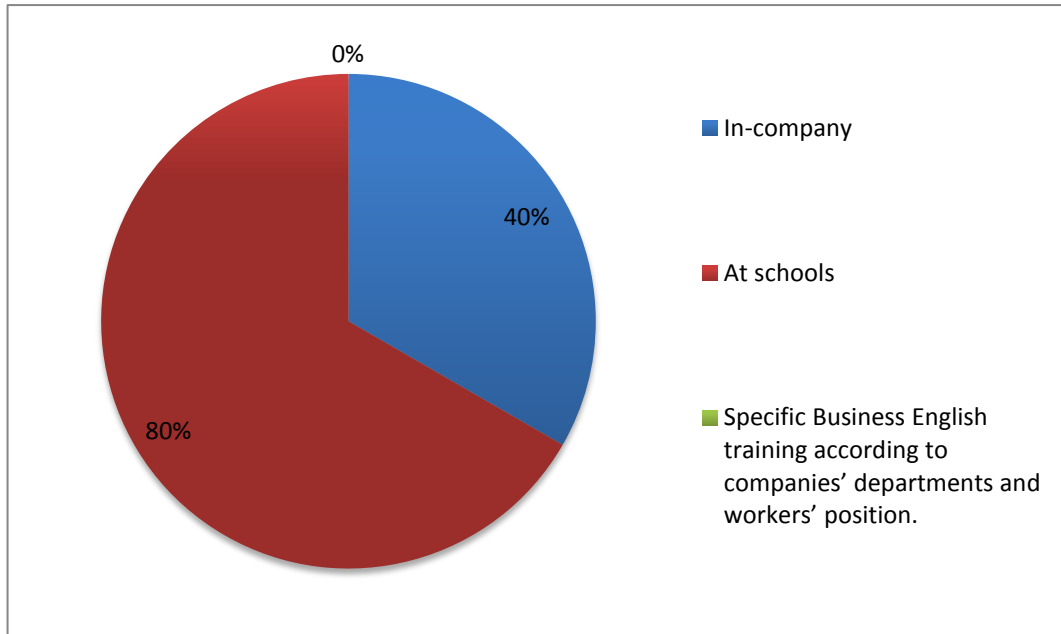


Figure 8 - Where are Business English courses offered?

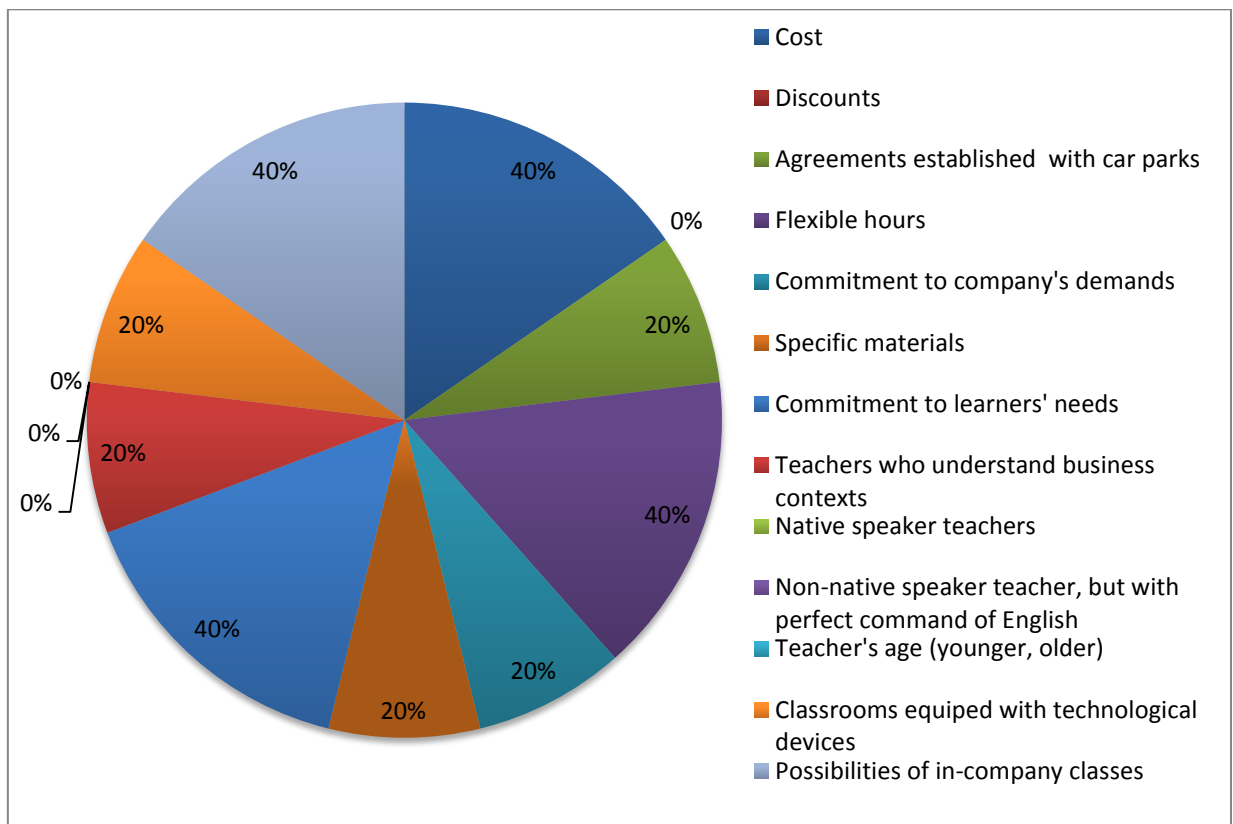
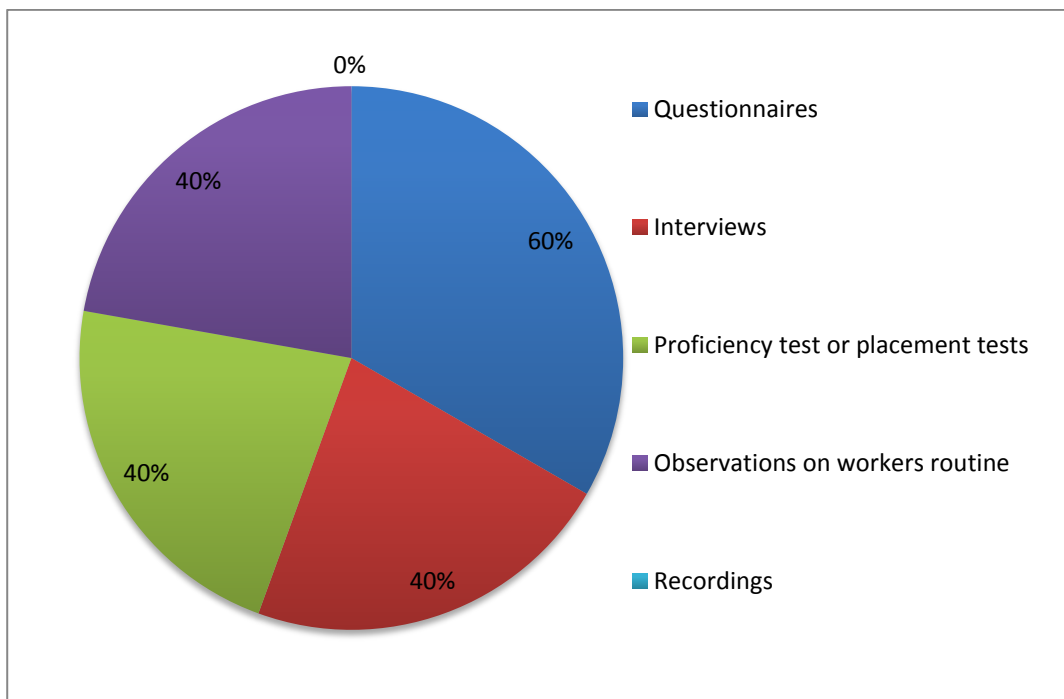
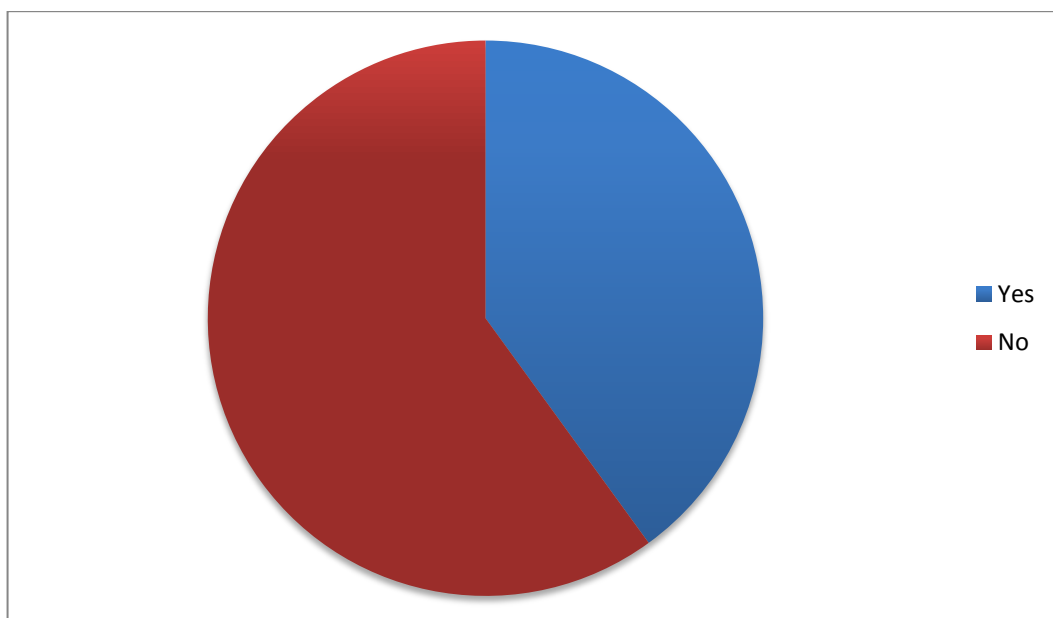


Figure 9 - What are the criteria to select a school to provide classes to employees?

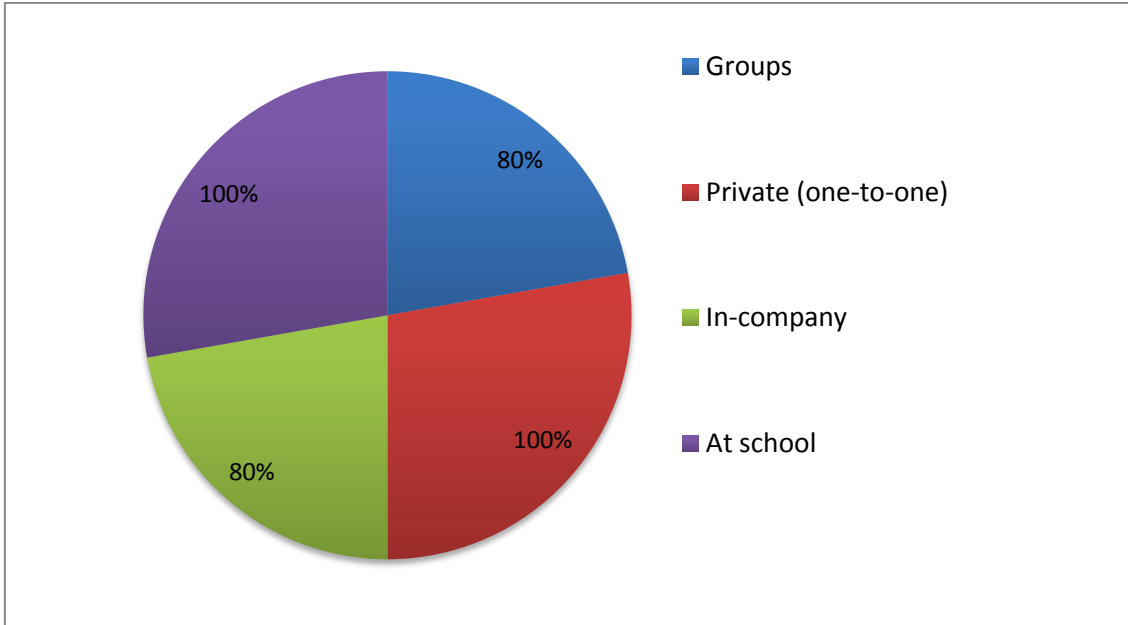


**Figure 10 - What are the procedures used to collect information about learners' need?**

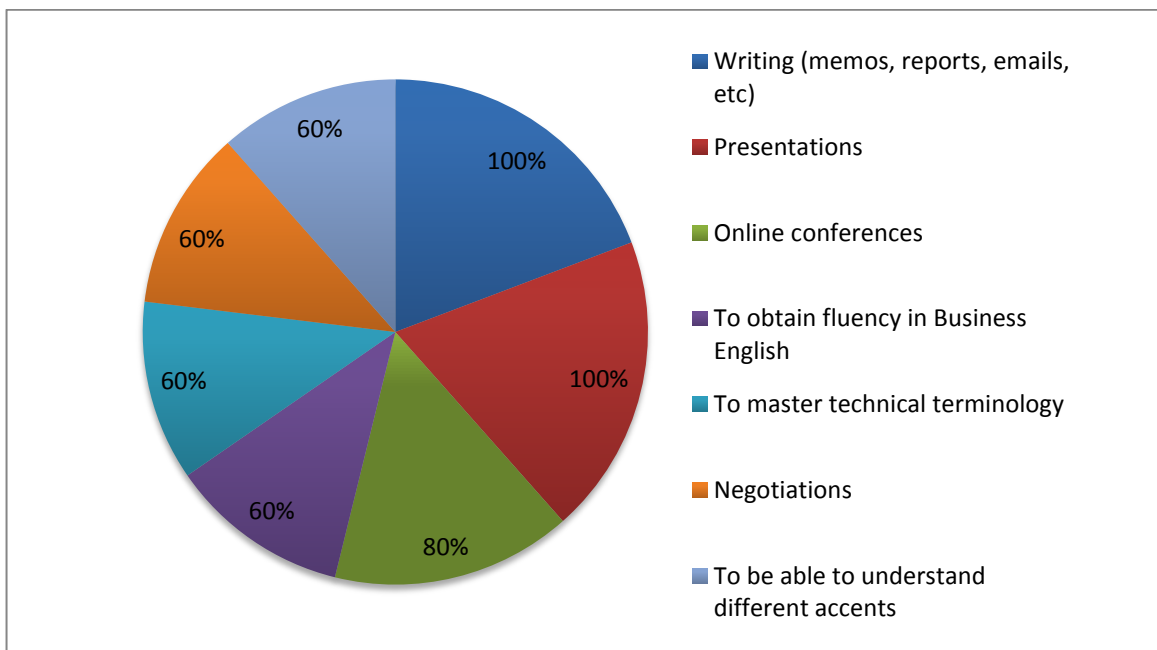


**Figure 11 - Does the company establish levels of English employees should reach?**

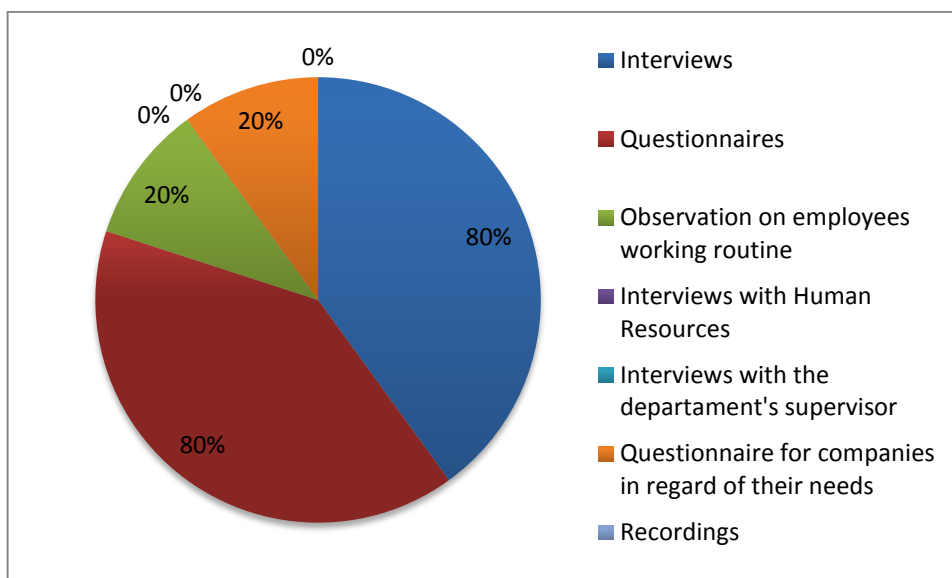




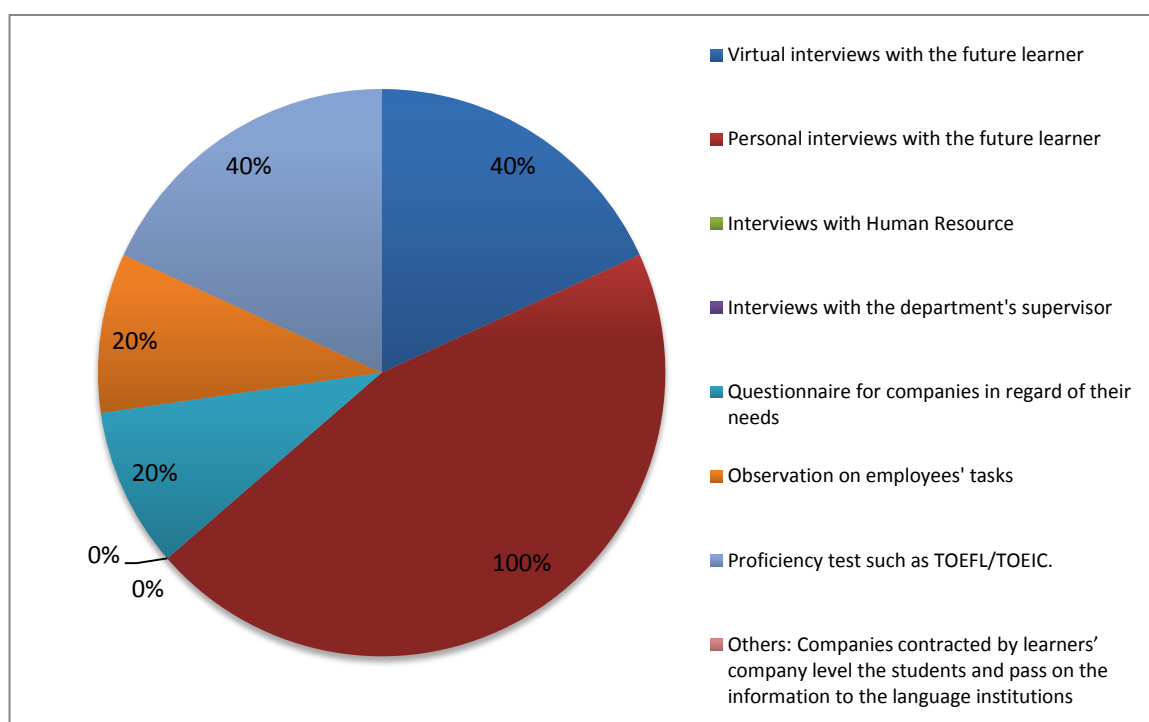
**Figure 12 - What are the modalities of Business English courses offered by the language institution?**



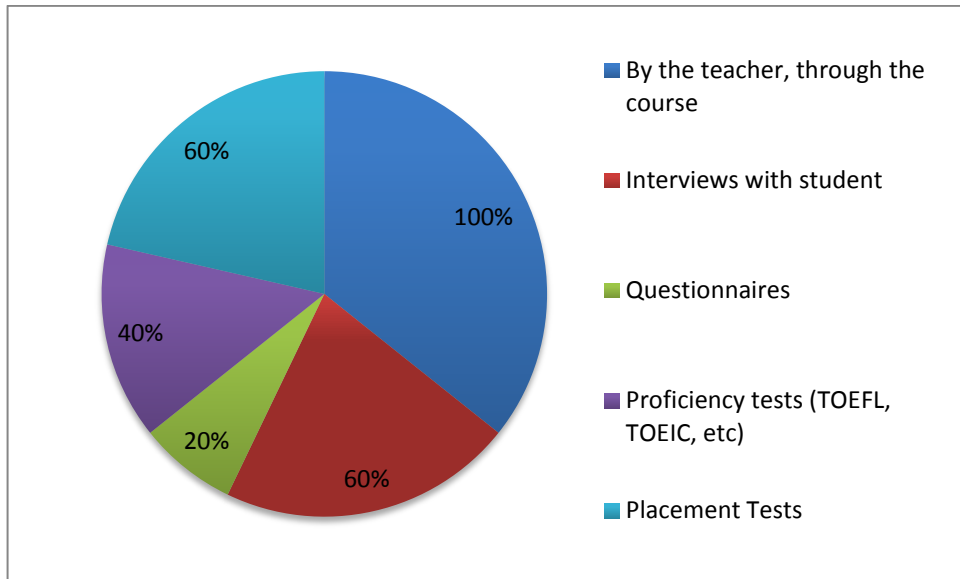
**Figure 13 - What are the situational uses of language Business English learners present?**



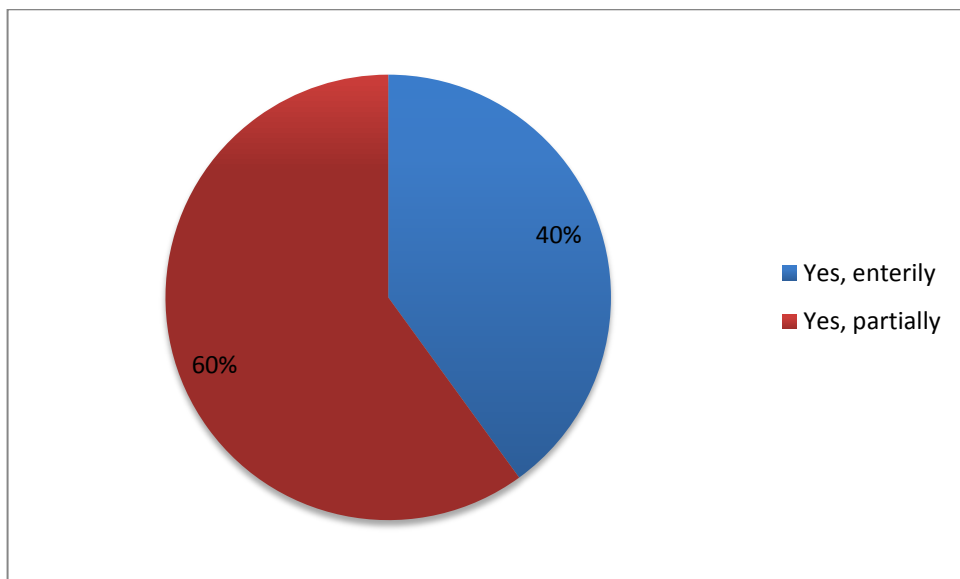
**Figure 14 - Through what procedures are the situational uses of Business English collected?**



**Figure 15 - What procedures is personal and professional information collected by?**



**Figure 16 - How have Business English learners' learning needs been identified?**



**Figure 17 - Has the data collected been contributing to an adjustment of classroom practice in terms of materials and content?**

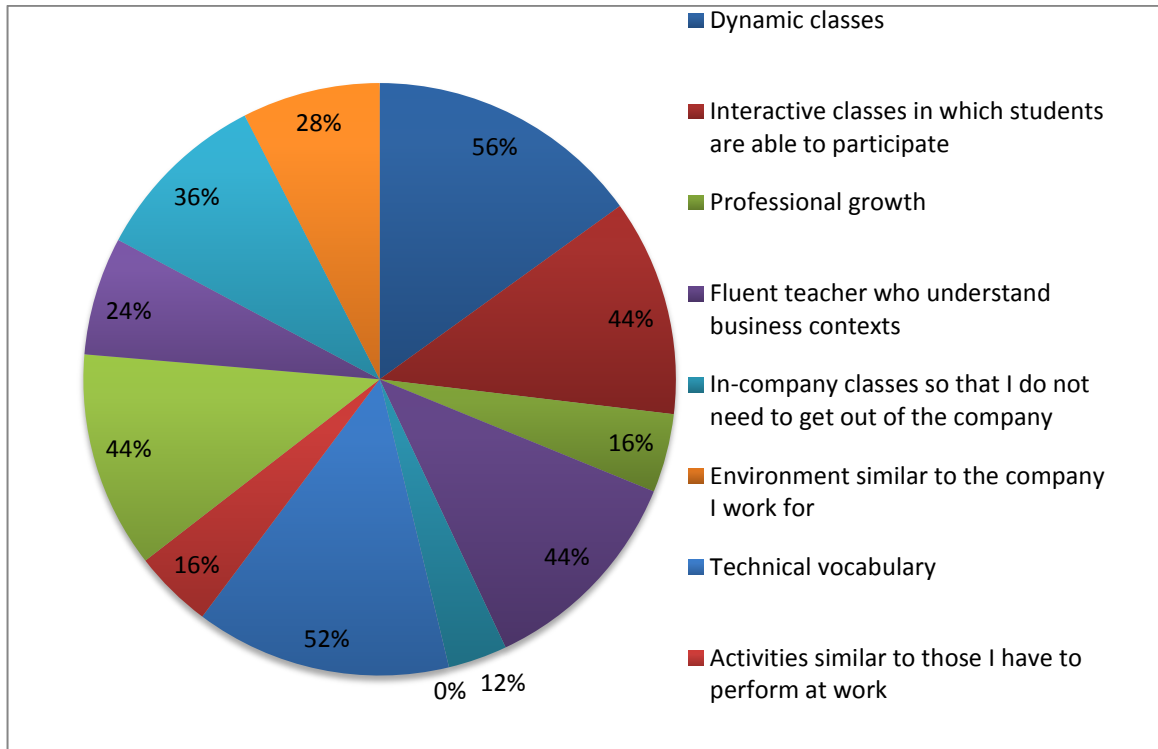


Figure 18 - What do you aim to find in a Business English course?

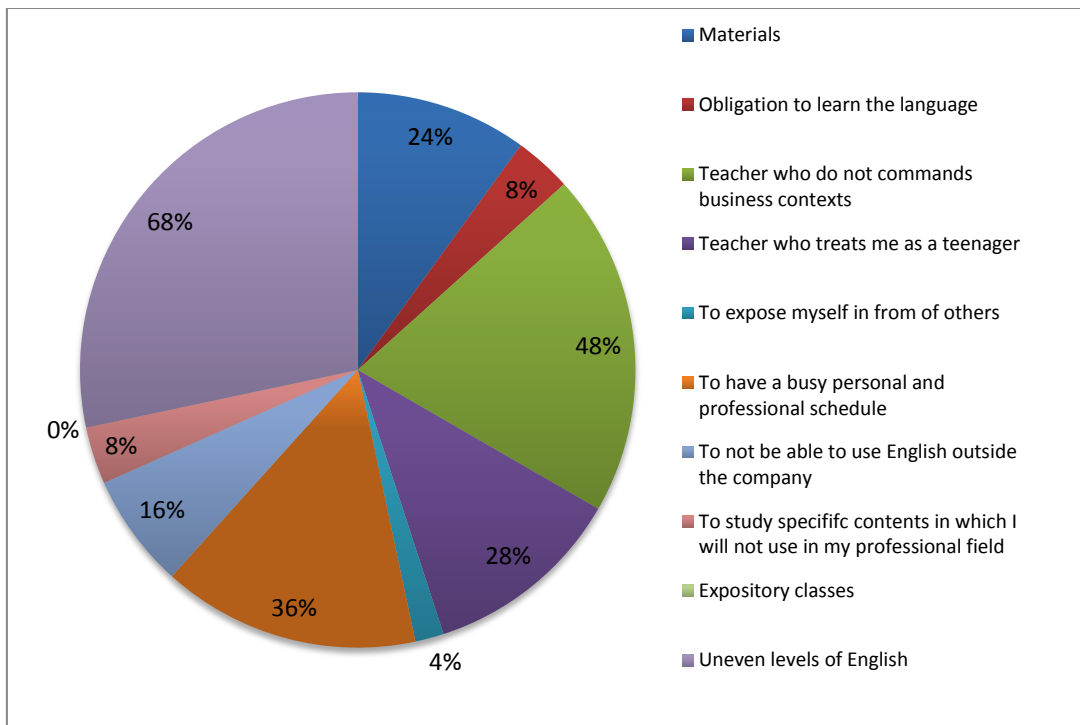
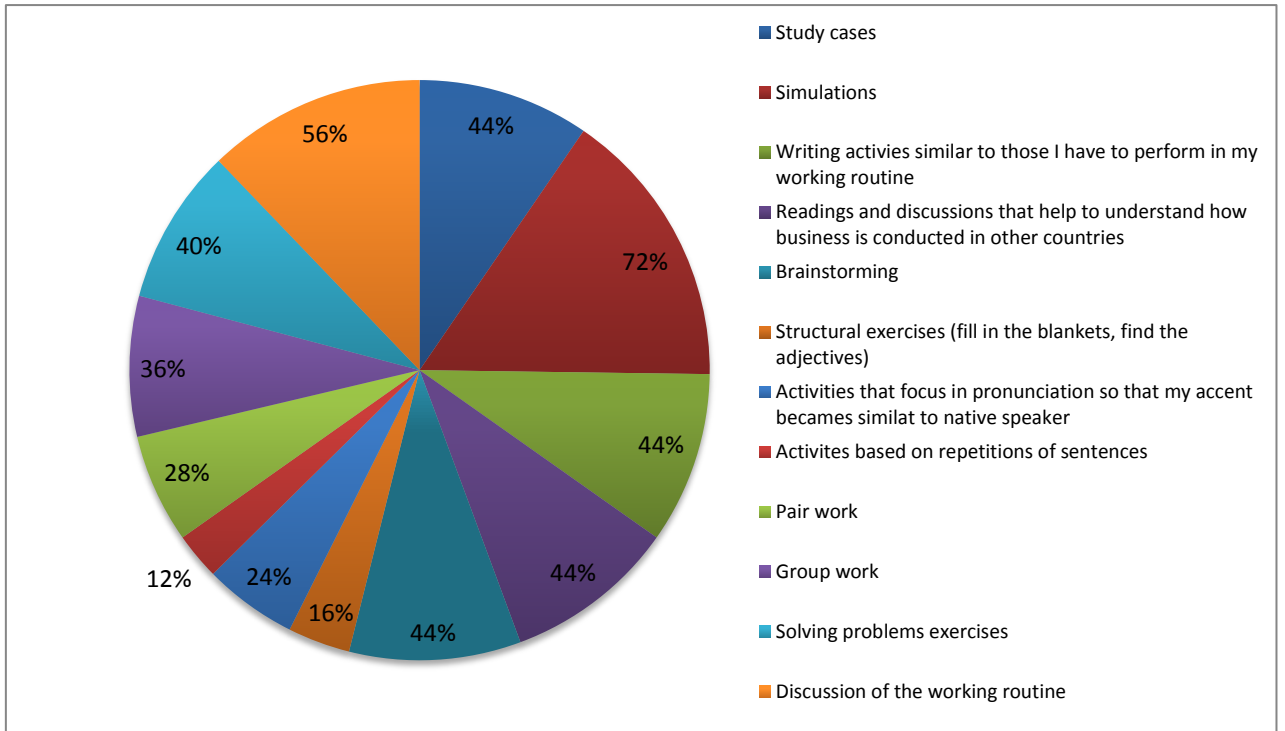


Figure 19 - What do you dislike in Business English classes?



**Figure 20 - What are the classroom activities you consider to be the most motivating to learn?**