

ELEMENT 3

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THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS IN MATERIALS DESIGN

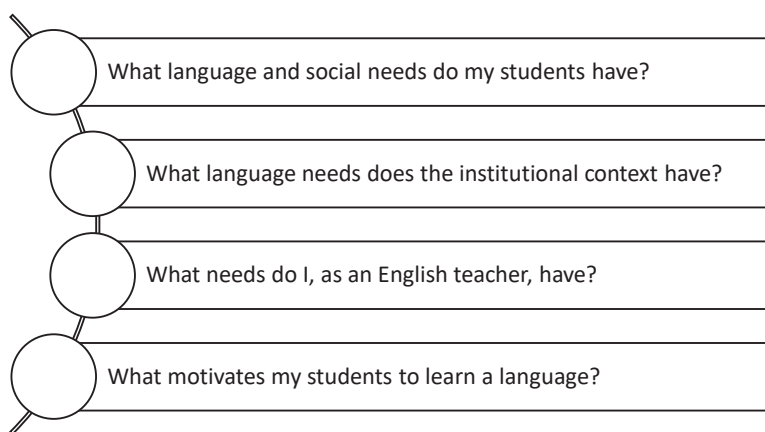
Objective

To recognize the importance and kind of needs in materials design.

Needs in Materials Design

One of the best ways to begin the process of designing your own EFL materials is for each one of us to reflect on the way we design materials. We can ask ourselves questions related to the students' needs, institutional context's needs, and teacher's needs.

Questions that need to be solved before starting any design are:



To start answering these questions, we ought to understand what each one encompasses.

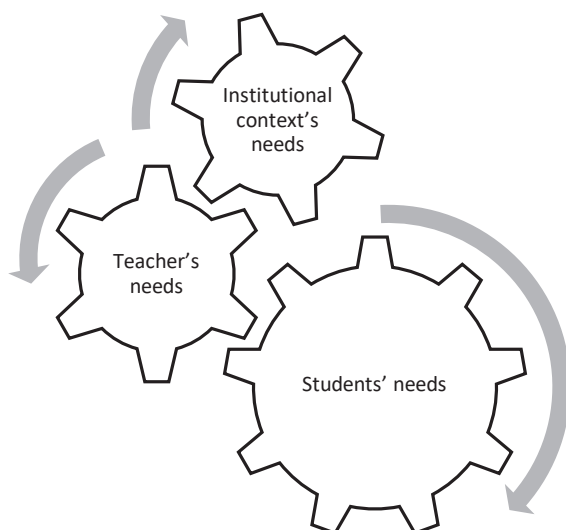
Teachers usually engage in decision-making processes during their experiences as teachers. For example, teachers will make decisions on what to evaluate, when to evaluate, what activity fits the content, etc. These decision-making processes are usually based on what teachers think the needs of their contexts are. However, in materials design, teachers ought to make informed decisions. Therefore, any decision to design an activity should be based on a systematic analysis of information collected within that context. In other words, it is paramount to carry out a needs analysis before starting any materials design.

According to Brown (1995), needs analysis is the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the bases for developing a curriculum that meets the learning needs of a particular group of students. He further stated that once needs are identified, they can be used for establishing objectives, developing tests, and teaching activities and materials, among

others. Seedhouse (1995) mentioned that the needs analysis is useful for problem solving in the English classroom, as well as serving as the foundation for designing aims, courses, and materials.

Kinds of Needs

As material designers, it is essential to develop a needs analysis that can account for the necessities of the students, teachers, and institutional context. Graves (1997) suggested that analyzing students' needs help material designers contextualize materials based on the **students' sociocultural context**. Additionally, material designers can understand how that specific group of **students learns**. Teachers' needs provide us with a landscape on **how the teacher teaches** and what he/she considers relevant when teaching a language. Institutional needs serve as bases to analyze the role of **national and local policies at the institutional level**. Instruments that can be used to collect information in a needs analysis include the following: students' and teachers' journals, interviews, questionnaires, diagnostic tests, bio data surveys, group meetings, institutional documents, institutional syllabi, etc.



1. Imagine that you are conducting a needs analysis. Read the clues provided in the chart below. Then, write the kind of needs you would analyze based on the clues: institutional context's needs, students' needs, or teachers' needs. In the third column, you can write the instruments you would apply for a needs analysis depending on the kind of needs. Please follow the first example.

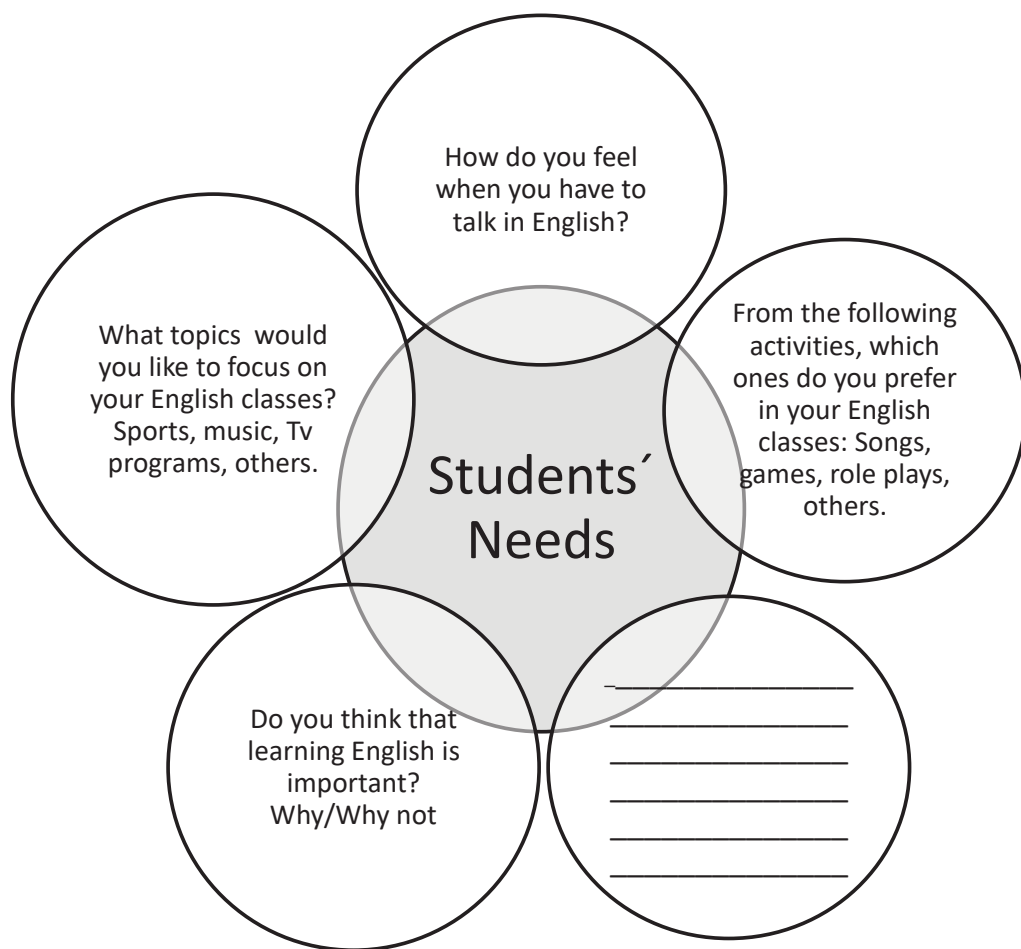
CLUES	KIND OF NEEDS	INSTRUMENTS
The situation in which language will be used	E.g. <i>Institutional context's needs</i>	E. g. <i>Institutional documents, Institutional syllabi</i>
The level of proficiency that will be required		
The students' age		
The students' location (Urban-Rural)		
The objectives and purposes for which the language is needed		
The material available for learning the language		
The students' learning styles		
The teachers' beliefs		
The skills teachers value the most when teaching a language		
The students' familiar environment		
The cultural aspects of the place		
The role of parents at school		
The students' resources		

2. Compare your answers in the chart with a classmate. Check what answers you have in common and what answers you differ with your classmate.

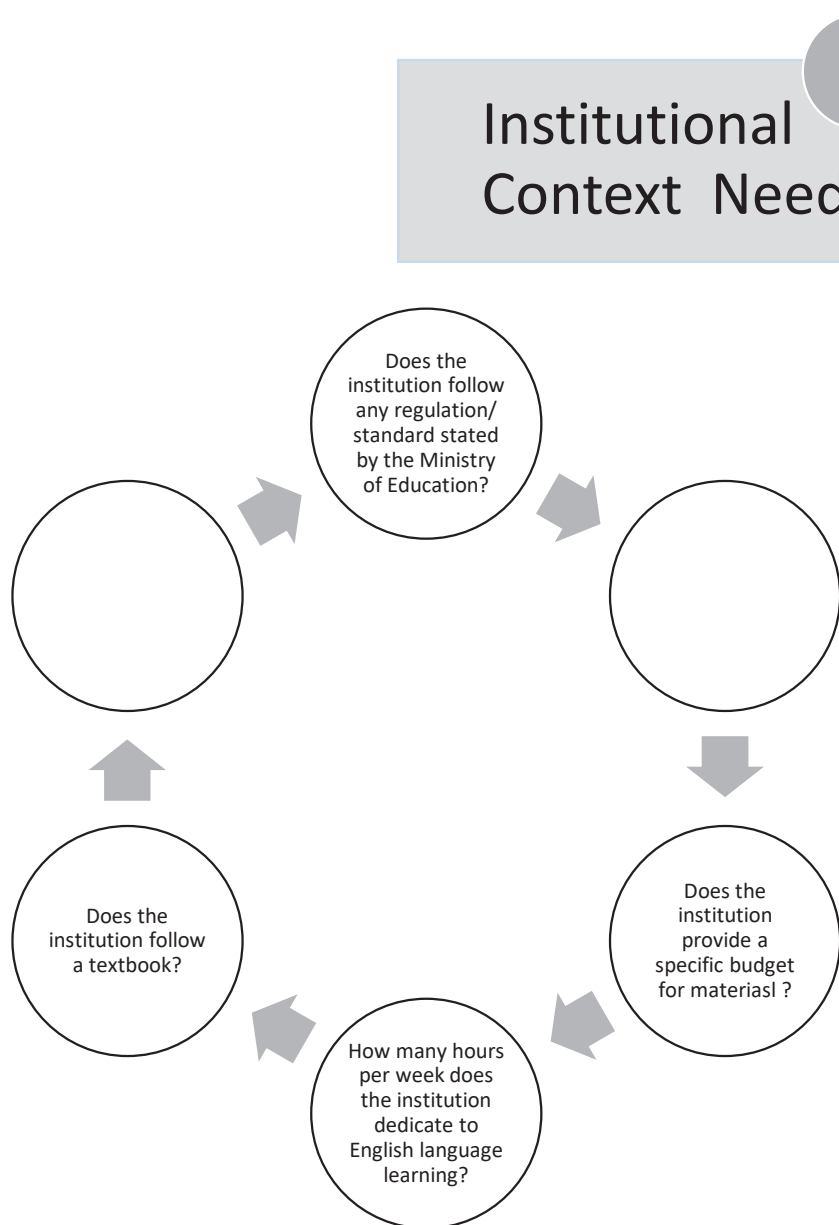
Common answers

Uncommon answers

3. The following items/questions have been used by diverse material designers to develop their needs analysis. Read them, then write at least two more items/questions that you can use to collect information about students' needs.



4. The following items/questions have been used by diverse material designers to develop their needs analysis. Read them, then write at least two more items/questions that you can use to collect information about the institutional context's needs.



5. The following items/questions have been used by diverse material designers to develop their needs analysis. Read them, then write at least two more items/questions that you can use to collect information about teachers' needs.

