

# MODULE 3 - TOPIC 3.4.1: LEARNERS' NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND CAPACITIES

# (VIDEO TRANSCRIPT)

You will now be introduced to some basic tools to identify your learners’ needs and interests, that affect your teaching and influence the tasks and your overall TBLT curriculum design.

The language class, in order to be successful, must be aligned with the learners' aims and objectives. Through this video we will focus on learners' needs and interests. What tasks do your learners need or want to learn? Why are they attending your class? Which are their interests?

On the first day of the course but also during the whole course, you can try to verify some details regarding the learners and their needs in specific tasks; this is called task-based needs analysis. If you decide to do it at the beginning of the course, it can help you to create a pool of tasks, which later on you can use to negotiate with the learners how to use them in class. Also, it can provide an insight of the learners’ gaps in performing specific tasks and it can guide you to better organize your curriculum with learning experiences that will be able to engage the learners actively. However, this is a procedure that can be present during the whole course.

The task-based needs analysis can be done by various methods and combining some, might provide you a more reliable picture of the situation:

1. Observe the learners or the outcomes they produce.
2. Have an interview with the learners or discuss various tasks with them and see where they show interest or which tasks, they can perform easier than others. For example, going to the dentist, taking the bus, or watching movies.
3. Assess the learners to determine their current needs revealed by the assessment information. This could be done prior to the starting date by sending out to the learners a google form (as we have already seen in module 2); Or in class, you can provide a table and ask the learners to fill in the tasks they would like to learn, the reasons they learn this language and their interest and hobbies. This can be kept in their personal portfolios so the learners can have access and self-evaluate their performance or track their own process, for which we will talk again in module 5.

Is needs analysis useful? How? Let’s check practically on one example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What tasks/activities do I want to learn to be able to do in (language)?** | **Why do I learn (language)?** | **My interests / hobbies** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Let’s imagine you have these results from all your learners:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What tasks/activities do I want to learn to be able to do in (language)?** | **Why do I learn (language)?** | **My interests / hobbies** |
| Take a bus, watch movies, write reports | To work | Dancing, football |
| Read novels and watch movies | To understand the culture | Reading, cinema |
| Talk when at the supermarket | To make friends | Walking, cinema |
| Write a diary | To have fun | Cinema, music |
| Read books and visit a bookshop | I love languages | Reading, creative writing, cinema |
| Watch movies, talk with my football team players | To work  | Football |
| Talk with my neighbours and colleagues  | To travel in the country | Cooking, dancing |

What does this evidence show for your class?

1. **Tasks adaptations 🡪** Your learners are here for various reasons that you can try to accomplish by adapting your tasks (for example, the ones that need the language to work or communicate with their colleagues, maybe they will need work-related tasks such as attending an interview, writing a curriculum, going-out with colleagues).

|  |
| --- |
| **Task – Applying for a job**Work in groups. One of you is applying for a job. This person describes the job she would like to the other. Look at online portals of job advertisements and find some possible jobs that suits the description.Write a letter applying for the job. |

1. **Topics adaptations 🡪** Also, as you have various learners who like cinema or movies, it might be a great idea to include cinema-related tasks. We will analyse the use of the different materials and see a specific example in module 4.
2. **Teaching methodology adaptations 🡪** As there are various learners that have interest in kinaesthetic activities (such as walking, dancing, or playing football), this might be a clue for adapting your methodology (for example, when doing a task, you can put learners to move, to do something active).

|  |
| --- |
| **Task – Telling stories** Choose your favourite plant and explain the reasons.  Invent the story of your favourite tree/plant (give a name, tell where it lived before, how it decided to come to this park, how it feels here (using like/love), speak about its family, speak about its “green” friends and how they became friends, etc.). Perform small theatrical storytelling acts. Prepare a 5-7 minutes presentation to show it to the class at the next class. |

Have you ever thought of providing tasks for children while your learners are adults? What about the contrary? What would have happened if you had decided to assign an introvert learner to make a public presentation from the first day of class? The learners would be possibly disappointed and discouraged to learn the language.

When designing your TBLT curriculum, you should consider the participants’ ages and any special requirements they have; their reasons for learning the language; their various social realities; how participants are used to learning; and their previous language learning experiences. Especially, when you teach your language to adult learners, it is important that you think on the below 5 elements:

1. Utilize their learning or language experience
2. Remember their readiness to learn
3. Time perspective of these learners differs. They need the language in order to use it immediately.
4. Adult curricula should be more problem-centered than subject-centered
5. Self-directed learning is important. Adult learners need to have the chance to learn according to their pace and direction and have the chance to assess their own learning.

Remember: the more you take into consideration your learners, the bigger your chances are that they keep engaged!

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

* Oliver, R., Grote, E., Rochecouste, J. & Exell, M. (2013). *Needs analysis for task-based language teaching: A case study of Indigenous vocational education and training students who speak EAL/EAD.* TESOL in Context. 22 (2): pp. 36-50. Retrieved January, 20th from: <https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/19517/191965_92233_Oliver_-_Needs_analysis_for_task-based_language.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>
* Rooney, K. (1998). *Designing a Task-Based Syllabus and Materials for Tyndale Level 1.* Retrieved February 20, 2021 from: <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp01/MQ39036.pdf>.