Ifigenia Kofou

Language & Communication Needs Analysis

Proposal of an Instrument

ZITI PUBLICATIONS

ISBN 978-960-456-396-8

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Phototypesetting **P. ZITI & Co.**
Printing 18th klm Thessaloniki-Perea
Binding P.O. Box 4171, Peraia-Thessaloniki 570 19, Greece
Tel.: +30 23920 72222 • Fax: +30 23920 72229 • e-mail: info@ziti.gr

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To the memory of my beloved father,
Aggelos Kofos

Acknowledgements

When it comes to acknowledgements for this book, there are two people I am deeply indebted to. In particular, I am grateful to Professor Antonis Tsopanoglou, who had the willingness and the patience to see to this book and contribute with advice and amendments. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Sofia Anastasiadou who inspired me for this book and helped with the reliability analysis of the proposed tool.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the schools which opened their doors for the visits and the students who responded to the questionnaire.

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Preface

Literature review shows that in general learners are little aware of their needs, they are unable to express them except in very vague terms (Richterich & Chancerel, 1987: 3), and they may not have any very clear purpose for taking the language in a particular language classroom (Tarone & Yule, 1989: 40-41). Or they have a view as to what their needs are, which will conflict with the perceptions of other interested parties, such as course designers and teachers (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 56), and they want to learn the language by relating it to more personal concerns or the types of situations in which they would really have a use for the foreign language (Escorcia in Quirk & Widdowson, 1985: 230-231). On the other hand, relatively few teachers are ever provided with detailed background information on their students' aims in taking a second language course (Tarone & Yule, 1989: 8-9).

As needs analysis is the first step to course design, gathering information about learners can be used to guide the learning process, prepare the syllabus, select or develop appropriate training materials, identify new or short-term priorities, reformulate objectives (West, 1994: 5), clarify motives, devise functional and motivational equipment and strategies (Trim et al., 1980: 47), and do communication and interaction activities in the classroom (Yalden, 1987: 77-78).

There are many methods to collect information about learners, such as tests, observation, case-studies, interviews and questionnaires. The present study provides a questionnaire on the language and communication needs of Intercultural School students, based on Hymes' "SPEAKING" taxonomy, and tested for its validity and reliability.

The first chapter is an introduction to language learning in the global context. The second chapter reviews the origins of needs analysis. The third chapter sets the theoretical basis of needs analysis. The fourth chapter connects needs analysis to course design. The fifth chapter focuses on learners' needs, instruments and approaches to needs analysis. The sixth chapter presents the most influential models to needs analysis. The seventh chapter is about the research conducted. The eighth chapter checks the validity and reliability of the proposed questionnaire, and the ninth one discusses the results.

1. Introduction

Globalization has contributed to the recession of geographical constraints and has induced economic, social and cultural changes. The question of language has been raised by "worldwide social relationships unfettered by the constraints of geography", since language is the primary medium of human social interaction through which social relationships are constructed and maintained (Block & Cameron, 2002: 1).

New communication technologies (Block & Cameron, 2002) enable individuals to have exchanges with distant others who they have never met face-to-face. Global communication of this kind, however, requires not only a shared channel (like the Internet or videoconferencing) but also a "shared linguistic code" intensifying the need for members of global networks to develop competence in one or more languages and/or to master new ways of using languages they know already. Thus, globalization changes the conditions in which language learning and language teaching take place. Communication skills and new literacies required by new technologies, as well as competence in one or more languages, represent a valuable "linguistic capital". Language is treated as a "commodity" (Pennycook, 1994: 155) affecting language learning motivation and people's choices as to which languages to learn. It can also be used for plenty of intercultural communicative purposes (McKay, 2002: 11) as cyberspace can be used for real and meaningful interactions between learners and native speakers (Block & Cameron, 2002: 1-3).

Communication is a keyword of the global age and communication skills, which are not merely vocational skills, but life skills, are rated as more important than literacy or ICTs skills. In this context, education takes the form of training in 21st century skills, which are attempted to be incorporated into the curriculum, so that students can meet the needs of the new economy and increase their employability in the labor market (Block & Cameron, 2002: 71-75).

In the global framework "successful language learning is vital for refugees, immigrants, international students, those receiving education or vocational training through the medium of a second language in their own country, and individuals in occupations requiring advanced foreign language proficiency, among others. The combination of target language varieties, skills, lexicons, genres, registers, etc, that each of these and other groups needs varies greatly, however meaning that language

teaching using generic programs and materials, not designed with particular groups in mind, will be insufficient, at the very least, and in all probability, grossly inadequate" (Long, 2005a: 1).

Thus, according to Long (2005a), no language teaching program should be designed without a needs analysis. Every language course should be considered a course for specific purposes, varying only in the precision with which learner needs can be specified –from little or none in the case of programs for most young children to minute detail in the case of occupationally-, academically-, or vocationally-oriented programs for most adults".

In other words, the procedures associated with the analysis of needs offer the course designer a framework for the selection of language content according to the goals of particular learners and therefore the possibility of creating tailor-made programs, rather than starting with a ready-made syllabus that does not of itself discriminate between differing objectives (Johnson & Johnson, 1998: 228).

Under these circumstances, the present study focuses on literature review on needs analysis, the examination of influential needs analysis models, and the use of instruments to detect learners' language and communication needs.

2. Origins

This chapter examines the origins of English language teaching based on learners' communication needs and elaborates on the Competence and Performance issue in this field. It also sets the necessity of a framework for language learning and teaching in accordance with learners' needs so that they can adequately perform in various communicative events in which they are involved in their social and professional life.

The end of the Second World War heralded an age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale. This expansion created a world unified and dominated by two forces –technology and commerce– which soon generated a demand for an international language (Astika, 2009). The effect was to create a whole new mass of people wanting to learn English, not for pleasure or prestige of knowing the language, but because English was the key to the international "currencies" of technology and commerce. The wide spread of English to countries in which it is not spoken as a mother tongue, such as China, is that English is the major language of international communication. It is the most important language of business and commerce, of governments and international agencies, of science and technology, and of tourism, film, and music (Tollefson, 1991: 81). The new generation of learners knew specifically why they were learning the language – businessmen who wanted to sell their products, mechanics who had to read instruction manuals, doctors who needed to keep up with developments in their field and a whole range of students whose course of study included textbooks and journals only available in English. All these and many others needed English and they knew why they needed it although Tokatlidou (2002: 133) argues that there are cases in which other languages than English are needed for effective communication, such as in local markets or in the school yard, where people need to learn a language not because they want to but because they want to communicate and express themselves better.

This development was accelerated by the Oil Crisis in the early '70s, when English became big business and a need for cost-effective courses with clearly well defined goals was created (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 8-9).

At present, mass travel for business and pleasure, electronic media, mass movements of immigrant labor and at managerial level in multinational corporations, supranational economic, cultural and political institutions, interdependence of im-

ports/exports in an increasingly unified market, all conspire to render hard national frontiers increasingly obsolete (Trim et al., 1980: 17, Trim, 1979). This mobility, taking place in the new information and knowledge society, gives rise to needs of communication, co-existence and cooperation, and requires new skills, such as information literacy, communication and cooperation skills (Tokatlidou, 2002: 136-138).

The discreet separation of national languages no longer provides a framework for increasing internal integration, but rather hindrances to an increasingly real and urgent wider unity (Trim et al., 1980). According to Brumfit (1993), the languages and cultures of minority groups throughout Europe have been seen as important elements in formulating educational policies, and cultural diversity as "a legitimate goal" for politicians and educationalists alike. In the third millennium, monolingualism will become increasingly out of date in a world where an active knowledge of an international lingua franca and some receptive acquaintances with one or two others will be required over an unpredictably wide range of social situations. The effective teaching of languages in schools is thus a matter of great urgency, which, as so often in transitional situations, is widely underestimated (Trim, Richterich, Van Ek and Wilkins, 1980, Trim, 1979).

2.1. English in the world

In the framework described above, English Language Teaching (ELT) is of great importance for a number of reasons. According to Tollefson (1991: 7), the industry of language education has been dedicated to meeting the linguistic needs of the millions of people who must acquire English or other languages for education, government service, political participation, and employment. There is, however, widespread inability to speak the language varieties people need to survive and prosper in the modern world, or to have access to economic resources and political power. Inadequate language competence, for Tollefson (1991), is due to language policy, and not to poor materials, learners' low motivation, or inadequate learning theories and teaching methodologies. As for monolingualism, the policy of requiring everyone to learn a single dominant language is widely seen as a common-sense solution to the communication problems of multilingual societies. The appeal of this assumption is such that monolingualism is seen as a solution to linguistic inequality, and thus economic and social inequality. A common world language-an international language-also referred to as a "language of wider communication" (LWC) (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986: 7) is vital for communities whose primary languages are not widely used outside their own area. People of such communities need a LWC for purposes such as foreign trade or in order to gain access to scientific, technical and literary materials that do not exist in their own languages.

Most of the people who do not speak English as their native language live in countries requiring English for what may be broadly called "external" purposes: contact with people in other countries, either through the spoken or written word, for such purposes as trade and scientific advance. They are people for whom English remains

a foreign language (though usually the chief foreign language) whether they live in a country with a highly developed tradition of English teaching or in a country where English teaching is less well developed. It should be noted that their use of English is no way confined to contacts with English speaking countries. There are also millions of people who live in countries where English is equally not a native language (rather a second language) but where English is in widespread use for what may be broadly called "internal" purposes: in administration, in broadcasting, in education (Quirk R., "The English language in a global context", in Quirk & Widdowson, 1985: 1-2).

As Tollefson (1991: 6) supports, "the modern world economic system requires a language variety for communication among people with different mother tongues. Throughout the world, English is increasingly used for this purpose, with different dialects, registers, proficiency levels, and literacy skills required for different kinds of interaction".

It is also to be expected that very substantial numbers of people who have completed their full-time education without acquiring any effective knowledge of any language will find themselves at a disadvantage at some point in their future lives by an inability to communicate with people of a different mother tongue. The extent of this disadvantage may range from the relatively trivial (inability to greet a visitor, to understand an entertainment film, to ask the time of a passer-by) to the disastrous (inability to summon help in sudden emergency, to retrieve a key piece of information from a publication, to negotiate a serious conflict of interest, to take employment in another country) (Trim et al., 1980: 17, Trim, 1979).

As far as adults are concerned, all the above support the argument for "permanent education" which will enable learners acquire the factual knowledge and practical skills necessary for the immediate performance of urgent tasks with which they are faced in various aspects of their lives, as well as a framework for adult language learning in accordance with their needs and interests. The establishment of such a framework is based on the language and communicative needs of the learner and the linguistic operations required of him in order to function effectively as a member of the language community for the purposes, and in the situations, revealed by those needs, and can be achieved by a unit/credit system promoted by the Council of Europe, which expresses units of study and their mastery, i.e. the acquisition of some formal qualification (Trim et al., 1980: 17-18, Trim, 1979), in which learners are guided to select units according to their needs and when they are completed, they are given credits (Kaur, 1990).

The language policy which was attempted to be established by the Council of Europe is to be examined in the following unit.

2.2. Language policy

The Council of Europe from the '70s tried to serve the interests of increased European understanding, co-operation and mobility by improving and broadening the learning

of modern languages. This entailed: making generally available the basic conceptual tools for planning, construction and conduct of learning programs closely geared to the needs, motivations and characteristics of the learner, and enabling him to steer and control his own progress, providing a framework for close and effective international co-operation in the organisation of language learning and developing systematic procedures for: i) identification of target audiences and the analysis of needs, motivations, learner characteristics and resources; ii) specification of communication objectives; iii) the devising of methods and materials appropriate to different classes and types of learner; iv) the evaluation of learning systems and of the achievement and proficiency of learners (Trim, 2007).

As Nunan (1988) puts it, "during the 1970s, needs analysis procedures made their appearance in language planning" and 'became widespread' in language teaching. At the same time, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) became a matter of general interest and LSP experts were making efforts to give birth to a more comprehensive and better LSP syllabus. As a result, needs analysis was warmly welcomed by LSP teachers as an approach to course design, which focused on learner's needs. But needs analysis did not find its remarkable influence and position in LSP until Munby's approach (1978) to needs analysis came into being.

In 1971 the Council of Europe convened a team of experts (Trim, Richterich, Van Ek and Wilkins) whose brief it was to consider the feasibility of developing a language teaching system suitable for teaching all the languages used in the Council's member countries. Wilkins had the particular task of developing a system of categories (semantico-grammatical and functional) by means of which it would be possible to specify the communicative needs of the adult learner working within a European context (Johnson, 1982: 34). The four experts defined for the Council of Europe the main issues affecting the development of language learning systems for adults, i.e. how: (a) to promote European integration and the mobility of populations through increased language learning; (b) to increase motivations for language learning by adults and optimise provisions in language learning to meet the diversified (social and vocational) needs of adult learners; (c) to break down the global concept of language into units and sub-units based on an analysis of particular groups of adult learners in terms of the communicative situation in which they are characteristically involved; (d) to structure a European multi-media system for this purpose through the application of educational technology; (e) to use such a system for the orientation of potential software producers and the information of the learner on available material and facilities; (f) to develop within such a system appropriate and inbuilt forms of evaluation enabling adult learners to built up a study profile appropriate to their individual needs (Trim et al., 1980: 9).

By looking closely at and analysing the particular needs of specific groups of learners (e.g. secretaries and lawyers), they tried to identify those notions and functions it would be most valuable to teach. The development of some criterion for selecting these notions and functions which a particular group of learners will find especially

useful would lead to the production of a syllabus inventory (and courses) of reasonable proportions, specifically geared to their needs (Johnson, 1982: 40-41).

The effective planning of a unit/credit system required information collection on the statistics of adult language learning and use in Europe, which concerned: (a) the general demography of adult population (age, sex, education etc.); (b) the existing knowledge of languages; (c) what the schools are and will be producing in the way of language competence in young adults; (d) the subjectively felt language needs of adults in different categories; (e) the expressed needs of society for different kinds of language ability; (f) the objective patterns of existing foreign language use among adults in different demographic categories; g) the short and long-term projections of language use, and thus of needs. The information would produce a model for the analysis of adult language needs leading to a definition of aims translated into language acts and learning acts, and the definition of the content of the learning units and their pedagogic strategies. The definition of language needs was based on an analysis of *acts of communication* in terns of language *situations* (*topic*, *agents, time* and *place*)[1], and *operations* (comprising the *functions* which the act of communication has to fulfil, the *objects* to which it relates and the *means* used to produce it) (Trim et al., 1980: 10).

Since the aim of language learning is first and foremost the ability to communicate verbally (Trim et al., 1980: 11), in 1974 Van Ek elaborated a detailed specification of the minimum language requirements of people who want to prepare themselves, in a general way, to be able to communicate socially on straightforward everyday matters with people from other countries who come their way, and to be able to get around and lead a reasonably normal social life when they visit another country'. This was termed "The Threshold Level" (Trim, 2007).

Consequently, the activities of the CDCC (Council for Cultural Co-operation), its Committee for Education and its Modern Languages Section, have been concerned to encourage, support and co-ordinate the efforts of member governments and non-governmental institutions to improve language learning and in particular, the steps which they take to implement measures such as:

1. to ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of other member states (or of other communities within their own country) as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them to satisfy their communicative needs and in particular:
   1.1 to deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so;
   1.2 to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them;
   1.3 to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage.

1. Also see Johnson, 1982: 43-47.

8. Development and evaluation of reliability of the questionnaire of language and communication needs detection and analysis (the case of intercultural school students)

8.1. Control reliability-Reliability Test

We are going to proceed to the reliability analysis of the Language and Communication Needs questionnaire NAI (Needs Analysis Instrument) (Kofou, 2011). At this point it should be noted that the research sample for the pilot research was random, and all observations-measurements were independent. The data were analyzed through a five-rating Likert scale, and each pair of variables had a bivariate normality. Each question-statement (item) is linearly correlated with the total of all other questions-statements (items), which indicates that the scale which was constructed is of an additive model. Additionally, the statistical errors are uncorrelated between different variables.

In order to examine reliability, 5 reliability models were examined:

1. **Alfa Model (Cronbach's a),** which measures the reliability of the measurement scale, in the sense of Internal Consistency (Dafermos, 2009). It is based on the average of all correlations of all variables by two, and it is independent of the position of questions. In particular, the evaluation of reliability-internal consistency of the questionnaire is done using Cronbach's alpha (a) index (Cronbach, 1984), which, according to Nunnally (1978), is considered the most important reliability index, since it is based on the number of variables/questions of the questionnaire and the correlations between variables. Therefore, the alpha (a) index is the most important index of internal consistency and is attributed as the average of the correlations of all variables, and does not depend on their arrangement (Anastasiadou, 2006: 341).
2. **Split-Half Model**, which separates the measurement scale into two parts, not necessarily equal, and then examines whether these sections are correlated.
3. **Guttman Model,** which calculates the thresholds of Guttman coefficient for the real reliability.

4. **Parallel Model,** which assumes that all questions-statements-variables (items) that make up the measurement scale have equal variances and equal error variances in the conceptual design of replications.
5. **Strict Parallel Model,** which has the same assumptions with the Parallel model, and in addition, it assumes that all the questions-statements that make up the scale have equal averages. Both the Parallel Model and the Strict Parallel Model are tests, which estimate the degree of the adaptation of a conceptual structure to the data we have, the common and true distribution, and the common correlation of variables, and they finally give estimates for impartial reliability (Dafermos, 2009).

Table 8.1.1 shows the averages, standard deviations and the number of items, which take part in reliability analysis.

Table 8.1.1: Averages and standard deviations of variables (Item Statistics).

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q8 I want to learn English to communicate with other people	4.000	.8165	74
Q9 My personality and way of thinking help me learn English	3.000	.8165	74
Q10 I find interest in new experiences, other people, ideas and cultures	2.286	.9512	74
Q11 I want to move away from conventional attitudes towards cultural diversity	3.286	1.2536	74
Q12a I use English at family gatherings/parties	1.429	.7868	74
Q12b I use English on holidays and trips	3.000	.8165	74
Q12c I use English at sporting events	1.286	.4880	74
Q12d I use English at conferences	1.143	.3780	74
Q12e I use English at school	3.000	1.0000	74
Q12f I use English at visits and exchanges	1.714	1.1127	74
Q13a I use English with relatives	1.429	.7868	74
Q13b I use English with friends	3.143	1.0690	74
Q13c I use English with employees in services and agencies	1.429	.5345	74
Q13d I use English with my classmates	2.857	.8997	74
Q13e I use English with the class teacher	2.286	1.1127	74
Q14a I need English to know the geographical, environmental, demographic, economic and political characteristics of the country	1.571	.5345	74
Q14b I need to know English for everyday life (food and drink, holidays, leisure activities)	2.000	1.0000	74

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q14c I need English to know the living conditions	1.429	.5345	74
Q14d I need to know English for interpersonal relations (class, gender relations, family relations)	1.857	1.0690	74
Q14e I need English to know the values, principles and behaviors (local cultures, traditions, history, religion, humor)	1.857	.6901	74
Q14f I need English to know the social conventions (gifts, clothing, conventions and taboos)	1.714	.7559	74
Q14g I need English to know the relationship between the world of origin and the world of community the language expresses (e.g. to handle cultural misunderstandings)	1.286	.4880	74
Q14h I need English to know ritual behavior (religious ceremonies, birth, wedding, death, celebrations)	1.714	.7559	74
Q15 I can use the English language to communicate, learn how to learn and cooperate	3.143	.6901	74
Q16 I can use the English language to encounter new experiences, find and communicate information, and use new technologies	3.286	1.2536	74
Q17a I can use grammatical elements in English	3.000	1.2910	74
Q17b I am aware of word meaning in English	3.000	1.2910	74
Q17c I can write orthographically right in English	3.571	1.5119	74
Q17d I can read aloud a prepared text in English	3.857	1.3452	74
Q18a I use the English language to listen and understand (native speakers' talks, announcements, recordings)	2.143	1.0690	74
Q18b I use the English language to read and understand (e.g. information)	2.857	1.2150	74
Q18c I use the English language to speak (e.g., to play roles or sing)	3.571	1.2724	74
Q18d I use the English language to write (notes, articles, letters)	2.857	1.3452	74
Q18e I use the English language to translate/interpret or summarize texts and articles	2.857	1.5736	74
Q19a Activities I do in the English class: formal or informal discussion in English	2.286	1.1127	74
Q19b information exchange	2.571	1.1339	74
Q19c interviews	1.857	.6901	74
Q19d correspondence (letters, e-mail)	2.429	1.5119	74
Q20a Texts I listen to or read in English: public announcements, speeches, presentations, debates	1.714	.9512	74

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q20b ritual (official ceremonies)	1.429	.7868	74
Q20c amusing texts (performances, recitations, songs)	3.286	.7559	74
Q20d sports commentaries	2.000	1.1547	74
Q20e news	1.286	.4880	74
Q20f telephone conversations	1.429	.7868	74
Q20g job interviews	1.571	.7868	74
Q20h literature, teaching material	1.857	.8997	74
Q20i magazines/newspapers	1.857	1.0690	74
Q20j instruction manuals	2.429	1.1339	74
Q20k comics, graffiti	2.857	.8997	74
Q20l promotional material/brochures	2.000	.5774	
Q20m public signs and notices/advertisements	1.571	.7868	74
Q20n packaging and product labels/tickets	2.000	.8165	74
Q20o recipes, menus	1.714	.7559	74
Q20p forms and questionnaires	1.857	.6901	74
Q20q dictionaries	2.571	.5345	74
Q20r letters, faxes, memos, messages	2.143	.6901	74
Q20s reports and activities	2.571	.9759	74
Q20t songs	4.143	1.0690	74
Q20u texts on the board	2.429	1.1339	74
Q20v texts on the computer screen, slides, videos	3,143	1,4639	74
Q20w databases (news, general information etc)	2.000	.5774	74
Q21a Media I use in the English class: telephone, teleconference	1.571	.9759	74
Q21b radio broadcasts	1.571	.7868	74
Q21c television	2.571	1.6183	74
Q21d films	3.143	1.3449	74
Q21e computers (email, CD-Rom etc.)	3.143	1.7728	74
Q21f videos, DVDs	3.286	1.7043	74
Q21g cassettes, CDs	3.714	.9512	74
Q21h publications and manuscripts	3.571	1.2724	74

Summary Item Statistics

In the following table (Table 8.1.2: Summary Item Statistics), and especially in the second line, we observe that the variables-items have an average value ranging from 1.143 to 4.143 units. This means that the range for the variables that examine intercultural school students' language and communication needs have a range equivalent which comes to 3.

Table 8.1.2: Summary Item Statistics.

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum/Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.388	1.143	4.143	3.000	3.625	.608	69
Item Variances	1.051	.143	3.143	3.000	22.000	.462	69
Inter-Item Covariances	.136	–1.571	2.619	4.190	–1.667	.210	69
Inter-Item Correlations	.174	–.918	1.000	1.918	–1.089	.178	69

The table below (8.1.3) tells us that we had interviewed 81 foreign students but only 74 respondents' answers were taken into account as 74 students completed the questionnaire correctly, that is, we finally have 74 valid cases, and 7 cases were removed from the scale.

Table 8.1.3: Case Processing Summary.

		N	%
Cases	Valid	74	91.4
	Excluded[a]	7	8.6
	Total	81	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

The following table, Table 8.1.4: Reliability Statistics, shows us that the value of Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the scale of the research is 0.908 = 90.8%. This exceeds 80%, which is an extremely good value for the internal consistency of the conceptual design of the scale investigated (Anastasiadou, 2010, Nouris, 1992). If we go on to a unit exclusion, i.e. Standard values of variables, then Cronbach's alpha coefficient takes a value a=0.934, which means that it increases slightly. This means that if we increase the number of items, Cronbach's a will get the value 0.934.

Table 8.1.4: Reliability Statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.908	.934	69

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