

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Development in ESP

ESP evolved in the mid-60's in response to an awareness that certain types of learners had specialised needs which were not sufficiently and efficiently dealt with in most of the current EFL courses which mainly focussed on grammar/ comprehension or general communication skills. The learners were mainly pursuing tertiary education or professional training. It was felt that they had more limited and finely focussed needs, for example, a chemist wanting to participate in conferences both locally and overseas, and an undergraduate seeking to understand lectures and participate in seminars etc. (Mackay, 1975).

Mackay and Mountford (1978) have suggested three kinds of purposes:

- (1) "Occupational requirements e.g. for international telephone operators, civil airline pilot etc.
- (2) Vocational training programmes, for example for hotel and catering staff, technical trades etc.
- (3) Academic and professional study e.g. engineering, medicine, law, etc."

This was modified by Strevens (1977) when he suggested that "all special-purpose language teaching courses are either occupational or educational in nature." Initially ESP took with it the "then current preoccupations of EFL"-emphasis on linguistic competence, avoidance of error, a rigidly-graded approach to syntax and lexis (Williams, Swales, and

Kirkman 1984).

The crucial element in any ESP course was the attention given to the needs of the learner. Learner-centredness was not being shown in communicative competence instead of mere linguistic or grammatical competence. This is attested to by Brumfit (1977) as cited in Robinson 1980,

"first it is clear that an ESP course is directly concerned with the purposes for which learners need English, purposes which are usually expressed in functional terms. ESP thus fits firmly with the general movement towards 'communicative' teaching of the last decade or so."

More attention was being paid to text information-structure in reading and writing, appropriateness of style in academic writing and study skills. Greater emphasis was also being placed on the learner's learning than on the teacher's teaching.

Strevens (1988) suggests that there are four absolute and two variable characteristics of ESP.

"ESP consists of English Language Teaching which is - designed to meet specified needs of the learner; related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, centred on language appropriate to those activities, in syntax, lexis, discourse, and semantics, in contrast with 'General English'."

Two approaches to ESP gained prominence among ESP's practitioners in the late 80's. The first is the Learning-Centred Approach (LCA) advocated by Hutchinson and Waters (Hutchinson & Waters 1981). In the early 1980's a few practitioners began to look at the processes of language learning, that is, what the learner needs to do in order to acquire the language instead of the 'target performance repertoire', which is what the learner needs

to do with the language at the end of the language course. They felt that all decisions as to the content and method ought to be based on the learner's reason for learning.

The second approach was concerned with producing 'pedagogically usable descriptions of aspects of academic English' (Tickoo, 1994). Insights into several disciplines were taken into account when texts were analysed. Each text was related to its role(s) inside a discourse community. Its main product was the 'genre' which has drawn a lot of attention amongst ESP practitioners. Roe (1993) believes that English for Specific Purpose (ESP) means:

"the grasping of the systematic nature of those selections made by the community in question and, most importantly, the relationship between these and values, purposes, meanings, they are meant to convey."

Tickoo (1994) suggests that for "small sectors of academic English GA (Genre Analysis) appears to offer insights capable of serving limited pedagogic ends." However, in many other cases they require "support from ethnographic or subject knowledge and adaptations to suit changing institutional conventions." For larger areas of ESP such as Business English communications (BEC) GA may have only a minor role even in the English speaking world. Outside the English speaking world it requires rethinking especially in aspects of theory and on the pedagogy it promotes. GA's main strength probably lies in what it offers the linguist towards thicker description than in what it gives the practitioners towards ESP course design or material development.

Robinson(1991), stated that "what is specific and appropriate in one part of the globe may well not be elsewhere." Given the wide variety of contexts and of ESP courses around the world today, she adds that what practitioners are involved in is "not so much English for Specific Purposes but teaching English to Specific People."

Swales (1988) felt that ESP programmes in educational institutions in the third world, for example, are "liable to fracture for three main sorts of reasons, such as uncertain status, poor communications with other departments and insufficient contact with the student's real world." He felt one should take into account the socio-political, logistic, administrative and psycho-pedagogic variables. Other practitioners have felt that there is a need to understand the culture of the classroom and the ways in which it is influenced by attitudes, expectations and beliefs outside it in the society to which it belongs and remains accountable. In the words of Bowers (1980) there is the need to grasp 'the spider's web of variables' within which ESP programmes take shape and operate. This means that the demands of a large number of people (clients, customers institutionalized pressure groups, the societies they form part of and the ESP practitioners themselves) with their various motivations, abilities and backgrounds have to be taken into consideration.

The road to ESP professionalism, according to Tickoo (1994) lies in making it a "situated educational enterprise (SEE)." It is undertaken to answer defined instructional goals and it is built on a full and reliable understanding of the existing human and material resources, the networks of human relationships and the established ways of teaching and learning needs of learners.

Syllabuses

In view of the above review of the development of ESP over the last 20 years the researcher believes that ESP curriculum designers have to deal with the problem of designing suitable courses or syllabuses for different groups of learners. The term 'syllabus' needs to be defined. According to Patricia Furey (1984) a syllabus is primarily concerned

with what is to be learned but Corder (1975) points out that it is more than an inventory of terms. In Streven's (1977) words:

"a syllabus is partly an administrative instrument, partly a day-to-day guide to the teacher, partly a statement of what is to be taught and how, sometimes, partly a statement of approach..... the syllabus embodies that part of the language which is to be taught, broken down into items or otherwise processed for teaching purposes."

Wilkins (1981) says,

"syllabuses are specifications of the content of language teaching which have been submitted to some degree of structuring or ordering with the aim of making teaching and learning a more effective process."

Candlin (1984), however, views syllabuses as :

"Social constructions produced interdependently in the classrooms by teachers and learners..... they are concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned, frequently set down in some written form as prescription for action by teachers and learners."

Based on the above descriptions it can be said that syllabuses are plans for teaching aimed at what can be achieved via teaching and learning and it specifies what is to be taught and in what form. In preparing a syllabus therefore, what, when and how to teach must be decided on: the selection of data, their organisation and presentation as teaching materials are considered to be the basic steps involved in syllabus design. Theory has undergone an important shift from language structure to an ability to use language for communicative syllabus. It is necessary to see how the emphasis has varied from one to the other.

Needs analysis and ESP

Needs analysis is generally regarded as critical to an ESP course. According to Munby (1978), in order to decide what to teach, an investigation of the communicative needs of the learner must first be established, for instance, the communicative purpose, setting, activities and the relationships between him and his interlocutors. Therefore, identification of needs precedes the selection of the speech function or rhetorical acts to be taught.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) indicated that since most of the ESP learners are adults, they are 'aware' of a need to learn. The primary consideration then, in any ESP undertaking or decision making, should be the learner's purpose and needs for learning the target language. Hence, the point of departure of any syllabus design is an identification of the language needs of the ESP learners concerned. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are of the opinion that the possibility of identifying a "definable need to communicate in English" is what distinguishes an ESP learner from a General English learner. But needs analysis according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) is more complex than just identifying the language needs of the target situation. Apart from target situation needs, learning needs must be taken into account. Learning needs tell us "how people learn to do what they do with language." In other words, a learning-centred approach to needs analysis takes into account a multiplicity of "affective and cognitive variables which affect learning," (Brindley, 1989:63). Littlewood (1984:1-2) stresses that in order to produce effective teaching, one must be aware that individual learners "have their own personalities, motivations and learning styles". The failure of methods and techniques to produce effective teaching is related to a failure to engage the learner's personality in the educational process and

include the learner as an active participant in the developmental process.

The specific requirements of the learners rather than external features such as general educational criteria (Stevens, 1977:50) therefore determine the aims and content of an ESP course. An ability to meet the learner's purpose for learning will enhance learner motivation and maintain the learner's interest. The specific requirements of the learners should include the "learners' current and future language use" (Brindley 1989:63).

Trimby (1979) lists the following use of needs analysis in syllabus design. Needs analysis:

- (1) helps decide learners' current ability to use language
- (2) helps decide the training gap of learners
- (3) indicates the types of learning environment, duration, methods and content which might be appropriate for learners' subjective needs in the light of learners' attitudes, motivation and awareness
- (4) helps choose appropriate language contexts to meet communication needs of learners-
 - a) so that learners can be placed in groups of homogenous language proficiency
 - b) so that language content can be pitched at the learners' proficiency level
 - c) so that adults' individual characteristics as learners can be given due consideration
 - d) so that adults can be helped to be self-directing by being involved in decision-making about their own learning.
 - e) so that learners will be presented with language data relevant to their own personal goals and social roles
 - f) so that motivation will be enhanced by the relevance of this language content and learning will thus be facilitated

A consideration of these advantages on the part of the syllabus constructor and course designer in planning and implementing courses for engineers in multi-national company and engineering sector will do much to enhance the engineers' motivation, thus making language teaching and learning for them more effective and meaningful. A needs analysis is definitely useful in the context of my study.

ESP's greatest contribution to language teaching has been its insistence upon careful and extensive needs and task analysis for curriculum design. Before the inception of ESP there was a tendency to 'intuit' the needs and future language uses of students, rather than to attempt to discover them. The concept of a needs survey originates from the work of the team of experts which the Council of Europe assembled in 1971 to study certain linguistic problems which were faced by the European nations at the time of the creation of the common market. Many workers began to move north to work in countries whose language they could not speak. At the same time there was greater mobility between countries in various occupations and professions. What this implied is that the communicative needs of the workplace were seen as of utmost importance. The needs survey was at that time closely tied to the language needs the worker would experience in a foreign country throughout the duration of his work. Hence specifications made for course content were based on detailed studies of these kinds of language needs such as:

- (1) examining the tasks learners have to perform in English
- (2) understanding the target situation in which they will operate
- (3) analysing the discourse of the target situations and
- (4) determining learners' learning strategies.

McDonald and Sager (1975) as cited by Robinson (1981) suggest that the identification of needs depends on the level of experience of the learners. If the learner is

already trained in his occupation, his motivation is strong. He knows what he needs and what he needs it for. He can himself define the skills, purposes as well as the language areas that are required. Pilbeam (1979) talked of the 'language audit' (used in language training for business and industry) to plot the role played by a foreign language in a commercial or industrial enterprise. Learners may have their own needs (not to be confused with wants and desires) in learning English and in deciding on what needs should be taken into consideration before designing a course, curriculum designers have to take note of the factors shaping the needs of the student such as external entities (colleges, universities, a national education policy making body and future employer). Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff and Nelson (1985) suggest that needs analysis can be defined in general as "the process of determining the things that are necessary for the fulfillment of a defensible purpose. It helps to determine what needs exist and how these needs should be addressed." Sinha A. C and Sadorra L. C (1991) suggest that in any ESP course which is learner-centred, the needs, they felt are the basis for designing a specific course for a specific group of learners. Since different groups of learners have different needs in learning English, a course that does not take into account the specific needs of a group of learners is likely to be ineffective.

Approach to needs analysis

A comprehensive study of needs analysis requires investigating needs from a variety of informants and by a variety of means. This is to ensure validity and reliability in the study. The importance of identifying the learners' needs have been elaborated upon earlier. The second group of informants, the employer of the user-institution and the teaching establishment, according to Richterich and Chancerel (1978) and Chambers (1980), can provide useful alternative sources of information for identifying language needs and

establishing course objectives.

Other ESP practitioners favour the opinion of the course lecturers only. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) feel that course lecturers are the most suitable people to determine the needs in ESP courses and to translate these needs into linguistic and pedagogic terms to produce and teach an effective course. Khoo (1994a) and Bhatia (1994) are in agreement that changes in course design are initiated by the lecturers. Lawson (1979, cited in Berwick, 1989:65) cautioned that lecturers' approaches to 'needs' will be heavily influenced by their practical experience as well as by their personal philosophy and conception of their role.

The most commonly applied means of analysis is the questionnaire (Robinson, 1980:29). Since a questionnaire may not discover all the needs, other means should also be used. Van Passel, Shroeder and Gorosch(cited in Robinson, 1980) have employed other means in their survey. Trimby, 1979 (cited in Brindley, 1989) gives a detailed list of methods of data collection:

- (1) standardised forms
- (2) language proficiency tests
- (3) observation
- (4) intensive language analysis in target communication situation
- (5) surveys of learners' patterns of language use.
- (6) counselling / interviews
- (7) oral surveys
- (8) group discussions
- (9) written questionnaires followed by discussion

In diagnosing the needs of the engineers, the instruments used will be the survey

questionnaire, interview and examination of the corpus.

Needs analysis and course design

Needs analysis is an essential preliminary to any course design. In this study, the terms 'course design' and 'curriculum design' are used interchangeably. Foremost in the mind of the course designer is the central question "What does the learner want or need to do with the language?" Needs analysis provides guidance to the development of the following areas in curriculum design (Tan, 1994:247):

- (1) course content and language skills and structures
- (2) approaches and methods used
- (3) resources needed
- (4) objective set
- (5) teachers' attitude and approaches
- (6) materials designed
- (7) testing and evaluation to monitor the course
- (8) review and re-design of course

Robertson (1971:564; cited in Richards, 1980:4) defines the curriculum as including:

"... goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the language experience planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programmes"

(Richards 1980:4)

There are basically 4 important components in curriculum planning:

- (1) formulation of objectives
- (2) selection of content
- (3) selection of instructional procedures(methodology)

(4) evaluation

Having first identified needs, it is then possible to define the objectives of a teaching programme, select relevant content and methodology and evaluate both course objective and course design. Thus the programme will be more valid and as a result, learner motivation will be higher. Owing to the constraints of time and resources, language practitioners are often not given the opportunity or the luxury of designing courses on the basis of a systematic assessment of learners' needs. The absence of this aspect in the planning accounts to a large extent for the inappropriateness of ESP curricula, where courses are designed with little consideration given to an objective analysis of learners' purposes for learning the target language. Ultimately, these courses may prove to be unsatisfactory in terms of meeting the demands and expectations of learners as well as those of employers and user-institutions.

With an increase in demand for ESP courses and an inadequate supply of ESP specialists to teach the courses, needs analysis tends to be shoved aside in a hurry to design courses and churn out course materials to get a share of the lucrative ESP market. In any ESP course design, needs analysis is an integral and dynamic process of the learning system. It is the researcher's hope that this study will lay some ground work and will encourage English teachers called to teach ESP courses to carry out needs analysis and apply the findings to designing a suitable English course.

Needs analysis and objective formulation

"It is now widely accepted as a principle of programme design that needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives."

(Brindley, 1989:63)

A language objective can be defined as description of the behaviour expected of a learner after instruction (Davis et al, 1974). A learning objective relates to the learner's performance as follows:

- (1) it has the learner as the subject
- (2) it describes what the learner can do
- (3) it specifies the conditions under which the performance takes place
- (4) it specifies the degree of proficiency or performance standards to be demonstrated by the learner.

Robinson believes that there are two steps in a needs analysis:

- (1) establish the target profile of language skills needed for a job by finding out what tasks or activities people perform in their jobs and the level of language performance required.
- (2) [identify] a profile of present ability to establish the gaps between employees' present ability profile and the company's target profile. (Robinson, 1991:9)

The first step is in line with Widdowson's view of needs, which is "goal-oriented" (Widdowson 1981:2), that is, "what the learner needs to do with the language once he has learned it." This will provide appropriate language content in the teaching of ESP. The second step identifies the training gap of the learners. The training gap highlights what should be the training focus and what needs to be achieved in the long term rather than what can be immediately achieved on a particular course. Setting learning objectives serves a number of useful purposes, especially since the learners concerned here are adults who are cognitively mature and independent.

- (1) it enables the teacher to evaluate what has been learned since terminal behaviour is always defined in terms which are measurable;

- (2) it means that learners know what they are supposed to be learning and what is expected of,
- (3) it provides a constant means of feedback and ongoing evaluation for both learner and teacher; and
- (4) it provides a means for learners to set their own standards of performance and evaluate how well these standards have been attained. (Davis et al, 1974)

Once the learning objectives have been established, a framework for course design can be drawn up. The objectives of the course will determine the language and awareness activities. Courses, evaluation and feedback provide for further changes in defining needs through a process of information exchange, discussion and negotiation to arrive at a new set of objectives. This study plans to establish the target profile of language skills and establish the training gaps of the engineers in terms of objectives in the proposed course outlined in chapter 5. Each task in the proposed course is preceded by a statement of the learning objective.

Needs analysis and selection of methodology

Methodology is defined broadly as the instructional strategies and learning processes employed by both teachers and learners in performing tasks which they engage in, separately, in groups, or as a whole class. Many aspects of conduct (what is taught) are closely interrelated with method (how the teaching is conducted). These changes in syllabus design from a structural to a communicative syllabus mentioned in the previous section implied quite radical changes of method, teaching material and language lecturers' attitudes. Yalden (1983) advocates a more flexible approach to teaching an ESP course. According to her an approach whereby a classroom experience closely approximates the environments of real language use is reflected as communicative. Syllabuses designed for

such situations should thus be called communicative syllabuses. Syllabuses can take several forms, e.g., structural-functional (Wilkins, 1974), structures and functions (Brumfit, 1979), variable focus (Allen, 1980), functional (Robinson, 1970), fully functional (Maley, 1980), fully communicative (Allwright, 1979), 'task-based' (Nunan, 1988a) and 'procedural' (prabhu, 1983). The last two approaches emphasize learning activities in the form of tasks, exercises and teaching techniques. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 92) suggest a learning-centred approach emphasizing the learning process that occurs. The principles underlying learning activities and Hutchinson's and Waters' learning-centred approach are very similar (Nunan, 1988a). In this approach, the "syllabus and materials evolve together, with each being able to inform the other." (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 93) The syllabus is thus used creatively to generate relevant learning activities; at the same time, maintaining relevance to target needs. The model developed by Hutchinson and Waters combines the four elements of content, input, language and task. The task component is central and from it are derived relevant language and content. Task, as defined by Nunan (1988a), is "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form." This analytical approach assumes that language can be learned holistically in 'chunks', or as it were (Nunan, 1988b) without need to linguistically grade the language to be taught.

This approach, which requires the use of experiential rather than linguistic content as the starting point for syllabus design, would be more intellectually stimulating for the engineers. A process-oriented, learning-centred, task-based approach will be adopted for the recommended course design in chapter 5 with equal emphasis placed on the product and process of learning.

Needs analysis and evaluation

Needs analysis should not only be carried out at ongoing process (Richterich and Chancerel, 1978) which can be conducted mid-course or at the end of the course in the form of an evaluation of course objectives to provide feedback on changing needs.

Feedback can be obtained through group discussions, surveys, interviews, learning contacts and communication awareness activities, learning strategies profile, etc. (Brindley, 1989:78).

"If feedback and consultation are built into the learning cycle, a language activity can in itself become a kind of needs analysis which allows the teacher to perceive and provide for needs as they arise." (Brindley, 1989:76)

Ongoing analysis is necessary since the learners' needs may change with a change in jobs, financial resources and with changes in needs as the ESP course progresses. As the learners undertake learning activities, they become more aware of what is involved in learning a language and become more conscious of their own resources. As a result, their needs will change and the cycle of information exchange leads to further adjustments and a re-evaluation of needs. Robinson (1991:65) distinguishes between formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is carried out during the life of a course or project and the results obtained can be used to modify what is being done. Knight (cited in Robinson, 1991), refers to formative evaluation as monitoring. Summative evaluation is carried out at the end of a course or project to ascertain the effectiveness of a course or project. Summative evaluation can serve as a resource for others thinking of conducting similar courses. Both formative and summative evaluation would provide useful feedback and will be included in the proposed course design of this study.