INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Problem

Over the last 10 or 15 years, the internationalization of businesses and the growth of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) have generated an increasing number of business English textbooks. However, even with the recent rapid expansion, commercial ESP business publications seem to have not solved the problem of suiting teaching materials to the needs of learners. This paper thus explores the issue of whether there are possibilities of books which can represent the best solution to meet the language needs of target learners or even ONE target learner as is the focus of this study. If such possibilities do not exist, the role of textbooks in the teaching and learning of ESP, Business English in particular, is then questionable. My hypothesis is that textbooks at best serve as the main structural framework in the teaching and learning of ESP - particularly Business English, and at worst, they could be adapted supplementary materials.

1.2 Source of Information

1.2.1 Textbooks as teaching resource

In many teaching situations, teachers rely on textbooks. Littlejohn (1992: 84) in his study of some wide-used primary / lower secondary textbooks echoed the idea that textbooks have produced a kind of dependency culture among teachers and learners. Some claimed that no teaching-learning situation is complete until it has its
relevant textbook. In fact, even now, the textbook is an almost universal element in
ELT teaching.

In some studies, textbooks have been found to play an important role in the
management process. Torres (1994) in a questionnaire data to learners asked, “Why do
you want to use a published textbook?” Learners cite 'content' and management as
their reasons for wanting published textbooks. They see textbooks as 'framework' or
'guide' that help them organize learning inside and outside classroom thus enabling
them to learn faster, better and clearer, etc. Meanwhile, teachers cited the facilitating
role of textbooks in managing their lessons. They “save time, give directions to lessons,
guide discussion, facilitate giving of homework, making teaching easier, better
organised, more convenient and learning, easier, faster and better”. They provided
security and confidence to teachers. Prabhu (1992) characterised a lesson as a social
event which in turn is characterised by a high level of unpredictability. Generally, such
unpredictability is intolerable. Textbooks enable the process of routinization to lower
the level of unpredictability of a lesson. Textbooks impose a structure on interactive
learning.

In fact, such structured lesson is not a constraint. Wong-Fillmore (1985)
concluded from her observation of different lessons that good lessons were
characterized by a clear lesson format with lesson phases clearly marked and
signposted, by regularly scheduled events, and by clear and fair turn of allocation for
student participation. In short, a good lesson is a clearly structured lesson. There have
been assumptions that structured mean dictatorial. However, it is possible for a teacher
to present a highly structured learning environment that allow students great flexibility, responsibility and freedom of choice.

Then, in another description, Torres (1990) found that ESP textbook for fisheries technology provided the basis for communication between ESP teachers and content teachers, leading to a better relationship in working together instead of blaming each other for learners' poor language skills. Textbook is visible and can be freely negotiated. It is a detailed, full and easily accessible map for the teaching-learning process. The process does not reside in the teacher's head where it is inaccessible to anyone else except the teacher; nor is it a written syllabus, understood only by those who can decipher the framing code of the syllabus. Textbooks provide visible and predictable structures for the management of a lesson as a social interaction and a basis for negotiation for all relevant parties.

Again, in Torres (1990), the introduction of an ESP textbook meant that teachers were not spending their time scouring for materials and producing visual aids, but were free to concentrate on planning the lessons and understanding the subject matter. As also the two teachers in Torres' study said, "The ESP textbook enabled the teachers to save time, especially when the teacher were quite busy ["...I lack the time and...finances"] with other school matters. It resulted in better planned lessons, a more creative methodology and more useful materials adaptation and supplementation.

Furthermore, the use of textbooks relieves the teacher of the burden of responsibility for introducing changes. ESP teachers in Torres' study, drew great comfort from the fact that textbooks project to meet changes was supported by a network of regional colleges and content teachers and administrators. Textbook is a vehicle for teacher and
learner to accommodate changes in teaching approaches, etc. within a structured framework. (Hutchinson & Torres, 1993).

And, I tend to agree with what Robinson, P. (1981) said, "a real professional is able to make a principle choice between materials writing and use of what is already available in the market". What is often needed is written supplementary materials to published courses. In fact, Stodolsky (1988 : 180) found little evidence to support the idea that teachers teach strictly by the book. Most often teachers follow their own scripts by adapting or changing text-book based texts, changing task inputs or expected outputs, and so on. The more developed the textbook, the greater the skills required of the user. Thus, textbook can be seen as a means of 're-skilling' and not 'de-skilling'. Providing classroom materials is just one of the functions of textbooks.

However, Swan (1992 : 33) gives this warning:

The danger with ready-made textbooks is that they can seem to absolve teachers of responsibility. Instead of participating in day-to-day decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to teach, it is easy to just sit back and operate the system, secure in the belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case.

And according to Littlejohn (1992) again, given the influence of textbooks, there appears to be apathy or even hostility to textbooks in academic circle. There is even "the widespread feeling that textbooks available are deficient" (Robinson, 1992 : 57). Are the above observations and feeling justified? Many current ESP materials claim to derive their textual input from students' propose course of study or work, for example, English for Mechanical Engineering, English for Business, etc. Authentic materials have been used from these learner situations to be developed as classroom
materials. To a great extent, ESP depends on help and materials from professional specialists for its successful implementation. However, are textbooks in fact teaching the correct or the most useful or appropriate language (skills)?

Ventola (1984) pointed out:

"so far, the major orientation of textbooks has been towards individual speech acts or exchanges ....communicative skills and strategies should be incorporated in a larger framework."

And many textbooks still teach isolated functions (Williams, 1988). In fact, Williams (1988) in her research entitled ‘Language taught in meetings and language used in meetings. Is there anything in common?’ mentioned her dissatisfaction with textbooks currently in the market, particularly on meetings, discussion and negotiations in her search for suitable teaching materials or texts for Business English. After some observation, she was convinced that language taught by textbooks did not reflect language used in meetings, nor was the language of any use when students participated in meetings. In order to confirm the observation, Williams embarked on an exploratory examination of language used by 12 native speakers of English in 3 business meetings. The exponents of functions used were compared to the functions for use in business meetings specifically taught in 5 Business English textbooks. It was found that there was almost no correspondence between the two. Her study raised the question of whether textbooks are in fact teaching the correct or the most useful or appropriate language for meetings. This study is to some extent a response to this researcher’s call for more real data about what and how language is used in different situations before coursebook writers can begin to select what to write to be taught for different situations.
In addition to that, the development of concepts such as process syllabus (Breen 1984) seemed to preclude the idea of fixed and permanent textbooks. Resource packs and the like and the creation of own texts are advocated.

Yet another observation by Sheldon (1988) provides the basis for this paper: textbooks were frequently seen as the tainted end-product of an author’s or a publisher’s desire for a quick profit. Generally, textbooks were subjects of tension between educationally desirable and financially viable, or valid, labour-saving tools versus ‘masses of rubbish skilfully marketed’ (Brumfit 1980 : 30). And even Littlejohn (1992) implies that vulnerable teachers and learners are being seduced and exploited by the attractive packages deals offered by commercial publishers. Will this study revealed similar reasons for throwing away ESP textbooks? According to Sheldon (1980) again, just as ELT books, there have been emphatic contradictions and conflicts in their creation, commercial exploitation, public assessment and selection and ultimate classroom use. (Sheldon, 1980). The credibility of coursebook is put on trial and that is what makes the subject of text analysis interesting. And it is when the textbooks are to be used as coursebooks rather than as supplementary textbooks that controversies about them escalate. The reason is that there would be considerable professional, financial and even political investment in the search for suitable coursebook(s) for a group or an individual learner.

Finally, there is the belief that any materials there are commercially available could not possible be suited for this particular learner since they have not been specifically designed for it. Pilbeam & Leckey (1987) confirmed the problem of finding published materials to use on ESP courses. In fact, Jones (1990) posed a crucial
question in the title of the research "ESP textbooks: Do they really exist?" Thus, I believe that there is an assumption that needs to be addressed: the assumption (in Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) that "a textbook cannot meet the needs of any individual teaching-learning situation nor the needs of the individuals within it" because it has not been specifically designed for the particular learner. Is this assumption true also in this local Malaysian context?

In sum there have been many negative views of ELT textbooks and ESP textbooks have not been spared.

The 'fact' that no ONE textbook fits for reasons of deficiency or whatever, suggests that the real issue is not which syllabus to put first or use. According to Swan (1985), it is how to integrate and/or syllabuses of different texts or sources (form, situational, topic, functional, notional, skills, etc.) into a sensible teaching programme to meet the needs of learner(s). But often one is likely to be the primary organising principle for the course, other syllabus subordinate to it. Allen (1984) advocated variable focus of various lessons while McDonough (1986) argued for a range of approaches within a course. However, before one decides on how to integrate syllabuses of different texts or sources, there is a need for text evaluation. The next section discusses the theoretical framework for text analysis.

1.2.2 Text Analysis for Syllabus Design - A Theoretical Framework

The content analysis criteria for textbooks can be those adapted from that of Hutchinson & Waters (1994) in English for Specific Purpose - A Learning-Centred Approach, Cambridge University Press. pp. 99-104. This criteria is used in this study.
Syllabus or course design analysis of the textbooks are based on the combined 3 approaches in ELT syllabus depicted in the figure below:

Adapted from Robinson (1991: 35).

Content-based syllabus are of four types. The first is that of language form. Here, language items are graded according to difficulty of learning. Another is the notional-functional syllabus (Wilkins, 1976) where the basic units are notions or concepts or ideas (for example, time, space) or functions (for example, greeting, seeking clarification, asking). The third is situationally organised syllabus, that is according to situations which may be presented in chronological order, for example, meeting clients, entertaining clients, negotiating with clients, etc. Meanwhile, topic-
based syllabus deploys the content of learner’s work. Sandler (1990) provides an example of this syllabus:

**Topic Syllabus**

1. The Rig  
2. Fishing Jobs  
3. Traps & Geology  
4. Reservoir Fluids  
5. Natural Flow  
6. Blowout Control  
7. Drives & Simulations  
8. Directional Wells  
9. Jobs on the Rig

(*Sandler, 1990*)

There are language skills and learning skills in skills-based syllabus. The former focusses exclusively on one or more of the four traditional language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and / or also includes ‘professional skills’ or ‘communicative skills’ such as making oral presentation. Learning skills would involve micro-skills, for example, inferencing, deducing gist for the ‘macro’ reading skills or gestures, appropriate phraseology, terminology and clear pronunciation for communicative skills. This syllabus suggested the development of cognitive skills other than language skills.

An example of skills syllabus is as follows:

**Skills Syllabus**

1. Organising your studies  
2. Improving your reading efficiency  
3. Taking notes  
4. Taking part in seminars  
5. Writing an essay i) Research and using the library  
6. Writing an essay ii) Organisation  
7. Writing an essay iii) Presentation  
8. Assessment, study techniques and examinations

(*Wallace, 1980*)
The method, also known as process approach to syllabus design could be divided into two sub-categories: process or method or leaning process and the other, task or procedure. The key feature of the first approach is that it involves negotiation between learners and teachers for the students to select the syllabus that they feel they would learn best. The focus is sharing responsibility, problem-posing rather than problem-solving and exploiting the experiences of learner. The procedural or known as task-based syllabus consists of a set of tasks or activities ordered according to cognitive difficulty. Only when language is necessary for carrying out the tasks successfully is language focussed. Here, materials are viewed not merely as texts but as activities learners engage themselves in.

According to Hutchinson & Waters (1991), evaluation is basically a matching process: matching needs to available solutions - justifying the fitness of something [in this case textbook(s)] for a particular purpose [in this case, the target learner needs]. They mentioned that needs analysis and course design form the basis of selection of 3 options of turning the analysis and design into actual teaching materials:

1) Select from existing materials: materials evaluation
2) Write own materials: materials development
3) Modify existing materials: materials adaptation

Both materials development and materials adaptation involve materials evaluation and textbooks are one source of ideas and techniques for material production.

Since textbook analysis on its own does not serve a purpose, therefore, it has to be geared towards learner's needs. Thus the process of needs analysis is inevitable in the search for the text to meet learner(s) needs.
1.2.3 Needs Analysis

According to Schegloff (1971), the teacher must first make an analysis of what the students already know before he or she starts to teach. One source of such knowledge necessary in the process of language syllabus design could be gained from the significant innovation which the Council of Europe introduced: that of prior analysis of learner needs as a guide to the selection of syllabus content, hence the term needs analysis. Needs analysis is concerned with finding out the learners' needs in the use of the target language (i.e. who is communicating with whom, why, where, when, how, at what level, about what and in what way).

There seems to be confusion over the interpretation of the term 'needs' due to different perceptions. For example, Hawkey (1985) suggested the label 'objectives' in place of needs as the latter is more appropriate for individuals' inner requirements. I would not go into a debate on how the term is defined, rather in this paper, I would compromise by using needs to cover target needs - what learners have to be able to do at the end of a course, and learner needs - what the learners themselves would like to gain with reference to needs at the workplace, the latter encompassing desires or wants. Some consideration for the learning needs - learning styles, in particular, would be considered to facilitate learner learning within specifically, the constraints of time.

Needs analysis is now regarded as an essential step especially in the design of courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Most comprehensive and best known work in this area is Munby (1978). And according to Johns, 1991 (cited in Benesh, 1996), the rationale for needs analysis is that by identifying elements of learner target
English situations, and using them as basis for ESP instructions, teachers will provide them with specific language they need to succeed in their careers.

Needs analysis would also help in making an important distinction between target learners who are newcomers to this field of work and those who are already experts or on the way to becoming so. As Strevens (1988) noted, “this distinction is between English which is instructional and English which is operational”. Generally, newcomers need instructions in concepts and practices. Experienced ones prefer operational ESP materials - the ability to function in English is imparted. Needs analysis would reveal the category the target learners belong to. It has implications for the kind of content knowledge teachers need to deploy. It would help determine the generality or specificity of ESP course.

The recent trend of needs assessment has concentrated on individual needs than on group needs. This has been observed more than a decade ago (refer Mackay & Palmer, 1981).

The next step after assessing needs is conceptualizing the course - the design of a syllabus. And I prefer the use of the term syllabus which refers to a plan of work to be taught in a particular course (British sense) to the term curriculum which involve issues of policy, planning and complete education environment, the latter of which would not be covered in this study (definitions by Johnson (1989)). In the design, one must bear in mind that a good syllabus is not simply one that is based on sound theoretical principles but one that can realistically be implemented, given the social and education context in which it is used. ESP practitioners would find it beneficial to
realise that learners of ESP study English not for interest in the language itself, but for work purposes. Such goal orientedness has implications for the kinds of activities and topics.

In ESP too we are dealing mainly with adult learners. What makes ESP and this study challenging and intriguing is that adults have their own 'set' styles of learning. The choice of materials and teaching methods often need to be adapted to suit and cater for their emotional, intellectual and physical needs.

Therefore, ESP practitioners need knowledge of or need to learn to access information on what learners are professionally involved with before they can analyse textbooks to decide on the possibilities of whether the textbook(s) provide the best solution to the learner(s) needs.

As in this study, the framework for the needs analysis can be based on models and classification provided by:

1) Dr J.A. Van Ek (1985) in *The Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools for the Council of Europe*, Longman.


1.2.4 Objectives of Project Paper

In the light of some crucial questions and assumptions which have been discussed, it is thus the purpose of this project paper to carry out content analysis of some published Business English textbooks after carrying out needs analysis. Furthermore, there are also currently no locally published ESP books that I have come across. It would be thus interesting to find the extent of the relevance of native books to a non-native local learner. This study also heeds the call of Robinson (1991) that there are too few reviews of Business English textbooks in spite of the rapid expansion of commercial ESP business publications.

Thus the aim of this paper is to find out the extent to which published textbooks meet the language needs of a target learner. The research questions are:

1. What are the topics or subject matters which are relevant to the learner?
2. What are the grammatical structures which are relevant to the learner?
3. What are the language functions which are relevant to the learner?
4. What are the language skills relevant to the learner?
5. What are the communicative or professional skills relevant to the learner?
6. What methodology or style or approach is relevant to the learner?

The answers to these questions would have bearing on the role and purpose of textbooks in the teaching and learning of ESP - Business English, in particular. The information obtained may explain whether ESP practitioners, including learners can resort wholly to published Business English textbooks to be used as coursebooks, whether ESP practitioners can base their materials on published coursebooks and also
whether ESP practitioners should design in-house materials and not base them on published textbooks.

The answers and information obtained would have implications on ESP learners, teachers and teaching methods, and materials and material writers. ESP practitioners and learners would learn to investigate and realise the importance of choosing relevant texts. Learning how texts are 'organised' could enable learners to independently assume responsibility of deciding on the most appropriate texts for their particular situations. Teachers and material writers too would gain some insights regarding teaching methods and materials production respectively. Thus, this paper attempts to cast some insights for ESP practitioners who, as Robinson (1991) put it, need training in ways of describing language, training in teaching language and training in designing language courses.

1.3 Limitations

Every evaluation is by definition, value-laden. Judgement is derived from a complex relationship between evaluator's attitudes, values and beliefs and the objects of evaluation, in this case needs analysis and textbooks. Thus, there is no universal evaluation criteria.

It has been said that actual analysis is disappointingly subjective, 'does not have objective reality (Brindley, 1989) and is influenced by ideological perceptions of analyst (Robinson, 1991: 7). My own experiences in carrying out needs analysis have seemed to support such observations. I do not deny that to some extent, my own interpretation
and perception could have crowded the results of the needs analysis. Furthermore, it has been almost impossible and impractical to attempt to predict all uses for which a learner might want to use language or skills. However, I believe needs analysis to a great extent reflected learner needs. At the least, needs analysis reveals the most possible uses of the language and skills. Inevitably, the tremendous growth in ESP courses in the 1970s has popularised the use of needs analysis. The ideal teaching situation is one in which time and resources are available for a needs analysis (Waters, 1982).

Due to the inability to observe learner at his workplace at different times of day, nor to 'shadow' him as he went about his work, nor to note job duties, details of the environment, nature of spoken interactions, to interview peers or other colleagues which could also have been tape-recorded, much of the social and institutional aspects of the course content designed for the learner have not been exemplified. Findings from questionnaire and interviews could have been confirmed by discussions with colleagues, staff of the Company. Hence, the influence of micropolitics - situational context of the learner, an area often overlooked in curriculum design (Hoyle, 1988) has also unfortunately been overlooked here, partly due to the constraints discussed earlier.

A 2-way needs analysis would have been more appropriate, the first stage to reveal the complexity and dynamics of the organization the learner is in and the second stage, the specific needs (Coleman, 1988). Complex organization influences learner needs, but there is no instrument yet to measure the extent of influence.
Even if one tries to provide a complete specification for a given participant, it is quite an ambitious task to specify the actual language forms to realise those needs, thus echoing similar lamentations of Munby (1977: 20) and Mackay & Palmer (1981:32).

And, the study has not taken into account changes which may occur over time as learner becomes more or less motivated or if he develops or fails to develop effective learning strategies or might discover that he needs extra tutoring on certain language items or skills as he moves along in his job.

And lastly, the text analysis has been confined to a small sample of Business English textbooks. Thus the findings might not be generalised to encompass all Business English textbooks.