Chapter II

Review of Related Literature
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2.01 INTRODUCTION

The English Language has no longer been the exclusive property of England. It has spread to different parts of the World that it is the mostly spoken language than Chinese in the World. People living in all the six continents of the world speak this language and as a result more work is being done in the teaching of this language than any other language.

The research in English language teaching has been going on since eighteenth century. What was started as Direct Method in teaching has now resulted in studying learning strategies and second language acquisition. In 1950s it was thought that if the method adopted for teaching English was perfected, then there would not be any difficulty in learning the language.

2.02 SHIFT IN FOCUS FROM METHODS TO LEARNING

In 1980s the focus of attention in the field of ELT shifted from 'Methods' to 'learning'. Till 1950s, the concentration was mainly on the methods of teaching English. It was believed then that by making changes in the methods, the language could be taught more effectively as a second or foreign language.

Mackey's (1964) Analysis of Methods is a typical work produced following that trend. Different methods of teaching English were suggested since the beginning of the 18th century. 'The Direct Method' emphasised that the learners of a language should be made to immerse themselves in the target language in order to learn it. Some of the works that popularised the Direct Method were: P.C. Wren's The Direct Teaching of English in Indian Schools – Henry Sweet's Practical Study of Grammar, Otto Jesperson's How to Teach a Foreign Language, and Harold Palmer’s The Principles of Language
Study. The features associated with the Direct Method were oral work, suppression of Mother Tongue, the acceptance of the sentence as the unit of speech and the inductive methods of teaching grammar. This method worked well where it was practised well.

In 1920s and 1930s, a great deal of work was done in America, Asia and Europe in the field of vocabulary selection and reading. Frequency counts were made and many lists of 'Essential Vocabulary' were published. Michael West's 2500-word list was the most well known, and his 'New Method Readers' was one that captured the imagination of educationists and teachers in a major way. His belief was again based on the importance of methods. His 'Readers' were based on his ideas on vocabulary selection and the primacy he gave to the systematic teaching of reading. He conducted his experiment in Calcutta and proved that his theory was right.

In 1940s, the influence of Linguistics and Psychology began to be felt on ELT. In America, during World War II, the first widespread application of Structural Linguistics to Foreign Language Teaching was made in the Army specialised Training Programme. Charles Fries developed his 'Oral Approach' which was based on the conviction that language is primarily speech and not writing. As a result, there emerged a new approach to ELT namely, the 'Structural Approach', which laid its main emphasis on the teaching of 'form'.

This approach enabled the teachers to make full use of the principles of the Behaviouristic Theory of Learning which emphasised the teaching of one item at a time, and the formation of a habit. It viewed language as linear and additive. Hence learning was defined as bringing about a change in behaviour based on stimulus and response. Text books were produced in large numbers based on the Structural Approach and Behaviouristic Theory of Learning. The entire curriculum was thus teacher-based up to 1950s.

With the arrival of Chomsky in 1957, there has been a considerable change in the ELT curriculum. The focus shifted from the teacher to the
learner. Even the theory of language underwent a change. Language was no more considered a behaviour, but a 'rule-governed activity'. Chomsky's 'Transformational Generative Grammar' stressed the fact that with a finite set of rules, infinite sentences could be produced. This led to a search for 'Language Universals'. Simultaneous with this new approach to the theory of language, there emerged a new theory of learning, namely the cognitive theory of learning. The cognitivists were not ready to treat human beings as habit-forming robots or animals but stressed the importance of 'cognition' in the process of learning, instead of considering learning as a direct bond between stimulus and response.

The cognitive function, according to cognitive psychology, is the faculty which permits the learner to 'monitor' and 'evaluate' the different stimuli being received, to co-ordinate and regulate them, to 'reject' some of them, and to develop appropriate responses to those stimuli which are accepted. That is to say, the cognitive function makes the learner the controller of the learning process rather than a passive recipient. Thus the learner-centred approach in ELT gained currency. The teacher ceased to be the focal point. Studies in ELT began to have 'the learner' as the central point. His needs were analysed and assessed. Need-based courses were prepared.

Dell Hymes in 1972, introduced his new idea called 'communicative competence'. By this he meant that for a speaker of a language, it was not enough if he produced only grammatically correct sentences. He should also have a knowledge of "when to speak, when not, what to talk about, with whom, when, where and in what manner". By this he meant that the utterances should be grammatically correct and socio-linguistically appropriate. The same idea was later on contained in the two terms 'usage' and 'use' by Widdowson. Dell Hymes' term 'communicative competence' provided the needed impetus for the blossoming of a new approach to language teaching namely, 'Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT), which is meaning based and opposed to the Structural Approach which is form-based. One of the off-
shoots of CLT is the emergence of 'Notional Syllabuses' and 'Functional Syllabus'. A 'Function' is a communicative act whereas a 'Notion' is an idea. For example, 'requesting' is a function. So are 'ordering, warning, accepting and rejection'. On the other hand, 'Time' is a notion. So are 'shape, size and money'. Wilkin's Notional Syllabus tried to categorise functions and notions, and opened enormous possibilities for strategies under CLT. Books based on 'notions' and 'functions' came to be produced in large numbers and seemed to cater to the needs of the learners.

Altman (1980) observed that the learner-centred teaching had the following tenets:

1) Learner-centred language teaching implies a process of education in which the needs, abilities and interests of each learner determine, as much as possible, the nature and shape of the foreign language curriculum.

2) Learner-centred language teaching can be viewed from four perspectives, namely (a) goals (b) means (c) rate (d) expectations. The teacher can personalise the goals instructions which allow a different learner to pursue different curricular goals in the same course. The teacher can personalise the rate of instruction so that the pace of learning becomes unique to each learner; and the teacher can personalise the expectations as a result of instruction, whereby different learners are held accountable for meeting different quantitative and qualitative criteria; and

3) Learner-centred language teaching implies tailoring teaching to the needs of learners, regardless of whether they work individually or in groups of any size. The critical qualification is that ideally, teaching is given to learners only when they require and / or request it and in the form most facilitative of their learning, for it is only under such conditions that they can derive greatest benefit from it.
In the later half of 1970s, psycho-linguists projected their theory that human beings alone have been endowed with an 'in-built' mechanism for learning languages. The 'in-built' mechanism is responsible for the child mastering the mother-tongue before it is five years old. They referred to the 'in-built' mechanism as 'Language Acquisition Device' (LAD). Their thesis is that because of this device a child up to the age of 12 learns a language effortlessly. After the age of 12, this natural 'gift' of language learning seems to decline. This does not mean that an adult learner can never learn a language. He may use another 'gift' such as the power of mature reasoning which may help him to discover and understand 'rules' more easily than a child. These psycholinguists make a distinction between language 'acquisition' and language 'learning'. The former is an unconscious, natural and spontaneous process whereas the latter is a conscious, deliberate attempt to learn. Krashen (1983) who has studied the process of 'acquisition' and 'learning' has pointed out three internal factors in operation when learners learn a language. The three internal factors are: (1) filter, (2) organiser, and (3) monitor. The first two operate subconsciously and the third consciously. Krashen calls the process involving the first two 'acquisition' and the process involving the third 'learning', thus accounting for the differences in mother tongue learning and second language learning. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies carried out by Ellis (1987) have helped him to put forward his 'variability theory' which states the difference in learning between formal and informal teaching situation. Further studies by Pica (1984) have tried to order the morphemes in the process of acquisition. All these studies are a pointer towards the individuality in the learning of the English Language.

The result of these studies is that teaching has now become learning-oriented. A by-product of this type of research has been the study of the learner strategies, that is, the strategies that a learner uses in order to learn the language effectively. A study carried out at Ontario Institute of Education (1978) examined the strategies used by good learners. In addition, 'Diary
Studies’ (1983) are being carried in order to learn more about the strategies of language learning. Thus the new precept with ELT situation is “teaching the learner how to learn”. In the changed situation, the teacher’s role is that of a ‘facilitator’ of learning. His duty is to ‘deliver’ the students slowly from the clutches of a teacher and to ‘force’ him to take up the responsibility of learning on his shoulders. In other words, ‘Learner Autonomy’ or ‘Learner Training’ is the new trend in the teaching of English. Dickinson’s work (1987) is considered to be a new trend-setter in this regard.

2.03 English for Specific Purpose (ESP)

Depending on the needs of the learners courses such as ESP, EOP, EST, EAP are designed. ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has given focus to specific areas of grammar and discourse. Pauline C. (1980) examines the present trend in ESP. The author identifies three kinds of purposes for which English language is learnt (i) occupational requirements (ii) vocational training programme and (iii) academic or professional study. Pauline reveals that an ESP course is purposeful and is aimed at the successful performance of occupational and educational roles. It is based on a rigorous analysis of students’ needs and should be ‘tailor – made’. She finds fault with ELT which has given little attention to coherence and cohesive devices and emphasizes that these two areas need focus in any ESP course.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) attributes three reasons for the emergence of ESP – i) After World War II English played instrumental role in communication (ii) Firth and Halliday (Britain) and Hymes in (America) began to assert that both spoken & written language varied considerably from one context to another and (iii) Halliday et al (1964) postulated that the detailed studies of these sub-language and registers used by a particular group of persons can describe the language behaviour that person might want to learn to meet his learning goals. Hutchinson and Waters suggest that ESP must be seen as an approach and not as a product.
Thus, in language learning and teaching, main focus is on developing communicative competence by integrating the four skills (LSRW) and by using the skills in meaningful communicative contexts. Reception, perception, interpretation of ideas and creative capacity of the writer manifest only in written communication. In addition to the application of rules of grammar, the ideas are synthesised, streamlined and sequenced in writing. Hence, the learners need adequate focus in writing skill.

**2.04 WRITING SKILL**

Ghosh, R.N., Sastri, H.N.L., Das, B.K., (1977) opine that written communication becomes more or less an intellectual and impersonal activity. The teaching of writing is a complex process involving many activities such as - the initial probing into experience, the analysis of it, the listing of items of specific and definable significance their subsequent organisation into a meaningful sequence and finally their expression in language that is both appropriate and competent.

Levy and Olive, C., (2002) consider writing as the most complex activity but suggest that it is also a model of learning and a discovery process. They call writing as a multidimensional activity and add that writing is inherently difficult to study.

Brumfit (1980) observes that accuracy and fluent production is impossible for many students. Hence, keeping the purpose of the utterance in mind whether it is spoken or written, the teacher should be prepared to tolerate a wide range of possible mistakes of accuracy in the interests of developing fluent production and comprehension.

Rohtas Singh (1993) reveals that the ability to combine sentences enables the writer to convey maximum information in the possible minimum number of words. A written text containing the greater number of combined sentences indicates the evidence of syntactic maturity of the writer. The
growth in the syntactic maturity reflect a kind of cognitive development in the writer.

Widdowson, H.G. (1978) says that meaning do not exist\(^{\text{a}}\) readymade in the language itself; they are worked out in the course of writing.

Shaughnessy (1977), in his analysis of the difficulties of students in writing concludes that the students write (Basic Writing) the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable to academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must like all beginners learn by making mistakes.

The views of the writers and researchers discussed above explain the complex process involved in writing. They also imply that the competence in writing skills can be developed gradually if the learners are given suitable communicative context and appropriate tasks. Considering the long term needs, of the UG students in their personal and professional career, the writers and scholars emphasise the various aspects of effective business writing.

2.05 BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

Business letter writing is a Universal written language activity irrespective of the volume of business and the product of transaction. The British and the American writers' books on business letter writing are reviewed under this section. The writers have focused on a single/more feature (s) of successful business letters.

Shurter, L. (1948) suggests that friendly tone should be used in business letters and adds that the effective letter should have an indefinable tone called personality. Shurter emphasises that the writer should convince the buyer stressing that the transaction is for the latter's benefit. He calls this 'you attitude'. The Business correspondence should always reflect this point of view.

Gretchen, K. and Jeannette Wortman Gilsdorf (1994) suggest that in business letters active voice can be used to make the letter livelier, vivid, and
easier. They view that long sentences, even when perfectly grammatical, slow a reader down and so they suggest the writers to restrict the words in a sentence between 5 and 25. They add that a paragraph in a business letter can be maximum of six to eight lines. While giving specific examples of business letters, they adopt a new technique of giving the sequence of the pointwise content of the letter in the margin. They have tried their best to provide some help by way of points to bring about improvement in their business communication. But their help is of such a nature that only a few brilliant students could benefit by that and most of the other students could miss the points. There is need for obvious reference to the functions involved in any business communication along with the language that goes with it. The present study takes care of that aspect.

Bell, R.W, (1954) views that the feeling the writer expresses in a letter may have an important influence on the reader’s attitude to the situation. According to him, sense, feeling, tone, intention and language should be in tune with one another. Stevens (1957) recalls the letters written during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which have literary value. He observes that though letter writing is another dying art, the business letters are written in simple prose. He suggests that abstract terms, meaningless cliche, circumlocutions etc should be avoided and clarity in language should be maintained.

King, F.W. and Ann Cree, D., (1962) deal with persuasive techniques in business letters especially sales letters and suggest the writers to use friendly tone. He adds that situation where the writer has to turn down a request, he/she can use ‘we’ve no option’, ‘we shall have to’, ‘it is impossible’ to etc.

Gartside, L., (1973) reveals that without a competent knowledge of words and a mastery over their use it is not possible to weave the element of style into the fabric of a good letter. He views that style itself does not depend on rules and concludes that style springs from a deeper source – i.e. the
writer's personality and the sincerity with which he writes. He infers that 'tone' emerges from language and identifies a few tones – persuasive, apologetic, conciliatory, friendly and firm. Gartside deals with style, tone and logical sequence of points briefly.

Jones, J., (1956) identifies three features of a good business letter – viz. (1) carefulness in arrangement and in attention to detail (2) clearness in expression (3) correctness in style and tone. He suggests that the writer should ensure that the tone of the letter is conventional and that it includes nothing capable of causing offence.

Stattery, L. (1965) reveals that goodwill building functions are performed by the opening and closing of the letter. He infers that often business letter is made or broken at the very outset, by the first words of the opening sentence. These largely set the tone of the whole letter and indicate the writer's approach to his letter writing problem.

Murphy, A. and Peck, E. (1972) identify seven C's as specific writing principles for effective letter writing as mentioned below:

1. Completeness
2. Conciseness
3. Consideration
4. Concreteness
5. Clarity
6. Courtesy and
7. Correctness.

They specifically deal with 'persuasive' requests. Murphy and Peak (1972) emphasise that the writer should start writing letters only when he/she has right frame of mind and the writer should plan before writing.
Spooner, M.D. and McKellen, J.S. (1975) advise the writers to take the line that the customer is always right. In other words, the author's point of view should be to satisfy the ego of the reader. They suggest that if the stronger letter receives no reply, the writer can resort to a brief note about legal action.

LaB, H., and Mader, U.E., (1977) deduct some basic structure patterns to express i) Emphasis ii) Polite request and iii) Complaint. They (1977) suggest the structure $S + Adv + V + ed + c$ (e.g. we particularly mentioned the lowest price) to express emphasis. They also suggest another structure to express emphasis. $[S + aux - be + v + ed + adv + adv_2]$. They reduce the business letters to a set of structures providing many structural patterns for different situations and purposes.

Moore (1979) deals with complaint tone and suggests some words and phrases which can be used to express complaint tone. For example, 'unfortunately', can be used for mild expression, 'we assume that' to express polite suggestion, 'apologise' to express regret etc.

Narayanasamy, V.R. (1979) infers that business letters must be serious and at the sometime courteous. He also suggests the writers that chatty, casual and 'newsy' tone of personal letters should be avoided in business letters. Courteous and considerate tone should be maintained.

Love and Tinervia (1980) lists four stages in persuasive letters (Sales letters) – i.e. i) Attract ii) Stimulate iii) Emphasis and iv) Convince. They conclude that in all persuasive letters polite tone would be suitable.

Tuson (1982) affirms that the way in which we communicate the message creates the tone of the letter and in turn the tone of the letter creates the effect of the message. Tuson reveals that the length of the sentences and the amount of punctuation affect the tone of the letter. She holds the view that all letters need not be friendly. If the writer uses firm or cold tone, he/she should be consistent throughout.
Adler, B. & Elmhorst, A. (1983) explain ‘Organizational culture’ and suggest that the letters written to the organisation should respect the culture. They deal with four stages in evolving persuasive tone – (i) problem – Solution (ii) Comparative advantages (iii) Criteria Satisfaction and (iv) Motivated Sequence.

Huckin, N. and Olsen, A. (1983) identify the purpose of writing complaint letters is to ‘correct unpleasant situation’. They suggest two phases in Complaint letter – (i). Identify the nature and seriousness of the problem and (ii) If possible, request or suggest a solution to the problem.

Cynthia (1984) reveals that the purpose decides the tone of the letter. She deals briefly with tones such as apology, threatening, sympathy, complaint and reconciliation. She follows functional approach and frames communicative contexts and suitable tasks. She gives an example of strongly worded complaint and suggests that the same letter could be written in a formal way without losing the effect.

Katherine and Newhouse, L. (1984) infer that a friendly tone is more effective than a cold impersonal tone in almost any business situation.

Chellammal, V. (2002), in her resource book for Engineers and Technologists, analyses letters in general. She suggests that an effective letter communicates with the right person telling him what the writer wants. She points out that the styles (she means format) have changed over the years but several elements remain common in every letter. She points out ‘tone’ in the context of memo and suggests that ‘right tone’ should be used. She also gives a brief illustration of cordial gentle tone in a communication to the colleague of equal rank (emphasis mine). Though the author mentions about ‘tone’ and ‘point of view’ at a surface level, she has not attempted to concretise them in language.

Smith, L. Jr. (1986) suggests that a range of tones can be used in writing and the students should be trained to differentiate between successful and unsuccessful tones. Precisely, Smith deals with tonal changes in writing.
Robinson, M.H., Vidhya S. Netrakanti and Shintre, V. (1989) deal with complaint letters and list the sequence of stages in writing complaint letters – i) Polite beginning ii) Facts about the happening iii) inconvenience caused iv) Claim with support v) Suggest a solution. They add that the final sentence in the complaint letter may hint a threatening note which would add to the effect of complaint tone.

Kahn (1991) reveals that the writers who have problems in business with the addressees should not throw all their ‘punches’ in the first round because there may be many more rounds to come. Khan suggests that complaint letters should never be opened with ‘Dear Sir/Madam but only use the name of the customer.

Whitehead & Whitehead, H. (1992) deal with complaint letters. They suggest restrained and ‘tactful way’ writing ‘Complaint letters’. They affirm that the sequence of the essential points is the first step in achieving the tonal effect. By practice it is possible to polish and improve the letter until it says exactly what we intend.

Flowerdew (1993) understands ‘genre’ as a particular class of speech event which has certain features common to that particular event. He takes ‘genre’ of shop transaction and lists five stages: i) Situation ii) Enquiry iii) Investigation of product iv) Bargaining and conclusion.

Rinvolucri (1995) finds the present method of teaching letter writing tiresome both to the teacher and the students. She suggests a practical method – i.e., the students can be asked to write letters to the teacher, they can also write on behalf of others (role play) on specific issues. Besides this method, she proposes that techniques used by the colleagues round the world and those which have not yet been pooled and shared could be collected. English language learning could be made very effective through letter writing.

Humanities and Social Sciences Division of Anna University has published text books (2 volumes) for Engineers and Technologists in
association with the English Dept. of Thames Valley University, UK (1990). The book has tasks based on skills approach (LSRW). Though the book deals with all the skills, tasks on business letters are very inadequate. Emphasis is given to product advertisements, letter of application for job, complaint letter to newspapers, letters to the editor of newspaper and personal letters. The authors do not deal with tone and point of view business letters. However, in the letter of application the authors make a reference to the format of the letters.

Roy, W. (1994) concentrates on the skillful use of AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) in business letters. He suggests six guidelines for effective business letter writing – (i) goodwill, (ii) precision (iii) lively and simple language (iv) personalize the language (v) emphasise the positive and (vi) use the correct letter form.

Quible, K., Margaret, H., & Mott, L. (1996) reveal that the tone conveyed by the sender (how he / she views the reader and / or the subject of the message) may make the difference between the reader’s accepting or rejecting the message. They conclude that a writer may have little or no control over the content of the letters he / she writes but he has control over their tone.

They list the other factors over which the writers have no control – i) authority relationship between the writer and addressee ii) the readers’ frame of mind iii) Attitude to the reader / content iv) Reader’s frame of mind at the time of reading the letter and v) the reader’s disposition at the time of reading the letter. They infer that subjunctive mood can be used to improve tone. They deal with preaching tone, bragging tone, negative tone, positive tone and persuasive tone.

Gerson, J. and Gerson, M. (2000) analyse positive tone and negative tone in business letters. They insist on using courteous and friendly tone in all business letters including complaint letters. They suggest that if the letter is
stuffy, impersonal, high handed, abrupt, offensive, or mean spirited, then the tone should be altered.

Rutherfoord, J. (2001) views that the letters convey the attitude and image of the writer. Rutherfoord’s brief chapter on business letters, explains the format of business letters, sequence and language.

Lakshminarayanan, K. R. (2002), dealing with letters in general views that we are living in the age of communication and adds that most communication takes place through telephone or E-mail. Our massages reflect our relationship with the other persons. He distinguishes between formal and informal letters. Though the author’s viewpoint sounds meaningful, communication through telephone would go out of records in business letters. In Indian situation, written letters are the only dependable means of business communication. E-mail the letter can be sent quickly but it has to be prepared by the sender who would express tone and point of view.

Farhathullah, T.M. (2002) identifies three important factors in letters – (i) the sender (ii) the receiver and (iii) the message. He argues that as a letter should hold the attention of the receiver, it should be written from the standpoint of the reader. He also adds that any information or message that may have no interest to the receiver should find no place in the letter. The author gives an example of complaint letter to the company about manufacturing defect. He has not focused adequately on business letters, which are very essential for the future career of the Engineering students.

www.Yahoo.com.cabusinessletters.in Presents five main steps under the heading ‘writing an Effective Business Letter’ i.e. (i) identity your aims (ii) Establish the facts (iii) know the recipient of the letter (iv) create a sample copy (v) Decide on physical layout of the letter. To get the right tone in business letters, it is suggested that friendly tone should be used (‘Speak and Talk on Page’). Conversational style, using constructions, personal reference and direct questions are also proposed.
Under the heading 'achieve the right tone' six points are given (i) Avoid jargon (ii) Use short sentences (iii) Avoid using... (iv) Don’t let your feeling get the better of you. (v) Don’t try to be too clever (vi) Be clever and to the point but don’t be too blunt.

Under the heading, ‘Ten Secrets of writing Business letters’ abstract ideas are given. Two ideas are mentioned here as examples – (i) Be human, (ii) Be positive (never write in anger) Thus, courteous and friendly tones are suggested in business letters. These terms are very abstract and could be understood only by experts in English language. Unless they are expressed in concrete terms, the students cannot use them in business letters.

To sum up, the studies reviewed above deal with different aspects of effective business letters. Depending on the culture and society in which they live, the authors perceive the problems and suggest how language could be used effectively in business letters. They discuss the ‘tone’ of business letters and conclude that the use of positive and friendly tones would be effective in business letters. In the following paragraphs a review is attempted on ‘point of view’ in business letters.

2.06 'POiNT OF VIEW' IN BUSINESS LETTERS

'Point of view’ is basically a narrative writing technique used in novels. Percy Lubback’s the Craft of Fiction (1926), E.M. Foster’s Aspects of the Novel (1927) and Henry James’ The Art of the novel (1934) are significant contributions to discourse on the point of view in novels. Leech, N. and Short, H. (1981) discuss two categories of points of view – (i) discourse point of view and (ii) fictional point of view. The fiction writer can either limit his ‘omniscience’ to those which belong to one persons’ model of reality or vary the fictional point of view sometimes claiming authorial omniscience or one character’s version of events or that of another. Authorial tone (in novels) means the ‘stand and attitude’ taken by an author toward his readers, and towards his message. The symmetry between the attitudes the author
expresses, and the attitudes elicited from the reader as if the reader's situation is a mirror - image of the author's. It is by virtue of this symmetry that critics can reasonably talk about 'the tone of the novel' or the 'tone of the passage'. The relationship between the author and the readers, and the relationship between the author and the subject matter decide the tone and point of view. Leech and Short (1981) view that the writer can even take an animal or of a man on the point of death, by passing the problem of authenticity. But discoursal point view refers to the writer's stand on specific issues.

Stanzel, F.K. (1984) discusses the three oppositions which form the constitutive basis of the narrative situation - person, perspective and mode. He also analyses the novelist's narrative techniques as first person narrator, third person (omnipresent) narrator etc.

Quible, K., Johnson, H., Mott, L. (1996) deal with upward - directed, downward directed and horizontal communication in business letters. They imply that depending on the official position of the writer the point of view changes. For example, they quote the managers who discharge the functions such as controlling, persuading and co-ordinating. Their point of view varies depending on the function.

Lloyd David and Susan Mckay (1996) argue that every narrative is told from a specific viewpoint. As is the case in description, the notion of point of view in narration has many meanings. They add that point of view combines the narrator's involvement in attitude towards the subject matter.

Thus, the 'point of view' in fiction has been a subject for discussion and interpretation among critics and writers. But a limited number of writers have dealt with 'point of view' in business letters. The following section reviews the research trends in business letters.
2.07 RESEARCH TRENDS IN BUSINESS LETTERS

Saraswathi, V. (1981), from the letters written from / to banks, offices and universities, identifies the global conventions in letters with regard to tone. She also identifies the local conventions. She takes the letters written by undergraduate students in language class as samples and attempts to find out to what extent the students meet the requirements of writing successful official letters. She concludes that (i) the students are not capable of adopting different tones according to the variations in role relationship and (ii) they tend to use exaggerated tones e.g. unnecessarily rude or over humble.

Rohtas Singh (1993) has conducted an experimental study of writing effective letters by defence personnel with special reference to tone and coherence. He chose the letters of students from air force academy, Hyderabad and officers Training academy, Chennai for analysis. His study reveals that the students lack the skills to use cohesive devices and to present the ideas in sequence. They also lack the syntactic maturity. Naturally they could not use ‘appropriate tone’.

Brown, L. and Herndl, G. (1986) conducted an interview with Training and development managers and technical mangers of fifteen corporations and asked questions about professional writing. Brown and Herndl conclude that two aspect of the cultural context are strongly related to writing behaviour – (i) writer’s status in the work group (ii) the writer’s anxiety about job security.

Rajender Singh (1998) analyses the sales persons’ oral communication needs in English during sales encounters. He, after surveying five hundred inter and intra-national communications and business negotiations, concludes that the publications have incorporated minimal treatment of linguistic and socio-linguistic issues. Singh recommends a short term oral communication course to the sales persons to improve their communicative competence.
Eapen, L. (1979) focuses on designing a course in functional writing for degree courses. He observes that the students need training in argumentative, persuasive and polite forms.

Chitra Dutta (1980), in her study on ‘Functional Approach to EAP course Design’ infers that in acquiring command over the various aspects of written language (elaboration, coherence, structure complexity), the pupil also acquires the ability to present his / her own thoughts in a consciously ordered manner. She infers that the written language introduces a fundamentally new order of complexity into the structure of communication since it opens the possibility of addressing an interlocutor who is not present.

At the University of Kentucky, a study was conducted (DAI, 1990) to examine the ability of V, VIII, XII grade students in writing persuasive letters. The data reveal that the ability to write persuasive letters to different audience is developmental on most aspects of writing. As the students get older, they improved in their ability to adjust the content of their letters to different audience.

Koh Moy Yin (1998) attempted a study of “ESP for Engineers”. He collected the views of the administrative heads of industries on writing business communication and disclosed that the engineers working in industries lack communication skills. Yin analyses the problems of students and concludes that the difficulty is due to confusion of form and function. Further, he adds that inappropriateness of tone and language is a serious problem which will affect not only the inter - personal relationship but also the organisation to which he belongs. So he emphasises adequate communicative tasks on tone and career – roles in the course content for engineering students.

Usha Padmanabhan (1998) in her research work on the ‘Analysis of the writing skills in English of UG students of Technology in Mumbai’, applies communicative language learning strategies in the class. She instructed the students (12 high achievers, 5 low achievers) to keep the goals and audience
in mind when they write. She also motivated them to choose the words and phases to be used to repeat and practise. Her study revealed improvement in the writing skills of both high and low achievers but in varying degrees.

Usha Nagpal (1978) attempted a study on ‘English for business’. She collected data in the form of questionnaire from U.G (commerce) students of Delhi University. She analyses the students’ difficulty in identifying the difference between personal tone and formal tone, fact and opinion and the different shades of formality. She suggests that while designing a special purpose course for students of commence, focus should be given to these problems.

Haswell, H. (2000), adopting the longitudinal approach documented the improvement in college writing. His area of study is written communication. The study was conducted during the first two and a half years in college to record the longitudinal evidence of changes in his writings of under graduate students. He took a sample size of sixty four students. He designed nine measures of writing with different variables under each measure. He found out that in eight out of nine measures significant longitudinal change was recorded.

2.08 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REVIEW

The review of related works and researches reveal that more focus has been given to the theoretical knowledge in business letter writing. They identify problems and suggest solution depending on their socio – cultural background. Some of the techniques of using persuasive tone and complaint tone are dealt with inadequately. ‘Tone in business letters’ has been discussed but only the negative tones. Writers have restricted only to ‘Point of view’ in narrative fictions. Consistency in tone is emphasised in addition to appropriate format and formal language. Sequential arrangement of content, presentation, emphasis etc., has been dealt with elaborately. The writers in business letters suggest friendly and courteous tone. Hence, the researcher concludes that the following points need focus.
1. Sentence structure and sequence of content from which tones emerge.

2. More tones which are generally expressed in business letters (in Indian context)

3. Tone changers which are used to change the tone (tone shift) in business letters.

4. Application of the discourse point of view in business letter writing.

After serving as an English teacher in various Government Engineering Colleges in Tamilnadu, it is felt that the students of Engineering should be sensitised about ‘tone’ and ‘point of view’ in business letters. Deficiency of skill in these areas will have negative impact later in the students’ professional career. Hence the topic is chosen for research. The following chapter deals with the conceptual framework.