CHAPTER 2
Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

The scholarly articles on surveys carried out on English language teaching in Sri Lankan universities showed that they spanned over a number of areas. Some of them have dealt with theoretical perspectives that contributed to the planning of the courses and modifications of them, while some have tackled different areas such as English for specific purposes, English medium instructions, etc. Due to the paucity of literature exclusively on the Undergraduate ELT in Sri Lanka, we sought to examine literature pertaining to the ELT one stage before the undergraduate level, that is, on Advanced Level students and one stage after the undergraduate level, on graduate employees in the country. The assumption behind such a selection criterion was that it would be able to place undergraduate ELT in a better position in terms of learners' perceptions before the university entrance and after leaving the university. Moreover, we examined the literature related to different aspects of ELT in general such as teacher and student perceptions, lesson materials analysis, assessment practices, etc as our research looked into such dimensions in undergraduate ELT and parameters to assess the current programme were required. Since there was no literature on the aforementioned aspects exclusively on undergraduate ELT, it was assumed that the available literature would provide the basic understanding pertinent to the areas. Moreover, some literature on studies carried out outside the Sri Lankan context on ELT at the tertiary level has been included to compare and contrast the ELT practices and various aspects of it such as motivation, needs of learners and their attitudes to English language and lesson materials, etc between Sri Lanka and other countries. The literature from global scenario including those from the Asian contexts revealed that there were similarities of perceptions in terms of motivation and attitudes vis-à-vis English. The available literature exclusively on undergraduate ELT revealed that undergraduate ELT in Sri Lanka has undergone a metamorphosis at the theoretical
level at an earlier stage of its history. At later stages modifications have been carried out in areas such as lesson materials, teaching and evaluation. At the same time, the literature pertinent to ELT at the last stage of school career and in the aftermath of university career revealed that needs of English and the domains to use it have not undergone changes over time. So we sought to find out the ways in which changes have taken place in those areas. Was it the intensity of the needs that has preceded over others in various domains?

2.2. Current Communicative Approaches

Common to all versions of Communicative Language Teaching is a theory of language teaching that stems from a communicative model of language and language use, and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviours, and for classroom activities and techniques.

Richards and Rodgers (2002) have put forth dimensions of a particular approach or method in terms of three elements:

1. Approach which is comprised of a theory of nature of language and a theory of the nature of language learning

2. Design specifies the relationship of theories of language and learning to both the form and function of instructional materials and activities in instructional settings

3. Procedure - comprises the classroom techniques and practices which are consequences of particular approaches and design (cited from Fernando, 1991, p.108).

Therefore, the Communicative Language Teaching at the level of ‘Approach’ has;

(a) Theory of language (nature) as communication – the goal is to achieve communicative competence E.g. (I) grammatical competence,
(II) sociolinguistic competence, (III) discourse competence, (IV) strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Communicative language theory has a base akin to eclecticism. It has the following features.

i. Language is a system for the expression of meaning

ii. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication

iii. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses

iv. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p.161).

(b) Theory of language learning – these have been discerned from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) practices. i) the communication principle, ii) the task principle (Johnson, 1982), iii) the meaningfulness principle.

Also, Krashen’s theory of language learning and a skill-learning model of learning, an alternative theory by Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) are seen as compatible with the principles of CLT.

At the level of Design, there are extensive discussions on syllabus. What follows here are Yalden’s (1983) nomenclature of syllabus types.

1. Structures plus functions (Wilkins, 1976)

2. Functional spiral around a structural core (Brumfit, 1980)


4. Functional (Jupp & Hodlin, 1975)

5. Notional (Wilkins, 1976)

6. Interactional (Widdowson, 1979)

7. Task-based (Prabhu, 1983)

Types of learning and teaching materials, learner roles, teacher roles, and the role of instructional materials also come under Design and Procedure. They give a clear picture of the types of activities to be designed and the kind of strategies to adopt in teaching in the Communicative Approach.

Procedures can be common to Structural –Situational and Audiolingual principles. Yet, the methodological procedures in a text reflect a sequence of activities represented by Littlewood (1981, p.86). They have the following dimensions:

1. Pre-communicative activities that include structural and quasi-communicative activities

2. Communicative activities that include functional communicative and social interaction activities

Dubin and Olshtain (1981) suggest three broad, abstract areas that influence on the goals which become articulated through a curriculum: (a) a viewpoint of the nature of language, (b) a view point of the nature of language learning and (c) an educational-cultural philosophy (1987, pp. 40-41). Thus, the ideal Communicative curriculum from which syllabuses and lesson materials are produced need to have three elements in it corresponding to the three abstract areas mentioned above: (i) sociocultural views on the nature of language, (ii) cognitively-based views on the nature of language learning and (iii) humanistic views of education (p. 68).

Thus, in relation to the Communicative Approach, where Dubin and Olshtain have separated the first two, i.e. the theories of nature of language (sociocultural view of language) and the nature of language learning (cognitively-based views), Richards and Rodgers have clubbed together into Approach. And the former duo has educational cultural philosophy (humanistic views of education) and roles of teachers, learners as separate elements whilst the latter two have included them in the Design and Procedure.
Nunan and Lamb (2001) describe the theory of language in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as follows: Language is a system for the expression of meaning and its primary function is interaction. The theory of learning that influenced CLT emphasized using activities that involve real communication: Carrying out meaningful tasks and using language that is meaningful to the learner will promote learning. Objectives of CLT will reflect the needs of the learner, which will include functional skills as well as linguistics objectives. A Communicative Language Teaching syllabus will include some or all of the following: structures, functions, notions, themes and tasks. Ordering will be guided by learner needs. Activities prescribed are such that engage learner in communication; involve processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction. Role of the learner is seen as that of a negotiator, interactor, giver as well as a taker. Teacher's role will be that of facilitator, analyst, counselor and process manager, as well. Materials will be planned to promoting communicative language use; task-based, authentic materials.

Breen and Candlin (2001) suggest that any teaching curriculum is designed in answer to three interrelated questions:

1. What is to be learned?
2. How is the learning to be undertaken and achieved?
3. To what extent is the former appropriate and the latter effective?

In the light of above, a Communicative curriculum will place language teaching within the framework of this relationship between some specified purposes, the methodology, which will be the means towards the achievement of those purposes and the evaluation procedures, which will assess the appropriateness of the initial purposes and the effectiveness of the methodology.

The five innovations in language teaching namely, (a) The Notional-Functional Syllabus, (b) The Process Syllabus, (c) The Natural Approach, (d) The Procedural Syllabus and (e) Task-Based Language Teaching "were developed by different
people and organizations and evolved in different geographical and institutional contexts. Therefore, they may seem quite different from each other. At a deeper level of analysis, however, the diffusion of these syllabuses is analyzable in terms of common underlying principles that affect all attempts to innovate” (Markee, 1997, p.8).

Current Communicative approaches aim to:

1. make communicative competence the goal of language teaching

2. develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

And CLT philosophy has been molded into a variety of teaching practices claiming that they all have basic principles of CLT embodied in them: Natural approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-based Teaching and Task-based Teaching are among them.

**The Notional-Functional syllabus**

The Notional-Functional syllabus enjoyed great popularity during the late 1970s and early 1980s to the extent that it has spread well beyond Europe to the United States and to Asian countries like Indonesia (Nababan 1984) and Malaysia (Abu Samah 1984). The innovations it had were such that it was based on a systematic behavioural analysis of language learners’ needs. That is, the Notional-Functional syllabus was one of the first syllabuses to be theoretically based on a learner-centred, communication-oriented approach to language instruction. In the early 1970, the social changes that swept over the Europe had their influence over linguistic domain as well. The Council of Europe, a cultural organization recognized monolingualism as a fast growing problem for Europeans, sponsored the Modern Languages Project that developed new syllabuses to meet learner needs that resulted in the evolution of the notional-functional syllabus. It sought to cater to the needs of the adult learners who have specific professional and personal needs
and who require short, intensive programmes (Wilkins, 1976). And it was one of the first syllabuses that was theoretically based on learner-centred, communicative oriented approach to language teaching.

**The Process syllabus**

In the 1980s, after the Notional-Functional syllabus, alternative approaches to language teaching began to appear including the process syllabus. The process vs. product distinction has been taken into language teaching from general educational studies, where it dates back to at least the 1960s: Mitzel (1960), for example, utilized it. White (1988) traced back the concept of the 'process curriculum', noting a course produced by Bruner which was described in terms which would be familiar to today's language teaching syllabus designers: 'the...aims...centre around the processes of learning rather than the products' (1960). It was too analytic that it did not pre-select the linguistic content of instruction. Instead, it used problem-solving tasks. And it was situated within a curricular approach to organizing language instruction. Its materials, methodology and types of assessment used in a course were also not predetermined. Thus, in the process syllabus, the content, materials, methodology and assessment are negotiated between the instructor and the learners throughout the course. The process syllabus in contradistinction to product syllabuses focuses on the 'processes of learning and procedures of teaching – in other words [on] methodology'. Product syllabuses are based on pre-specification of content whether this is stated in Structural, Notional-Functional or other terms according to Bruner. Proposals for a language teaching process syllabus are particularly associated with Breen, whose 1984 paper provides useful discussion.

**The Natural Approach**

This was first developed in the early 1980s. According to Krashen and Terrell (1981), the Natural Approach conforms to the naturalistic principles that can be found in successful second language acquisition. It has less emphasis on teacher monologues, direct repetition and formal questions and answers, and less focus on
accurate production of target language sentences. The emphasis is not on practice but on exposure which is used in the Approach as “input.” It gives optimum space for emotional preparedness for learning, a long period for language learners to hear or listen to the language before they produce language. According to this approach, communication is the main function of language and it is viewed as the vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. Therefore, the focus of the approach is on teaching communicative abilities to the learner. Krashen and Terrell believe that other language teaching methods such as Audiolingual method are woven around the structure of language and not around the actual theories of language acquisition. Therefore, they have given less emphasis on a theory of the nature of language.

The language learning theory that is grounded in the Natural Approach is known as Krashen's language acquisition theory. It is based on the following basic tenets:

1. The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis – this claims that acquisition and learning are two distinct ways of developing competence in a second or foreign language. Acquisition is an unconscious process whereby language proficiency is gained through using language for meaningful communication. And it is parallel to the natural way to a child's first language development. Contrastively, learning refers to a conscious process of development of language rules and requires formal teaching. According to the theory, learning cannot lead to acquisition.

2. The Monitor Hypothesis – In the case of acquisition, the acquired system is believed to initiate the utterances in communication in the second or foreign language. Learning is a monitor that checks and corrects the output of the acquired system. As this hypothesis claims, the learned knowledge may be required for correction in communication which is supposedly the only function of it. There are three conditions that influence the successful use of the monitor: (a) time, (b) focus on form and (c) knowledge of rules.
3. The Natural Order Hypothesis – The process of the acquisition of grammatical structures takes place in a predictable order and errors are a sign of natural language development process and no matter what their native language is, it is said that similar errors occur in learners.

4. The Input Hypothesis – this clarifies the relationship between input (exposure) and acquisition: (a) This hypothesis relates to acquisition and not to learning, (b) people acquire language best by understanding input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (1+1), (c) the ability to speak cannot be taught directly; rather it emerges independently in time once the acquirer has built up linguistic competence by understanding input and (d) if there is sufficient quantity of comprehensible input, 1+1 will usually be provided automatically. Comprehensible input refers to utterances that the learner understands based on the context in which they are used as well as the language they are phrased.

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis – According to Krashen, learner’s emotional state or attitude is an adjustable filter that freely passes, blocks or impedes input that is necessary for acquisition. Acquisition is better when there is a low affective filter. There are three affective/attitudinal variables vis-à-vis second language acquisition: (a) Motivation, (b) Self confidence and (c) Anxiety- low personal and low classroom anxiety produce more success. Thus low affective filter is desirable.

The Natural Approach is said to be for beginners to become intermediates, yet can be applicable to a variety of situations. What Krashen and Terrell emphasize is that learners should be informed as to what they will gain of a course and what they will not. In regard to the syllabus they hold two viewpoints: one is that the typical goals of any language course could be to improve

1. basic personal communication skills: oral (E.g. Listening to announcements in public places)
2. basic personal communication skills: written (E.g. reading and writing personal letters)

3. academic learning skills: oral (E.g. Listening to a lecture)

4. academic learning skills: written (E.g. Taking notes in class)

And of the above, they state that the Natural Approach is primarily “designed to develop basic communication skills – both oral and written (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p.67, as cited by Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The other view is that the purpose of a language course depends on the students’ needs and interests. The implication for selection of content for a syllabus therefore, is that it has to be for fulfilling the needs and interests of students as well as for creating a low affective filter. The types of learning and teaching activities for this should be such that they provide comprehensible input in the target language. The techniques Krashen and Terrell recommend include command-based activities, mime, gestures, situation-based activities and group work. (For learner roles, teacher roles, the role of instructional materials see Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The procedure, i.e. the type of techniques used in this method are common to many approaches, yet the way they are used is different; they are geared towards providing comprehensible input without requiring response production or expecting minimal response in the target language.

The Procedural syllabus

The procedural syllabus emerged out of the Bangalore project, an experimental English language teaching project that lasted from 1979 to 1984. This was developed by Prabhu and his associates as opposed to the Structural syllabus coupled with Audiolingual methodology. The central hypothesis was that structure could best be learned when attention was focused on meaning (Prabhu, 1987). He advocated two tenets in regard to this: First was the abolition of any linguistic syllabus, the second was to eschew formal teaching procedures, like drilling and error correction, where the result would be form-focus rather than message-focus.
The circumstances under which these procedures would be permitted were where they occurred naturally and incidentally, for example, if a learner actively sought explanation of a language point. In the general avoidance of these procedures the teacher was expected to behave like the parent. Tasks were the main carrier of language content. The methodology used was meaning-focused whereby students learned the language by communication. In addition, form focused activities were tried to be avoided. In other words, explicit grammar teaching and error correction were not done. However, error correction of meaning was carried out. This syllabus relied on problem-solving model of change. The theoretical principles that underpinned the procedural syllabus have not developed out of research but said to have evolved over several years of trial and error classroom-based processes. This syllabus type highlighted the importance of cultural appropriateness in any process of educational change.

**Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)**

Cooperative Language Learning is part of Collaborative Learning (CL). It has been defined by Olsen and Kagan (1992) as follows:

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. (p.8)

Cooperative learning is grounded in the theory of interactive/cooperative nature of language and language learning and there are some premises on which it has been built upon:

1. Communication is the primary purpose of language
2. Most speech is organized as conversation
3. Conversation operates according to certain agreed upon set of cooperative rules or 'maxims' (Grice, 1975)
4. One learns how these 'maxims' are realized in one's native language through casual, everyday conversational interaction.

5. One learns how the maxims are realized in a second language through participation in cooperatively structured interactional activities.

Therefore, CLL is supportive of both structural and functional models as well as interactional model of language.

Cooperative language learning is based on the theories of developmental psychology, especially of Jean Piaget (1965) and Lev Vygotsky (1962) who emphasize social interaction as central to learning. CLL advocates the activities based on Bloom's Taxonomy for developing the critical thinking of the learner. Another important aspect of the CLL is its emphasis on the cooperation in learning rather than competition. Therefore, the approach of CLL has three major objectives embedded in it: It promotes cooperation than competition, aims at developing critical thinking and designed to develop communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities.

**Content-Based Instruction (CBI)**

This approach has its teaching woven around the content that the learner will acquire than around any linguistic type of a syllabus. The approach is grounded on two main principles:

1. People learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than an end in itself.

2. Content-Based instruction better reflects learners' needs for learning a second language.

A number of assumptions about the nature of language underpin the Content-Based Instruction: They are, language is text-based and discourse-based; language use draws on integrated skills; language is purposeful. The main theory of learning that is behind the Content-Based instruction is that content is the point of
departure or organizing principle of the course and that successful language learning occurs when the learner is presented with meaningful contextualized material with a primary focus on information acquisition (Brinton et al., Wesche, 1989). Many others have supported this view with a number of studies (for instance, Scott 1974; Collier 1989; Grandin 1993). The other additional assumptions that underlie the Content-Based Approach are stated below:

1. People learn a second language most successfully when the information they are acquiring is perceived as interesting, useful and leading to a desired goal.
2. Some content areas are more useful as a basis for language learning than others.
3. Students learn best when instruction addresses students' needs.
4. Teaching builds on the previous experience of the learners.

The objectives of a Content-Based language learning programme can be considered as the objectives of the content course, because the language learning in CBI is typically considered as incidental to the learning of content. An example objectives in CBI comes from the theme-based Intensive Language Course (ILC) that has identified four objectives which are linguistic, strategic and cultural:

1. To activate and develop existing English language skills
2. To acquire learning skills and strategies that could be applied in future language development opportunities
3. To develop general academic skills applicable to university studies in all subject areas.
4. To broaden students' understanding of English-speaking peoples.

The CBI principles have the potential to be applied to many course designs such as courses at the university level, at the elementary and secondary level and courses in private language institutes. And there are no specific techniques or activities associated with the CBI as it is an approach rather than a method thus teaching
materials and a variety of activities can be used to suit the programme. The main criticism against this approach is its questioning of teacher roles that language teachers are generally trained to teach language as a skill than to teach a content subject thus may result in more demand placed on teachers in teaching subject matters that they have not been trained in.

**Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**

This approach is based on tasks as the central unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. Willis (1996) promotes it as a logical development of CLT as TBLT draws on some principles of it such as,

1. activities that involve real communication are essential for language learning
2. activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning
3. language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

TBLT concerns with the following areas as central to it:

1. Analysis of real-world task-use situations
2. The translation of these into teaching tasks descriptions
3. The detailed design of instructional tasks
4. The sequencing of instructional tasks in classroom training/teaching.

TBLT underpins a theory of learning than a theory of language. Nevertheless, there have been a number of assumptions behind TBLT:

1. Language is primarily a means of making meaning
2. Multiple models of language inform Task-Based Instruction
3. Lexical units are central in language use and language learning
4. Conversation is the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition
TBLT has similar assumptions to Communicative Language Teaching in relation to theory of learning. In addition, some more principles govern it: (a) Tasks provide both the input and output processing necessary for language acquisition in that only comprehensible input is not sufficient but the opportunities to use them are also crucial (Swain, 1985), (b) Task activity and achievement are motivational. That is task are supposedly motivate learner and enhance learning, (c) Learning difficulties can be negotiated and fine-tuned for particular pedagogical purposes. This has been elaborated by Skehan (1998); when tasks are too difficult, fluency may develop at the expense of accuracy.

The objectives of TBLT depend on the real-world needs of the learner. A typical syllabus may contain language structures, functions, topics and themes, macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), competencies, text types, vocabulary targets. However, according to Nunan (1989) a TBLT can specify two types of tasks: (a) real-world tasks that are designed to practice the tasks that have been found as important in the needs analysis and turn out to be practical in the real world as well, (b) pedagogical tasks that have psycholinguistic basis in Second Language Acquisition theory and research but do not necessarily reflect real-world tasks. The procedure for teaching role-plays in TBLT has been developed by Richards (1985) that involve pre-task activities, task activity and post-task activities.

So far what have been discussed are the theoretical perspectives of various methods and approaches of CLT that have gained currency in the ELT domain. These aim at developing communicative competence in the learner.

Cummins (1979) makes the distinction between two differing kinds of language proficiency: BICS and CALP. BICS are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; these are the "surface" skills of listening and speaking which are typically acquired quickly by many students, particularly by those from language backgrounds similar to English who spend a lot of their school time interacting with native speakers. CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and, as the name suggests, is the basis for a child's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon
him/her in the various subjects. Cummins states that while many children develop native speaker fluency (i.e. BICS) within two years of immersion in the target language, it takes between 5-7 years for a child to be working on a level with native speakers as far as academic language is concerned. Though Cummins primarily discusses about children's language proficiency, there is sufficient proof that adults who live in a foreign country and who are extensively exposed to the language spoken in that country acquire that language with a considerable speed and become proficient.

The focus of the following section is on theoretical principles of teacher training.

2.3. Theoretical basis for teacher training

Teacher training is an area which is equally important in language teaching. Language teachers, unlike subject teachers have many challenges to face as teaching a language is different from teaching a subject. It is important for teachers of English to have a thorough knowledge of the approaches of ELT discussed above for the successful application of them in teaching. Apart from the experiential knowledge teachers acquire while in service, it is imperative that they are professionally trained from time to time to update their professional knowledge and to relegate what is outdated. According to Avalos (1980), adequately trained teachers “exhibit less of an authoritarian mode of teaching, better professional attitudes and relationships, and better lesson preparations.” Teachers should be made to reflect on their professional action so that they will make conscious efforts to create, change and shape their professional behavior which will gear them towards professional competence. Wallace (1991) proposes a model named the Reflective model that advocates reflection as a means to achieve professional competence.
Figure 2.1: Reflective practice model of professional education development suggested by Wallace

Stage 1: This is the pre-training stage where an individual is at, before he/she decided to take a professional training. The ‘trainee’ may be already in the profession. The Reflective model highlights the trainees and what they bring to the training/development process. Therefore, this model emphasizes that the individuals seldom enter into professional training situations with blank minds and/neutral attitudes. Wallace (1991) identifies them as mental constructs or ‘conceptual schemata’ which stem from personality factors, social factors, cultural factors and many others. It is crucial to know “where trainees are at” when they enter the developmental process than “where they are coming from” (p. 51). Such conceptual schemata may be derived from what trainees have been reading or taught and what professional experience has given them.

Stage 2: This is the stage of professional education or development. Two key elements are highlighted in this stage: received knowledge and experienced knowledge. Received knowledge is where a trainee becomes acquainted with the vocabulary of the subject and the matching concepts, research findings, theories

Source: Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach by Michael J. Wallace (1991:49)
(This model as Wallace suggests is applicable for both in-service and pre-service education development.)
and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession. So, currently, it might be accepted that a skilled language teacher will be able (among many other things) to speak the target language to a reasonable degree of fluency, to organize pair and group work, to read a simple phonetic transcription, to be familiar with certain grammatical terms and so on (p.14).

Experiential knowledge is the knowledge-in-action. A trainee will have such knowledge by practice of the profession. Also he/she will have had, the opportunity to reflect on that knowledge-in-action. Herein, Wallace makes a distinction between experiential knowledge-by-observation and experiential knowledge-in-action.

Professional development courses may consist of inputs furnishing the received knowledge only. The effectiveness of such a course may depend on how well it relates to trainees’ own reflection and practice. In other words, the trainees (the in-service teachers) may evaluate the inputs in terms of their own practice and either decide to change their teaching in some way or not (p.52). This may be normal with in-service courses and this is how the reflective practice takes place to achieve professional competence. However, such a process has disadvantages since experience is private, lacks potential for discussion as well as a structure in the mode of articulating reflection.

Wallace argues that the language teacher training courses offer variety of subjects that are related to the language teaching per se, yet trainees are left to themselves in amalgamating them and making use of them ‘somehow’ in their teaching practice. The reflective model suggested by him incorporates received knowledge into the practice through the training course itself. The ‘reflective cycle’ is a shorthand way of referring to the continuing process of reflection on ‘received knowledge’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ in the context of professional practice (p.56). This reflection can take place at many points; while reading texts or listening to lectures trainees may reflect upon them and comprehend them with reference to their
professional concerns. Also, reflection can take place by a process of recollection or it may take place during the practice itself.

**Goal:** This is what the professional aspires to, namely (increased) professional development. Wallace discusses the goal of professional competence in two ways: First, one's competence may be proved by a certificate gained at the end of a teacher training programme. This he calls as initial competence. Second, professional competence is a moving target which can never be attained but through which a professional travels all his professional life. There are many variables in this regard: society's expectations, the nature of the subject, the examination system, the curriculum, methodology, teacher's own interests, teacher's changing and deepening insights into the nature of the profession, changes in responsibility, etc. It has a force of expertise. Therefore, professional competence is not a terminal point, but a point of departure.

2.4. Theoretical basis for undergraduate ELT in Sri Lanka

In view of improving the undergraduate English language proficiency, the ongoing general English language teaching programmes are incorporated into the undergraduates' career that lasts for three to four years. Fernando (1991) outlines a rationale for the course that is mainly for the Arts undergraduates in the University of Colombo. Yet it aims at fitting into the general undergraduate population in Sri Lanka in terms of its common characteristics despite regional and ethnic variations. The discussion is woven around the needs of the undergraduates: needs related to temporality, i.e. immediate and deferred needs.

It is quite a timely discussion to see how far these needs are valid for the undergraduates today, nearly after 20 years of their identification. It is inevitable that any language teaching programme is subject to change in terms of many aspects over the course of time. The modifications may be in relation to the areas of materials, teaching methods or student assessment. Changes can take place in all
or some of these areas or in any one of them. The success (or failure) of a programme may depend on its evolution over time. In such a context, it is apt to examine the relevance of the current English language teaching programme against student needs. This could be achieved by examining the needs of the undergraduates today and the nature of the current ELT programme comparing and contrasting them with those outlined by Fernando in 1991.

Clearly defined goals and theoretical perspectives that underpin a programme give not only the basis for the programme but also the space for changes. As Fernando (1991) states:

by defining the framework of such courses, areas where development is required will be clarified, thus providing the basis for purposeful materials development, relevant testing, methodological innovation and research. (p.107)

It can be well justified if modifications have taken place in certain areas such as lesson materials, teaching methods and assessment of the course that was designed some 20 years back. Such alternations could have been in relation to student needs and the demands of the society as felt by the teachers. A number of questions arise in this regard: Have changes taken place in all the areas pertinent to undergraduate ELT? Or have they been limited to certain areas only? Is the seemingly “purposeful” development in lesson materials leading to any results? Are there changes of teaching methodologies and testing? Are they at par with the changes in the materials? Or, are they at a tug-a-war? If it is so, is it the root cause for undergraduates to be criticized today for their inability to meet the societal demands in terms of English language proficiency? There could be a possibility that lesson materials have changed, yet teaching methods might have not changed accordingly. In the same way, assessment practices might have changed without having major alternations carried out to the lesson materials and teaching (If the tests have been pre determined as achievement tests). In such a case, clashes between and among the above areas are inevitable. However, such questions are not easily answered as
there is a paucity of literature on the modifications made to the materials, teaching methods and assessment practices in relation to undergraduate ELT after 1991.

It is extremely unlikely that needs of society did not change over approximately 20 years of time. What are the changes in those expectations in terms of temporality and their nature? Do the deferred needs as described by Fernando have any bearing upon undergraduates' current English language learning? So far, how have the present undergraduates responded to the tried-out methods to cater to those identified needs through the ELT programme (syllabus)? Are the needs of the undergraduates today different from the needs identified about 20 years back? If there are differences, then what are they? And how have the materials, teaching and testing methods changed to cater to the changes in the needs of the undergraduates today?

First, it is important to have an understanding of the theoretical basis outlined by Fernando for “Service Courses” in English as she terms the ELT programmes in the university set up. The rationale for the courses has been formulated on the basis of the model suggested by Richards and Rogers (1987, p.146) who recognize a three-part division in language teaching: approach, design and procedure.

**Approach**

Approach defines those assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and the nature of language learning, which operate as axiomatic constructs of reference points and provide a theoretical foundation for what language teachers ultimately do with learners in classrooms. The approach Fernando follows is based on Brumfit's (1981) recommendations for achieving accuracy and fluency, the dual aspect of language with a syllabus that is organized as “a grammatical ladder with a functional-notional spiral around it” (p.49). Thus Fernando’s approach has accommodated the dual claim of accuracy and fluency with (a) a structure component which is the grammatical ladder and (b) skills components where
grammatical knowledge has been put to use, which is the “functional-notional spiral” (Fernando, 1991, p.114).

The structure component she uses is based on a cyclic approach (as explained by Wilkins, 1980) considering the fact that the university entrants already possess the basic knowledge of grammar. The skills components include categories and patterns of exchange that relate to students’ “current social and academic contexts and those in which they are likely to be placed after graduation in which English is a natural medium of communication.” (Fernando, 1991, p.114)

Considering the fact that students are of diverse cognitive styles, teaching English should be done with a variety of approach. Thus she recommends communicative, natural and humanistic approaches as desirable with an aim to lower the affective filter (Krashen, 1981) in order to maximize learning via building confidence and reducing the sense of “threat and embarrassment” attached to using English (Fernando, 1991, p.116). In addition, to teach the group of “young adults with a tradition of academic learning behind them,” she recommends an analytic academic approach as suitable for some instances, particularly for advanced groups. According to her, “this approach will activate use of the Monitor (Krashen, 1981), will be considered necessary in view of the complex and substantial language needs of the group” (Fernando, 1991, p.116). Also she mentions about a process-oriented approach as viewed by Widdowson (1987) based on social science methodologies “that develops in the learner strategies which he will be able to apply to his later learning” (Fernando, 1991, p.116).

**Design and Procedure**

Design specifies the relationship of theories of language and learning to both the form and function of instructional materials and activities in instructional settings. Procedure comprises the classroom techniques and practices, which are consequences of particular approaches and design. Thus, the aim of having an eclectic approach to the programme to teach English to undergraduates is to have
communicative/functional/notional basis in the modules designed for skills components with a content graded in cyclic order while the structure component organized structurally. Added to them are the academic and occupational/professional modules with a process orientation.

Undergraduate needs vis-à-vis ELT have been identified in 1991 by Fernando spread in the following three areas: education, employment and public life. They seem quite relevant to the 21st century undergraduate as well. Yet, the need for changes has been felt, thus modifications have been carried out using the space allotted in the above model. Such changes are obvious in certain areas such as materials and testing methods, whereas changes in the domain of teaching methods are not overt. Yet, the criticism that was prevalent nearly 20 years ago, of graduates not being employable on the basis of lack of English language proficiency still prevails. So, where has the programme failed? The current study sought to find out the failures and the nature of them through examining it from two main perspectives, namely teachers and students in the backdrop of the language policy of the country.

It would be important for this discussion to know the theoretical basis for the service courses that was available before the course discussed by Fernando. That is, the basis of the programme that existed during the decade beginning from early 1980s till early 1990s. Wickramasuriya (1981) discussed the theoretical basis of the Service Course for the undergraduates in the University of Colombo. The main aim of the programme was to cater to the level 1 students who had scored the lowest marks at the placement test on their entrance to the university. By catering to the weak student, the study largely targeted the average undergraduate in Sri Lanka. The focus was to provide undergraduates with sound reading abilities required for their academic purposes. The course was considered as experimental.

The discussion on the course has been carried out under three themes: (a) aims and assumptions of the experiment, (b) the problem and (c) producing the experimental course.
The course was based on the following assumptions:

1. Teaching the system of language and its lexicon was inadequate but teaching how to use such knowledge into performance skills was also required.

2. The prerequisites for fluent reading i.e. teaching the basic structures of English and training in the practical skills of language processing could be put to effect as a simultaneous process.

3. Cyclical process of teaching the language would be preferable to linear progression.

The aim of this experimental programme was to accelerate the progress and upgrade the standard of the undergraduates in terms of their reading skills as it was found out that by the time they left the university their abilities of reading have not come to the expected level. In producing the experimental course, a thorough survey of literature was carried out in terms of (a) the psycholinguistic processes involved in reading, (b) linguistics and descriptions of contemporary English and (c) the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language chiefly at the tertiary level in the area of English for Special/Academic Purposes.

The development in the aspects of psycholinguistics as well as both communication theories and sociolinguistics have influenced the field of Applied Linguistics which in turn has affected the area of teaching English for specific purposes. The prevalent literature dealt with tertiary level students who have acquired some level of knowledge of language structure. But the undergraduates in question were with extremely low level of such knowledge thus, that too were to be given through the programme itself. Therefore, combination of teaching the structural aspect of language along with interpretative skills was seemed necessary when considering the limited time available.

Wickramasuriya has reported the findings in terms of two main aspects, namely the reading process and the linguistic system and discourse. The literature on the reading process has implications for methodology needed to be adopted in teaching
reading. Among them is the recognition of reading as “one of the most complex forms of information processing” (p.32). This process involves many steps: (a) information is processed through orthography, syntax and semantics structures and information processing (recoding and decoding) takes place either serially or simultaneously depends on the learner, (b) in relation to handling the complexity of reading in teaching is the device “chunking” whereby larger units are made out of smaller ones, (c) Also is required here the need to perceive these units with syntactic and semantic basis that replacement is possible by the reader, (d) then the reader will have anticipation which is related to the continuation of the process whereby a message can be predicted. As the theory states, “The existence of one category presupposes the existence of other categories in the system” and that comprehension is reduced if the reader cannot anticipate” (p. 33) and (e) the reader avails himself of the feature of redundancy. The section on reading as a complex process thus has been summarized as “Chunking, anticipation and awareness of redundancy enable a reader to use the surface features of a text economically, and simultaneously and process them with the speed that is essential for efficient comprehension” (p. 33).

The other aspect related to the reading process that was discussed was speed. Unless processing occurred rapidly, comprehension would get impaired (p.33). Also was the learner's knowledge of the world, the semantic input and the sociolinguistic aspect of language. Other two were the medium factor that the reader must be able to identify antecedents, referents and the author's line of thinking and the distinction between recoding and decoding. In short, the teaching should be geared to the process of recoding and decoding and that if the outcome of reading was a translation then decoding had not been achieved, gist had not been extracted (p.34).

In relation to the Linguistic system and discourse, the literature showed the importance to distinguish between the pedagogic grammar and other grammar models such as structural, transformational-generative, etc. A pedagogic grammar should impart students not only a cognitive understanding about the mechanisms
of structures and the ability to manipulate them but also the communicative functions of them in the context. An utterance has cognitive (or propositional or ideational) meaning and functional meaning both and readers need to know both (p.35).

Apart from the above, the literature has guided the course planners in selecting the kind of grammatical and vocabulary content of courses as well as the texts for reading:

Hence, the common core of grammatical structure and general purpose vocabulary of academic writing along with texts which adequately sample the communicative activities entailed in mediating academic knowledge should be regarded as essential components of proficiency courses. (p.36)

The literature on analyses of discourses showed that attention must be paid on related aspects such as reading difficulties, readability of texts, selecting and adapting texts, training to comprehend and evaluation in proficiency course production.

In addition, it has been emphasized that the theories of education be taken into consideration in producing a proficiency course. Finally, Wickramasuriya stated that the teacher's role was a crucial factor in transmitting what had been produced through proper considerations of the above-discussed features. She further stated that they could be put to practice with a teacher who was a creative professional in his field.

Thus, the 'new' proficiency course had the basis of the findings of the above with reading comprehension as the main objective. The steps that have been taken in writing the course were as follows:

1. Instructional objectives were derived from the findings related to reading that the process, the expected outcomes and texts vis-à-vis the learner's previous knowledge and experience.
2. The language syllabus and its organization were determined on the basis of the objectives.

3. Texts were selected and examined for their instructional potential, thematic suitability and discourse features.

4. The texts were sequenced to form lesson units with the twin objectives of
   (a) teaching grammatical structure and vocabulary
   (b) training to read

5. Guidelines were prepared for exercises in language structure.

6. The units were written.

The discussion ends with a note that draws the attention to the fact that “the production of a proficiency course is a complex undertaking with many aspects to be taken into consideration and has necessarily to be the product of insights derived from a variety of sources” (p.37).

The research that was carried out a decade before Fernando’s discussion on the same area, that is, undergraduate English language teaching, invites comparisons between the two programmes in the following aspects:

1. in terms of perception of student needs

2. in terms of theoretical perspectives

Concerning the first, i.e. the perception of students’ needs over time has changed. Or, it could be better expressed if we say that the needs have changed and they have been perceived thus. Subsequently, the main aim of the undergraduate English language teaching programme has been shifted from teaching them reading comprehension as the main aim to achieving communicative competence in students. Therefore the second, the theoretical perspectives also have changed. Therein, the needs of students have been identified as pertaining to the following areas: (a) education (in higher education and advanced academic studies in
individual subject specialisms), (b) employment (routine official administrative duties) and (c) public life (general communication and responding to media in large urban centres, dealing with non-Sri Lankans, professional transactions, professional and formal social contacts at an international level and possibly international settings) (Fernando, 1991, p.115) as opposed to the needs of improving academic reading skills. Considering the above three areas, it is evident that by 1990s, students' needs were mainly concentrated on learning English for communicative purposes rather than exclusively for academic purposes as identified in the 1980s.

On the basis of the above discussion, the programme, in terms of modifications that have taken place, can be divided into 3 main periods:

1. Period between 1981 and 1991

2. Period between 1991s and 2000

3. After 2000

After 10 years of application of the course, as described by Wickramasuriya (1981), the changes have taken place in terms of the general outlook of the course, its main aim and therefore its theoretical basis. Having identified the domains students need to use English, the programme in the 1990s has been geared to cater to communicative needs (Fernando, 1991). The changes that are taking place at present, after 20 years in the undergraduate English language course should be examined in the light of theoretical perspectives that underpin the programme along with student needs. If one assumes that the programme ran smoothly for approximately 10 years (a period similar to the previous programme described by Wickramasuriya), after Fernando's discussion on it in 1991, there seems to be a gap of theoretical explanation in relation to the alternations that have been carried out to the overall undergraduate curriculum after 2000. Is it because the aim of overall programme remains the same? That is to say that its aim remains as developing communicative skills in students. Have the needs for changes been felt in specific areas such as speaking, reading, speaking or other factors such motivation, attitudes,
etc or aspects pertaining to teaching methods and student assessment? This assumption may be corroborated by the available literature pertaining to some specific areas on the undergraduate ELT enterprise. Also it may be supported by the unavailability of literature of a complete change of the programme. On the other hand, does the aforementioned gap exist, because the changes have been erratic and ad hoc?

The corpus of the recent local research on the area shows distinct focuses:

1. Different individual aspects that affect undergraduate Communicative English language teaching (E.g. skills, motivation, learner autonomy, learning strategies, etc)
2. English for specific purposes (E.g. ESP, EAP)
3. Case-specific studies (E.g. University-specific, Faculty-specific)
4. English medium instruction and language practices in universities

Fonseka (2006) attempts to develop a model for building a direct relationship between student aspirations and English studies in order to achieve greater relevance in the University General English Programme. In this exercise, the key focus is on student motivation in the pursuit of English. Fernando (2001), in his paper, discusses the strategies to enhance learner autonomy in learning English. He explores methods of teaching a variety of language-learning strategies for tertiary level students in the ELT classroom.

Mendis and Collure (2006), examine the effectiveness of using genre-based ELT material in tertiary-level English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Their discussion is on Faculties of Science and Medicine which demand English courses, with specific disciplinary or skill-based focuses rather than general courses that have been designed to achieve English language proficiency. They design a genre-based ESP course titled “Technical Writing for Science” at the University of Colombo, and outline the procedures used to build a corpus of resource materials, select areas of special focus, etc. Kulasingham (2006) suggests that the concept
“communication skills” changed over time and discusses the new ways in which teachers can develop students’ communication skills by focusing on the underpinnings of all effective communication-skills that can be implemented in any situation. Her area of concern is the Business English Courses for students in the Faculty of Management and Finance. The course attempts developing oral skills related to negotiations and presentations that are required in the business world.

Some studies seem to have done on individual cases. For instance, Perera, in her study of the ELT programme focuses on the undergraduates of University of Kelaniya whose programme was modified with an inclusion of a Foundation Course for the weaker students (2006, pp.47-57). Samaraweera (2006) discusses the effectiveness of methods used by instructors to improve communicative skills among students at the University of Ruhuna. She deals with a case study which revealed that different instructors used different techniques, and the effectiveness of some of these was found to be questionable. Rathnayake (2006) evaluates the quality of the materials used in a task-based approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the General English Course at the University of Ruhuna and discusses the need to develop materials that promote students’ communicative skills in the context of university-level EFL teaching in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

The survey done by Ellawala (2007) in three Faculties of the University of Perdeniya focuses on language practices of staff and students. A study of problems encountered by students and teachers of the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Sri Jayawardenapura, reveals that predicaments of varying nature emerge in using English as the medium of instruction due to students’ mother tongue education at school level and in most cases, due to their rural backgrounds where the environment is not conducive to English language improvement. As a result, the aim of the conversion to English medium instruction at the university level suffers, for neither students are able to grasp what is being taught in English, nor are teachers able to impart knowledge effectively (Walisundara 2006).
All the studies discussed above are important for the understanding of the undergraduate English language programmes in the country. However, it remains a question that the results and insights gained through such scholarly works are disseminated to the other universities in the country. At the same time, it is highly doubtful whether all the alterations implemented in the undergraduate English language curriculum have always been documented in the above form. It is not always the case in practical situations that as a result of research, modifications are carried out in the system. More often than not, changes come about as the needs are felt by the teaching staff or with the introduction of a new project being added to the already existing courses. As per personal experience, the first area that is affected by such endeavours is the lesson materials. What theories underpin the current modifications in the materials? Have changes in teaching methods taken place? How has the teaching changed to cater to the changes in the syllabus? What modifications have gone in to the area of student assessment? When the programme is geared to teach communicative skills, do the proportions of all four skills match the course objectives? Do the overall (new) course objectives match the student requirements? Also is the question that with the kind of changes that have taken place in the domain of English language teaching, whether the teachers have been given training accordingly in the areas of materials preparation, teaching and student assessment.

If, for instance, we consider the reading skill, it is important to note that the primary aspects of teaching reading have not changed over time from the period Wickramasuriya discussed them till date. But at the level of implementation them in the programme with modifications, there could be changes in terms of the kind of thematic content, gradation, etc that have been brought into the present materials. Have they been carried out with a clear understanding of the theoretical perspectives that underpin teaching reading?

Another dimension to this discussion is that the emphasis given to the reading skill in the current programmes. A cursory look at the materials in use in some universities gives the impression that for some levels of students, especially, those
who are in higher proficiency levels, the emphasis is given only to reading. If reading is highlighted, it is inevitable that the aim of the programme to teach English for communicative purposes suffer. On the other hand, is it possible that the emphasis is not deliberate but a reminiscence of what has been theorized in 1981 that has not changed because the need was not felt as a result of not having asked for student opinions? Is it because of the common assumption that the undergraduates of comparatively higher proficiency levels (decided by the placement test at the entry point, in most universities) need more of academic reading? In such a case, it is pivotal to know the perceptions of students regarding their needs and motivation to learn English. This aspect should be examined in the context of the problem of high student absenteeism in the undergraduate English language classes.

Despite the fact that undergraduate ELT has undergone transformation over the years as per the demands of the society as well as those of students as perceived by teachers, the graduates' English language proficiency level hitherto is questionable. As stated earlier, mainly the Arts graduates being not employable due to the lack of English language competence remains a strong point to examine the present undergraduate English language programme.

The literature that has been discussed so far pertaining to undergraduate English language teaching draws the following points:

1. The programme has been completely restructured in the 1990s in terms of aims and objectives and therefore theoretical perspectives

2. The programme keeps changing mainly through lesson materials

3. Nearly after 20 years of its restructuring, still the programme is a failure as perceived by the society in terms of the English language proficiency of the graduate output
A couple of questions stem from such a scenario: Have the needs of student to use English changed over time? If yes, then what are their new needs? If not, then what has changed over time? Considering the areas where needs for English is required as recognized by Fernando in 1991, (in education, employment and public life) it seems that the nomenclature is valid in today’s context as well. If this assumption is credible, the possible answers to the question of “what has changed over time?” could be:

1. the priority of students’ needs in certain domains may have changed
2. the intensity of their needs may have changed

Therefore, it is essential to examine the present scenario of ELT in relation to students’ needs in the light of their perceptions.

What has caused teachers to make changes in the materials? Are those the needs of students as perceived by teachers? Or, are they societal needs as perceived by teachers? What guided them to make modifications? In the absence of proof, and when the picture is blurred, the need to examine the existing undergraduate English language programme as per teachers’ views gains currency.

While such a scenario prevails in the present undergraduate English language teaching programmes, “Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education” popularly known as the IRQUE, a project funded by the World Bank with the aim of English skills enhancement of the undergraduates “proved to be successful” as some teachers view it. Informal discussions with teachers of the University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayawardanapura revealed that teachers witnessed students reaping the benefits of the programme. The project aimed at improving students’ self-confidence and encouraging them to project themselves positively in the society. Speech activities as group work were used to make students speak. In addition, students were made aware of the qualities, which

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1 Personal interview with C. Jayasuriya, University of Sri Jayawardenapura on 17.12.2007
Personal interview with S. Illangakoon, University of Colombo on 12.06.2008
employers seek from their prospective candidates. Students were encouraged to cultivate such in them. They were coached to write Curriculum Vitas, applications for jobs and to face interviews which took place in real during the course helping the students face such with confidence. Self-learning, which was a part of the programme allowed them to discuss and clear doubt with the peers (Illangankoon, 2008).

The IRQUE was an optional programme and there was no compulsion for students to follow it. Moreover, the teachers who taught in the programme were self-appointed and the motivation of both the teachers and students was self-imposed according to Illangakoon. It is noteworthy that the nature of the IRQUE project in terms of time allocation, aims and selection of student population largely differs from the ongoing general English language programme. To begin with, the time allotted for English language teaching in universities does not exceed five hours per week. And in some universities three hours are officially given and the other two hours teachers and students have to negotiate and find without having clashes with the core subject timings, which is quite an exhausting task, which in most cases ends with not having found such hours. On the contrary, the IRQUE course had six officially-allotted hours per day for 23 days, which made it a full-time intensive course (Illangakoon, 2008, p.101). Moreover, its aims were “specific” as opposed to the “general” aim/s of the ongoing general English language programme: While the former aimed at “enabling students to gain proficiency in grammatical English and using the language with confidence in a variety of situations” and “providing students with skills necessary for employability” (p.99), the latter aims at developing “communicative competence” in students. The similarity of the two programmes was that there was no compulsion for students to participate in them (other than for the first year students in the ongoing general English programme in some universities). One main difference was that those who opted for the IRQUE project were self-motivated while the other programme suffers because of high student absenteeism.
What could be the reason behind having self-motivated students in one programme and high student absenteeism that manifested lack of enthusiasm for learning English in the other with the same teachers planning lesson materials and teaching in both the programmes? Some reasons perhaps could be gauged at from the aims and objectives of the two programmes. But a study supported by undergraduates' and teachers' perceptions of the ongoing general English language programmes would give the empirical proof.

2.5. Different aspects of ELT

2.5.1. Learner needs and perceptions

There is a corpus of literature related to the field in relation to learner needs, learner differences and perceptions: Under the first category i.e. needs, learners are classified as activists, pragmatists, reflectors and theorists and there are conditions under which each category learns best (Honey and Mumford, 1990). And according to them, learners may not be aware of their preferred way of learning and may need guidance in identifying them. Also the notion about learners level of competence and their needs put forward by Legutke and Thomas (1991). Often there is a disparity between what task designers or teachers expect learners should achieve, and what learners actually derive from a particular task (Wright, 1987). Another view with regard to learner needs is in terms of orientation: product (narrow) orientation which is on the needs of the student as a learner. The other is the need to take account of learners' attitudes, motivation, awareness, personality, wants, expectations and learning styles.

The second category is on learner differences. Nunan (1991) states that learners have 'hidden agendas' and aspects of curriculum studies need to accommodate them. Cook (1991) brings out the importance of treating the learner as an individual: Even though teaching is done for groups, teachers need to understand that students learn language as individuals. Making "students learn in ways that are
not consistent with their natural or habitual approach can be extremely threatening” (Kinsella, 1996, p.27). The theory of Multiple Intelligences put forward by Howard Gardner (1983) throws light on the importance of creating an individualized learning environment. The implication of this theory in second language teaching has been explained by Christson (1996).

The third group which is on learner perceptions talks about the importance of teacher’s awareness of learners’ personal approaches and personal concepts in bringing about more productive “interventions” by the teacher (Kumaravadivelu, 1991). Some learners prefer traditional learning activities to communicative types (Alcorso and Kalantsis, 1989; Barkhuizen, 1998; Willing, 1985). Another study has shown that stronger students (according to test score and teacher gradings) favour more learner oriented or learner-teacher oriented activities whereas weak students preferred teacher controlled activities (Pope & Saka, 1997).

Some local literature was available in relation to student perceptions of English language teaching programmes in schools. The survey carried out on the General English for G.C.E.(A/L) students, aimed at making “a preliminary evaluation of the implementation of the programme in order to suggest revisions in the instructional materials” (Wijeratne, 2008). The research instruments used were questionnaires, classroom observations and structured interviews. The questionnaire for students was designed to procure (a) quantitative data such as time spent on tasks (real learning time), the availability and the usefulness of the learning materials, the content and focus of lessons and (b) qualitative data such as quality of lessons, teacher effectiveness and the importance of learning English.

Findings of the survey of students’ perceptions were reported under the following themes:

1. Learning-teaching process
2. Teacher effectiveness and the classroom process
3. Methods of teaching and the exploitation of materials
4. Importance of learning English (p.60)
According to the findings, the "official position" given to General English Programme in schools was positive. However, students' responses revealed that the actual time spent for the programme was far below than what the schools claimed to have given. This showed the negative attitude of the school administration to English as the periods for English were used for other purposes. The interviews with teachers disclosed the fact that in some schools, periods allotted for General English were used to teach the main subjects. The issues such as English periods were given to other activities suggested that some school administrators were "insensitive" to the importance of English to students (p.66). A somewhat similar situation is prevalent in universities where core subjects are given priority by both the administration and students in terms of time allotment.

The overall rating of the materials of the above study showed that majority of them viewed materials as fairly good. The rating of materials according to skills proved that a large majority rated reading and writing positively. However, with the grammar component, this was more negative as they found it not useful (p.63). How would the undergraduates view the various components in their materials? Would it be similar to the views held when they were in schools? Or have they changed their preferences with university entrance?

Student responses to the open-ended questions of the above study showed that teachers did not have clear objectives nor have they made use of the methods indicated in the materials. The classroom observation revealed that less than 10% of the schools made use of the textbook effectively. Modern methods were not used. This was further proved through the lesson observations. The interviews conducted with teachers revealed that they have not been trained sufficiently to teach the new book (p.67). What is the situation of language teaching in universities? How would university English teachers assess themselves in terms of teacher training? How would undergraduates view their teachers' methods of teaching?

In Wijeratne's study, the regular attendance of the students for the General English classes indicated a high level of motivation to learn English. However, some
students seemed to go for English tuition because of better teaching methods, individual attention received there, and systematic and graded lessons in grammar (p.66). Do undergraduates abstain from participating in undergraduate English classes because of lack of the aforementioned in the programme?

Nearly 100% of the students in the sample of the above study considered English as important. The reasons given were according to the order of preference (a) because of its standing as an international language, (b) needed for social and communication purposes, (c) needed for employment, (d) for higher education and (e) for technology. This showed that students liked English because of its importance in the first three areas and not because of its importance in higher education and technology (p.67). This nomenclature of needs identified by Wijeratne, still, outwardly matches that of the undergraduates' identified by Fernando nearly 20 years ago. Can we expect a similar hierarchy of needs from the undergraduates today?

Wijeratne's same study showed that students had a positive attitude towards the General English programme, and were aware of the importance of English for future. Their concentration was more on the importance of it for employment and communication purposes. They showed lack of understanding of the value of it in higher education as they did not consider English as "central" to the area (p.68). This may be because of the prevalent situation in the country in relation to higher education: Only a limited percentage of students get the opportunity to enter the university. Even if they get the chance, mother tongue instruction is available in the Faculties of Arts in most of the universities so that they can get by without English.

Wijeratne's paper recommended the following:

1. The need for trial of the newly designed materials in various teaching-learning situations.

2. Students should be motivated and teachers should be made competent.
3. There must be political will to implement programmes, once they have been endorsed by policy.

4. Student complaints of teacher absenteeism and teacher ineffectiveness must be addressed.

5. Materials specific training should be given to teachers to adapt them in different situations.

6. Teaching methods should be made effective and attractive to students with special reference to grammar.

7. Equal and on time distribution of materials should be done.

8. Curriculum innovations must be closely monitored and their impact evaluated from time to time. (p.68)

The above recommendations give valuable insight to understand undergraduate English language teaching programmes in terms of areas that need investigation.

Learner perceptions, despite whether they are in schools or at the undergraduate level, are central to the development of a programme as they reflect the success or failure of a programme just as their performance does. A study carried out on the factors that were important in learning a foreign language, students have come out with teachers as the most important factor followed by other factors such as textbooks, equipment and teacher-made materials, etc. (Chambers, 1998). Another study carried out on Sri Lankan school children by Silva (2001) to find out their attitudes towards English, their perceptions of the activities in the ESL classroom and the importance they place on various factors affecting ESL learning revealed that they perceived teachers and text books as most important factors. In this study, the activities used for teaching English were differently perceived by the students. While the majority showed indifference others were divided between the two extremes of liking and disliking them (p.88). The study showed that more students liked activities such as reading the textbook, listening exercises, group work and games irrespective of the school type. However, giving speeches, writing make-up
stories and role-playing were not among the preferred activities. In comparison to this study, it is important to find out how undergraduates view the programme in terms of activities and components that are presented to them.

Conclusions drawn from the above study showed that classroom activities and affiliated factors influenced students in varying degrees in learning English. It was evident that teachers were not aware of students’ perceptions vis-à-vis English language learning. The study recommended the following:

1. There should be a variety in the type of activities done in the classroom; there needs to be a balance of both communicative and traditional type activities
2. Teachers should be given thorough pre-service and in-service training enabling them with knowledge of using modern technology in the language classroom.
3. Teachers should be encouraged to carry out classroom research and discover learner needs.

Moreover, the survey suggested some ways to help teachers to develop awareness of student perceptions:

1. Get student feedback after a lesson/activity (such as keeping a book available for them to comment)
2. Discuss students needs and interests with them at least once a week
3. Welcome student suggestions
4. Get students involved in lesson material planning and preparation
5. Plan lessons for different student types

The study emphasized the importance of not making the teaching styles and activities stereo-type but adapting them to suit learner needs, interests and abilities
in order to bring the desired outcomes of teaching. This can only be achieved
through a proper understanding of students’ perceptions of their learning
experience.

A survey carried out on a short-term (3 month) English language teaching course
conducted to the academic staff in the National Institute of Education (NIE), Sri
Lanka revealed that the academic staff did not require much English for the
functioning of their day-to-day work nor did they require it to communicate with
their superiors (Gunaratne, 1991). Their use of English was limited to classroom
where they built some confidence to speak with peers. The learners were graduates
and some of them had postgraduate qualifications.

The course was intended to improve all four skills with special emphasis on speech
skills in the initial stage and more emphasis on written skills in the final stages. Such
objectives were identified through a pre-course needs analysis whereby learners
have indicated their desire to improve speech. Also a grammar component was
introduced at the beginning with the focus of improving accuracy but later it was
taught implicitly. An observation made in this regard was that albeit their increase in
fluency, the degree of accuracy in “handling” English was not satisfactory (p.153).
The course suffered due to high absenteeism. The learners may have felt either the
course was too difficult or it was not challenging enough. Also, some may have felt
that “the syllabus, teaching materials and techniques did not cater to their specific
needs as adults have very definite views on what their requirements are” (p.155).
The need of English in the NIE academic staff was not geared to use it in their
work domain apart from the foreign consultancies for which a higher level of
linguistic competence was required than what was envisaged by the course. In
addition, there was no need of English for their domestic or social communication
and yet they were well aware of the importance of English as the means for upward
social mobility along with aspirations for higher education.

The most important issue raised in this paper was that, though the Sri Lankan
learners wanted English for broad communicative purposes, they would not or
could not use it outside the classroom as their immediate environment did not necessitate nor was conducive to the use of L2 (Second language - English), making them "turn more to the classroom" to achieve their language aspirations (p.156). Thus, Gunaratne made the following point:

Is it time to face the realities of this situation, re-think and perhaps see it in a wider perspective, whereby we cater to the learners' need to participate confidently in an English speaking environment; and then gear ourselves to a longer period of teaching to enable these learners to move from MT\(^1\) confidently towards the TL?\(^2\)” (p.156)

The significance of Gunaratne's suggestion in designing courses to adult learners of this kind is such that there is the need to move from general to specific skills, if developing specific skills is required. Also, the course should be built into their work environment and for a longer period, at least for one year. With regard to the present Sri Lankan context, this study raises two questions: Is the working environment in relation to the use of English language today in a government office the same as that was in 1991, nearly 20 years ago? If it is so, are we trying to train our undergraduates for a non-existing English speaking working environment in the government sector? Or, should we target to produce fluent speakers of English to face the unseen?

2.5.2. Lesson materials

Cunningsworth (1991) described a survey of educators and employers worldwide carried out on training in materials selection and evaluation. Lesson materials were rated as the second most important item by the 62 non-US respondents and the sixth most important by the 77 mainland USA respondents. In a study conducted on student perception of ELT in Sri Lanka, students perceived textbooks as one of the two most important factors in their English language learning (Silva, 2001, p.89). Such data reveal the importance of course material evaluation and selection,

\(^1\) Mother Tongue
\(^2\) Target Language
which is generally entrusted with the teacher (especially in the higher education). However, Cunningsworth’s paper was based on the selection of materials that were available on the market and which were of a wide and partly unspecified nature. It was perceived as important to equip teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge in order to make rational and principled judgments by sensitizing them to what to look for. Cunningsworth discussed the procedures for teacher training courses for the evaluation and selection of lesson materials which were done through group activities. The main aim behind this was to equip teachers with the criteria “for making useful judgments” and for developing their critical faculty, “linked to an awareness of the importance of matching methods to objectives” (1991, p.169).

According to Cunningsworth, there are no absolute values to determine whether a material is good or bad, yet it should be evaluated against the learning objectives of the particular programme taking into account the context of teaching. Rabbani and Tasmin (2001) sharing a similar view state, “it is a matter of relative merit, no absolute good or bad is there – only a degree of fitness exists for the required purpose” (p.103). It is important to understand that learning objectives can be present in varying form depending on the views and approaches of the syllabus designers. For instance, they may be in the form of

1. language items such as grammar and vocabulary
2. language skills
3. patterns of interaction relating to different types of speech event and situation (informal conversations)
4. functions such as asking for and giving information

Or the objective could very well be an integration of all the above in which grammar, functions, situations, etc are put together. It has been reiterated that language learning materials are best evaluated against the background of the course objectives with contextual factors that should be taken into account such as the age
of the learners, class size, social attitudes, the role of English in the community, learner expectations and previous experiences (Cunnigsworth, 1991, p.166). Rabbani and Tasmin (2001) identify two categories in order to evaluate lesson materials: validity related criteria that include text validity, learner validity, teacher validity and institutional validity; the reliability related criteria, which incorporate coherence, skills, tasks and design (p.105).

Cunnigsworth (1991) emphasizes the centrality of the learner in resolving conflicts that can arise in trying to make generally-acceptable criteria from among potentially complex variables. Teacher’s role is crucial in

1. selecting and organizing the language to be learnt
2. using appropriate models for presentation
3. selecting activities for use
4. effectively managing the learning environment

However, there should be consideration on the learners’ approach to learning to understand that individuals use different strategies (such as mnemonics, holistic vs. serial approaches) at different times and when confronting different tasks.

According to him, there are other factors that affect the learner and the learning process:

1. Socio-cultural factors such as the status and economic value of the target language
2. Psychological factors affecting motivation, learner attitude to other nations and cultures, etc.

A study carried out by Akin and Guceri (2001) identified the following areas for a macro-material evaluation of course in a higher education institute in Turkey. The data were collected from teachers and students by means of questionnaires and interviews under the following:
1. Timing: As all the time allowances given to the materials were estimated, both teachers and students were asked to comment on their accuracy.

2. Suitability of teachers’ notes: Teachers were asked to give feedback regarding their clarity, suitability, and whether they were easy to follow.

3. The layout of materials: Teachers were asked to remark on the quality of the print and the layout of the materials and examine whether they were visually appealing to students.

4. Motivation/interest/usefulness: Both teachers and students were asked to analyse how interesting, useful and motivating the materials had been.

5. Variety of tasks and activities: Both parties were asked to consider whether there was enough variety of tasks within the materials and whether they were challenging and meaningful.

6. Materials in relation to course objectives/learning: Teachers were asked to comment on whether they thought that the materials had attained their objectives and to give reasons for their comments.

Tambinayagam (1991) attempts developing teacher awareness of discourse features in materials by bringing out the relationship between materials and pedagogy. Pedagogy in a restricted sense refers to principles and methods of teaching. He explains that English language teaching has taken on a “new dimension” as earlier it was learning ‘language skills’ whereas now it is the ability to ‘use’ the language in order to ‘receive’ and ‘convey’ information (p.184). Accordingly, this new dimension has brought about changes in the materials which contain features of it demanding the changes in the teaching methodology with teachers’ awareness of them. Thus the orderly graded materials that came under the rubric of the Structural Methodology has given way along with the teaching which was more or less of a spoon feeding nature. The awareness of the discourse features of materials would help teachers to be aware of the developmental nature of the materials which goes from known to unknown (p.193).
Tomlinson (2003) divides materials evaluation into three steps depending upon temporality of the evaluation: pre-use evaluation, whilst-use evaluation, and post-use evaluation. Pre-use evaluation takes the form of prediction that involves the potential use of the materials to their users. It is often impressionistic and carried out by teachers (or potential selectors) by flicking through the material. Whilst-use evaluation involves measuring materials while being used or observing them being used. It can measure short-term memory through observing learner performance. However, it is limited to observable features only as it cannot measure what is going on in the brains of the learner. Post-use evaluation helps to evaluate materials in terms of their use for achieving short-term goals and long-term goals that are designed for a course. As Tomlinson recognizes, it is the most valuable of all three and helps measure the actual effects of the materials on the users, both teachers and students.

Among the guidelines, checklists and questionnaires available for materials evaluation, Breen and Candlin (1989) use a checklist which has two segments: overall usefulness of the materials and suitability for a particular group of learners in a classroom situation. Also Breen (1989) explores the theoretical and empirical value of materials. He distinguishes three phases in the evaluation of materials namely, materials-as-work plan that is the theoretical values of materials, materials-in-process, that is how teachers and learners actually use and respond to materials and the last stage which is the outcomes from materials, i.e. the achievement of learners. The stance McDonough and Shaw (1993) take is that there needs to be two types of text evaluation: external and internal. External evaluation consists of the examination of the claims made on the cover (of the book/s) and the introduction and the table of contents which will help teachers to determine the following:

1. the intended audience
2. the proficiency level
3. content in which the writers of the materials intend them to be used
4. the way language has been organized into teachable units
5. the writer’s views on language and methodology

External evaluation should be followed by an internal evaluation which will look into the in-depth analysis of two or more units in order to examine aspects such as

1. presentation of skills in the materials
2. the grading and sequencing of materials
3. the kind of texts used in them
4. relationship between exercises and the texts.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.97) propose a four-tier process of materials evaluation that comprises the following:

1. Defining criteria – E.g. On what bases will you judge the materials?
2. Subjective analysis – E.g. What realization of the criteria do you want in your course?
3. Objective analysis – E.g. How does the material being evaluated realize the criteria?
4. Matching – E.g. How far does the material match your needs?

Dickins and Germaine (2001) distinguish between types of evaluation in terms of purpose: general purposes, specific, topic-related purposes. They emphasize the theoretical and empirical analyses of materials for a comprehensive evaluation of them.

We want to conclude the review of literature on materials evaluation with a note for the future, taking into consideration the features given by Tomlinson (2003, p.9) of potential future of materials. In doing so, the future materials evaluators can be enlightened as to what to look for in materials they select for their potential learners:
1. Greater personalization and localization of materials
2. Greater flexibility and creativity of use
3. More respect for the learners
4. More affectively engaging content
5. A greater emphasis on multicultural perspectives and awareness
6. More opportunities for learners with experiential (and especially kinesthetic) learning style preferences
7. More attempts made to engage the learner in the language learning process as an experienced, intelligent and interesting individual
8. More attempt made to use multidimensional approaches to language learning

2.5.3. Student assessment

Language testing and theories of language

Language testing is influenced by the theories of language and its use. The theory of Communicative Competence represents a profound shift from a psychological perspective on language, which sees language as an internal phenomenon, to a sociological one, focusing on the external, social functions of language. Accordingly, language testing has seen a change from the integrative/pragmatic testing (which integrated knowledge of relevant systematic features of language—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary—with an understanding of context) to communicative language tests (MacNamara, 2000, p.17). Communicative testing is both cognitive and social.

Lado (1961), under foreign language testing, discussed the theory that underpinned the contemporary testing practices as assuming that language was a system of habit of communication. Testing control of language problems that were associated with language learning was seen as testing control of language (p.24).
MacNamara (2000) captures the shift in testing with the emergence of Communicative language teaching as follows:

To begin with, the very nature of testing has changed quite radically over the years to become less impositional, more humanistic, conceived not so much to catch people out on what they do not know, but as a more neutral assessment of what they do. (p.4)

Bachman (1990) identifies five distinctive features in classifying language tests: (a) the purpose or use for which they are intended, (b) the content upon which they are based, (c) the frame of reference within which their results are to be interpreted, (d) the way in which they are scored and (e) the specific method or technique they employ.

Tests can be categorized according to the method as paper-and-pencil language tests and performance tests. Paper-pencil tests are supposedly traditional and are typically used for the assessment of either of separate components of language knowledge such as grammar, vocabulary, etc. or of receptive understanding such as reading comprehension, listening, etc. (MacNamara, 2000, p.5). Performance tests assess language skills in an act of communication, mostly in writing and speaking.

Language tests are different from each other by their purpose. Achievement tests accumulate student performance during, or at the end of, a course to see whether or where progress has been made in terms of goals of learning. A well designed Achievement test should support the teaching to which they relate. Thus, they are able to reflect progressive aspects of the curriculum (p.7). Achievement tests relate to the past in that they measure what language learners have learned as a result of teaching. Proficiency tests look to the future situation of language use without necessarily any reference to the previous process of teaching. The future real life language use is referred to as the criterion.
A website article \(^1\) (2007) on language testing classifies language tests into five categories on the ground of their purposes:

**Proficiency tests**

Proficiency tests are designed to measure people's ability in a language regardless of any training they may have had in that language. The content of a proficiency test, therefore, is not based on the content or objectives of language courses which people taking the test may have followed. Rather, it is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to be considered proficient or having sufficient command of the language for a particular purpose.

**Achievement tests**

Most teachers are unlikely to be responsible for proficiency tests. It is much more probable that they will be involved in the preparation and use of achievement tests. In contrast to proficiency tests, achievement tests are directly related to language courses, their purpose being to establish how successful individual students, groups of students, or the courses themselves have been in achieving objectives. They are of two kinds: *final* achievement tests and *progress* achievement tests.

Final achievement tests are those administered at the end of a course of study. Clearly the content of these tests must be related to the courses with which they are concerned. Some language testers argue that the content of a final achievement test should be based directly on a detailed course syllabus or on the books and other materials used. Since the test only contains what it is thought that the students have actually encountered, and thus can be considered a fair test. The disadvantage is that if the syllabus is badly designed, or the books and other materials are badly chosen, then the results of the test can be very misleading. Successful performance on the test may not truly indicate successful achievement of the course objectives.

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\(^1\) Testing and teaching: A brief introduction
The alternative is to base the test content directly on the objectives of the course. This has a number of advantages. It forces course designers to be explicit about objectives. Secondly, it makes it possible for performance on the test to show just how far students have achieved those objectives. In turn, this puts pressure on those responsible for the syllabus and for the selection of books and materials to ensure that these are consistent with the course objectives. Tests based on objectives work against the perpetuation of poor teaching practice. This will provide more accurate information about individual and group achievement, and it is likely to promote a more beneficial backwash effect on teaching.

Progress achievement tests, as their name suggests, are intended to measure the progress that students are making. Since 'progress' is towards the achievement of course objectives, these tests too should relate to objectives.

**Diagnostic tests**

Diagnostic tests are used to identify student's strengths and weaknesses. They are intended primarily to ascertain what further teaching is necessary. Indeed existing proficiency tests may often prove adequate for this purpose.

**Placement tests**

Placement tests, as their name suggests, are intended to provide information which will help to place students at the stage (or in the part) of the teaching programme most appropriate to their abilities. Typically they are used to assign students to classes at different levels. The placement tests which are most successful are those constructed for particular situations. They depend on the identification of the key features at different levels of teaching in the institution.

**Aptitude tests**

These tests are designed to assist in the decision of who should be allowed to participate in a particular course. This becomes a matter of serious concern when there are more applicants than spaces available. Such selection decisions are often
made by determining who is most likely to benefit from instruction, to attain mastery of language or content area. In the area of language testing, aptitude tests are commonly used to predict the success or failure of students prospective in a language-learning program.

With the introduction of the course unit system, testing in the Sri Lankan universities have seen a paradigm shift in term of both test method and purpose. The formative assessment has gained currency. However, in the school system in the island, continuous assessment has been a short-lived discourse due to some perceived failures. A survey conducted on formative assessment in school in order to find out the attitudes of its users, both teachers and students has been selected for the literature review as there is a paucity of local literature exclusively on undergraduate language testing. Through such an enquiry, the intent is to gain some insight into the assessment practices in the Sri Lankan undergraduate ELT scenario.

Formative testing

Nagasundaram (1991) discussed the outcome of a survey carried out on the Continuous Assessment system for English functioned in the Sri Lankan school education. It was short-lived due to the perceived apprehension of it by teachers, students and parents. The survey was conducted in order to find out the attitude of the teachers and students who experienced the system for some time. The system was introduced in view of having a better integration between teaching and evaluation: Evaluation would help in bringing about required changes to meet the needs of the students via developing learning activities. It was aimed at shifting the teacher-centred teaching-learning to a more learner-centred process: “Instead of a set of note-taking dull and inactive learners’ a ‘generation of active, enthusiastic and talented learners born out of the innovation – students who would seek and use of knowledge’” (p. 199). Accordingly, the role of the teacher also would be that of a guide and a facilitator.

Nagasundaram reported that this new assessment system as highly debated soon after it was introduced and most of the “public arguments” were “not favourable”
Parents, students and teachers along with some of the educationists were non-supportive of the system. She discussed the potential role of it in an ELT programme, especially in view of claims which have been made about its importance in the Communicative Approach to language learning. Breen and Candlin stated (1979), as cited by Nagasundaram (1991), “A genuinely communicative use of evaluation will lead towards an emphasis on formative or ongoing evaluation rather than summative or end of course evaluation which may be based on some prescribed criteria” (p. 200). And the conclusion was that formative assessment should be an integral part of the communicative process of teaching and learning whereby potentially formative feedback was developed.

The survey was conducted using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with students and teachers in order to find out (a) the initial attitude of students and teachers on the system, (b) demands and problems created by the new scheme as perceived by the teachers and students, (c) the advantages of the system of formative assessment, (d) the attitude shifts and (e) the final verdict of students and teachers on the system of formative assessment in English.

As it was found out, the initial attitude of the students was more positive than that of the teachers. A number of disadvantages were reported and among them were the poor classroom conditions prevalent in some schools that made the assessment unreliable. Speech testing was hampered due to large numbers of students. Frequent absenteeism of students had a negative effect. In addition, problems were created by the disparities in the socio-economic background of students in terms of access to the sources of knowledge and information. Group work was emphasized through the new assessment system, yet it seemed to have not totally popular as teachers had difficulties in managing group tasks with students who indicated “a streak of anti-social qualities in them” (p. 207). However, teachers have tried out remedial measures in overcoming the aforementioned problems. The 9-point rating scale was also not popular: This was due to the inadequacies in guiding teachers with the scale; and students found that gaining one mark out of nine was insufficient.
According to the survey, more than half of both teachers and students have seen advantages of the system as it gave students more exposure to the language both within and outside the classroom. An increased motivation was observed by both the groups. From the students' point of view, the system supported them to obtain a high grade in the General Certificate of Education – Ordinary Level [G.C.E. (O/L)] Examination. The students were of the view that with the system they gained more confidence and had better rapport with the teacher. Also it helped the weak students to progress. From the teachers' viewpoint, formative assessment was able to change and improve their teaching as the feedback was immediate. The system has helped them in identifying weak students and giving them remedial teaching. The emphasis given to all four skills teachers viewed as favourable which promoted student interaction. The analysis of attitude shifts of students and teachers indicated a major shift from negative to positive in both groups.

As Nagasundaram reported, “From these results, it may be concluded that in the opinion of these samples, the perceived benefits of this scheme outweighed the demands or problems created by it” (p. 210). It is evident that the short-lived formative assessment system had supported students to achieve some level of communicative competence at the school education level. Therefore, it is important to know the effects of the formative assessment that is in practice at the undergraduate level and the attitudes of both teachers and undergraduates towards it.

2.5.4. Motivation

Motivation is a crucial element for English language learning. Learners are motivated to learn English for various reasons. Gardener and Lambert (1972) and Lambert (1985) developed a theory that categorized motivational orientation found in learners into four different types: integrative, instrumental, resentment and manipulative. According to them, when a person prefers to learn a language to become a part of that language community, then he/she is considered as having integrative motivational orientation. It is said to be instrumental, if a person wants
to learn the target language for gaining benefits, for instance, obtaining an employment, etc. However, resentment and manipulative motivations were not explained in detail by Lambert and Gardner. Yet, a comprehensive study carried out by Rahman (2005) showed that when students learnt a language because they were compelled to and without their willingness, as students in a particular study programme, then they would develop resentment motivational orientation to learn that language. Motivational orientation is recognized as manipulative when a person learns a language to get work done by manipulating others. The sociolinguistic dimension to motivational orientation has proven that instrumental motivational orientation is most prominent among the motivation types to learn English in bilingual and multilingual societies. However, social-psychological theories show that the integrative type is better in the long run to sustain second language acquisition (Samarakkody, 2001, p.38). According to Gardner (1988), as cited by Samarakkody, it is the assemblage of attitudes that involve various aspects of second language learning with the chief determinant of achievement being the motivational component. “It is also associated with a positive disposition towards the second language group and a desire to interact with and become a valued member of that group…” (p.38) that makes a person develop a particular motivational orientation. As studies show, in relation to English language learning, all of the aforementioned motivational orientations were found to be present among learners. Agnihotri and Khanna (1997) describe the motivational orientation to learn English as regards to the Indian context as follows:

People in India learn English for a variety of reasons but all of them have an unmistakable instrumental colour: some are integratively instrumental, some instrumentally instrumental, some manipulatively instrumental and some instrumental despite resentment. (p.83)

A survey conducted by them on different types of motivational orientation revealed a high degree of overlap. Thus they identified, in order to suit the Indian context, learners’ motivational reasons as ‘complementary motivation’ and ‘supplementary motivation’. The former referred to the motivation to learn English in order to get
better jobs or receive higher education; while the latter referred to the motivation to learn English for 'additive/ornamental' purposes, i.e. to read English literature, to see English movies or just to feel superior etc. (Agnihortri and Khanna, 1994). Therefore, it is clear that motivation to learn a foreign language are, by and large, manipulated by the learners' real-life needs/demands, which are in turn controlled and guided by their respective socio-cultural settings.

The study that was carried out by Samarakkody (2001) in relation to the motivation and acquisition of English in Sri Lanka had a linguistic and social-psychological perspective. It aimed at showing the kind of integrative motivation prevalent in the society to learning English that has been continuously influenced by other dynamics such as historical factors and present conditions in the society. The study used case studies as the intent of the study was to explain "the linguistic and socio-psychological dimension of subjects as individuals" (p.41). This was because individual performance was believed to be more revealing in this than when they were taken as a group. The group consisted of Sinhala-English bilingual informants who had completed the final year of the Diploma in Advanced English for Administration and Academic Purposes offered by the Extension Courses in English of the University of Colombo. The informants were employed mainly in the public sector. The data was collected through interviews, questionnaires and by a version of 'matched-guise' type of instrument for assessing language attitudes via a number of dimensions through tape-recorded speech samples. The linguistic data was obtained by analyzing the interview transcripts. All the respondents indicated that the desire to learn English stemmed from the need to have a positive social identity via interacting with and within the standard Sri Lankan English speech communities. It was found out that the informants identified the speakers of proficient English having many positive personality traits. The informants viewed such speakers as individuals of high educational, occupational and social status. Thus, the informants too seemed to aspire to be so through acquiring proficiency in English. Therefore, in addition to the instrumental motivation type, the responses indicated the existence of a very strong integrative motivation to learn English: It
was with subtle and complex attributes intermingled and emerged as a complex and
ambivalent phenomenon resulting from socio-historical and inter-group dynamics
(p.41).

2.5.5 Literature, culture and language

Ramanathan’s (2005) work was on the divisive role of English in the postcolonial
India which addressed some realities in the domain. It brought out the positioning
of English in the vernaculars and vice versa: “English...is entrenched in the heart
of a class-based divide... and issues of inequality, subordination and unequal value
seem to revolve directly around its positioning with Vernacular languages.” (p.vii).
Her work revealed the ways in which language policies at various levels – nation­
wide, state-wide, institutional – influenced the education domain. However, the
work did not deal with issues related to language policy or planning, but presented a
vivid account of how students, teachers and institutions interpreted and engaged
with particular language policies to bridge the gaps that existed as a result of the
impact of the post colonial legacy.

Generally, the task of postcolonial studies have been to revisit by remembering,
questioning the colonial past with a simultaneous acknowledgement of various
complex and reciprocal love-hate relationship between the colonizer and the
colonized (Ramanathan, 2005, p.1). Colonizer represents power and even after his
departure, several instruments of power have remained and language is one such
that influences various domains including education. A number of works are
available on how vernaculars got marginalized in front of the power of the English
language in multilingual societies. But what is important to comprehend is “how the
English-Vernacular divide is resisted, mitigated and bridged” in such cultures
(Canagarajah, 1999). Therefore, the intent of Ramanathan’s work, which she called
as an “interpretative endeavour,” was to understand some local intricacies in the
tertiary level English-Vernacular enterprise, while trying to recognize how students,
teachers and institutions were positioned in relation to each other (p.3).

Understanding of this is important in the Sri Lankan context as societal attitudes
towards English language have shifted over the years from a power-related identification of it towards more accommodative notions. Therein, English language is not regarded as a threatening entity but a tool of utilitarian value (Samarakkody, 2001).

The opening argument of Ramanathan's work was that the understanding of the English and vernacular education should be done by locating them side by side and not in a hierarchy. Such a positioning would pave way for further understanding of language-related inequalities in a postcolonial context and discerning how, according to some view points, the English and the vernaculars divide and dichotomous and at the same time “overlapping and conjoined” (p.3). Thus, she attempted to show the gulfs and bridges between the English-Vernacular divide.

The setting was Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India and three institutional realities were selected for the study: one was a middle-class largely English medium (EM) institution which had recently opened for Vernacular medium (VM) students who were also low caste and low-income. The second was a low-income Vernacular medium women's college and the third was an English medium private business college that admitted a few Vernacular medium students with English language proficiency. Ramanathan, having been raised in Ahmedabad and then lived outside, stated in retrospect, “The combination of being and feeling both an insider and outsider to the institutional scenes has been, for the most part, an asset” (p.8). The survey had an ethnographic perspective in its methodology with a focused approach to study particular aspects of everyday life in data collecting and analyzing.

The research investigated into three main areas:

1. Divergent pedagogic tools
1. Divergent pedagogic practices
2. Divergent tracks (student selection criteria)

The justifications given for such an isolation of aspects were as follows:
1. All three are super ordinate social cogs with diverse sub-cogs that can be seen to maintain the EM-VM gulf

2. All three have interesting historical trajectories that extend from India's colonial past and find distinct articulation in the present

3. All three cumulatively inform the overall context against which to understand local resistance.

The research offered a detailed account of the different cultural models vis-à-vis English literacy and how the Vernacular and English medium students were socialized, "with the latter winning out over the former" (p.12). Textbooks as the key instruments of knowledge transmission discourse seemed to produce two distinct literate-in-English in the context. While the English medium textbooks offered westernized readings, more space for individual views and opinions, comprehension exercises that required students to probe deep into societal issues along with appropriate teaching practices to go with such content, the Vernacular medium textbooks had extensive focus to grammar, "survival English", and lack of space for self-learning, thus produced two divergent literate-in-English outputs.

Pedagogic practices too were observed as different accordingly as they were not entirely autonomous domains: the divergent practices teachers used may be attributed to class-related issues such as attitudes and practices that fell along the lines of medium of instruction. A contrastive analysis between the low-income, Vernacular medium women's college and the upper middle-class English medium business college was presented to show the distinct features of such a situation. The ways in which teachers tried to reach out to the Vernacular medium students by connecting the teaching to their background pointed to ways in which teachers went about resisting the inequalities built into the larger system (p.13).

The research revealed the ways in which tracking of students into different streams were carried out: For instance, allowing students to offer major in English was largely an outcome of "state-mandated" education policies though however, local
realities varied with negotiations within the institutions while trying to be in keeping with the "ideals" (p.14).

Thus, a multidimensional analysis into the inter-relations of the above features confirmed that English versus Vernacular knowledge production and consumption remained, from some points of view, as individual enterprises, while also disclosing areas of overlap. Ramanathan, situating the English-Vernacular divide in a postcolonial context like India, and analyzing it in the aforementioned multidimensional scenario, pointed out the implication of such an endeavour; "it allows us to understand the areas of friction and cooperation between the teaching and learning of different languages in the same/similar cultural domain...affords us glimpses into areas of overlap and divergences" (p.17).

2.6. Conclusion

The literature has been surveyed under three chief categories: The first part deals with the theoretical perspectives of English language teaching-learning. In that we discussed the current Communicative Approaches and the modern approaches related to language teacher training.

In the second part, the focus has been on the theoretical basis that underpins the undergraduate ELT in Sri Lanka. It has been discussed under three chronological sub-categories namely the period from 1981 till 1991, the period between 1991 and 2000 and the period after 2000. The theoretical perspectives in regard to the first two periods vastly differ and a major paradigm shift in theoretical basis has taken place. The move was towards communicative language teaching from that of an exclusive teaching of academic reading. The recent local research, that is, research carried out after 2000, shows diverse and distinct focuses: different individual aspects (such as motivation, learning styles, etc), case specific studies (university-specific, faculty-specific), English medium instruction in universities, etc.
The third part of the literature review deals with different aspects pertaining to English language which are considered as relevant to this study. They cover learners' needs and teachers' and learners' perceptions of English language teaching at both global and local situations, lesson materials, student assessment (the theoretical basis of testing and local research pertinent to testing), motivation-commencing from global view to local scenario with Asian perspectives in the middle- and finally the aspect of English language as a post colonial entity and its influence on culture.

A reader may find the literature survey as moving from theoretical perspectives towards pragmatic level in each of the above three categories while critiquing and relating the literature to the prospect at hand, that is the study on undergraduate English language teaching in Sri Lanka.