CHAPTER 3
CURRICULUM THEORY AND ANALYSIS OF SYLLABUSES

3.1 BRANCHES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

English Language Teaching (ELT) branched off into several specialized disciplines like English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Science and Technology (EST) and so on. People of different professions use different varieties of English. According to Widdowson, “These specific varieties of English have different goals, methods and procedures which are guided and determined by the goals, methods, needs and expectations of the specific learner” (Widdowson, 1983). ESP is a subdivision of EGP. “ESP is essentially a training operation which seeks to provide learners with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with certain clearly defined tasks” (op cit). Hutchinson and Waters state, “ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Another development of the 1970s was the growth of “Language Teaching for Specific Purposes (LTSP)” (Ronald White, 1988).

ESP has two main branches namely English for Academic Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes. EAP is a variety of English used in the study of academic courses like Engineering, Medicine, Physics, Chemistry etc.
EOP is a training programme for Personal Secretaries, Telephone Operators, Pilots, Waiters, Captains and so on. English for Science and Technology, which is a division of EAP, is being taught in the ESP situation of engineering colleges. ESP also has sub branches like English for Business Purposes (EBP), Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), English for Educational Purposes (EEP), Special Purpose Language Teaching (SPLT), Language for Special Purposes (LSP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP) and English for Recreational Purposes (ERP).

3.2 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

English has become the accepted international language of technology and communication. Present generation of learners know specifically why they are learning a language. As English is needed in every field, the demand is growing for English courses tailored to specific needs of learners. The English needed by a particular group of learners could be identified and they can be taught a variety of English that caters to the requirements of their specialized area of work or study. “Tell me what you need English for I will tell you the English that you need became the guiding principle of those teaching English for Specific Purposes” (ESP) (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

Educational psychology which emphasizes the central importance of learners, their attitudes to learning and their needs also contributed to the development of ESP. Learners have different needs and interests which have influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of learning. It is obvious that the relevance of the English course to their needs
would improve learners' motivation and make learning better and faster. Sivaraman also emphasizes the same point,

In recent years, two developments have been apparent in the methodology of English teaching. One of these has been an increased concern with the problems of learners in higher education who need to learn other language to pursue their specialist studies, especially in the fields of science and technology. The second has been the recognition provoked by research in sociolinguistics (Sivaraman, 1981).

It is true that,

The ability to use language as a means of communication does not necessarily follow as a consequence of learning the language as a formal system (Widdowson, 1975).

This has led to the concept of teaching 'Language for Specific Purposes'.

From the early 1960s, throughout the world, teachers, students and course designers started commenting on the inappropriateness of prescribing the same literary English course to all learners regardless of their aims, needs or interests. They also pointed out the irrelevance of literary training to large numbers of learners for whom English was a tool in a job or profession. In India, some states teach English from the primary stage as a compulsory subject. In other states, teaching of English begins from the sixth standard. Hence, students of different states have varied degrees of exposure to the English language. When they reach the college level, they all have the same
need for English and their medium of instruction is English. They have all their course books and classroom lectures in English. They also have to write their examinations in English. It is very difficult for the undergraduate level teacher to teach the class that has students of different levels. Taking all these into consideration, the Government of India set up a ‘Study Group’, in 1965, to design different diversified courses for college level students who have a common syllabus for all disciplines (Ghosh, 1977). The report of the study group (1971) envisaged the widespread use of English as a library language with the premium on reading rather than expression. Courses in English will then serve to help students achieve communicative competence in areas of language relevant to their specialties.

These special courses have varieties of language use in different situations, which are called ‘registers’. They have different grammatical patterns and groups of lexical items. A student may be given proficiency in the special register of English, which he needs, but not in other registers. A student who has a general proficiency in the language may be able to acquire the special registers of English quite easily. These special registers can be taught to the student gradually as he is introduced to the discipline, which is of interest to him. The Indian students also need English for limited, special purposes and they don’t need general proficiency in all areas and in all skills of the language. Many linguists and teachers of English feel that it is necessary to introduce the student to the particular kind of English, which he may need for the specialized study of his own subject. In ESP courses, the aims and the content are determined by the functional and practical English language requirements of the learner.
Now varieties of ESP courses are offered for students of science, engineering, medicine, commerce, agriculture etc. As we have already seen, specific courses are being offered for sets of people like Secretaries, Hotel staff, Diplomats, Nurses, Doctors, Pilots, Airhostesses, Scientists, Technicians, Managers, Meteorologists and Telephone Operators. Some described ESP as teaching English for any purpose that could be specified. Others described it as English teaching for academic or professional purposes. ESP is related to purposeful, tailor-made courses designed for specific disciplines and uses a different methodology from that of general English; it is designed for advanced adult learners, either at tertiary levels or in a professional work situation.

According to Dudley-Evans, ESP meets specific needs of learners and makes use of methods and activities of disciplines it serves (Dudley-Evans, 1997). It also centers on the language aspects appropriate to these activities like grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre. ESP Course possesses a recognizable mixture of features of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, symbols, styles, etc. and also incorporates a greater content of ‘scientific English’ which has some special vocabulary, special symbols and also employs ‘logical grammatical operators’ (if, although, unless, whenever, etc.) with great precision. EST, an offshoot of ESP, is characterised by:

- the use of specialised terminology,
- stylistic conventions like the use of impersonal tone,
- the frequent use of the passive voice,
- low redundancy,
- long and complicated sentences,
- little use of synonyms,
- the use of standard phrases in deeds and contracts for instance.
English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) today. There are many International Journals dedicated to English for Specific Purposes like IATEFL, TESOL and ELT Journal etc.

3.3 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN ESP CONTEXTS

An ESP teacher is certainly different from a general English teacher. An ESP teacher teaches students who have specific purposes for learning. Teachers who have been teaching emotional, subjective and lively language through literature have to prepare themselves for teaching pragmatic, objective, analytical and unemotional scientific language. They are supposed to have not only a competent knowledge and mastery of general English and the methodological principles and techniques of Foreign Language Teaching, but also a thorough understanding of the features of technical and scientific language and the main concepts of the subject in which their students are specializing. They must also get familiarized with the text, content area and the language of the subject. ESP teaches both language and the subject and also teaches the language through the subject. The selection of appropriate content may enhance language teaching through content-based language instruction. Language curriculum should be centered on the academic needs and interests of students, crossing over the barrier between language and the subject matter courses.

Teachers should analyse the needs and interests of students before starting the course. The aims and objectives of the course must be based on needs analysis. Teachers can evaluate and select a suitable textbook to match
the goals of learners. They should not become the slaves of the textbook. Instead, they can design materials appropriate to the standards of their students. It should also enable students to meet their job requirements. ESP teachers need additional training and they should take extra effort to use authentic and interesting materials for classroom teaching. They can have a constant collaboration with subject teachers in producing authentic materials because students are already familiar with the subject content and they can easily find out the lack of authenticity in teaching materials.

Teachers must be able to understand the pressure on students to cope with new subjects whose conceptual complexity increases day by day. English classrooms can be a platform for talking about science. Students are allowed to think aloud. Teachers encourage them to come up with their common sense theories. Soon they are in the midst of talking science which means observing, describing, comparing, classifying, analyzing, discussing, hypothesizing, theorizing, questioning, challenging, arguing, designing experiments, followings procedures, judging, evaluating, deciding, concluding, generalizing, reporting and writing.

3.4 THE ROLE OF ESP MATERIALS

Attempts are being made to provide different kinds of courses for students of different disciplines. English textbooks, which are used for such a purpose, contain materials drawn from the particular register, in which the student is interested. Instead of literary materials, materials related to science and technology may be used for students of sciences. There is, of course, the possibility that materials of this kind may be less interesting to the brighter
student of English (who already has some proficiency in the language) than literary writing. But for the majority of students, material related to their own field of study is more likely to be useful in acquiring the language skills than material of a purely literary kind.

The role of instructional materials has undergone a lot of change these days especially in English for Science and Technology. Varieties of materials for classroom use have been produced. While selecting the materials, the human-interest factor must be given priority as it is closely related to motivation and therefore to learning. The interest of students can be sustained only if they are presented with meaningful uses of language. Authentic material is taken from a scientific textbook and used in the English classroom. It is done with the aim of exposing students to their real world (Science & Technology) materials.

3.5 NEEDS ANALYSIS

The concept of needs analysis was developed alongside the communicative approach to language teaching during the 1970s. It has been particularly associated with the field of ESP where it has been extensively discussed and modified from the perspectives of both principle and practice. Expressed in general terms, the identification of language needs involves the compiling of information both on the individuals or groups of individuals who are to learn a language and its use which they are expected to make use of once they have learnt it. Analysis of needs of learners offers the course designer a framework for the selection of language content according to the goals of particular learners and also the opportunity for creating tailor-made
programmes, rather than starting with a ready-made syllabus that does not discriminate between different objectives.

Needs can refer to students' studies, job requirements or personal aims or 'wants or desires', that is, what they have to be able to do at the end of their language course (objectives of the course). It includes the needs of the society and the institutions where the course is offered. Needs can mean 'what the user-institution or society at large regards as necessary or desirable to be learnt from a programme of language instruction'. Needs analysis was firmly established in the mid-1970s as course designers came to see learners' purposes rather than the specialist language as the driving force behind ESP. In Munby's words, "ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner" (Munby, 1978). He also added that needs of learners can be identified by investigating the target situation for which learners were being prepared,

By the language I mean the language of the target situation. Thus needs analysis should be concerned with the establishment of communicative needs and their realisations, resulting from an analysis of the communication in the target situation - what I will refer to from now on as target situation analysis (TSA) (Chambers, 1980).

Deficiency analysis gives us information about what the learners' learning needs are, i.e. which of their target-situation needs they lack or feel they lack,

The question of priorities is ignored by standard needs analysis. In discussing learners' perceptions of
their 'needs' ... we shall have to take into account lacks and wants, as well as 'objective' needs. Strategy analysis seeks to establish how learners wish to learn rather than what they need to learn. By investigating learners' preferred learning styles and strategies, we get a picture of the learner's conception of learning (Allwright, 1982).

3.6 THE ROLE OF COURSE DESIGNER

Needs of learners should necessarily be taken into account while making syllabus decisions. The course designer must be able to predict the students' needs. He must also be aware of the institutional objectives (i.e., what the institution wants the students to learn) and the learners' objectives (i.e., what they want to learn). Syllabus designer should have balance in materials. They should be suitable for regional (Tamil) medium learners and challenging for English medium students. It should not frighten the Tamil medium students and be boring to the English medium students. While designing a curriculum, the designer should decide both the language content and the sequence for the language content elements. Course designers should analyse the purpose for which a particular group of learners needs to learn the foreign language, identify the possible causes of their learning difficulties and also make a study of the age of learners, their motivation, duration of courses and reinforcement.

The analysis of learner needs before deciding what and how much they should learn is to help the course designer in the selection, gradation and presentation of teaching items. The basic idea behind this is that courses should progress from simple and 'easy to learn' items to the presentation of more complex and difficult items; that is known as a linear progression.
3.7 CURRICULUM THEORY

Curriculum is a general concept that reflects the philosophical and theoretical views on language and language learning, teacher-learner relationship and roles. It defines the general goals of language education and acquisition and also takes into account administrative and evaluative considerations. According to Robertson,

Curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programmes (Robertson, 1971).

Most often, the words syllabus and curriculum are used synonymously. Nunan says,

Curriculum is concerned with planning, implementation, evaluation, management and administration of educational programmes, syllabus on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on the selection and gradation of contents (Nunan, 1989).

Taba (1962) suggests seven points that are to be considered before constituting curriculum:

1. diagnosing educational needs
2. formulating objectives
3. selection of contents
4. organization of contents
5. selection of learning experiences
6. organization of learning experiences and determining the ways
and means of evaluating the effectiveness of what is taught (Taba,
1962).

Thus curriculum is concerned with selecting and sequencing the
structural, functional and also experiential content of the course making it
available and at the same time negotiable and adjustable to all parties involved
i.e. students, learners and institutions. “In recent years, a major trend in
language syllabus design has been the use of information from and about
learners in curriculum decision-making” (Nunan, 1989). The teacher is no
longer to be a mere ‘class room manager’ of a centralized curriculum by a
government agency through an expert; he is likely to take on a significant role
in developing curriculum (Nunan, 1988).

Syllabus is defined differently by a variety of ELT experts.
Researchers like Shah view that syllabus is a part of curriculum. A syllabus is
more specific than a curriculum. Curriculum gives an overall view of the course
whereas syllabus is specific about the language items to be taught during the
course of study (Shah, 1977). According to Widdowson and Brumfit,
“a language syllabus is a device for helping learners to arrive at their objectives
in the most economical way” (Widdowson and Brumfit 1981). For Yalden,
“a syllabus is a plan which the teacher converts into the reality of classroom
interaction” (Yalden, 1983).

According to Brumfit, There are five essential features that are to be
taken into account while designing a syllabus:
1. A syllabus must be goal oriented.
2. The syllabus implies a progression in learning.
3. It must be practicable and realizable.
4. It must be generalizable.
5. It must have some principle of internal organization (Brumfit, 1981).

Nunan defines syllabus as,

an instrument by which the teacher ... can achieve a 'fit' between the needs and aims of the learner and the activities, which will take place in the classroom. Its elements are real-world learning goals, grammar items, functions, notions, situations, topics and themes and learning tasks and activities (Nunan, 1993).

Hence, a syllabus has a vital role to play in the teaching and learning process.

3.8 THE ROLE OF A SYLLABUS

Learning a foreign language is not an easy task. To make language learning painless for learners it should be divided into different parts graded accordingly to suit the level of learners. A syllabus further divided these parts into small manageable units to help teachers know what to teach, when to teach, how to teach (which method or approach to be adopted while teaching) and how to evaluate. According to Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters,

the role of the syllabus is complex one, but it clearly satisfies a lot of needs. We need crucially to be aware of the different roles that the syllabus plays, so that it
can be used most appropriately. In particular we need to recognize its ideal nature and therefore, its limitations as an indicator of learning (Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters, 1987).

Widdowson has defined syllabus differently as the specification of a teaching programme or pedagogic agenda which defines a particular subject for a particular group of learners (Widdowson, 1987). Such a specification provides not only a characterization of content, the formalization in pedagogic terms of an area of knowledge or behaviour, but also arranges this content as a succession of interim objectives. Johnson also observes that “the fundamental role of syllabus is to provide some way of breaking down terminal behaviour into pedagogical, manipulative items” (Johnson, 1983).

Christopher Brumfit in his paper ‘Functions and Structure of a State School Syllabus for Learners of 2nd and FL with heterogeneous Needs’ in the Symposium on Syllabus and Curriculum Design for TESOL in 1984 defined syllabus elaborately as,

A syllabus is a specification of the work of a particular department in a school or college; it may be broken down into subsections, which will define the work of a particular group or class and also it is often linked to time-semesters, terms, weeks or courses. A syllabus must specify a starting point, which should be related to realistic assessment of the level of beginning learners and ultimate goals, which may or may not be realized by the end of the courses depending on the abilities of learners and their progress in a particular course (Brumfit, 1984).
As Breen observed, every syllabus manifests “certain assumptions about language, about the psychological process of learning and about the pedagogic and social processes within a classroom” (Breen, 1984). Hence, a syllabus has an important task of satisfying the needs of the learners, teachers, course designers, parents and institutions. But sometimes as Aslam Mohammed feels,

very often, the syllabus would be influenced by the administrators and community members with the result that neither the classroom teacher nor the students would feel satisfied with the courses available in the educational institutions (Aslam Mohammed, 1995).

3.9 LEARNER CENTERED CURRICULUM / SYLLABUS

These days the most favoured opinion is that curriculum should be learner centered. The learner is the starting point in learner-centered curriculum, which is designed according to the needs and wants of learners. Learner centered curriculum, which is suitable for ESP courses, encourages active participation of learners in learning process. Learners involve themselves in doing tasks and language activities. Teachers’ role is to provide appropriate material, motivation, support and encouragement. According to Nunan (1995a) learner-centered teaching stresses, on the part of learners, the following initiatives:

1. Learners should be involved in actively communicating with each other and with the teacher;
2. In addition to language, learners should be taught learning strategies that will help them to cope with linguistic situations throughout their lives;

3. Learners should be involved in making choices about the content and the direction of their study;

4. Learners should be encouraged to explore other avenues of learning that would be effective for them and they should become autonomous learners (Nunan, 1995a).

Thus, it is clear, that the curriculum should be a learner centered one. The learner should be motivated by instructors who provide meaningful and relevant materials. They should allow the learner to take part in classroom activities. Hence, there arises a need for the curriculum designers, to frame a suitable syllabus that will cater to the needs and job requirements of learners.

3.10 THE TYPES OF SYLLABUSES

Syllabuses can be classified into two broad kinds: Product Syllabuses and Process Syllabuses. A Product Syllabus specifies a range of possible ways that are needed in order to learn a language (e.g. to learn grammar, vocabulary, functions, etc.), whereas a Process Syllabus takes as its focus how the learner learns a language (e.g. learning strategies, affective considerations, the learning environment, interaction, etc.). However, any useful syllabus will address both the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of language learning. Nunan, differentiated between “product-oriented” and “process-oriented” syllabuses. A process-oriented syllabus consists of a specification of tasks and activities through which learners gain knowledge and skills. He has also defined process as “a series of
actions directed toward some end" and product as "the end itself" (Nunan, 1988). Examples of process-oriented syllabuses would include, task-based and content-based procedural syllabuses, as well as those based on second language acquisition (SLA). Product-oriented syllabuses focus "on the knowledge and skills which learners gain as a result of instruction". Product syllabuses include Situational and Functional-notional syllabuses, which are use-based and Structural and Grammar-translation syllabuses which are usage based.

3.10.1 The Grammar - Translation Syllabus

Grammar-Translation syllabus focused on the written language. Grammar-translation syllabus described the target language in terms of rules. Translation from L2 to L1 was seen as the core activity of the approach. Translation from L1 to L2 was an important exercise that enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge of L2 rules. The L1 or L2 translations were usually decontextualised and rarely chosen with the aim of transmitting meaning. The emphasis on learning rules leads to the use of structural syllabuses.

3.10.2 The structural syllabus

The notion behind the structural syllabuses is that the content of language teaching is a collection of the grammatical forms and structures of the language being taught. Examples include nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses and so on. Structural syllabus details the structures which the target language is composed. Also, there is an emphasis on the spoken language and its structures, reflecting the belief that language is
primarily spoken and that the written language develops after the spoken form is developed. For the structuralists, learning a language meant acquiring a knowledge of finite number of structures from which the language was generated. Meaning was secondary to structure development and the structuralists tended to sequence the syllabus in terms of concepts of linguistic simplicity and complexity, so that "easy" structures were taught first and more "complex" structures were gradually built upon them. The structural syllabus, still the most widely used, breaks language down into small grammatical components and presents them in a strictly controlled sequence, building language competence through knowledge and internalisation of linguistic rules (Knop, 1981).

In Wilkins’s words, the theoretical principle underlying this approach is that,

you facilitate learning if you present the learner with pieces of language that have been pre-digested according to the categories found in a description of the language (Notional Syllabuses). Grammar makes up the core of the syllabus; grammatical patterns are clearly more important than vocabulary or the meaning expressed by examples (Wilkins, 1976).

According to Oller, many learning principles implicit in a structural approach are sound,

simple structures precede the more complex ones; those structures with fewer exceptions to the rule are introduced before the presentation of patterns with more deviations; patterns follow a sequence of relative frequency in language use and proceed from the
familiar to the unfamiliar. The structural syllabus also offers the presumed advantage that teachers need not be fluent in the language they teach, since grammatical explanations and drills do not require a high level of language proficiency. Teaching and testing are relatively simple, because we deal with discrete-point knowledge and skills. But few, if any, learners are able to gain language proficiency through discrete-point methods of teaching (Oller, 1979).

Proponents of communicative approaches to syllabus design maintain that a grammatical syllabus is neither necessary, efficient, nor effective in language learning. The shortcoming of the structural model is that language form takes precedence over meaning. This model emphasizes linguistic competence over communicative competence and offers language samples outside their social and cultural contexts, making transfer of learning from the classroom to the real world rather difficult. This thought was influential in developing situational, communicative and functional / notional syllabuses.

3.10.3 Functional-Notional Syllabus

Functional / Notional syllabus maintains that the content of the language teaching is a collection of the functions that are performed when language is used, or of the notions that language is used to express. Examples of functions include informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting; examples of notions include size, age, colour and time. This syllabus was based on an analysis of what people do when they use language (i.e. what functions or "speech acts" they perform). The Notional-functional syllabus is primarily based not on a linguistic analysis but on an analysis of learners' social and/or vocational communicative needs (White, 1988). A notional syllabus is based on
the premise that communication is meaningful behavior in a social and cultural context that requires creative language use rather than synthetic sentence building. Content, meaning and context take priority over form. Grammatical structures are taught not as an end in themselves but as a means of carrying out communicative functions such as evaluating, persuading, arguing, informing, agreeing, questioning, requesting and expressing emotions. The syllabus also deals with semantico-grammatical notions such as time, quantity, space, location, motion and agent.

Barnett lists the following characteristics of notional functional approaches:

1. a functional view of language focusing on doing something through language;
2. a semantic base, as opposed to a grammatical or a situational base;
3. a learner-centered view of language learning;
4. a basis in the analysis of learner needs for using language that are reflected in goals, content selection and sequencing, methodology and evaluation;
5. learner-centered goals, objectives and content organization reflecting authentic language behaviour and offering a spiraling development of content;
6. learning activities involving authentic language use; and
7. testing focused on ability to use language to react to and operate on the environment (Barnett, 1988).
Barnett explains further that a notional-functional approach focuses on:

1. sentences in combination instead of the sentence as the basic unit in language teaching;
2. meaning over form;
3. relevance of what is taught for meeting the immediate and future language needs of learners;
4. participation in authentic language use; and
5. effectiveness, fluency and appropriateness in learner performance over formal accuracy.

A notional-functional syllabus enables students to use the language actively in limited contexts outside the classroom right from the beginning. It also promotes language variation and creativity, since students may choose a variety of expressions and a number of grammatical patterns for each communicative function. This syllabus attempts to address the complexity of natural communication while at the same time taking the needs of learners into account. In terms of language, functions are realised through grammatical structures, while notions are realised through lexicon (specific notions) and grammatical categories (general notions). This kind of syllabus has the potential to respond to learners’ needs to use language for specific purposes while at the same time allowing for the important generative capacity of language through its grammatical specifications.
3.10.4 The Situational syllabus

The situational syllabus maintains that language is always used in a social context that influences meaning and therefore uses a series of situations that learners are most likely to encounter while traveling abroad, situations such as finding a room, ordering a meal, buying stamps, traveling by train or getting around town. Wilkins considers this type of syllabus more efficient and more motivating than the grammatical syllabus because it centres on practical needs rather than abstract analysis. The shortcoming of the approach, however, as Wilkins points out,

is that physical situational settings such as “At the Post Office” or “In a Restaurant” do not necessarily predict the language forms that will be used. One may go into a restaurant not to order for a meal but to ask for directions to a nearby museum or to change money for a telephone call. Certain language functions will most likely occur in certain situational settings, but physical setting cannot always predict the language use (Wilkins, 1976).

The content of language teaching is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. A situation usually involves several participants who are engaged in some activity or in the other in a specific setting. The language occurring in the situation involves a number of functions, combined into a plausible segment of discourse. The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in situations. Examples of situations include seeing the dentist, complaining to the landlord, buying a book at the bookstore, meeting a new student and so on. This syllabus was based on the assumption that there was a high correlation
between language and the situation in which it is used, so that, for example, it is predicted that the language used in a restaurant will be largely about ordering food. The interesting thing about the way we use language is that it is only occasionally related to the situation in which it is used. Generally, it is rather unpredictable. Situational syllabus tries to prescribe language, which is closely related to situations and ignore the unpredictable language use.

### 3.10.5 The Skill-based syllabus

The content of language teaching is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language. Skills are things that people must be able to do to be competent in a language, relatively independently of the situation or setting in which the language use can occur. Skill-based syllabus groups linguistic competencies like pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse together into generalized types of behaviour, such as listening to spoken language for the main idea, writing well-formed paragraphs, giving effective oral presentations and so on. The primary purpose of skill-based instruction is to learn the specific language skill. A possible secondary purpose is to develop more general competence in the language, learning only incidentally any information that may be available while applying language skills.

### 3.10.6 The Product syllabus

Product syllabuses became more responsive to the complex needs of learners and emerged from questions such as “What do you want to do with this language?” To which a type of answer such as “I would like to study in an
American university” might be expected which might lead to a typical Product syllabus based on the analysis of the language required to cope with the tasks that confront a student in an American university. A learner’s subjective needs interfere with the learner’s acquisition process and these needs relate to affective considerations such as wants and likes which might affect learners’ motivation. So, it would be sensible to include topics related to their interests in their course.

The fundamental belief of Product syllabuses was that presenting grammar in a particular sequence would lead to language acquisition. It was as if learners had their own internal syllabus, which was somewhat different from the syllabuses, designed by most syllabus writers. This “internal syllabus” was related to what some scholars hypothesized as a “natural order” of language acquisition which, while difficult to define exactly, would seem to account for the observable features of language acquisition. The language teacher should assist language acquisition by setting up the optimal conditions, which would allow the internal syllabus to be activated effectively.

3.10.7 The Process syllabus

The Process syllabus takes learner-centeredness to its logical conclusion. The designer must take learners’ needs into consideration when designing a language course. If these needs change as the course progresses, the syllabus can be continually revised in the light of negotiations between the teacher and the student. These evolving needs will be related to course content as well as to methodology, which will respond to students’ perceived learning
styles and strategies. Hence, the content of the syllabus will be going on changing during the course whenever there is any change in learners’ needs.

3.10.8 The Procedural syllabus

The Procedural syllabus was developed by Prabhu (1987) to be used with school children in Bangalore in India. It consists of a range of tasks sequenced according to their cognitive complexity. Tasks involve various forms of problem solving drawn from subject areas such as mathematics and geography. The teacher presents tasks by demonstrating how a task is to be performed. Students are then given the opportunity to work on related examples for themselves. Prabhu maintains that in working on tasks, students are required to use language in a repetitive way (they do a number of the same sorts of task) and, as a result, they internalise the structures on which the language is based. Thus, because the language is not the focus of their attention, they can process the language unconsciously, a necessary requirement of acquisition. Hence, there was a need for designing suitable language tasks in the form of Task-based syllabus.

3.10.9 The Task-based syllabus

A task-based syllabus has the task as its unit of organisation. The syllabus is arrived at as the result of an analysis of students’ real world needs. The content of the teaching is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students want or need to perform with the language they are learning. Tasks are defined as activities with a purpose other than language learning, but, as in a Content-based syllabus, the performance of tasks is approached in a way that is
intended to develop second language ability. Language learning is subordinate to task performance and language teaching occurs only as the need arises during the performance of a given task. Tasks integrate language skills in the specific settings of language use. Task-based teaching has the goal of teaching students to draw on resources to complete some piece of work. Students use a variety of language forms, functions and skills, often in an individual and unpredictable way, in completing tasks.

Tasks are presented in problem-solving mode and the students' language develops as they negotiate its use in solving a range of task-based problems. This involves dealing with authentic language in the form of teaching materials which require students to engage in the use of all four macro skills. Clearly, the aim of such a syllabus is to use students' involvement in task-based problems to activate unconsciously their language acquisition processes. It was felt by the language practitioners that tasks provided in the content related to learners' subject discipline can interest and motivate them to learn language effectively. Hence, the ESP course designers started trying Content-based syllabus for language teaching.

3.10.10 The Content-based syllabus

The content-based syllabus takes as their content specific academic subject areas (e.g. mathematics, science, history, etc.) and students are assessed in terms of those content areas within a wider, general curriculum. The primary purpose of instruction is to teach some content or information using the language that students are also learning. Students are simultaneously language students and students of whatever content is being taught. The subject matter is
primary and language learning occurs incidentally to content learning. Content teaching is not organized around language teaching, but vice-versa. Content-based language teaching is concerned with information. An example of content-based language teaching is a science class taught in the language, students need or want to learn, possibly with linguistic adjustment to make the science more comprehensible.

3.11 REVIEW OF THE I B.E.ENGLISH SYLLABUSES IN USE

FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS OF THE SYLLABUSES OF VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES IN TAMILNADU

The researcher has been teaching in an engineering college for students of Science and Technology. The feedback obtained from students after completing one-year English course revealed that their English syllabus did not help them sufficiently to improve their language skills. They are still not able to communicate with others effectively. This reality initiated this researcher to analyse different syllabuses of various Universities in Tamilnadu.

Anna University

Anna University has a two-level task based syllabus to meet the needs of the mixed ability groups. The heterogeneous group consists of students from convent-run schools who have native like fluency because of the very high exposure to the language and students with poor exposure to English and don’t possess even the minimum language requirements. The homo-ability groups are identified and divided according to their level of proficiency. Students of
higher streams are exposed to advanced level communication skills and those of lower streams to intensive remedial courses till their achievement is up to the mark. The members of these special groups are identified by the placement test administrated at the start of the undergraduate course. The size of the special class ranges from 8-15 and that of the general class from 35-40. A lot of practice in the use of language is provided to these slow learners. As their number is small and as the contact hours are two per week, small classes help learners and teachers learn and teach effectively (Appendix 1).

Course materials are organized around eight topic areas. They are Resources, Energy, Computers, Transport, Technology, Communications, Environment and industry. Implicit and explicit teaching of grammar along with rhetorical use of language is being done. Labels are not mostly used. Contextual use is emphasized. Many exercises on building vocabulary are found in the textbooks. Special materials (Vol. I and II) suitable for slow learners and bright students have been prepared by the ODA team comprising the British experts from the then Ealing College of Higher Education and Anna University staff. Materials focus on developing communication skills both expressive and receptive, through suitable activities, which would enable them to meet the target situation demands. All skill based activities in text books Vol. I and Vol. II are challenging to the able and not problematic to the less able ones. Textbooks have 'core' course materials to be completed by all students and supporting materials labeled 'preparation' and 'follow up' to be completed by low level learners only. 'Preparation' prepares them for the core course and the 'Follow up' reiterates what they have learnt in all the three previous classes.
Regional Engineering College, Thiruchirapalli (RECT) is an autonomous college affiliated to Bharathiar University. Fifty percent of the students who join the college are from Tamilnadu and the rest are from other states in India. Students have to take up a proficiency test when they join the B.E. degree course. Those who score less than 60% in this test should attend a foundation course in English offered in the first semester. In the timetable, each section has free slots for weak students to attend the foundation course. Attendance to these classes will be compulsory and there will be periodic tests to assess their proficiency. As and when they attain the desired level of proficiency students will be permitted to drop out of this course.

General Course content includes (Appendix 2):

Reading strategies: practice in various techniques: skimming, scanning, eye reading etc. Active and Passive reading – Reading and interpreting charts and diagrams – Need & role of reading in technical/industrial organizations.

Written communication: Introduction to technical writing-Discourse writing: Definition, Description, Instruction-Summary writing-Cohesive paragraphs.

Business Communication: Business correspondence- Format, tone and message of business letters- Perspective / point of view in purposive writing-Sales letters.
Listening and language development: Barriers to listening: Physical and Psychological- steps to overcome them - listening with a purpose- Active listening and anticipating the speaker - Practice in note-taking - steps to improve speaker’s contribution.

Successful speaking techniques: How to improve self-expression - Need for clear thinking - The speech process - Fluency & accuracy in speech process- developing persuasive speaking skills- Goal oriented group discussion- formal and public speaking practice - Need for clear thinking - The speech process.

The syllabuses of other Universities have prescribed the following items to be taught in the I year classes as in Table 3.1 (Appendix 3).

Almost all universities have similar types of syllabus that have included different grammar items and various kinds of writing. More emphasis is on grammar items. Out of 80 marks, 40 marks have been allotted for grammar questions. Direct teaching of grammar is stressed. The basis for selection and gradation of the syllabus content materials is not specified. Methods to be followed in classes for teaching language items have not been specified. Moreover, learners’ needs have not been identified. Objectives are not clearly stated. Only the list of items to be completed is given in many syllabuses. Reading comprehension finds a place in all university syllabuses. Almost 50% of marks are allotted to the testing of writing skills. Syllabuses lean heavily on the teaching items presented in the mechanical engineering - based textbook by A.J.Herbert’s ‘The Structure of Technical English’. Transcoding, Lab Report, essay writing, and job-oriented letters have been
Table 3.1 List of syllabus items of universities

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made a part of the content. Students just memorize letters, reports and essays and reproduce them in the examination. Hence, students continue to practise the same type of rote learning as they were doing in their schools. Listening and speaking skills are almost neglected in the syllabuses. Hence, there will not be any desired outcome or improvement from students who follow these kinds of syllabuses.

Syllabuses are more than ‘traditional’ ones that include ‘traditional’ essay writing, ‘structures’ and ‘forms’ of grammar and ‘functional’ letters. They lack focus and purpose at worst, despite a concentrated ESP orientation. ESP based letters can be learnt best in the field where ample samples must be available. ‘Transcoding’ is a mechanical exercise because learners are supposed to merely change from one code into another. Besides, in real life no one transcodes diagrams into continuous writing. In fact, it is the other way round. That is, what may be expressed in continuous writing is represented diagrammatically for brevity and as a visual help. There are different kinds of representations. The choice of the diagram depends on the purpose for which it is used. Moreover, these diagrams express ‘technical’ information and are intimately related to ‘discipline’ contents. As such, they are better learnt, understood and used as a part of ‘major’ discipline and not as a part of the English syllabus.

The learners come to engineering institutions with the knowledge of how to write laboratory reports in Physics and Chemistry. Moreover, as for laboratory reports for ‘major’ disciplines, teachers concerned will help them with the format and the language. Therefore, there is no need to include this in the English syllabus. There should be changes in the kind of questions asked to
measure reading comprehension, as there is a need for discourse-based learning. Therefore, the learner may be trained to use background knowledge appropriate to lesson contents and exercises in order to understand coherence, cohesion and their full implications.

As several syllabus items involve students in mere mechanically repetitive exercises, a lot of class time is being underutilized. Besides, there seems to be no visible increase in the proficiency level of students. Therefore, if their reading and writing improved during the degree course, it was in all probability in spite of the first year syllabus. Hence, 'The syllabus must provide not only curriculum experts feel they need but also what learner needs and wants', even if they are not what the curriculum theorists want.

3.12 DEFINING OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH SYLLABUS IN ENGINEERING INSTITUTIONS

Objectives state what learners will be able to perform using language after completing the prescribed course. It means that learners should know what they are supposed to be learning and what is expected of them. Objectives enable a teacher to evaluate what has been learned. In a curriculum, course objectives play an important role in the learning process. By making explicit course objectives, the following benefits can accrue:

- Learners come to have a more realistic idea of what can be achieved in a given course.
- Learning comes to be seen as the gradual development of achievable goals.
• Self-evaluation becomes more feasible.
• Classroom activities can be seen to relate to learners’ real life needs.
• There will be a gradual development of language skills that may be necessary for their future academic and professional needs and interests.

Hence it is mandatory for any syllabus to define objectives clearly. It is found that course objectives are not clearly stated in the engineering syllabuses of various universities in Tamilnadu. After analyzing the findings of students’ and teachers’ questionnaires, the following objectives have been formulated. Though all four LSRW skills are integrated, the objectives of four skills are defined here separately for convenience.

3.12.1 Listening

While undergoing a language course a student should develop his listening skills. During his course of study, the student should be able to follow simple spoken English delivered at a reasonable speed. He should also be able to follow and comprehend simple instructions he receives for sessions at workshops and laboratories. While listening to continuous speeches the student must be taught to recognise words and their meanings and discriminate between words and word groups. After a lecture or talk, the student should be able to recollect easily the main ideas or details. The main objective of this engineering course is to prepare students for the workplace and for international English examinations like Test Of English as a Foreign Language and International English Language Testing System by empowering them to participate in oral
communication effectively, appropriately and confidently in real-life, workplace and classroom contexts.

Willis lists a series of micro-skills of listening, which are called enabling skills. They are:

- predicting what people are going to talk about
- guessing at unknown words or phrases without panic
- using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand
- identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information
- recognizing discourse markers like 'well', 'oh', 'another thing is', 'now', 'finally', etc. and recognizing cohesive devices like, 'such as', 'which' and including linking words, pronouns, references, etc.
- retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)
- understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc. which give clues to meaning and social setting
- understanding inferred information, e.g. speakers' attitude or intentions (Willis, 1981).

While discussing the long term objectives, students should be able to listen for gist and for specific information as presented in a variety of formats such as conversations, talks, news broadcasts, etc. They should also follow a variety of accents and comprehend literal, inferential and conceptual meanings, that is, to understand the specific meaning of a given word in a given context. He must also be able to understand explicitly stated messages and organize the
given oral ideas logically and coherently. Hence the syllabus should train students to take notes, recognize and understand lectures; understand relations within the complex sentences, discourse markers, signposts, deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words and word groups, recognize implications: information not explicitly stated; recognize the speaker's attitude, evaluate the importance of information, select information, understand intonation, voice emphasis etc.

3.12.2 Speaking

Speaking is also an important skill that is needed for engineers. Unless they have fluency in the English language, they won't be preferred for employment. In the modern set up there is a need for a highly efficient way of communication. Hence, there arises a need for students to develop certain skills that would help them to master the spoken language. Usually the teacher does most of the speaking in the classroom and learners who are passive listeners speak only when required by the teacher. Thus, the traditional system deprives the student of the opportunity to speak and discuss. But the spoken communication skills of students can be developed during class hours. During their stay in the college, students should develop fluency in the use of language. Students should speak or converse in simple grammatically correct English. They should also be able to ask appropriate questions and make responses to questions properly. Students must be aware of the appropriate word stress and sentence patterns and tone groups. They must also be able to take part in group discussions, seminars and present technical papers. The learner must choose the correct vocabulary to describe the item sought, rephrase or emphasize words to
clarify the description if the listener does not understand and use appropriate facial expressions to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service.

According to Brown,

for developing speaking skills, it is very important to give training in producing the sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, intonations of the language, in using grammar structures accurately and in using gestures or body language (Brown, 1994).

As far as the long-term objectives are concerned, students should be able to use conversational strategies and converse freely with peers on topics related to the subjects. They have to express their emotions orally, in different contexts— to regret, to console, to thank, to condole and to participate effectively in public speaking, e.g. formal debates, speeches, presentations, etc.

3.12.3 Reading

Reading is a decoding process, where the message is decoded from the written material. This is the most important skill that needs more attention. During the course, it is necessary for students to read and comprehend the instructional materials and other study materials. Students should read at an average speed and identify key words. They must also be able to skim and scan and know how to tackle unfamiliar words. It is also necessary for students to know how to use a library, a dictionary and an encyclopedia and understand the relationship between one part of the text and another. They must learn conceptual meanings and analyse how the text is organized. Students’ long-term objectives include their ability to read and understand the details stated in
relevant material, to infer the conveyed information and read with comprehension a variety of text genres such as newspaper and magazine articles, Internet materials, journal articles, academic papers, technical reports, speeches, literary works, etc. They should also assimilate a variety of materials, discriminate facts and identify a bias or weakness in the argument. Students must also develop the ability to evaluate and criticize the material.

3.12.4 Writing

Writing is often regarded as the most difficult of all language skills. It requires a whole battery of skills to become a proficient writer – selection of content, effective organization, clear and accurate presentation. Students must be trained while undergoing a course of study to write a series of connected sentences in the form of a short essay, personal letter or business letter or technical report or in the form of an answer to a question. A student should write to consolidate what has been learnt orally or aurally or what has been read. Writing something down helps it 'set' in memory. The student must be able to transcode instructions given in the laboratories into procedures or laboratory reports. While the student is on the job, he must be able to write technical reports/project reports, formal, informal and business letters.

Students would like to write about their own personal experiences and heartfelt emotions. Teachers need to provide learners with opportunities to write about topics that are relevant to their lives, in order to participate enthusiastically in various writing activities and to feel that their writing has value. By integrating writing with content at every level of instruction, teachers help learners find their own voices in their new language and develop the
ability to communicate effectively in different contexts and with different audiences.

Hence, in syllabus design, the emphasis should be on the objectives, topics, themes, methodology and evaluation processes in order that teaching and learning processes are effective. For the processes to be successful, a syllabus must provide aspects and elements of a course that are apt and appropriate to the student body who take up the course. Students will feel comfortable with the syllabus that is suitable to their levels. They need a syllabus, which combines the best of all types of syllabuses in one, a syllabus, which strikes the ideal balance between the correct production and comprehension of the linguistic forms and their appropriate use in actual communication.