The researcher has made an attempt at establishing the need for introducing changes in syllabus design to bring about a qualitative improvement in the teaching and learning processes that students of engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu go through while learning English as a second language. Even after having learnt English for twelve years in high schools, students at tertiary level do not seem to have acquired the ability to use the language appropriately in different contexts. They are not able to listen and comprehend easily lectures delivered in classrooms and they are also not able to communicate effectively with others in English. Listening comprehension is usually neglected in the teaching of English in India and also due importance is not given by course designers and practitioner teachers to speaking skills development.

In this modern era of mass communication, it is of vital importance that our students are taught to listen and speak effectively. As the present syllabus does not cater to these basic needs, the researcher has proposed to frame a syllabus incorporating items using which these skills can be taught. Thus the syllabus should cater to the professional needs of our learners because no successful learning process could occur without a well formulated syllabus.

The research is also oriented towards finding solutions for the problems faced by engineering students while trying to acquire English language skills (LSRW). It was decided to identify their problems
through questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to about three thousand five hundred first year and final year students studying in thirty-five colleges which are at present affiliated to Anna University, Tamilnadu. Views of English teachers and working engineers were also collected using different types of questionnaires. The findings arrived at after a thorough analysis of the entries in questionnaires and of students’ frank comments reveal that listening and speaking skills are the neglected aspects of language teaching.

Skills like speaking and listening that have been neglected for a long time can also be taught and tested through a syllabus that provides scope for the adoption of teaching, learning and adaptation of new assessing procedures. These are the most important skills that are required to be used while attending interviews and taking part in group discussions. Separate examinations can be conducted to test listening and speaking skills. Therefore, any ELT course meant for students of science and technology should include the teaching of oral and aural communication skills as an integral part of the curriculum.

An in-depth study of the views of students, English teachers, and working engineers as expressed in the filled-in questionnaires has lead to a discussion of the problems of learners in institutions and in industries and of their genuine concern for the effective learning of English and of their recommendations to syllabus designers. The views expressed by them will have to be borne in mind while framing the syllabus and designing materials. It is also recommended to involve English teachers, working engineers, their employers and even students while designing the syllabus.
The significance of the teaching of listening and speaking skills, pronunciation and grammar is also discussed in detail. Taking all these factors into consideration syllabuses for three semesters are framed by the researcher and presented in this thesis. Inferentially it is important that a syllabus presents items, topics, themes, methodology and evaluation processes in such a way that teaching and learning processes are very effective. For the processes to be successful, a syllabus must provide aspects and elements of a course that are need-based.