4. PLANNING ESL CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS

4.1.0 ESL Planning: Problem and Principles

Any planning is necessarily future oriented and language planning is no exception to that; it is to be pointed out that language planners like other planners have obligations to the society when they make recommendations in respect of a particular language use. Systematic evaluation and monitoring of language planning policies and programmes are important and essential components.

In India, as already stated, there has been no proper language planning and as a result, unfortunately there is no uniform policy about the use of English at the tertiary level. Various states and universities have different policies about their ESL programmes.

Two important aspects should be taken into consideration in respect of any language planning, namely,

i) the choice of the types of language use and
ii) the purpose for which it is chosen.

The reports of the committees and commissions appointed by the Government of India (Study Group Reports 1967 and 1971, UGC Syllabus Reforms Workshops, 1977) to make recommendations about the use of English remain only on paper and have not led to any programmed action. For instance the latest UGC Curriculum
Development Centre (CDC) report for the study of English has ignored the very important use of English for Science and Technology. Only periodical evaluation of language planning policy can help us develop appropriate resources suited to the needs of individual learners. India does not have a language policy planning commission to evaluate and monitor the use of English and various regional languages. There is a dire need to focus our attention on the factors that determine the type of language use that is appropriate in a particular context.

4.2.0. Language and Sociolinguistics

The concept of language planning is itself a product of serious thinking in the field of sociolinguistics. The interplay of linguistics, political and social issues affects the language planning exercise. Language planners have to take into account the future language needs of the society. The government as language planners and the members of the society as language users should decide on the choice of language use and the level of mastery required of such language use.
4.3.0 ESL Policy to Meet Specialised Needs

A language policy should necessarily be formulated after an objective national deliberation, taking social, political and economic factors into account. Of course, the feelings, attitudes, values, loyalties, preferences and practices of the society should be given due consideration. Political decisions may not be imposed. Senior citizens, educationists, industrialists, professionals, administrators, bureaucrats and others need to engage themselves in a kind of exercise to ascertain the language needs of the society. Decisions have to be taken on the basis of real language needs of the people.

4.4.0 ESL Curriculum Planning

There is a growing dissatisfaction among the employees, parents, administrators, learners, teachers and others about the usefulness and relevance of the ESL curriculum in se at the tertiary level. The curriculum does not promote the skills of seeking (listening and reading) and responding (speaking and writing) in the learners. A new awareness is required while fixing the objectives of an ESL course. Tabas guidelines (1962:12) for a course designer in developing 'Curriculum Process' are most relevant here:

(i) Diagnosis of needs
Curriculum planning and implementation

- a cyclic process
(ii) Formulation of objectives
(iii) Selection of content
(iv) Organisation of content
(v) Selection of learning experiences
(vi) Organisation of learning experiences
(vii) Determination of what to evaluate and the means to evaluate.

The ESL objectives should give guidelines concerning what the teacher should teach and how he should relate the objectives to the classroom activities, laboratory instruction, workshop practices and real life situations where language is the medium of communication; how he should formulate appropriate learning experiences and how he should specify the means to evaluate the learning outcomes. Unfortunately, the ESL syllabuses in use do not indicate any of these but only mention the names of the prescribed texts.

4.5.0 Curriculum Syllabus Distinction

Before proceeding further, the subtle distinction between curriculum and syllabus should be noted. The term 'curriculum' defines what constitutes as valid knowledge; a curriculum contains the sum total of organised learning stated as educational ends, activities, subjects or topics that are to be
mastered; it should also mention the evaluation criteria. A curriculum, however, takes into account the broader context at the national level or state level at which the planning for language teaching takes place. A syllabus is usually prepared for a particular group of learners, for instance, the learners of science or engineering or technology. Until the seventies the term 'syllabus' in its present sense was not widely used in language education and the syllabus merely meant the list of prose essays and poems that are to be taught over a particular period of time.

When the applied linguists started talking about the learners' built-in syllabus (Corder, 1967) or 'notional syllabuses' (Wilkins, 1976), the term began to be used in the present expanded sense pointing to the organising principle of a course of study and planning for teaching, in a particular area of knowledge. In brief, a syllabus is a document which on the one hand guides the learners, the teachers and the examiners and on the other, serves as an indicator to the future employers of the level of proficiency of the individual who has mastered a particular area of knowledge. The syllabus apart from listing the objectives, content and methodology and evaluation scheme
also indicates the processes or means by which the objectives are realised in that particular area.

Whenever learning takes place, it manifests itself in some observable outcomes of learning. Objectives can be expressed in terms of proficiency scores or as performance objectives such as language skill attainments, for example, the ability to read technical texts or the ability to listen to and comprehend a lecture or talk or the ability to speak on a given topic or write a technical report. Clear and unambiguous objectives for a course of study help the teacher to plan his teaching methods, select and organise the learning materials and experiences and evolve suitable formative tests so that remedial exercises can be prepared for the learners.

4.6 Needs Identification

An ESL Curriculum designer while outlining the educational objectives analyses the communication needs of the learners while undergoing a course of study and later on, their job requiremets. There are a number of ways by which the ESL curriculum designer can gather useful information. However, questionnaires and structured interviews are more commonly used. A questionnaire for the learners, another for the ESL teachers, a third for the subject teachers and a fourth
for the future employers, namely the members of staff of public sector undertakings, government offices, banks, private companies and others, must be administered to assess the learner's possible needs. After the possible needs of the learners are ascertained, the ESL course objectives can be formulated.

4.7. An Analysis Of Environment

An analysis of the environment the ESL learner faces needs to be done before we take up a discussion of the learner's needs per se. In the last few years, the tertiary level institution's environment has become very dynamic. However the situation has become less predictable and more complex due to a number of factors. ESL teachers and teacher trainers need to be familiar with these reasons for changes and should be prepared to design responsive ESL programmes. They must predict future changes and plan for future ESL programmes. The following may be regarded as the major reasons for the change in the environment in respect of ESL programmes:

a) technological advances
b) geographical accessibility
c) increased education level
d) population explosion
e) socio-cultural factors
f) economic factors
g) varied opportunities for learning contributing to various levels of achievements and
h) non-responsive government, boards of studies and universities.

These changes necessitate proper diagnosis of the tertiary level ESL environment to ensure effective ESL planning and management. In the light of the foregoing reasons, care should be taken to evaluate the various environments with regard to the ESL programmes at the tertiary level.

After identifying the reasons for the wants of the environment, an assessment of the organisation of the ESL courses needs to be undertaken. An analysis of the ESL courses organisation will focus mainly on the four important areas:

a) the course objectives
b) the resources available
c) the conditions or climate required for achieving the course objectives and
d) the structure of the ESL course organisation.

An analysis of the roles of the teachers and learners complements the analysis of ESL organisation. Such an analysis helps us communicate the expectations of the society of a particular role the learner or the
teacher has to play at a given time. By reviewing the existing roles of the learners and the teachers one can arrive at decisions in respect of assigning specific tasks to the learners and teachers and specify performance standards.

A key component of ESL courses planning is the determination of the types of learners who need to be trained for various types of professions. ESL curriculum planning includes forecasting the needs of the future professionals, namely the employees of various categories of jobs.

4.8. ESL Programme Planning

ESL programme planning takes into account not only the learner's learning programme planning but also the employment planning. Once the learning needs are identified, the ESL programme objectives can be listed for suitable curriculum planning, development and implementation. A good programme guide should help the teachers anticipate and meet the changing needs of the prospective learners for various professions.

4.9. Developing an Approach to Programme Planning

ESL programme planning should involve the joint effort of ESL teachers, subject teachers, university
administration, enlightened educationists and others who form the cross-section of the society.

4.10. Implications for the ESL Professionals

The ESL professionals must identify, monitor and evaluate the existing ESL programmes to ensure the effectiveness of planning and implementation.

4.11. The Role of an ESL Learner: An Analysis of the Present Day ESL Learner.

The present day ESL learners need to use English as the language of communication in certain areas of operation and not for literary expression. As indicated earlier, a number of factors have contributed to the growth and also the weaknesses of the learner. Learners who have a fairly adequate level of proficiency and those who have almost no proficiency are grouped together in the tertiary level classroom. The language learning task has become a ritualistic exercise in such a situation. Some manage to "pass" the end-of-year examination while the lower ability group drops out. But when those learners who "pass" come out of the portals of the institution, they have to perform as employees of offices, companies and other establishments. Even the fairly proficient learners are not able to cope with the demands of the new
environment they are in. Such a trend needs to be corrected and the teaching-learning should be made effective.

4.12. The Role of the ESL Teacher: An Analysis of the Present Day ESL Teacher

The present day ESL teacher is mostly unaware of the challenging needs of the present day ESL learner and as a result, is not sensitive to the needs of the society and the demands of future employers. The language learning process should start from the needs of language learners. Unfortunately, the ESL teacher does not provide opportunities to the learner to use the language as he is busy trying to "cover" the syllabus, lecture all the time and test only the memory of the learners. There is no perceptible change in the proficiency level of the learner whom the ESL teacher teaches at the tertiary level institution.


A survey to ascertain the needs of the learners should be undertaken. Learners' needs while undergoing a course of study and their future professional needs ought to be identified, to be translated into instructional objectives. A learner does not operate as an isolated individual. He has to work in a group or a
team. He may also represent an organisation. At different levels, the individual learner's needs should be ascertained.

4.14 Level of Needs

i) Individual level: Every learner has unique needs owing to the particular combination of his or her job profile, educational and cultural background, experience and personality. Individual needs assessment aims at providing for language learning experiences suited to the individuals.

ii) Group and team level: Some learners' needs are individual and unique; others' are common. The learner in the classroom does not learn as an isolated individual but in groups and teams; thus it is impossible to identify individual needs in a large class but it is possible to identity group or team needs. More importantly, needs that concern relations and interaction with other learners in a group or class room often have to be taken care of.

iii) Organisational level: The needs at the organisational level are particularly important for relating language experiences and training to the needs of the learners. Particular organisations have particular problems, which have to be diagnosed. The
problems pertaining to a rural institution will be
different from the problems faced by an institution in
a metropolitan city. Even in a metropolitan city,
learners from the regional medium background face
problems which are different from those felt by English
medium learners. Once the problems are diagnosed,
objectives have to be specified, based on the needs
and performance levels of the learners.

4.15 Professional Needs

At the other side of the needs identification
exercise, future needs of the prospective employees or
on the job requirement should be identified.

In any professional setting, at the lowest level,
skilled workers undertake mechanically routine jobs.
An attendant in an office or a fitter or turner in a
workshop floor of a factory belongs to this category.
At the supervisory level, the employees operate within
a defined range of objectives and policy-guidelines of
the organisation they are in; their principal task is
to ensure the smooth execution of set tasks. The
technical specification is quite narrow and they are
likely to engage themselves in routine activities of a
different nature. However, management of the people
and workmen is very important and it requires a broad
range of abilities including inter personal
communication, motivation, team building and Organisational skills.

The second echelon (middle level management) includes a fairly broad range of managerial positions with diverse degrees of specialisations. The focus is on tactical management and execution of planned activities. Though these middle level managers do not have a role to play in major decision making activities, they have to participate in some of the company/organisation level strategic planning and management. Of course, management of people is an important function of the middle level manager/executive or any middle level person. The importance of organisational co-ordination and conceptual skills at the middle level is larger than that of the lower level of management.

The third echelon (higher and top management) is characterised primarily by the need for despecialisation as regards individual functions, services and technologies in use. However, it does not mean that the top level person has to lose contact with the current state-of-the-art and development trends in the industry/organisation in question. The focus is on conceptual and strategic management and business policy, with considerable demands on skills required.
for managing the organisation as part of its external environment.

The critical social skills here include leadership, understanding environmental trends, constraints and opportunities, conceptualisation, organisation, co-ordination, negotiation and public relations.

The three levels indicated above are general and very broad. It is necessary for one to find out how a particular organisation works and the level of competence required to perform certain tasks in such organisations.

4.16 Implications of Needs Analysis Survey for Fixing Educational/Instructional Objectives

The needs assessment survey will form the basis for the specification of course objectives. The investigator of this study conducted a survey to analyse the communication needs of the polymer industry. The findings clearly indicate three levels of communication situations:

a) Mother tongue/local language communication at the lowest level, for instance at the skilled workers' level.
b) Interplay of the local language and general communicative English at supervisory level, middle level.

c) Interplay of register-based technical English, general English and the local language at the top executive/professional level.

The study clearly points to an interplay of the local language, namely Tamil, General English and register-based English. The investigator is of the view that there should be an integrated approach to the teaching of the local language, here, Tamil, English for General Purposes (EGP) and register-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in consonance with the teaching of respective subjects at the tertiary level institutions. The present study is restricted to the use of English for Polymer Chemistry.

English is now seen as the language of opportunity, the language most suitable for higher education and for intranational and international communication. Accordingly, the objectives for an English curriculum should be formulated for implementation. Before deciding on objectives, it is better to formulate the present and future needs of the learners.
4.17 **Present and Future Needs**

Present (short-term and current) needs can be established by comparing the present performance of the learners with a standard that should be normally attained in a relatively short time, for instance, to listen, understand, and comprehend lectures, follow instructions in the workshop and laboratory and read all types of learning materials.

Future (long-term and hence prospective professional setting) needs are linked with future assumed projections and long-range career objectives.

4.18 **Qualitative Needs**

Qualitative needs include developing leadership style, imbibing motivational skills, developing positive attitudes and creating aptitude. Efforts should be made to incorporate these in the course objectives.

4.19 **Quantitative Needs**

Quantitative needs do not exist independently of qualitative needs. They indicate how many learners have identical or similar qualitative needs and what volume of effort and resources are required to achieve the qualitative change in each of the learners' performance level in respect of language use.
4.20 Needs, Demands, Objectives.

The general educational objectives and the specific instructional objectives should meet the needs that have been identified. Our experience tells us the educational/course objectives need to be defined clearly and precisely.

i) By clearly defining objectives, we take the first major step towards remedial action. The needs analysed and presented for consideration indicate the existing gaps and hence suggest the required improvements in the learning system. The statement of well formulated and clearly defined objectives indicates the course of action that has to be pursued for the results to be achieved.

ii) Objectives tell us the type or resources/materials required to achieve desired goals. They also suggest the improvements that are to be made in the system, methods that are to be followed and the type of materials that are to be used.

iii) Objectives are defined for various learners who are engaged in the business of learning. The objectives for a particular group of learners during a period may vary from the objectives specified for another group of learners.
iv) Definition of objectives will help in understanding the difference between the needs and the demand.

v) Objectives tell the ESL teacher what to teach, the examiner what to test, the learner what to learn and the prospective employers what to look for in the learners.

4.21 Psychology of Needs Assessment

A number of factors affect the learners' learning style and interest. For instance, highly motivated learners whether they are fairly proficient or not will want to learn newer things. There are other factors including personality traits, such as a person's natural curiosity or eagerness to learn new things, and attitudes such as the readiness to admit ignorance, or the recognition of the fact that a fairly bright person can also learn from others in the classroom.

4.22 Tackling Psychological and Cultural Barriers

Building up confidence in the learners is an important factor in a class of learners with heterogeneous levels of attainment. Therefore, an atmosphere of full trust has to be created amongst all the members of a particular group. Normally, members of the lower ability group keep themselves aloof and
maintain a low profile. So, efforts should be made to make these learners feel confident. It must also be guaranteed that information on individual training needs will be kept confidential and it shall not be used for the performance appraisal and against the individual learner's interests. Self-assessment checks followed by useful feedback and advice will be more acceptable to the learners and may prove more productive than other modes of assessment. In certain situations, the ESL teachers will consult other teachers, teacher-trainers and other experts to assess the needs of the learners. It should also be amply demonstrated that the learners' views in the light of course objectives will receive keen attention to create positive motivation and to dissipate mistrust.

4.23 A Model of a Result-oriented Needs Assessment System

The needs survey of the learners incidentally helps us identify the problems, causes and areas of difficulty experienced by the learners. These factors help us determine the performance objectives and performance standards. The diagram indicates clearly the ways and means to pool information for developing objectives and programmes.
MODEL OF A RESULT-ORIENTED ESL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SYSTEM

Diagnosing the weakness in the ESL learning processes

Identifying the problems, causes and areas of difficulty

Identifying individual and group performance problems

Needs survey and analysis

Learner's performance appraisal

Determining performance objectives

ESL Learner's needs solutions

ESL Teacher's strategies

Information for developing ESL objectives and programmes
4.24 Setting Objectives

Identification, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of needs take us to the next step of clarifying objectives, both general educational objectives and specific instructional objectives. Identification of specific instructional objectives is essential for decision making in respect of the choice of teaching techniques, learning materials and experiences.

4.25 Clarification of Objectives

Teachers engaged in the business of designing an ESL syllabus often make statements such as Learners will be trained in listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, or the learners will be able to employ listening, speaking, reading and writing skills effectively.

It may seem to us that the objectives are stated explicitly here but there are a number of implicit problems which are ignored. For instance, with such course objectives, the teacher is not able to decide on what to teach and how to teach. He/She cannot decide how much of a specific skill is to be taught. A part of the syllabus and its aims always remain implicit. Only explicitly stated objectives will guide the classroom teacher to take decisions on what to teach.
and how to teach. The objectives of a course of study should be stated as explicitly as possible.

4.26 Aims and Objectives

An aim is a general statement indicating the direction in which an educational programme is set, and an objective is a particular point towards that direction set in the educational programme.

While an aim is an answer to the question why a specific lesson is taught to a particular group of learners an objective is an answer to the question what will have been achieved when the lesson has been taught. Objectives are learner-centred statements which help the teacher in the implementation of the programme.

4.27 Objectives

Whenever learning takes places, it manifests itself in some observable outcomes of learning. Objectives can be expressed in terms of proficiency scores or as performance objectives, such as language skill attainments, say, an ability to read a technical text, or an ability to listen to and comprehend a lecture, or talk or an ability to speak on a given topic or write a technical report. Clear and unambiguous objectives of a course help the teacher devise his
teaching methods, select and organise the learning materials, evolve suitable formative tests, receive feedback, monitor progress and organise remedial exercises. It was Robert Mager (1962) who introduced this systematic approach to the specification of objectives.

Objectives should specify clearly the goals of an ESL programme. Objectives are aimed at translating societal expectations and needs into attainable and operational goals. To be precise, the societal needs and expectations are to be transformed into performance objectives.

Once the objectives are established, following Tyler's model, four important aspects should be integrated into the ESL curriculum:

i) setting educational purpose

ii) planning educational experiences

iii) organising educational experiences and

iv) evaluating educational experiences.
However, one of the weaknesses with Tyler's model is that it is a kind of a linear model having four stages of development from specifying objectives to evaluating learning experiences.

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<th>Planning</th>
<th>Organising</th>
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<td>Objectives</td>
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4.28 Role of Evaluation in Fixing Objectives

Acquisition of language skills is not a mechanical process and it cannot be equated with the acquisition of motor skills. A linear framework following Tyler's model will not work in any language learning context as it stops with the evaluation of educational experiences. Curriculum planners have to go beyond the evaluative stage. Evaluation is the collection and use of information for the purpose of decision-making. It is this purpose which characterizes evaluation and distinguishes it from testing and measurement. Tests are normally used for gathering information about the level of learner mastery level; but they are not themselves evaluative. Information/data derived through tests and examinations become evaluative only when they are used as input in the decision-making process. Learners' learning experiences are evaluated.
so that the teachers may determine the learners' readiness for a specific task. Hence evaluation of learning experiences cannot and should not wait till the end of the programme. Lawton (1973) points out that "...leaving evaluation until the final stage of the curriculum process is rather like doing military intelligence after the war is over; in other words, evaluation should take place at every stage". (Lawton 1973:14). This would make an ESL curriculum model a cyclical one rather than a linear one enabling the learner to keep returning to the various learning experiences, and consolidate what has been learnt already.

4.29 Fixing Objectives: General Considerations

Objectives in a curriculum should be stated as desirable learner's learning potential and as actions to be undertaken by the ESL teachers, the subject teachers and curriculum designers to influence, affect or bring about these learning outcomes. They should be clear, concise and the learner should be capable of understanding them on his own.

Objectives are multi-directional and dynamic. Hence they must be reviewed and evaluated, modified, refined, reformulated and rectified as the teaching-learning process unfolds itself. Objectives will gain
their credibility only if they are related systematically to the teaching and learning outcomes. Hence it is always desirable to fix objectives as given in the diagram.

4.30 Teaching and Testing Objectives

The objectives of a course of study are specified in order to be achieved. Unless objectives are stated precisely in concrete terms, it will be difficult to say whether the objectives have been achieved. The test items should take care of all the stated objectives so that the mastery in the test may indicate the realisation of the course objectives. In a way, teaching objectives and testing objectives are one and the same.

4.31 Levels of Objectives

While preparing for a blue-print for classroom instruction as an ESL teacher, or while writing a resource book as materials producer or while designing a test as a tester, one should take care of the appropriate level at which the language skills are taught or tested. They may be classified as:
The construction of the curriculum should be participatory in nature involving learners, teachers, parents, professionals and the members of the society.

4.2 Training Objectives and Educational Objectives

Training is like a pilot following a path presented by the navigator and a signaller in order to reach a predetermined destination. Education is like a pilot flying about freely drifting towards left and right of the path, preferably with a map. In both the cases, the pilot aims at reaching the destination. Similarly the learners' training requirements may be identified and incorporated as part of the learning programme. Conversely, the learner may also be asked to identify his own needs and establish his own aims or objectives with the help of the teacher. Once the learner has established his/her objectives, he/she should be provided with a variety of materials and other resources required for the fulfilment of his aims and objectives.