CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a literature review concerning the topics of needs analysis and needs, ESP, ESP course designing, and adult learners.

2.1   THEORIES OF NEEDS ANALYSIS

2.1.1   Definitions of Needs Analysis and Needs

A number of theorists have defined 'needs analysis' in various ways and from different viewpoints. The following are some examples:

Richards and Rodgers (1986) define 'needs analysis' as "the identifying of general and specific language needs that can be addressed in developing goals, objectives, and content in a language program. It may focus either on the general parameters of a language program or on the specific needs." This idea is similar to that of Nunan (1988b); he refers to needs analysis as "a family of procedures for gathering information about learners and about communication tasks for use in syllabus design". Nunan (1988a) also summarizes "Needs analysis is a set of procedures for specifying the parameters of a course of study. Such parameters include the criteria and rationale for grouping learners, the selection and sequencing of course content, methodology, and course length, intensity and duration."

Graves (2000) calls needs analysis "a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about students' need and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs."

Another definition of needs analysis with a more restricted specification is given by Brumfit and Roberts (1987, p. 199):

An investigation, in light of specification of the tasks a learner

or group of learners will be required to perform in the target

language, of what particular aspects of the target language need

to be learnt in order to bring about proficiency in these

particular tasks. The results of needs analysis can be used to

determine a syllabus and suitable teaching techniques.

When looking through the more specific matter of needs analysis, the term 'needs' is defined in various ways.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) suggest that in the language-centered approach, needs would be "the ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation."

Robinson (1991) also suggested that needs refers to what the students themselves would like to gain from the language course. This view of needs implies that students may have personal aims in addition to (or even opposite to) the requirements of their studies or jobs. Berwick (1989) notes such personal needs can be devalued by being viewed as 'wants or desires'. Needs may be interpreted as lacks, that is, what the students do not know or cannot do in English.

2.1.2 Types of Needs Analysis and Needs

Theorists devide needs into different types. Nunan (1988b, pp. 14-19) suggests that there are two types of needs analysis: learner analysis and task analysis.

1. *Learner analysis* is based on information about the learner. The central question of concern to the syllabus designer is: "For what purpose or purposes is the learner learning the language?"

2. *Task analysis* is used to specify and categorize the language skills required to carry out real-world communicative tasks, and often follows the learner analysis which establishes the communicative purposes for which the learner wishes to learn the language. The central question here is: "What are the subordinate skills and knowledge required by the learner in order to carry out real-world communicative tasks?"

Hutchinson & Waters (1987, pp. 53-54) divide needs into two types: target needs and learning needs.

1. *Target needs* refers to what the learner needs to do in the target situation.

2. *Learning needs* refers to what the learner needs to do in order to learn.

They also divide target needs into 'necessities', 'lacks', and 'wants':

1. *Necessities* or *'objective needs'* are what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation.

2. *Lacks* are the gaps between the target proficiency and the existing proficiency of the learner.

3. *Wants* or *'subjective needs'* refers to the perceptions of the learner. That is what the learner wants or feels s/he needs.

According to Robinson (1991), needs analysis has seven techniques for investigating needs, namely, questionnaires, interviews, observation, case studies, tests, authentic data collection, and participatory needs analysis.

1. Questionnaires

The advantage of a questionnaire is that it can be sent easily to a large number of people; the disadvantage is that not many people will fill it in and return it.

2. Interviews

The strength of the interview is that the interviewer is able to help the respondents with linguistic clarification and to record their answers and explanations in more detail. There are some limitations, such as time-consumption and bored feelings that may lead to distorted answers or performances. The interviewer's personality may also affect the obtained information or the willingness of subjects in providing data. The interviewers should be friendly and professional; this will make the respondents feel relaxed and free to answer the questions.

3. Observation

In order to supplement questionnaires and interviews dealing primarily with the respondents' opinions, direct observation could be made at the workplace at different times of day, noting the job duties, details of the environment, and the nature of the spoken interactions that take place.

4. Case studies

The advantage of the case study method is the possibility of an in depth study over a period of time, the opportunity to appeal to the student's intuitions about his or her difficulties and needs in more detail than in the oral interview or questionnaire, and the occasion for the curriculum developer to do direct observation of the student in the classroom and study situation to gain insight into the student's own methods of learning. The disadvantages are that this method of needs analysis is time consuming and that the results may not be generalisable.

5. Tests

Ideally, students should be tested before the start of the ESP course so that the course designers can have some idea of their present level of ability.

6. **Authentic data collection**

Authentic data collection refers to the making of audio or video recordings, and to the collection of print material, for instance samples of commercial correspondence, books and journal articles that students are required to read. It is important to make an accurate record of the source of the data and note such factors as how and for what it was being used, and in what kind of situations.

7. **Participatory needs analysis**

This type of needs analysis involves the students more actively. They might be invited to take part in a discussion on their needs (and wants), with the students to make recommendations as to what happens in the resultant course.

In regards to this research, a questionnaire only was used to collect data.

2.2 ESP

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 & Waters 1987, p. 19)

Robinson (1991) states that ESP is normally goal oriented, and that ESP courses develop from a needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English.

Dudley-Evans & John, St., (1998) specify that ESP requires the careful research and design of pedagogical materials and activities for an identifiable group of learners within a specific context. This idea is the same as Swales' study (as cited in Robinson 1991, p. 47):

> ESP practitioners can certainly learn a great deal from general ELT materials and methodological suggestions. The resultant difference might be that ESP can base activities on students' specialisms and that activities can have a truly authentic purpose related to students' target needs.

Strevens (as cited in Dudley-Evans & John, St., 1998 p. 3) provides a list of characteristics of ESP. He states that in order to define ESP there is a need to

distinguish between four absolute and two variable characteristics. Concerning absolute characteristics, ESP consists of English language teaching which is "designed to meet specified needs of the learner; it is related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities; and it is centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of this discourse, and in contrast with General English." Regarding variable characteristics, ESP may be, but is not necessarily, restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only) and it is not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Moreover, before proceeding with ESP course design, it is also necessary to discuss the key issues in ESP curriculum design because there are different perspectives between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) according to Cummin's theory (as cited in Gatehouse, 2001). The former refers to language skills which are used in everyday informal language with friends, family and co-workers. The latter refers to a language proficiency required to make sense of and use academic language. Situations in which individuals use BICS are characterized by contexts that provide relatively easy access to meaning. However, CALP use occurs in contexts that offer fewer contextual clues.

Based on the experience of teaching a curriculum called Language Preparation for Employment, Gatehouse adds a third skill or ability to Cummin's theory in order to complete the ESP picture. According to her, the first ability required in order to successfully communicate in an occupational setting is the ability to use the particular jargon characteristic of that specific occupational context. The second is the ability to use a more generalized set of academic skills, such as conducting research and responding to memoranda. The third is the ability to use the language of everyday informal talk to communicate effectively, regardless of occupational context. The task for the ESP developer is to ensure that all three of these abilities are combined into and integrated in the curriculum.

2.3   ESP COURSE DESIGNING

In order to design an ESP course, many issues should be taken into consideration. Regarding an ESP curriculum design for Greek EFL students of

computing, Xenodohidis, (2002) states that, in addition to needs assessments, the course development process should also include determination of goals and objectives. In order to avoid de-motivation, the goals should be realistic and the objective should be appropriate to the goals.
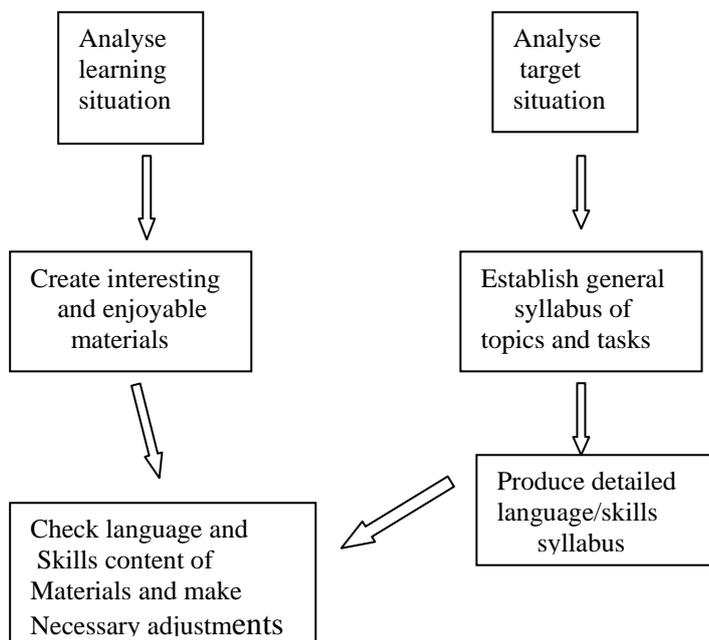
When designing an ESP course, another issue to take into consideration is that grammatical functions, acquisition skills, terminology, and specific functions of discipline content are crucial parts of the ESP course. In the meantime, general English language content should be integrated into the course since content - related language cannot function without general English language content (Jiajing, 2007).

Based on professional experience developing a curriculum for language preparation for employment in the Health Science, Gatehouse (2001) pointed out that when developing an ESP curriculum, three abilities need to be integrated into it for the purpose of successful communication in occupational settings. The three abilities encompass the ability to use particular jargon in a specific context; to use a generalized set of academic skills; and finally the ability to use everyday informal language to communicate effectively. Therefore, ESP course designers should take into account how to integrate the three abilities into the components of an ESP course.

Assessment and evaluation are also two important issues that should be included in the course design process. Assessment is the process of measuring what learners know and what they can do, whereas evaluation reveals how well the ESP course works with emphasis not only on successful factors but also on modifying less successful aspects (Dudley-Evans & John, St., 1998).

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) warn, "the target situation is not a reliable indicator of what is needed or useful in the ESP learning situation" (p. 62) In other words, needs and wants must be negotiated and balanced during the course design process in order to come up with an effective textbook.

The course design flowchart in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 93.

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┌──────────────┐              ┌──────────────┐
│   Analyse    │              │   Analyse    │
│  learning    │              │   target     │
│  situation   │              │  situation   │
└──────┬───────┘              └──────┬───────┘
       │                             │
       ▼                             ▼
┌──────────────┐              ┌──────────────┐
│   Create     │              │ Establish    │
│ interesting  │              │ general      │
│ and enjoyable│              │ syllabus of  │
│  materials   │              │ topics and   │
│              │              │  tasks       │
└──────┬───────┘              └──────┬───────┘
       │                             │
       │                             ▼
       │                      ┌──────────────┐
       ▼            ◄─────────│ Produce      │
┌──────────────┐             │ detailed     │
│ Check language│            │ language/    │
│ and Skills    │            │ skills       │
│ content of    │            │ syllabus     │
│ Materials and │            └──────────────┘
│ make Necessary│
│ adjustments   │
└──────────────┘
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The current concept of need analysis in ESP, according to Dudley-Evans & John, St., (1998), includes consideration of the following aspects:

A: Professional information about the learners: the tasks and activities learners are/will be using English for – *target situation analysis and objective needs*

B: Personal information about the learners: factors that may affect the way they learn such as previous learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and expectation of it, attitude to English- *wants, means, subjective needs.*

C: English language information about the learners: what their current skills and language use are - *present situation analysis* – which allows us to assess (D)

D: The learners' lacks: the gap between (C.) and (A.) – *lacks*

E: Language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and Language in (D) – *learning needs*

F: Professional communication about (A): knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation- *linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis.*

G: What is wanted from the course.

H: Information about the environment in which the course will be run - *means analysis.* (p. 125)

According to Brindley (1989) " one of the principles underlying learner - centered systems of language learning is that teaching/learning programs should be

responsive to learners' needs. It is now widely accepted as a principle of program design that needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives" (p. 63).

Brindley further suggests that the teacher should bring pre-course information about the learners' objective needs to use in planning the preliminary learning activities.

Thus, before writing an English for Specific Purpose syllabus, the syllabus designer should have comprehensive information about the learners' language needs in order to establish realistic and acceptable objectives. Thus it is necessary for the syllabus designer, especially of ESP courses, to conduct an analysis of learners' present and future needs before embarking on the design of a course.

2.4   ADULT LEARNERS

Adult learners are notable for a number of special characteristics (Harmer, 2000 cited in Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaliene 2002):

> They can engage with abstract thought, have a range of life experiences, definite expectations about the learning process, their own set patterns of learning, and are more disciplined than children. On the other hand, adult learners have a number of characteristics which can make learning and teaching problematic: can be critical of teaching methods, anxious and under-confident because of previous failure and worry about diminishing learning power with age.

Factors affecting second language learning:

Lightbown & Spada (1996, p. 69) state that

> the learner's age is one of the characteristics which determines the way in which an individual approaches second language learning. But the opportunities for learning (both inside and outside the classroom), the motivation to learn, and individual differences in aptitude for language learning are also important for determining factors in both rate of learning and eventual success in learning.

They also point out that adults can make considerable and rapid progress towards mastery of a second language in contexts where they can make use of the language on a daily basis in social, personal, professional, or academic interaction (Lightbown & Spada, p. 67).

These statements seem to be similar to the four assumptions Knowles (as cited in Schugurensky, 2002) uses to distinguish adults from children as learners and to establish significant guidelines for creating adult learning environments:

- The self-concept principle reflects the self-directing character of the adult learner, which implies that their learning performance is proportional to the levels of motivation and sense of self fulfillment that they get from the learning situation, rather than the dependent nature of the children.

- The principle of experience simply acknowledges the need to draw on the adult's rich source of experience. In contrast, the child does not possess sufficient life experience to effectively incorporate into the learning environment.

- Readiness to learn indicates that adults have special learning needs. The assumption implies that adult learning needs tend to focus more towards their social roles. On the other hand, the learning needs of children are geared towards physiological and mental development stages.

- Orientation to learning assumes that adults put more value on being able to practically apply their learning while that children naturally focus on postponing immediate application for future needs.

In the Adult Education context, Knowles, 1990 (as cited in Sifakis, 2003), states that adults' primary social role is defined with reference to their occupational specification and their interactions with people operating in the same and/or other professional environments. Sifakis claims that adults are primarily workers and secondarily learners, acquiring knowledge mainly from experience rather than books and the media. At the same time, however, adult learners may be reluctant out of a feeling of lack of confidence in themselves, being long absent from the English classroom, and lack of current English language skills. As a result, the adult curriculum should be designed in such a way as to minimize these negative feelings and take advantage of work environment.

Adults learn best when these six conditions are met (Computer Strategies, 2001):

1. Adults feel a need to learn and have input into what, why, and how they will learn.

2. The learning situation relates to past experiences, and these experiences are used as a resource for learning.

3. What is to be learned relates to the adult's developmental changes.

4. Adult's learning styles are taken into account.

5. The learning environment is non-threatening and encourages freedom to experiment and take risks.

6. The learner's ability to take risks is compatible with the type of learning situation.