CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the background of English for specific purposes and how the needs analysis which is the main focus of the study benefits ESP teachers and learners in establishing English courses.

2.1 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

2.1.1 THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

ESP is the English teaching approach that is adjusted to meet the needs of learning the language by institution, employers and the needs of the students themselves. As pointed out by Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987) the end of Second World War in 1945 announced an age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale. This expansion created a world unified and dominated by two forces, technology and commerce, which in their relentless progress soon generated a demand for an international language for various reasons, most notable the economic power of the United States in the post-war world. This roll fell to English. Then this development was accelerated by the oil crises of early 1970s, which resulted in a massive flow of funds and western expertise into the oil-rich countries. English suddenly became big business and commercial pressure began to exert an influence. Time and money constraints created a need for cost-effective English courses with clearly defined goals. At the same time, as the demand was growing for English courses tailored to specific needs, influential new ideas began to emerge in the study of language. Traditionally the aim of linguistics had been to describe the rules of English usage, that is, the grammar. However, the new studies shifted attention away from defining the formal features of language usage to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication (Widdowson, 1978). New developments in educational psychology also contributed to the rise of ESP, by emphasizing the central importance of the learners and their attitudes to learning. Learners were seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and

therefore on the effectiveness of their learning. The assumption beneath this approach was that the clear relevance of the English course to their needs would improve the learners' motivation and thereby make learning better and faster. So the growth of ESP was brought about by a combination of three important factors: the expansion of demand for English to suit particular needs, and developments in the fields of linguistics and educational psychology. All three factors seemed to point towards the need for increased specialization in language teaching.

According to Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M.J. (1998), the origin of the ESP movement resulted from general developments in the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s: the growth of science and technology, the increased use of English as the international language of science, technology and business, the increased economic power of certain oil-rich countries, and the increased numbers of international students studying in the UK, USA and Australia. The idea of language for specific purposes, however, has been around for a long time. Finally, it was in the mid- to late 1960s that various influences came together to generate the need and enthusiasm for developing ESP as a discipline.

2.1.2   WHAT IS ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES?

English for specific purposes, or ESP, has been defined by a few scholars earlier but the most recent and precise definition is given by Dudley-Evan, T. and St John, M.J. (1998). They stress on two aspects of ESP methodology; the first one is that all ESP teaching should reflect the methodology of the disciplines and professions it serves; and for the more specific ESP teaching the nature of the interaction between the teacher and learner may be very different from that in a general English class. And this could be said that ESP teaching has its own methodology. The scholars also indicate the importance of needs analysis by stating that while specified needs arising from needs analysis relate to the activities that students need to carry out (rather than language), a key assumption of ESP is that these activities generate and depend on registers, genres and associated language that students need to be able to manipulate in order to carry out the activity.

The definition of ESP proposed by Dudley-Evan, T. and St John, M.J. (1998) has three absolute characteristics which must exist in every ESP course and there are four other variable characteristics which could be there in the ESP course or not but it will still be an ESP course.

1. The absolute characteristics are:

   - ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner.

   - ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves.

   - ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

2. The variable characteristics are:

   - ESP may be related to, or designed for, specific disciplines.

   - ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English.

   - ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level.

   - ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. (1987) state further that what distinguishes ESP from general English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need. If learners, sponsors and teachers know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course. Thus, although it might appear on the surface that the ESP course is characterized by its content (Science,

Medicine, Commerce, Tourism etc.), this is, in fact, only a secondary consequence of the primary matter of being able to readily specify why the learners need English. Put briefly, it is not so much the nature of the need which distinguishes the ESP from the general course but rather the awareness of a need. In short, Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. (1987) make a conclusion on how important needs analysis is to the ESP by expressing that if we had to state in practical terms the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design, it would be needs analysis, since it is the awareness of a target situation – a definable need to communicate in English – that distinguishes the ESP learners from the learners of general English.

2.2 NEEDS ANALYSIS

2.2.1   WHAT IS NEEDS ANALYSIS

Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. (1987) has clarified the word need in the language - centered approach interestingly in that it is the need to possess the ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation.

Robinson P.C. (1991) gives more detail on the definitions of needs analysis in that needs do not have of themselves an objective reality Brindly, G.P. (1989). However, what is finally established as a need is a matter for agreement and judgment not discovery (Lawson, K.H. (1979). The needs established for a particular group of students will be a result of a needs analysis project and will be affected by the ideological preconceptions of the analysis. A different group of analysis working with the same group of students, but with different views on teaching and learning, would be highly likely to produce a different set of needs.

A number of researchers have discussed the different meanings or types of needs. First, needs can refer to students' study or job requirements, that is, what they have to be able to do at the end their language course. This is a goal-oriented definition of needs (Widdowson, H.G. (1981). Needs in this sense are perhaps more appropriately described as objectives (Berwick, R. (1989). Second, needs can mean what the user, institution or society at large regards as necessary or desirable to be learned from a program of language instruction (Mountford, A. (1981). Third, we can

consider what the learners need to do to actually acquire the language. This is a process - oriented definition of needs and relates to transitional behavior, the means of the learning (Widdowson, H.G. (1981). Fourth, we can consider 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 in opposite to, the requirement of their studies or jobs. Berwick, R. (1989) states that such personal needs may be devalued by being viewed as wants or desires. Finally, we may interpret needs as lacks, that is, what the students do not know or cannot do in English.

According to Belcher, D. (2009), commitment to the goal providing language instruction that addresses students' own specific language learning purposes is what those who take an English for specific purposes (ESP) approach see as distinguishing it from other approaches of English language teaching. She also states further how important it is for ESP practitioners to be attentive to learners' needs since the purposes served in language instruction are not always those of the language learners and it will then be English for other people's purposes if the learner's needs are ignored. Hutchinson T. and Waters, A. (1987) also emphasize the essentiality and usefulness of conducting needs analysis in that if we had to state in practical terms the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design, it would be needs analysis, since it is the awareness of a target situation–a definable need to communicate in English–that distinguishes ESP learners from other learners of general English. This is agreed by Belcher, D. (2009); as a learner–based approach, ESP practitioners are particularly interested in the gap between learners' current and target competencies. Also she adds that acceptance of this needs–identifying responsibility means that well before actual instruction begins, ESP course designers will have collected and examined learners' needs data.

Needs analysis has been justified by several scholars for its usefulness in giving ESP teachers or any interested persons important information about what is perceived by the subject group of people regarding the language features they project ahead that they will need to possess in order to function well in the target situations.

2.2.2 SURVEYING OF NEEDS

McKillip, J. (1987) states that survey is a popular method of gathering information on needs. It provides a flexible means of assessing the expectations of the target population and of other audiences to the needs analysis. In needs analysis, the use of survey is widely accepted and survey occurs in a rich variety of scope, content and length. It focuses on problems, solutions, descriptions and on forecasts. Moreover, survey of needs can generate a great deal of information; they probe attitudes and opinions as well as measure behaviors and population characteristics.

Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M.J. (1998) report that there are 6 methods to collect information on needs analysis of the language.

- Checklists and Questionnaires.

Questionnaires are generally more wide ranging than checklists and, as they are used for quantitative information, they need careful construction. Checklists are narrower in scope and more commonly used for a qualitative feel. They can determine facts or attitudes.

Constructing good questionnaires often takes effort. When used with large numbers, only objective responses can be analyzed which restricts the information collected. Striking the balance between enough answers and data, and time to boredom for responders is difficult. Wording the questions so that they and the responses are unambiguous takes time. All questionnaires should be piloted before extensive use, and statistical techniques should be used to analyze the results. In large-scale projects they can have a valuable role as one among several methods. For small-scale work, other methods maybe more informative and reliable.

For evaluation purposes, attitude scales such as paired comparisons, the Likert scale, balanced non-comparative rating scales and adjective checklists can quickly assess views but not the reasons behind them. Of the attitude scales, the easiest to construct is an adjective checklist. The Likert scale consists of statements that respondents agree or disagree with. It reveals useful information and is easy to administer but the statements need careful thought to make it understood by the subjects. Rating scales are easier to use and useful for board distinctions. The

respondents mark a numbered descriptive scale and the more positions there are, the finer the distinctions responders are asked to make; between five and seven positions is normal for most rating scales.

- Structured Interviews

The structured interview is extremely useful in evaluation and needs analysis. Structured interviews consist of questions which have been carefully thought out and selected in advance. Because the interviewer has key questions which everyone is asked, comparisons can be made. Additional questions may be asked to follow up responses for clarification and more detail. Structured interviews are time consuming but provide valuable information that we may not otherwise obtain. There should be an agreed time limit for the interview, and where possible it should be recorded so that the interviewer can really listen rather than take lots of notes. The art is to gain the maximum relevant information in the minimum time. Key skills for interviewers are active listening (combining both hearing and processing), summarizing and asking open questions. Interviewing takes up other people's time so it is good policy to let them know the results and what action will follow from their help.

- Observation

For needs analysis, observation can cover a range of activities from watching a particular task being performed to shadowing individuals at work. (To shadow someone is to follow everything they do for a block of time such as a day, several consecutive days or one day a month.) Observation and particularly shadowing are sensitive issues. People in business may feel the content of events are commercially sensitive; anyone may feel a personal threat at having their movements watched and their words noted or recorded. Good preparation beforehand is a crucial part of the process so as to explain the purpose, give confidentiality assurances, possibly show the results of previous observation or shadowing and thus gain people's confidence. The subjects should be carefully explained, what the survey is looking and listening for, and why; equally, what does not. In situations where English is not a medium of communication, observation and shadowing are still very useful for

understanding work patterns although they cannot provide language data for materials production.

Most observation for evaluation is of classroom activity, but it could also include seeing how well a learner was coping with using the language in their work or studies. Teachers are often reluctant to have others observe their classes. Perhaps this stems from unfortunate experiences in teaching practice and a misunderstanding of purpose. Classroom observation requires careful preparation and handling. For peer evaluation, the focus must be on the learners and the material and not on the colleague, the teacher. The observer and teacher should talk about and agree on the purpose of the observation in the first place. Is it concerned with the learners' behavior, for instance, their interactions in group work, the way in which they approach tasks, or is it to determine how well some new material works, for example, to note when learners are interested or bored, involved or passive, clear or confused; to see whether any parts are difficult to teach?.

- Analysis of authentic texts

Analyzing authentic texts is a crucial stage of needs analysis. The texts can be written documents or audio and video recordings of events such as lectures, meetings, telephone interactions, classroom activities. The provision of obtaining spoken data for needs analysis means that it is less accessible than written documents. As with observation, confidentiality is an important issue; people may wish to white-out information such as figures and company names.

Authentic texts are invaluable for learning about real and carrier content. They can also form the basis of classroom materials, with three provisos: the client/source has given permission; fictitious facts replace confidential ones; and anything which can directly identify the author is removed.

For evaluation, the texts learners produce in class can be looked at to evaluate progress towards the objectives and to identify needs that have not yet been met.

- Assessment

Needs of the language can be obtained by assessment which includes formal and informal judgments of students' performance and progress through class work, assignments and tests.

- Discussions

All the other methods require advance preparation and planning. Discussions are more informal; they can be planned but are often more spontaneous. Discussions can pave the way in both needs analysis and evaluation to other methods such as interviewing and observing or be an end in themselves. Talking informally to students over coffee or taking a few minutes of class time can provide insights into how activities went, what was most beneficial, where difficulties arose, what else they would like to cover; but it is important to check whether the views are representative of everyone or only reflect the vocal minority.

2.3 RELEVANT RESEARCH

Kaur, S and Clarke, C.M. (n.d.) researched in human resource (HR) personnel of multinational companies. The subjects were expected to possess good English language skills. They claimed that in today's globalized workplaces, HR staff were often confronted with specific language demands in the course of performing their job functions at their workplaces. This study comprised 25 staff and three managers from the HR departments of two American multinational companies in Penang, Malaysia. The primary objective of the study was to identify the English language skills of the HR staff and to investigate the HR staff's perceptions of their English language skills at the workplace. It also aimed to explore any possible differences between the expected English language skills and the actual performance of the HR staff at the workplace. Data were gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews. The findings showed that communicative events such as chairing and speaking in meetings, writing reports, and editing written materials were deemed very important by the respondents. The findings revealed that the HR staff from both companies perceived that they did not perform well in speaking, reading, and writing skills. The implications of this study indicate that the HR personnel need to improve

their English language skills and abilities if they wish to function more effectively in their daily tasks at their workplaces.

Naphon Karuna (2008) conducted research on needs and problems of English usage at work in the big 4's auditors, and wants regarding English training courses. The purpose of the study was to investigate needs and problems of English usage of auditors at work at the Big 4, as well as the type of English course which the auditors wanted to attend, in order that a suitable English training course could be established for them. Auditors from the Big 4 who had been working for 1 - 3 years were the population of the study. After obtaining the data, statistical devices used to analyze the questionnaire results were a five-point Likert scale, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and percentage. The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

1) English writing skill was considered as the most necessary skill for audit work, followed by reading skill. Listening and speaking skills were less important but occasionally used at work as well.

2) It can be interpreted that the auditors sometimes had problems when using English in all four skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the arithmetic mean showed that they found more difficulty in speaking than in writing, reading, and listening skills respectively. Selecting appropriate words to speak or write was the most frequent problem encountered at work, whereas non-often used vocabulary and technical terms were difficult in reading and listening to English.

3) For English training courses, the auditors preferred to learn English with foreign teachers who are relaxed and have a sense of humor, to learn in an English class that focuses on the four skills equally, to learn in a class in which a variety of materials are used, and a class in which business contexts are used to teach. For class duration, they preferred a 3-month course with 2 hours per class and also wanted to learn the course once a week in the weekend morning.

Choompon Wanlaya (2009) studied English needs analysis of Siam Nissan Automobile Company Limited. The objective of the study was to explore and specify the employees' needs for English communication using each language skill with consideration on job tasks which employees have to deal with in everyday

situations. The main focus was on the needs for English communication skills and the needs for English communication improvement. Also employees' general background and English background were investigated. The survey data was gathered by appropriate survey technique based on a questionnaire from 17 respondents in 4 sections of the department of Export Vehicle Department; namely ordering group, business group, delivery group, and invoicing group. The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions. The needs analysis and the findings revealed that speaking and writing skill were rated as the most needed among other skills. The need to be able to understand the conversation that takes place between customers was considered the most important thing for their career. However, listening skill was the least preferred way of improvement. The statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to analyze the descriptive data (percentage, frequency count, mean, and standard deviation) in order to interpret the outcome. The research carried out for this independent study lead to results that benefit developing employee's English proficiency in the organization.

In conclusion, needs analysis should be one of the first things an ESP teacher does before getting the lesson started. The result of the research should discover the informative base knowledge to build up the specific English course or lesson to suit learners' needs. And that English course would also respond to the needs that were expressed by the learners themselves; therefore, it could be said that there was a communication between teacher and his learners at the beginning even before the English course has started. Then, it could be hoped that the English program that is carried out subsequently would better bring the students to the direction of the education that they need in the first place and that should result in the effectiveness of being a good English teacher for doing his/her duty.