

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter concerns itself mainly with the literature that has bearing on this study. The review of literature will be discussed under these main headings:

1. Theoretical issues in needs analysis
2. Needs analysis in ESP
3. An overview of needs analysis
4. Related research on needs analysis

The review of literature related to the study is not confined solely to this chapter, but is introduced where relevant in other chapters as well.

2.1 Theoretical issues in needs analysis

According to Coffey (1984) and McDonough (1984), needs analysis has a basis in theory that was largely established by Munby (1978) and the Council of Europe (Richterich and Chancerel 1980). Needs analysis is closely linked to curriculum development and syllabus design. West (1994) states that needs analysis is usually undertaken to improve teaching methods, to adapt teaching to the learners, and to train the learners how to learn. In the survey of the theoretical positions on needs analysis, the two models presented by Munby (1978) and Richterich and Chancerel (1980) are discussed.

Munby's model is intended to be "an instrument that enables its user to construct a profile of the communication needs of a particular participant or category of participant, and then to convert the profile into the needs-related specification of syllabus content" (Munby 1978: 154). Munby claims that once the needs profile is established, the course designer will be able to produce a detailed and comprehensive syllabus consisting of language skills and functions needed by the learner to carry out the communicative activities identified in the communication

needs profile. His model therefore is an attempt at providing a methodical basis for specifying the content of purpose-specific language programmes. According to Munby (1978: 218), “the systematic processing of the profile of communication needs for the particular participant input is a prerequisite to the syllabus specification output.”

Munby’s model of needs analysis is for defining the content of purpose-specific language programmes. The needs that it sets out to identify are objective, future needs which are either academic or occupational. It is believed that a knowledge of the situations in which English is expected to be used would enable the syllabus designer to draw upon his/her own experience and intuition to specify the language activities that the learners are likely to be involved in, as well as the topics they might have to deal with.

Like Munby, Richterich and Chancerel (1980) see their model as “a method which should, on the basis of a knowledge of language needs, make it possible to move on to language acts and learning acts.” They place great importance on needs analysis as can be seen in their statement, “we can no longer do without language needs identification when introducing a teaching/learning system, drawing up a curriculum or selecting or producing teaching material.”

Richterich and Chancerel suggest that there are three basic sources of information: the learners themselves, the language-teaching establishment and the ‘user-institution’, for example the learners’ place of work. The information to be collected according to the model includes information concerning resources, objectives, methods of assessment and curricula.

Richterich and Chancerel also propose that needs analysis should be an on-going process and not confined to the beginning of a course, since needs are fluid and they develop and change during the course.

These models are directly applicable to the present study. Munby's concept of drawing up a profile of learners' needs is taken up in this study. Likewise, Richterich's and Chancerel's rationale for needs assessment to have a better understanding of the learners in order to adapt teaching accordingly, is adopted in this study.

2.2 Needs analysis in ESP

2.2.1 Meanings of needs

In ESP, there are different meanings and interpretations of needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1993) identify two kinds of needs: target needs and learning needs. Target needs include necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities are 'the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation'. Lacks refers to the gap between the target proficiency (what is demanded of the target situation) and the existing proficiency (the present ability) of the learner. Wants are 'what the learners want or feel they need'.

Richterich and Chancerel (1980) describe necessities as objective needs and refers to wants as subjective needs.

Target needs refer to language-related needs or what the learner needs to do in the target situation. This is also termed the 'narrow', 'product-oriented' (Brindley 1989) or 'goal-oriented' interpretation of needs (Widdowson 1981, cited in Robinson 1991).

Learning needs, on the other hand, refer to what the learner needs to do in order to learn and are often equated to the 'broad' or 'process-oriented' concept of needs (Brindley 1989).

In this study, target needs refer to Widdowson's goal-oriented concept of needs, that is the English language needs of the students in relation to their occupation or the academic situation they are being prepared for; and learning needs refer to the modes of learning English as preferred by the students.

2.2.2 ESP approach to needs analysis

The differing viewpoints and interpretations of needs in ESP have given rise to different types of needs analysis.

Target-situation analysis (TSA)

The term “target-situation analysis” was introduced by Chambers (1980) in his article, “A re-evaluation of needs analysis.” TSA refers to an analysis of needs which focuses on the needs of learners at the end of a language course. Needs analysis is devoted to establishing the learners’ language requirements in the occupational or academic situation they are being prepared for. According to Widdowson (1981, cited in Robinson 1991), this is a goal-oriented definition of needs, while needs in this sense are regarded as objectives by Berwick (1989).

The best known framework for a TSA type of needs analysis originated with Munby (1978). Among the useful features of Munby’s model are comprehensive data banks which can serve as useful checklists for syllabus design.

Present-situation analysis (PSA)

While TSA focuses on the needs of students at the end of a language course, the PSA approach, proposed by Richterich and Chancerel (1980) seeks to determine the present ability of the learners at the beginning of the course by investigating their strengths and weaknesses (Robinson 1991, Jordan 1997).

The sources of information are: the learners themselves, the teaching establishment and the ‘user institution’, for example, the learners’ place of work. Information is sought on levels of ability, resources and views of language learning and teaching. The methods of collection of data are surveys, questionnaires, and interviews.

Other types of needs analysis

Needs analysis has as its starting position the two types as described: TSA and PSA. Subsequently, there are refinements in the development of needs analysis that are derived from these two types or as a result of reactions to them.

The approach to needs analysis that has developed to take into account the learners' present ability as well as the English language requirements of the target situation is called deficiency analysis or lacks analysis.

The language audits, described by Pilbeam (1979), are a combination of TSA and PSA, used in language training for business and industry. They are large-scale exercises in defining language needs.

Hutchinson & Waters (1993) advocate a learning-centred approach, making a distinction between 'target needs' (what the learners need to do in the target situation) and 'learning needs' (what the learners need to do in order to learn).

The extension of needs analysis from *what* (syllabus content) into *how* gives rise to strategy analysis which focuses on methodology employed to implement language programmes (Nunan 1988). A pioneer in this area is Allwright (1982, cited in West 1994).

Further important development in needs analysis is the attempt to adapt language courses to local situations. Holliday and Cooke (1982, cited in West 1994) call this approach 'means analysis' or 'ecological approach'. This involves a study of the local situation, that is the teachers, teaching methods, students, facilities and others to see how a language course may be implemented.

2.2.3 Methods of needs analysis

There are many ways to carry out a needs analysis ranging from major scientific surveys to informal tools. Any project may employ more than one method. However, the scope and objectives of the inquiry will largely determine the nature of the investigation, and hence the choice of the most appropriate instrument.

Schroder (1981, cited in Robinson 1991) suggests that there are essentially four techniques for investigating needs: the questionnaire, the detailed interview, participating observation, and press ads (advertisements of job vacancies in the newspaper). Robinson adds three more methods, namely case studies, tests, and authentic data collection, such as audio and video recordings and documents from the learners' workplace.

Hutchinson and Waters (1993) also agree that questionnaires, interviews, observation and data collection are the most frequently used ways of gathering information on needs. In addition, they outline a simple framework for the analysis of target needs which is concerned with language use, as follows:

A target needs analysis framework

- Why is the language needed?
- How will the language be used?
- What will the content areas be?
- Who will the learner use the language with?
- Where will the language be used?
- When will the language be used?

Using a similar checklist, they provide another framework for the analysis of learning needs which is concerned with the process of language learning:

A learning needs analysis framework

- Who are the learners?
- Why are the learners taking the course?
- How do the learners learn?
- What resources are available?
- Where will the ESP course take place?
- When will the ESP course take place?

A comprehensive list of 14 methods for gathering data about the learners is given by Jordan (1997). They are summarised below:

1. Advance documentation: Information about learners' educational background, courses previously attended, references as to abilities and other relevant data can be requested in advance.
2. Language test at home: A language test can be taken in the learners' home country in approved centres, to indicate their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Language test on entry: A test is given to the learners on entry to the target institution, to provide diagnostic information and to show their language learning priorities.

4. Self-assessment: Learners can be asked to assess themselves, through the use of questionnaires, forms or checklists.
5. Observation and monitoring: Learners' difficulties can be observed in written homework assignments or in their English classes. Monitoring in a language laboratory can help in identifying oral or aural difficulties.
6. Class progress tests: Information can also be obtained from informal class progress tests. If records of repeated errors and areas of difficulty are maintained, diagnostic use can be made for correction.
7. Surveys: Surveys of learners' language and skills use and difficulties can be conducted through questionnaires.
8. Structured interview: Using prepared questions to which answers are noted, information about learners' skills, attitudes, expectations or listening and speaking difficulties can be gathered.
9. Learner diaries: Diaries or journals kept by learners can be used as a means of gaining insights into their learning experiences, based on introspection.
10. Case-studies: Like learner diaries, case studies can provide in-depth information of learners' needs and difficulties.
11. Final tests: At the end of a course, the final test can reveal the learning difficulties or strengths of the learners.
12. Evaluation/feedback: In addition to an end-of-course test, feedback or evaluation can be given by learners or staff through questionnaires or a round-up discussion so that improvements can be made for the next course.
13. Follow-up investigations: These are usually carried out some time after the completion of a course, to find out which parts of the course the learners found most and least useful.
14. Previous research: By examining previous research, information about the needs and deficiencies of learners can also be gathered.

2.2.4 When should needs analysis be undertaken?

Having considered the *why*, *what* and *how* of needs analysis above, the next question to ask is, "When should needs analysis be carried out?" There are three possible answers to this question: before, at the start and during the course. It has

been standard practice to conduct as much of the needs analysis as possible before the start of a course (Robinson 1991), but it is now generally accepted that needs analysis should be repeated during the course (West 1994).

1. Before the course

Chambers (1980) uses the term 'off-line' analysis to describe the analysis of needs that is conducted in advance of the course. Typically, off-line approaches attempt to build up a picture of the situation and needs through questions addressed to the learners, to those currently working in the target situation or to the sponsors.

2. At the start of the course

When and where it is not possible to access information of learners beforehand, then needs analysis takes place when the learners arrive to start their course. This is also known as 'on-line' or 'first day' needs analysis.

3. During the course

The third answer is a response to the realisation that learners' needs, or their perceptions of their needs, will change as the course proceeds (Chambers 1980, Richterich 1983, Jordan 1993). In addition, the instructors' perceptions of the learners' needs and possible solutions may emerge as the course progresses (Henderson and Skehan 1980, cited in West 1994). Richterich (1983) and Nunan (1988) also point out that learners often find it difficult to articulate their needs and preferences, especially in the initial stages of the course, and therefore on-going re-analysis is necessary.

2.3 An overview of needs analysis

From the early 1970s to the early 1990s, surveys of needs analysis in language teaching have been undertaken (James 1974, Chambers 1980, Cunningsworth 1983, Brindley 1989, Robinson 1991, cited in West 1994). During the twenty-year period covered by these surveys, the focus as well as the scope of needs analysis has changed. In the 1970s, the focus of needs analysis was primarily occupational (example: Richterich 1971/1980, cited in West 1994), which then later changed to academic (example: Mackay 1978). The scope of needs analysis was syllabus specification derived from target-situation needs. Then in the 1980s, the focus shifted to include general language teaching and the scope of needs analysis

broadened to include areas such as teaching methods (example: Holliday and Cooke 1982, cited in West 1994) and learning strategies (example: Allwright 1982). By the 1990s, the scope of needs analysis includes computer-based analysis (example: Jones 1991) as well as materials selection (example: Nelson 1993, cited in West 1994).

In the 1970s, the orientation to needs analysis was largely focused on the target needs of learners. However, over the years, needs analysis have taken a more balanced approach (Bowers 1980, Coste 1983, Richterich 1983, cited in Brindley 1989). Needs analysis means much more than the definition of target language behaviour; other variables which affect learning, such as learning needs, learning strategies, and materials selection, are also taken into consideration.

2.4 Related research on needs analysis

Studies on needs analysis have been undertaken by researchers. Some researches related to the present study are summarised below:

Pleansaisurb (1985) investigated the needs, wants and problems of medical students at Mahidol University as to the use of the four basic English skills in their present studies and in their future occupation. The results indicated that reading was the most needed skill for the first and third year students, as well as the interns. However, speaking and listening skills were most wanted by the medical students.

Chiraporn (1987) investigated the English language needs, wants and expectations of graduate students at the Faculty of Science of Mahidol University. Reading was ranked as the most necessary skill, followed by writing, listening and finally speaking skills. In terms of wants and expectations, the teachers were more concerned with skills and activities which were relevant to their needs in the target situation whereas the students preferred practising aural-oral skills.

Pholsaward (1993) conducted a survey to determine the English language skills most needed by the computing professionals at the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce. The findings showed that speaking skills were ranked of greatest importance, followed by reading and writing skills.

Thanamart (1996) carried out a research on the Chulalongkorn University students with regards to learning English. Based on the results, the majority of the students considered listening and speaking as the most important skills.

Suthathothon (1998) conducted a survey of needs and problems in the use of English for second and third year nursing students at Payap University and nurses at McCormick Hospital. All the three groups of subjects indicated that speaking skills should be the most emphasised in the Nursing English curriculum.

In this study on needs analysis, the focus is on determining the target and learning needs of the first-year MBA students at Payap University as well as to find out the perception of their present ability in using the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in relation to their work or their intended field of work.