

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the area of language curriculum development, "language or language analysis" has mainly been the focus of language teaching. Much of the curriculum perspective in language teaching emphasized how to specify the language content of a course. Thus, description of the phonology, grammar and vocabulary of the language to be studied usually came first in terms of priority. They were viewed as the foundation of language curriculum design⁽¹⁷⁾ However, there has been a shift of priorities in language curriculum development recently. This shift has led to different approaches to language curriculum development which are viewed as a set of interrelated processes and procedures. Richards (1984) defines language development as "encompassing the processes of needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology and evaluation⁽¹⁸⁾". Also, both theoretical issues and practical considerations should be allowed to impinge on course design because these may well affect the design of the program⁽¹⁹⁾.

In identifying the language needs of learners it is very important to involve not only the learners but also people who are more able to provide an input into the content, design and implementation of a language program other than the learners

to determine if the objectives of the program are meeting the needs of the individuals who are supposed to benefit from it. In this study the key informant approach is used to collect information concerning the needs of a group from key individuals who are presumed to be in a position to know those needs⁽²⁰⁾. These people are nurses practicing their profession in government and private hospitals in Bangkok to determine their English language needs which will form the bases for the design of an English Course for Nursing Students that will not only be appropriate but also useful in the students' field of study and in the practice of their profession in the future.

Designing such an English Course for Nursing Students needs planning. The curriculum planner is faced with vast number of questions on particular educational objectives, learning experiences and evaluation methods which will comprise an educational program.

In planning an educational program to attain given objectives, a teacher is faced with the question of deciding on the particular educational experiences to be provided since it is through these experiences that learning will take place and educational objectives will be attained. The teacher can relate the learning experiences to the work which the students

will be doing or relate them to the needs of the learners. In a study conducted by Wanida Chokasutta⁽²⁾, instructors of Bachelor's Degree English Program say that if they can provide learning experiences that respond to the needs of the students, the learning of English will be more effective but because of limited resources, they cannot provide students with real learning experiences. This finding also corresponds with the research done by Boonporn Atiratana⁽²¹⁾ in which he says that the provision of curriculum supporting activities which respond to the needs of the students are essential. If these are lacking, he says, the teaching and learning process will be unsuccessful.

There have been other studies and researches conducted to survey the English language needs of medical students and some other allied health professionals but so far there has been no survey of the English language needs of graduate nurses in Thailand.

Most needs analysis survey focus on the learners. One of these studies is done by Nunan⁽²²⁾ who outlines a procedure for using information by and from the learners to inform and guide the curriculum development process. According to him, learners are central to the educational process and have a right to be involved in all stages of that process. The process he is

referring to is known as needs analysis wherein information about the learners and their language proficiency and patterns of language use are collected plus their subjective needs. These objective and subjective needs are incorporated into each stage in the curriculum process.

Colin Payne ⁽²³⁾ writes a paper explaining the emergence of a different type of English course in the English Language Center of King Abdulaziz. This course originates as a response to problems encountered by low proficiency students in English. This course is tailored to specific student needs.

The paper also discusses the course objectives as derived from identified student needs, and outlines design criteria which governs the translation of these objectives into course material. According to this paper, motivation will depend upon the perceived relevance of the course to what students see as their immediate goals. This in turn would reflect not only the extent to which the students see themselves as needing a language course, but more importantly the extent to which they see their study skills course as the type of course they need.

One great contribution in needs analysis is made by Munby ⁽²⁴⁾. He develops a model for specifying communicative competence. This model is driven solely by the participant

(student), whose precise needs are "fed in" to what he calls a Communicative Needs Processor. Purpose, setting, and level are asked in needs assessment, but the new elements in this model are things like the likely role that the student would eventually be playing (i.e. the social interaction he may be have to participate in addition to whatever professional purpose he will be using English for, the mode of communication most likely to be used (written or spoken), the dialect that he should become familiar with, the communicative event most likely to take place and the communicative key).

From a consideration of all these points, Munby produces a profile of the communicative needs of the student.

In a survey of needs for learning English amongst students at Universiti Pertania Malaysia⁽¹⁷⁾, the authors hope that the results of their findings would provide a useful base for curriculum planners to design English courses offered at the university level to meet the students' perceived needs and interests.

Mackay and Mountford⁽¹⁵⁾ note that if the specific needs of the students are accurately identified and assessed, language teachers can move nearer to reality by translating these needs into proper linguistic and pedagogic terms to produce and

teach a more effective English course.

Needs analysis should be viewed as an "ongoing process" and should not be confined to the beginning of a course since a learner's need may change while he/she is taking a course⁽¹⁶⁾.

In a study conducted by Prapha Vittayarungrangsri⁽²⁵⁾ a needs analysis is done concerning the actual use of English by doctors in the profession, by students and by medical science teachers. Then a syllabus is designed, used in the classroom and evaluated. The author encourages research on the discourse structure of both speaking and writing texts so that a model may be formulated on which to base the methods and materials.

Maliwan Wanasiree⁽²⁶⁾ conducts a study on the English language needs and problems encountered by medical residents at Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, in order to provide guidance in the design of an appropriate English course for the future. But designing a course to meet the needs of health professionals is not easy. Standards and criteria set by the Ministry of University Affairs have to be taken into consideration in developing an English curriculum not only for nursing students but also for other health professionals in Thailand.

Although nursing students are of low proficiency level, they do have specific purposes for studying English. Therefore, it will be wise to design a tailor-made English course for them.