2 ESL and curriculum studies- a conceptual overview

2.1 Introduction

The main thrust of this chapter is to provide a conceptual backdrop for studying various issues related to syllabus and curriculum in ESL. The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of syllabus as applied in ESL. It then moves on to presenting the differences between syllabus and curriculum by adopting micro-macro parameters for identifying the respective concerns. After an elucidation of these concepts, the concerns of curriculum studies as a field of specialization is presented.

The concept of curriculum theorising is explained by exploring the three orientations to curriculum theorising. This is followed by an examination of its implications for placing ESL curriculum in the broad context of curriculum studies. As a specific instance, the chapter presents the framework developed by Johnson (1989) as an effort at broadening the scope of ESL by including issues related to curriculum. Some of the basic curricular issues that emerge from all the sections are reflected upon to arrive at the key areas of investigation in the study. The chapter wraps up with the presentation of the research plan for the study.
2.2 Understanding syllabus design

In this section, I shall introduce the concept of syllabus design by discussing issues such as concerns of a syllabus, role of teachers and learners and limitations of a syllabus framework. To begin with, it would be useful to understand the scope of participation of teachers and learners in decisions pertaining to syllabus.

The issue of syllabus design has often been the main concern of several debates and discussions on teaching ESL. This is manifested in questions like: what are the objectives of the course, what is the content that will help us deliver the required knowledge and skills, how is the content going to be taught, what is the appropriate methodology, what will be the scheme of evaluation that provides feedback on the course and so on. These questions usually form the moot points around which issues related to syllabus design get discussed. Usually, one tries to seek answers to questions such as these during the design phase of the syllabus. This phase involves activities like careful analysis of learner needs, selection of the 'right' content and methodology that could enhance the quality of learning experience. Ideally, both teachers and learners have a crucial role to play in the design phase. But, generally it is observed that teachers and learners have very little to do in syllabus
designing as most of the decisions are made by the university. This is typically the case with any ESL syllabus at tertiary level colleges in India.

It is possible to think of an alternative scenario wherein learners and teachers can also provide insights into the syllabus. In most cases it is noticed that college students, who are generally young adults aged between 18 – 20 years rarely get a chance to express what they want from their English classes. There may be very few instances where learners had been involved in decision-making processes. Learners can provide valuable insights by expressing their learning needs and learning preferences. This helps in framing the objectives, selecting the content and evolving a suitable methodology. How is the role of teachers perceived in the whole exercise of syllabus design? Teachers have an equally important role to play in making decisions with regard to objectives, content and methodology. To fulfil their roles, teachers need to be aware of the intricate processes of syllabus design and if required, they need to undergo formal training in syllabus design.

In the Indian tertiary level scenario, a typical college teacher’s role is confined to implementing the syllabus. In most cases the university prepares the syllabus and hands it over to the colleges for implementation.
The university is, in turn, guided by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), a centralized body in designing a syllabus. However, in the case of autonomous colleges and similar institutions, teachers can have a say in matters pertaining to syllabus design. We also have some instances where teachers' organizations have played an important role in influencing the universities and other decision-making bodies for better choice of content and evaluation schemes.

Having established the significance of teacher and learner roles at the design phase of syllabus, I shall now attempt to elucidate the concept of syllabus by describing the chief concerns.

2.2.1 Concerns of a syllabus

A syllabus outlines the goals, objectives of a course, prerequisites, the grading /evaluation plan, materials to be used, topics to be covered and so on. In the field of ESL, syllabus design has a special significance as each type of syllabus is grounded in a particular approach to language learning. New developments in language teaching theories are manifested in conceptual paradigm shifts, for instance, from structural to situational approaches, from functional and notional approaches to topics and tasks.
A syllabus could also be regarded as an expression of opinion on the nature of language and learning. It acts as a guide to both teachers and learners by providing a list of objectives and the "prescribed" content. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 80) define the syllabus as follows:

At its simplest level a syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt. It reflects on language and linguistic performance. "A syllabus can also be seen as a 'summary of the content to which learners will be exposed.'" (Yalden 1987: 87)

From the preceding explanation, it may be gathered that the issue of content is central to understanding the concept of a syllabus. But, what is even more crucial is the way in which the content is delivered to the students. In ESL two broad approaches have been proposed to address this issue namely, the product and process based approaches to realizing the learning objectives. By pursuing this line of thought, a syllabus can have either of the following concerns: it can focus on the learning outcome (i.e the product), or it can focus on the learning processes. When a syllabus is concerned with the learning outcomes, it will strive to present an accurate description of what will be learnt, usually in the form of behavioural objectives. The main thrust of such a syllabus is to provide
need-based learning that can be quantified and measured with the help of appropriate evaluatory devices.

On the other hand, a process-oriented syllabus provides scope for flexibility in the design and implementation processes. Here the focus is not so much on what the student will have accomplished on completion of the course but more on the specification of learning tasks and activities that learners will perform during the course.

In the field of ESL, syllabus classified as Structural, Situational, Notional or Functional could be cited as examples of product oriented syllabuses. Process-oriented syllabuses are exemplified by Procedural, Task-based and Learner-led syllabuses (Tickoo 1979).

It may be noted that with the evolution of new, learning-sensitive theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and their resultant impact on Second Language Education (SLE), there is a marked preference for process-based syllabuses. However, it should be noted that a pre-determined syllabus provides support and guidance to the teacher and it should not be so easily dismissed. In fact, critics have suggested that a learner-led syllabus seems to be radical and utopian in that it will be
difficult to track learning as the direction of the syllabus will be largely the responsibility of the learner (Parakrama 1994).

The discussion so far can be summed up as follows:

- A syllabus is course-specific and defines the objectives, content, methodology and evaluation scheme for a course.
- Both teachers and learners have a crucial role to play in designing and implementing a syllabus.
- In a typical tertiary level college, the teachers implement the syllabus designed by the university. They do not have a say in decision-making processes.
- In autonomous colleges, teachers and learners can play an active role in making their own decisions regarding the syllabus.

2.3 A review of syllabus framework

It was stated in the previous section that the term syllabus is commonly used to refer to the scope of the course, its structure and content. The syllabus helps in planning and strategising effective teaching-learning processes. It also provides a consistent approach and a systematic framework to discuss issues pertaining to teaching. In the
context of ESL, it could be said to have attributes wherein it can contribute
to fostering closer professional ties between experts and practitioners
(teachers) as it provides a common platform to discuss issues related to
language and language learning, thereby engendering a sense of
community, involvement and collaboration. Nevertheless, a syllabus
framework could comprise the following limitations:

a. **Narrow approach to language education**: With a narrow
outlook towards language education, the syllabus framework
could interpret language education by limiting it to the
immediate concerns of the classroom. In this sense, it may not
take into account macro level issues emanating from social,
cultural and historical context.

b. **Limited perception of teaching – learning process**: In this
view, a syllabus generally defines the teaching-learning process
as a straightforward interaction between teacher, learner and
content. Contextual factors that create conflicts and tension do
not fall under the purview of such a syllabus framework.

c. **Role of teachers and learners**: Even though teachers and
learners have a chance to negotiate the learning outcomes, in
process-based syllabuses they can do so only within the
contours of the syllabus as a given framework. They may not have an opportunity to reflect on problematic issues in content, methodology or even modify the syllabus specifications.

d. **Role of an expert**: Syllabus design can also be an expert-driven activity. The expert could be a teacher educator or a senior professor having a crucial role to play in the whole process of syllabus design. Often, this limits the chances for teachers to participate actively in the design stages and may continue to confine them to the role of implementers.

e. **Emphasis on technical aspects**: The effectiveness of a syllabus is generally measured by matching the objectives with the outcomes. In case of a mismatch between the objectives and the outcomes, the syllabus could be restructured and the cause for mismatch could be addressed. Thus, the syllabus provides scope for technical sophistication and refinement.

### 2.3.1 Issues in syllabus design

As mentioned earlier (Section 1.1) the field of ESL is heavily dependent on technical issues revolving around syllabus design. This seems to have engendered narrow way of perceiving problems in ESL. Of
course, the issues pertaining to the syllabus design are imperative in understanding classroom related pedagogic concerns. But, such an approach may restrict or options by trying to seek immediate, practical solutions. At this point, it may be reiterated that an urge to find such solutions implies that every issue, however complex is it, could be solved in desirable manner.

For instance, in the context of ESL in India, syllabus design has been a critical aspect of policy level decisions. The importance attached to syllabus is evident from the reforms and recommendations made by the decision-making bodies at the national level (see Appendix 6). Some reports have even addressed questions like what should be taught, how it should be taught and evaluated. To this end, ESL has been tackled as a pedagogic problem. However, excessive emphasis on objectives, content, methodology and evaluation scheme has marginalized broad educational concerns, namely, the goals of teaching ESL and motivation to learn in terms of relationship between knowledge and control. It is these concerns that provide a logical continuum to the study of micro level issues by placing them in the macro context. This aspect will be discussed a little later in this chapter.
I shall now briefly examine the significance of concepts like objectives, content, methodology and evaluation scheme as exemplary concerns at the micro level. Subsequently, I list down the assumptions that prompt us to seek a broad perspective that takes into consideration macro level issues as mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Objectives: Objectives strive to answer the questions, 'what is the final learning outcome; what are the learners are expected to do by the end of the course; what does the course set out to do, and so forth'. Objectives are also derived by studying the learners and their language needs. Objectives define scope of the lessons, topics and tasks, and help in designing suitable formative and summative evaluation schemes.

Assumption: Objectives are generally pre-specified by studying the learner needs. In such an approach, it is not mandatory to understand the socio-cultural context and historical background that have created these needs. Questions such as who creates these needs, how do learners articulate the needs and who decides for learners, which are crucial in determining the objectives, may remain unanswered in this case.
Content: This is signified by questions like, what are the means for imparting knowledge/skills through the course? Generally, content refers to prescribed course material for a particular course.

Assumption: Knowledge/skills already exist as a cultural given. Unquestioned acceptance perpetuates the privileging of certain forms of knowledge. Such a view of content overlooks the fact that knowledge is historically and socially constructed, contested and can result in conflicted perceptions.

Methodology: This signifies the actual process of teaching and learning that involves the use of appropriate techniques and strategies for effective classroom interaction. It is, in fact, based on theories of language learning and lends a scientific status to teaching-learning processes.

Assumption: Methodology is based on the notion of language and learning for example, task-based (subscribing to the notion of language as communicative tasks). Such methodologies are deemed to be universally applicable and do not call for critical scrutiny. It also believed that scientific procedures / methodologies can provide solutions to pedagogic problems.

Evaluation: It involves the design of various formative and summative tests and other evaluation tools for testing and feedback.
Assumption: What is taught can be tested, responses can be objectively evaluated and results can be quantified and measured. It also assumes that gaps in attainment levels can be bridged with suitable remediation.

The preceding discussion on syllabus brings out the following points:

a. A syllabus projects a certain view of language and language learning and it tries to translate them into learning objectives and processes.

b. By scoping the content and delimiting its scope it exercises control over what has to be taught, how it should be taught and how it should be evaluated and,

c. A syllabus addresses issues at the course level. In other words, these are issues that emerge from the immediate concerns of teaching and learning such as, objectives, content, methodology and evaluation. In the context of the present study, I would like to term these concerns as micro level concerns.
2.4 Concerns of a curriculum

Now, I shall present the main concerns of a curriculum and describe the micro and macro level issues addressed by the curriculum.

Etymologically speaking, the word *curriculum* originated from the Latin word *currere* which actually meant a course to be run and thus curriculum came to mean a course of study and the prescribed content of study (Goodson 1988, Barrow 1984). But it may be emphasised that curriculum is not synonymous with syllabus.

There could be various ways of differentiating between a syllabus and a curriculum. In the present study, I have demarcated the concerns of a syllabus and a curriculum by using the micro / macro parameters. The micro level parameters identified above, emerge from the immediate concerns of a classroom. Such a concern could also be illustrated with a typical classroom scenario where the course has a prescribed set of textbooks and a predefined examination pattern. The teachers would primarily be responsible for completing the *portions* i.e., the list of topics in the syllabus. They are usually preoccupied with solving day-today problems like planning for the lessons, correction of assignments and various aspects of classroom management. In this process, the notion of
successful completion of syllabus takes the form where the teachers usually ensure timely completion of topics, smooth conduct of examinations and satisfactory learner performance – after ensuring that these are accomplished teachers can feel that they have successfully implemented the syllabus.

This brings me to a related query: if teachers are generally preoccupied with syllabus-specific issues, then who addresses the curricular issues. The answer to this query partly depends on how the curricular issues get distinguished from the syllabus issues. As stated earlier, in the present study, I propose to adopt the micro-macro parameters to demarcate the syllabus and curriculum related concerns. For me, both micro and macro constitute two levels of approaching the curriculum. When I delve into the micro level issues my focus is more on dealing with syllabus-related issues. Whereas, I consider the macro level issues to emerge from broad educational concerns as these have to do with the purpose of education, dissemination of knowledge and values, exercising control on decision making processes and so on. Put differently, the micro-macro demarcation could also be understood as an effort at placing the micro level issues in the realm of Applied Linguistics/Syllabus framework and macro level issues in the broad spectrum of
Second Language Education. Hence, the study proposes that it is essential to combine the micro and macro levels to have a holistic and broad understanding of a curriculum.

Now, going back to the question posed in the preceding paragraph regarding the macro-level decision making, it may be construed that the macro level issues have traditionally remained a prerogative of the higher-level decision making bodies. These could be the policy makers, universities, board members and other influential authorities. I believe that curricular decisions made at such high-level forums have a tendency to overlook what may be termed as the burning issues at the grassroots level. As against the conventional roles for decision makers at the micro and macro levels, presumably, the autonomous college signifies a context with an opportunity for the grassroots participants to make decisions at both these levels. This may be considered as a significant assumption made by the study, with regard to locating the inquiry in the autonomous context. It may be restated that in an autonomous set up, certain powers are delegated to the teachers, thus suggesting a major breakthrough in tertiary level education in India.
2.4.1 Curriculum in the present study

In the present study, curriculum is envisaged as a social phenomenon characterized by an interplay of three major factors: the context, the content and the participants. Here, context refers to institutional context constituted by social, historical, political and cultural factors; it can be studied at the micro and macro levels. Content implies the corpus of knowledge that needs to be "delivered". Participants are key stakeholders such as teachers and learners, who have a role to play in decision-making. Curriculum also signifies the processes of creating, sharing, experiencing and preserving knowledge in an educational context. It provides the environment for providing learning experiences with teachers and learners as key stakeholders in the process. This view of curriculum encapsulates several educational factors such as:

- Curriculum is shaped by the context in which the educational site is located. The site is influenced by various social, cultural and historical forces.
- It creates an environment that provides suitable learning experiences.
- The decision-making processes have scope for contests and conflicts among the participants.
• The curricular events and experiences that are a part of the social phenomenon can be described and reflected upon.
• The participants have scope for improving the state of affairs by effecting desirable changes.
• Curriculum can be re-presented or rendered in a textual format whose warp and weft constitute various interwoven themes emanating from the curricular processes.

Before proceeding further, it would be helpful to have a clear idea about some of the key notions that elucidate the above interpretation. These are:

Curricular processes: This refers to the stages in curriculum development that signify major decision-making points, for example, syllabus design, materials production, teaching and learning events and evaluation.

Curricular concerns: A concern is an issue that can be formulated into a question. For instance, content can be described as a concern as it can be reformulated into questions like:

• Who decides on the course content?
• How does the content get translated into learning objectives?
• How does the syllabus realise the learning objectives?
• Does the syllabus perpetuate the existing knowledge structure or adopt something that is radically different?

**Curricular site:** The educational institution that creates the environment for various teaching learning experiences. In the context of the present study, the curricular site refers to the autonomous college.

**Curricular/educational context:** This refers to the context at two levels: the larger sociohistorical, macro context and the local/institutional, micro context of college. At both levels, the context involves interplay of various cultural, social and political forces.

**Curriculum development at micro level:** This refers to the immediate practical concerns of the curriculum which are usually pedagogic in nature. It is assumed that these can be resolved by taking corrective action often at the local level, which usually involves changing the textbooks or adopting new methods of teaching.

**Curriculum development at macro level:** This is the broad educational context constituted by interplay of cultural, social, political factors. The issues cannot be resolved easily as it involves a complex network of people and processes, often perpetuating the hidden dimensions and tacit agendas.
Culture: These are the events that constitute the everyday life as experienced by participants on the curricular site. These can be observed, described and studied as themes and patterns.

Curricular themes: These are the concerns that re-appear as focal points in curricular decision-making. In the present study the context, the content and the participants are identified as broad generic themes.

Curricular events: These could be any of the everyday experiences and happenings namely, classroom proceedings, meetings in staff room and other organised or unorganised activities.

2.5 Role of the micro and macro level context

Several curriculum theorists have attached a great deal of importance to the role of the context in conceptualising the curriculum. Schwab, for instance uses the term milieu to signify the context which is interchangeably linked with the sociocultural context. The context plays a vital role in exercising control over the nature of knowledge and formulation of objectives. It stands for all the values, traditions and other forms of cultural repertoire that are involved in the processes of creating and providing opportunities for educational experiences.
In my opinion, the context is inextricably linked with any perception of a curriculum. For example, the classroom in which the curriculum gets experienced constitutes the micro context which usually comprises concerns like lesson planning, developing teaching strategies, classroom management and so on. As against this, the macro context comprises concerns related to educational aims, the role of the institution, the process of discipline formation of ESL, role of teachers and learners in knowledge creation and dissemination. These are the broader concerns commonly shared by a given socio-cultural context.

The micro concerns can be termed as typical pedagogic concerns specific to a group of learners in a given institutional set up. They deal with practical problems that are encountered during syllabus implementation. In other words, these are concerns about syllabus design, implementation and evaluation in the context of the classroom.

Macro concerns are educational concerns that are common to a set of institutions within a socio-cultural and political environment like a country or a state. They deal with larger social, political, cultural and historical issues that characterise a particular educational context.
To conceptualise the micro concerns, one could study the classroom. This may involve the use of well-defined strategies to observe and analyse classroom interaction, course content, teacher behaviour, learner behaviour, learning outcomes and related factors. Thus, we can conceptualise the classroom processes by observing the action in a physical set up. As against this, the process of conceptualising the macro concerns involves efforts at reflection and introspection. To understand the macro concerns, one may begin by studying the classroom and its practical issues and place them in the broad sociohistorical context for figuring out the macro level connections of a particular micro level issue.

To follow up with the discussion on issues emerging from syllabus and curriculum (2.3 and 2.4.1), I shall now introduce the concept of curriculum studies as a plausible conceptual framework aimed at enlarging the scope of theorising ESL curriculum.

2.6 Curriculum Studies

To begin with, a few words on the historical evolution of the term would be in place. The concept of curriculum studies was initially discussed in the 1920’s in USA as a field of ‘new specialization’ (Ornstein and Hunkins (1988), quoting the term applied by Bobbit). The publication
of Bobbit's book *the Curriculum* in 1918 provided a new direction to the study of curriculum. The book was based on 'a scientific and technical approach to curriculum development investing on systematic procedures and methods rather than rules of the thumb procedures' (Ornstein and Hunkins 1988: 74). Klein (1992), while tracing the origins of the field, also quotes the same seminal book as being the first work exclusively 'devoted' to a discussion of curriculum. Moreover, the first documented conference devoted' to curriculum theory was held in Chicago in 1947, and out of that came the publication on curriculum theory (Herrick and Tyler in Klein 1992). It was in the form of a 'rationale' that Tyler published the book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* in 1949. The four basic questions that Tyler raised in this book are seminal to any kind of study of curriculum since they strengthened the foundations of the field and reoriented its concerns.

The book signifies Tyler's attempts at evolving a rationale for viewing, analysing and interpreting the curriculum and instruction program of an educational institution. According to Tyler, the four fundamental questions that needed to be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instruction are:

- What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

- How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

- How can we determine whether these purposes are being achieved? (1949: 2)

The questions posed by Tyler, even to this day, form the basis for many curriculum projects (Schwab 1971, Stenhouse 1975, Grundy 1987).

To get an idea about the scope of the field and to complement the four basic questions form Tyler, I shall now touch upon some ways of interpreting the concept of curriculum studies. The concerns of the field of curriculum studies may be understood by studying critical definitions of the concept and the issues highlighted therein. Walker (in Taylor and Tye 1973) defines curriculum studies as the study of 'all those activities and enterprises in which curricula are planned, created, adopted, presented, experienced, attacked, defended and evaluated' (p.15). Lawton (1983) adds to the 'processes' mentioned by Walker and argues for an interdisciplinary approach as curriculum studies, for him, 'is concerned with theories rather than one theory' and hence it will be necessary to draw from disciplines of philosophy, sociology, psychology and history in
order to deal with the issues involved therein. Thus, the concept of curriculum studies stands for 'much more than plans of instruction', and it involves,

... a whole range of discussions about content, justification for that content, the translation of plan into practice by teachers, the reception of those plans and so on (1983: 2)

For Barrow (1984) curriculum studies is a 'catch-all phrase' that includes curriculum development, design, research, implementation and evaluation.

Thus, it may be noted that curriculum studies is not synonymous with curriculum development and curriculum theory, where the former refers to the various stages involved in developing a curriculum and the latter signifies building grand theories. Curriculum studies may be considered to be a holistic and richer concept informed by insights from varying disciplines and encompassing various interdisciplinary influences (Taylor 1979) at the level of design, development, implementation and transdisciplinary approaches to broader terms like 'theory' and 'research'.

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2.6.1 Curriculum theorising

In the preceding sections, it was stated that the study seeks to theorise ESL curriculum by placing it in the area of curriculum studies. The notion of theorising, as adopted in the study shall be presented by juxtaposing it with related terms like ‘theory’ and ‘practice’.

It is observed that, generally, in curricular discourse, ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ are viewed as two conceptual polarities with clearly demarcated roles, aims and functions. While theory is said to denote a fair amount of abstraction, generalization, systematicity and universal applicability, practice is believed to be rooted in ‘reality’, in the day-to-day affairs, the ‘specific’ and the ‘local’ context. Such a dichotomous view could envisage neatly carved out roles for theoreticians and practitioners.

Moreover, in my opinion, the relationship between theory and practice could be either hierarchical or dialectical depending on the nature, goal and context of theorising. For instance, when a theory is said to inform practice or guide it, it may be held in high esteem and ‘practice’ could be relegated to the realm of the quotidian. But when one considers practice and theory as interacting with each other, holding a dialectical
relationship, it could mean that both are on the same plane and that there is constant interchange between these two activities.

In contrast to the notion of theory as a finished product, *theorising* connotes the actions involved in building up a theory. I consider theorising to be a richer concept than theory because it not only describes the action and the on-going efforts towards evolving a theory but it also conveys a sense of more personal involvement, initiative and impetus on the part of the theoriser. This perception of theorising is guided by insights from Huenecke (quoted in Klein 1992) where he describes curriculum theorising as activities that are preliminary to the completion of a theory, primarily a deductive approach to viewing phenomenon and their possible relationships.

Agreeing with the view mentioned above, I wish to add that the term theorising also signifies the ‘local’ efforts at understanding ‘personal experiences’ while making sense of one’s role in a sociocultural context. For further elucidation, I shall illustrate the concept of theory and theorising with reference to the ESL context. When we say that particular curriculum development activity is guided by a theory, it usually implies that the process of development is based on principles of a theory. For
instance, the model proposed by Tyler and Taba in the 1960s is designed on principles of behavioural-scientific theory of education. The suggested model and steps are derived from corresponding theory in education and in this sense theory could be regarded as a basis for prescription for practice. It also implies that there is a certain finished theory, behavioural—scientific/educational in this case, that is generic in nature and it can inform practice in a specific field, for instance ESL curriculum development. I consider this to signify a prescriptive approach where the actual curriculum participants are using an already existing body of knowledge.

With this explanation in the backdrop, I shall revisit the ESL classroom to explore the opportunities for theorising, to bring out the differences between theory and theorising. Here, a hypothetical case where teachers and learners are involved in various activities leading to theorising could be worked out. Let us assume that the college has already implemented a curriculum based on certain principles. Teachers have made conscious effort at theorising by reflecting on their daily activities and the emergent practical knowledge is consolidated from their experiences. They are able to identify patterns and common elements that signify their routine experiences. The students are also encouraged to
reflect upon their learning experiences thereby providing significant insights to the repository of reflective data thus generated. The consolidated documentation of experiences is analysed by teachers, or any external person and a set of findings is extracted. These findings could, in turn, be used as guiding principles for professional development, for guiding practice and for further theorising for the purpose of generating new ways of understanding the curricular context.

By way of recapitulating the discussion so far, it could be said that the notion of theory gets interpreted differently, depending on the goals it seeks to achieve. Here, I find Macdonald’s distinction (in Pinar 1975) of goals of theorising quite relevant and I shall use the same to substantiate the notion of curriculum theorising as conceptualised in the present study.

According to Macdonald, the goals of theorising vary according to the purposes for which the task of theorising is taken up. Hence, one cannot expect theorising to be focused upon a clearly identified realm of phenomenon when curriculum is the subject of our concern, for, the definitions of curriculum are as narrow as ‘the subject-matter to be learned’ and as broad ‘as all experiences students have in an institution’ (Macdonald in Pinar 1975). In the same context, Macdonald offers some
very useful insights while he makes a distinction between the three goals of theory.

First, theory could be perceived either as a guiding framework for applied curriculum development and research or as a tool for evaluation of curriculum development. Thus, theory becomes a springboard for prescribing and guiding practical activity in relation to curriculum. Theory, in this sense, functions like a philosophy, in that it is directly thought of as open to empirical validation.

The second view attempts to identify and describe the variables and their relationships in curriculum by following a more conventional concept of scientific theory. The purpose of this theory is primarily conceptual in nature and research would be utilized for empirical validation of curricular variables and relationships rather than as a test of efficiency and effectiveness of a curricular prescription.

The third view looks upon the task of theorising as 'a creative intellectual task', which should neither be used as a basis for prescription nor as an empirically testable set of principles and relationships. Here, the purpose is to develop and criticize conceptual schema in the hope that
new ways of talking about curriculum, which may in the future be far more fruitful than present orientation, will be forthcoming (ibid.).

The third goal of theorising is particularly relevant to the study as it defines theorising as a 'creative intellectual task', which provides scope for generating new forms of curricular knowledge. To be more specific, the objective of seeking new ways of talking about curriculum, which the present study strives to achieve, is inspired by this goal.

To summarise the discussion so far, it may be stated that the study signifies an attempt at curriculum theorising by adopting an eclectic approach. (The notion of eclectic approach, as interpreted in the study will be discussed in the next chapter). Here, theorising is interpreted as an activity pursued by the researcher in order to find new ways of understanding the experiences of the curricular participants. The researcher, who is also the theoriser, collects data and theorises by describing and reflecting on the data to unearth deeper meanings and tacit messages. Thus, theorising signifies an empirical endeavour aimed at reconceptualising the social phenomenon, here ESL curriculum, and seeking new ways to talk about it.
Now, to explore the relationship between theorising and its philosophical foundations, it could be mentioned that a curriculum is generally guided by certain convictions and ideology. These could be beliefs about education and its goals in relation to society. In the context of the study, I have made use of the framework provided by Grundy (1987) for theorising ESL curriculum. In the following sections, I shall delineate the main features of various orientations to curriculum theorising, followed by a discussion of these orientations in conceptualising ESL curriculum.

2.7 Ideological orientations

While creating a context for providing learning experiences, a curriculum can be guided by any of the following ideological orientations – technical, practical or emancipatory. I shall now illustrate these orientations with the help of the framework proposed by Grundy (1987). Grundy uses Habermas' framework of knowledge and human interests viz., technical, practical and emancipatory to conceptualise the curriculum as product, process and praxis respectively. These cognitive interests which form the basis for making decisions about actions, bring out the dominant concern of a curriculum. In the following section, I shall present the three orientations and follow it up with a discussion of ESL related issues for each orientation.
2.7.1 Technical orientation

The technical orientation attempts at controlling the environment through rule-following action based upon empirically grounded laws (Grundy 1987). When a curriculum is guided by technical interest the orientation is primarily towards controlling the processes so that one achieves the planned and predicted learning outcomes. This is achieved by controlling and confining learning to an a priori design so that the end product will conform to the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) that are pre-specified as a first step towards developing a curriculum. Following are the points that capture the key curricular issues in this orientation.

a. It attaches a great deal of importance to predetermination of objectives, logic and coherence in curricular planning.

b. It assumes a scientific / rational approach to teaching learning, does not cater to human contingencies if things do not go according to plan.

c. It has a tendency to project dominant view of view of knowledge/skills – for instance, language as communication, may not be applicable to all social contexts.
d. It insists on rigid planning which may not accommodate multiple approaches and multiple perceptions.
e. This approach may reduce opportunities for grassroots level participation in curricular issues.

2.7.2 Practical orientation

The practical orientation aims at understanding the environment through interaction based upon a consensual interpretation of meaning. When a curriculum is guided by this orientation, it strives for humanization of educational inquiry by taking cognisance of fallibility of human judgement. As against the exercise of practical rationality for controlling the curricular outcomes exemplified by the technical orientation, this orientation lays stress on meaning-making through an act of interpretation. Processes such as understanding and deliberation are at the heart of this orientation while developing a curriculum. Following are the points that capture the key curricular issues in this orientation.

a. Curriculum is conceived as a plan, a design to be implemented though there could be flexibility to negotiate the sequence and structure of content.
b. Being a cultural and experiential approach, unique experiences can be captured and presented as representative data.

c. It may lead to unmanageable situation in classes with heterogeneous groups of learners.

d. Too much of deliberation may delay consensus and this may hamper the process of learning.

e. Teachers need to be prepared to make decisions and be accountable. Learners also need to feel responsible for their learning. Only then the approach is effective.

2.7.3 Emancipatory orientation

The emancipatory orientation involves a fundamental interest in empowerment and transformation by engaging in autonomous action arising out of authentic critical insights. An emancipatory curriculum, according to Grundy (1987) entails a reciprocal relationship between self-reflection and action. Its basic concern is to work towards freedom at the level of consciousness and practice. At the level of consciousness, 'the subjects' participating in the educational experience will come to know theoretically and in terms of their own existence when propositions
represent distorted views of the world (views which serve interests in domination)' (p.18). And at the level of practice, the emancipatory curriculum will 'involve the participants in the educational encounter, both teacher and pupil, in action which attempts to change the structure within which learning occurs, and which constrains freedom in often unrecognised ways' (ibid). Following are the points that capture the key curricular issues in this orientation.

a. Need for emancipation arises out of need for empowerment, and awareness about the how control mechanisms are working.

b. Participants should realize the hidden agenda in educational program and how they are being subjected to decisions made elsewhere.

c. There should be an urgent participants to take control of the situation, as the decisions are made by those who are not directly involved in classroom or grassroots level decision making.

d. The participants should create opportunities for conscious self-reflection.
2.7.4 ESL issues under each orientation

Having provided an overview of the three orientations to curriculum theorising in the previous sections, I shall now make an attempt at placing ESL related issues under each orientation and study the implications for curriculum theorising. In this section, an effort is also made at understanding the concepts of knowledge, power and subject formation by relating it to ESL curriculum under each orientation. At this juncture, it may be recalled that the interpretation of curriculum in the present study seeks to explore the concepts of context, content and participants by juxtaposing them with educational issues like knowledge, power and subject formation. This issue will be discussed in forthcoming sections.

Technical concerns

In the field of ESL most of the curricular discussions have revolved around technical issues such as designing a syllabus, developing textbooks that conform to the predetermined objectives and methodology. There is also emphasis on training teachers in adopting a certain method of teaching. The assumption that there can be a perfect match between all the stages of curricular decision making stages (by studying the cause for mismatches) presupposes that learning can be easily controlled to match with the predetermined objectives, thereby making the curriculum
coherent (Johnson 1989). A detailed discussion of Johnson's contribution to ESL curriculum will be taken up later in this chapter (Section 2.9.1).

We also find a tremendous amount of significance attached to the role of methodology (application of principles from learning theories) in various communicative syllabus design manuals. To me, emphasis on methodological issues also indicates a preoccupation with technical paradigm.

**Practical concerns**

At the level of syllabus design in ESL, we have several instances of practical orientation. To some extent, this orientation forms the conceptual backdrop for Breen and Candlin (1980) and Prabhu (1987) when they argue for recognition of processes or procedural elements in syllabus design. We can associate these ESL concerns with the views of Stenhouse (1975), Eisner (1985) and others who have argued for building a human element in understanding curricular processes. It may be noted that in the context of curriculum studies, practical orientation has mostly got interpreted with regard to culture as a determining factor. The cultural view incorporates elements of negotiation and flexibility in decision-making.
as it can be observed from the view of Stenhouse (1975) and Grundy (1987).

Making an interesting analogy between a curriculum and a recipe in cooking, Stenhouse (1975) states that curriculum is like a recipe for a dish, it is first imagined as a possibility, and then it is subjected to experiment. The recipe that is offered publicly is in a sense a report on the experiment. It is the process that is crucial. This signifies an attempt at communicating the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and is capable of effective translation into practice.

Adopting a cultural perspective, Grundy (1987) perceives a curriculum as a social construction and not as a logical deduction (Grundy 1987). In order to illustrate this view Grundy makes use of an analogy from the concept of housing. While making a distinction between the conceptual approach and the cultural approach to housing Grundy says that the former corresponds to a draughtsman’s approach to housing which involves the aspects of a plan and a design and other technical requirements that have to be met while building a house. The latter, in her view, is more concerned with the houses in which people already live and
the reasons for their living in such houses. Thus, a cultural view of house regards the house as part of the cultural life of the occupants or owners.

Furthermore, a cultural view of curriculum is concerned with the 'experiences people have as a consequence of the curriculum rather than with the various aspects that make it up (Grundy 1987:76).’ Here, the notion of consequence is particularly relevant as it relates to the aspects of making curricular choices; the role of decision-making that is central to any curricular endeavour. It also takes into consideration the historical and social dimensions of decision-making. As a result, curriculum is treated as an integral part of the culture of that society. Following this view, any attempt at understanding the meaning of curricular practices implies that ‘they must be seen as both arising out of a set of historical circumstances and as being a reflection of a particular social milieu (ibid).

In other words, the cultural perspective, in addition to describing curricular experiences as a way of life and thinking shared by all the curricular participants, makes an attempt at exploring ‘the social structure of knowledge, skills customs and beliefs in order to understand how they came about, how they relate to society and how the society handles them.’ (Stenhouse 1975:8)
The relationship between culture and curriculum as discussed so far, has some crucial implications in understanding a curriculum. First, this implies that, just as culture is a dynamic construct, curriculum too is a living phenomenon that can be experienced differently at different spaces at given points of time. Secondly, culture is idiosyncratic, as there can be no universal claims to culture. It is specific to a group living in a particular ethos. Thirdly, culture is shaped by human interactions and struggles and in turn shapes them by way of influencing their values, attitudes and convictions that are culturally imbibed. Finally, culture is not a simplistic concept that gets transmitted linearly but it is a contestation of codes, a clash of ideologies and a site of struggle. In fact, it is this view of culture that gets highlighted while Clifford and Marcus define culture as 'a newly problematic object of description and critique' (1986: 3).

The process of understanding and meaning-making emerges as key aspects of this orientation. Another relevant aspect is the scope for textual interpretation and rendering of the curricular events and experiences as described by Cherryholmes (1987). Following the practical paradigm it is also possible to theorise the curriculum by adopting a hermeneutic approach. Elbaz and Elbaz (1990) and Cherryholmes (1987)
add a hermeneutic dimension by conceptualising curriculum as not merely a plan that gets implemented in the same way as an architectural plan but it is more like a 'text' that is open to myriad interpretations and a host of possibilities for meaning making. The practical orientation provides sufficient scope for teachers and learners to interpret the given plan/design and work with it as an artist starts with an image of the landscape. The syllabus emerges a posteriori more as an account of what actual processes were adopted than as a list of specifications that were followed.

Since the study adopts the goals of understanding and textual (section 3.4.1) analysis in the form of 'thick description' of themes from the practical orientation, it is worthwhile to explore the concepts in further detail. To achieve the objective of understanding, the study proposes to describe thickly the micro and macro level concerns. The description is rendered in the form of thematic analysis by selecting relevant chunks of data. The study is rendered in the form of textual reconstruction of the curricular site at the micro and macro levels.
Emancipatory concerns

When an ESL classroom is envisaged from an emancipatory perspective, it could suggest a case where the teachers and learners could create opportunities for sustained self-reflection. Such reflection could trigger off a critical scrutiny of everyday classroom events like the choice of lessons for a particular course, teacher–learner interaction in the classroom, the methodology of teaching. Here, the objective is to unearth the hidden dimensions of a curriculum and reconstruct the worldview presented through the curriculum. Such acts of reflection are expected to empower the teachers and learners with emancipatory knowledge that can transform their daily course of activities.

Apple (1976), Bowles and Gintis (in Blackledge and Hunt 1985) and Lynch (1989) attach a great degree of importance to the hidden assumptions that get subtly realized through the design of a curriculum. The tacit and unstated dimensions are inherently political and moral processes involving a network of competing ideological political and personal concepts of valuable educational activity. Glatthorn (1987) states that understanding a hidden curriculum is not just an unravelling of the tacitness by studying the mismatches between the teachers’ perceptions and actual teaching; it refers to those aspects of schooling other than the
intentional curriculum that seem to produce changes in student values, perceptions and behaviours (p. 20-21).

Put differently, here the efforts are directed at finding out why certain forms of knowledge get privileged, what constitutes as valuable educational activity, complex network of relationships and processes in social construction of knowledge, the underlying power structure that authorizes certain decisions – Young (1988) in (Goodson 1988) succinctly sum up these points when he states that a curriculum is historically situated and it is a specific social reality that expresses particular production relations among men. At the practical level too, he finds it reductionistic to label curriculum as practice for it reduces the social reality of curriculum to subjective interventions and actions of teachers and learners. This limits us from understanding the historical emergence and persistence of particular conceptions of knowledge and particular conventions.

With such a wide range of diverse assumptions, often unstated and implicitly conveyed, it is difficult to imagine a curriculum as a coherent entity, a whole. Positing curriculum as a social discourse that never existed as a monolith, but has always been a site for struggle, Aronowitz
and Giroux (1991) rightly assert that it is a site defined by the imperatives of organizing knowledge, values and social relations so as to legitimise and reproduce particular ways of life (p. 87).

Curriculum by its very nature is a social and historical construction that links knowledge and power in very specific ways. It does not merely offer course or skills, it functions to name and privilege particular histories and experiences. (p. 96)

2.8 Curricular issues in ESL

The preceding Sections provided an overview of three different orientations to curriculum by presenting the main issues in each orientation. It was also mentioned that perceptions of issues like knowledge, power and subject formation formed the basis for distinguishing between the three orientations (Section 2.7).

Now, I shall explore the concepts by relating them to the goals of the study as specified in Section 1.1. 'Knowledge' could refer to the course content, delivered to the students institutionally. Overtly, it could be grammar, structures, functions, notions, tasks, situational topics, and units from prose, poetry and plays. But, hidden beneath the selection of these content-types one may find 'educational' goals that the decision makers
plan to realise. These are usually goals emerging from perceptions of the role of teachers and learners in knowledge creation and dissemination as defined by the State.

A curriculum that is founded on technical principles (Section 2.7.1) treats content as a given entity that is finely itemized to correlate with the learning objectives (Section 2.7). Irrespective of the approach that is being adopted – Structural, Functional or Communicative – the technical orientation relies on pre-specification of knowledge by accepting, unquestioningly, the basis for such knowledge. As against this approach, in a practical orientation, the curricular participants could have a significant role to play in understanding the basis for certain forms of knowledge. For instance, if particular sets of materials are to be prescribed for the course, there could be scope for the participants - teachers and learners - to take part in the discussions and deliberations. They could even suggest alternative forms of knowledge and perform their role as contributors to the processes of knowledge creation.

In an emancipatory situation, knowledge cannot be perceived as a neutral entity. For instance, if a set of teaching materials based on Communicative Methodology are selected for a particular course without
the involvement of teachers and learners, the same may get contested and questioned for its pedagogic and cultural appropriacy and validity. The participants may challenge such an arbitrary choice of content and understand what hidden messages are being conveyed through such materials provided a critical review is undertaken. This may call for a critical review of the materials and a search for alternatives that are culturally and socially relevant, giving an opportunity for teachers and learners to empower themselves by seeking alternatives. Even more problematic are issues emanating from the notion of second language itself, particularly in the Indian ESL context. I shall discuss this issue later in the thesis when I reconstruct the macro level context (refer to chapter 5).

The term power signifies the element of control as exercised through curricular decision-making processes. The technical orientation being a linear model, with a top-down decision-making framework, identifies teachers and learners as mere implementers of decisions. These could be decisions pertaining to questions like:

- What is to be taught (for the teacher)
- How it should be taught and evaluated
• What is being learnt, how it is being learnt and evaluated in it (for the learner).

In the technical orientation, both teacher and learner roles may be distanced from any decision-making powers. The power to decide on curricular matters may rest solely with governmental agencies, theoreticians and experts. In the practical approach, teachers and learners may have a chance to voice themselves and feel in control of the curricular processes and outcomes. They may do so by interacting with other participants like experts and other authorities to arrive at consensus during deliberations. As against this, in an emancipatory approach they may, in fact, initiate the process by reflecting on the prevailing state of affairs. Moreover, as an exercise in empowering themselves, teachers may challenge the tacit curricular assumptions and seek alternatives. They may take total control of the curricular processes by making their own decisions and seeking more responsibilities.

In the preceding sections it was discussed that each orientation has its own perception of the learner as an individual who has a role to play in society. The technical approach envisages a role where the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge. The learners have no say in curricular matters whatsoever. Their role is confined to attending classes, working
with the prescribed lessons and taking the tests. However, sometimes, there could be occasions where their opinions and feedback is sought but this activity may be more like a ritualistic exercise. Thus, learners contribute to maintenance of status quo by accepting the state of affairs unquestioningly and may not even be aware of the processes that restrict their identity. In a practical approach learners have a role by voicing their opinions through their representatives. This makes them feel involved and respected for contributing to decisions and by being a subject who is aware of the processes and deliberates on the state of affairs. The emancipatory orientation gives scope for reflection on the state of affairs by trying to effect changes that make it equal and just. This orientation perceives a subject as thinking and reflective individual who has the potential to transform the environment through critical problem solving and reflective decision-making.

2.9 Need for broadening the scope of ESL

In this section, ESL curriculum is being posited as a specific instance where insights from curriculum studies could be applied to broaden the perspective. The need for broadening the scope of ESL is marked by a shift of emphasis from the 'narrow' concerns of syllabus to 'larger' issues involved in curriculum development. (White 1983, 1988,
Johnson 1989). Guided by a similar concern, the present study signifies an attempt at placing ESL in the context of macro concerns as discussed in Section 2.6. The issues delineated by White and Johnson (ibid) exemplifies a predominantly technical orientation (Section 2.7.1) as it will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

White (1988) argues for a broader context of curricular development to discuss wider issues of language teaching and syllabus design. For him, the dominant approaches to syllabus design have strong Applied Linguistic overtones like emphasis on methodology that can be questioned in order to take account of important work that has been carried out in the field of education. He finds the field of curriculum development more embracing than the factors, which have traditionally fallen under the rubric of syllabus design. For instance, White's concern for a curricular perspective could be exemplified from his interpretation of concepts like introducing and managing curricular change. While acknowledging the fact that it is not merely or even primarily 'question of content' that become issues for the purposes of developing and introducing a new language syllabus, White observes,

Although in the 1970s there was much concern with the Notional/Functional revolution, most of the problems
which actually face anyone attempting to introduce a new syllabus did not change. (1988: 1) (emphasis mine)

What needs to be noted here is the issue of 'the actual problems faced' as highlighted in White's conception of changing a syllabus. White formulates the problem in terms of the dynamics of 'change', while introducing a new syllabus. Considered this way, the factors brought in by White are quite crucial in introducing curricular change, as he affirms these problems tend not to have anything to do with either the theoretical basis of the Syllabus or Curriculum changes themselves, nor the content of the changes. Rather, they are issues, which have to do with ideas about education and with people and organizations. They are, in short, educational and managerial issues ' (ibid)

2.9.1 ESL curriculum: insights from Johnson

Johnson (1989) conceptualises the issues involved in the ESL curriculum by placing them within the context of developments in language curriculum studies. His publication, The Second Language Curriculum, presents an overview of the scope and dimension of language curriculum development. Johnson asserts that there has been a perceivable shift from a narrow view of their work which focused largely on issues of content and methodology to a more comprehensive and complex
understanding of the curriculum. Such a view encompasses issues like policymaking, needs assessment, curriculum design and development, teacher preparation and development as well as programme management and evaluation. It is these issues that form the basis of Johnson's framework for a broader approach to curricular decision making.

According to Johnson the broadening of the field that has happened as a result of incorporating issues related to curriculum development signifies the 'third phase' in the growth of Applied Linguistics, which according to him constitutes 'the theoretical arm of language teaching.' In the words of Johnson,

The first phase constitutes the 'communicative revolution' which ended with Applied Linguistics focussing upon the new linguistic sciences, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics which were, to use Johnson's words, 'divorced from the Structuralist' Behaviourist past and distanced, if not estranged from mainstream of educational theory. (1989: xi)

The second phase is called 'piecemeal reconstruction' which is epitomized by 'the flowering of a thousand methods' (ibid.). This phase included aspects like needs analysis, syllabus and materials design, the
role of the teacher and the learner and the nature of classroom interaction.

Commenting on this phase Johnson says,

the insights were genuine, the progress real but there was little progress between or integration of the different areas. (ibid)

The third phase is traced back to the 1980’s when there was a growing interest in the curricular process as a whole. According to Johnson this phase is ‘one of consolidation and integration and it is imbued with a sense of realism’ which attempts to put language teaching back in touch with educational theory in general and curriculum studies in particular (Stern 1983) and to impose order on the chaos into which at least fringe communicative methodology has fallen (Richards and Rodgers 1986). (ibid)

The ‘new sense of realism’ takes into consideration both the micro and macro level issues and curriculum development is seen as a dynamic process that must be understood in its entirety if it has to be coherent and efficient. Following this view of the language curriculum ‘a discussion of any part must take account of the aims of constraints upon the whole (ibid.).'
Apart from the emphasis on a holistic and coherent approach, there is another important feature that sets *The Second Language Curriculum* apart from typical manuals on syllabus design. It is its framework. The aspects involved in the framework could be exemplified by the Sections of the book is divided into: 1. Curriculum planning, 2. Ends/means specification, 3. Programme implementation 4. Classroom implementation. These stages are illustrated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Stages</th>
<th>Decision making roles</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. curriculum planning</td>
<td>policy makers</td>
<td>policy document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. specification; ends/ means</td>
<td>needs analysts</td>
<td>syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>methodologists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. programme implementation</td>
<td>materials writers</td>
<td>teaching materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teacher trainers</td>
<td>teacher-training programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. classroom implementation</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>teaching acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learner</td>
<td>learning acts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Johnson 1989: 4)

Evaluation, which is described as an on-going process runs through these four stages, which are in fact, crucial decision points in the implementation of a policy. The decisions taken before the development
and implementation of the programme constitutes the first stage of planning. The second stage of ends and means specification refers to the formulation of objectives and methods respectively. The third stage involves teacher training and materials/resources development. In the fourth stage teachers and learners play an important role in classroom implementation.

The framework proposed by Johnson involves the 'products' of these decision-making stages as exemplified in the table above, as well as the *processes* and the *constraints*. The 'products' exist in some concrete form and can be observed and described, for example, policy documents, syllabus, teacher training programmes, teaching materials and resources and the teaching and learning acts. Regarding the delineation of the processes Johnson very pertinently observes that the processes are difficult to identify and analyse than the product. Some of the questions that help one to understand these processes are:

a. Who is supposed to make the decisions and who actually does?

b. How are these people selected and what qualifications do they have?

c. What are their terms of reference?
d. What resources in time, money, information and expertise are available to them? (Johnson 1989: 1)

Johnson also acknowledges three sets of constraints on curricular decision-making viz., policy, pragmatics and participants. A curriculum which fails to achieve its aims at the level of policy but has been successful in other respects cannot justify its purpose hence policy acts as a constraint. A curriculum fails to achieve its aims if it does not take into account pragmatic considerations like time and resources. The participants in curricular process should interact favourably in order to reconcile policy to pragmatics. Their efforts should also be directed at achieving and maintaining consistency and compatibility of products of the decision-making processes.

In a coherent curriculum, constraints are overcome and consistency is achieved by avoiding scope for mismatch between policy and learning outcomes. Policy makers respond to the learning needs by determining the overall aims of the curriculum. They can be influenced by special interest groups and social and political pressures.

Ends-means specification is the process by which policy and the means of implementation are defined. End refers to the target level of
proficiency and Means refers to the methods by which proficiency will be achieved. Inadequate specification of means will provide more scope for mismatches and curricular becomes less coherent.

To me, this framework signifies a highly sophisticated and comprehensive outlook at curriculum development. It emphasizes the interdependence of various factors and the need for mutually consistent and complementary decision-making throughout the processes of development and evaluation.

Nevertheless, it seems to be deeply rooted in the technical paradigm as the concepts of coherence and mismatch are guiding precepts in the framework. Here it may be pertinent to explore the notion of coherence as applied to curriculum development. By seeking coherence in a human endeavour such as curriculum development, Johnson seems to iron out the scope for trial and error and interim changes. This could make coherence an almost impossible task as there are bound to me mismatches resulting in lack of perfection.

Certainly, the framework is holistic and comprehensive but it restricts itself to technical aspects like syllabus, method, and materials. It
could go beyond these issues by looking at ways of conceptualising ESL as an educational problem. This would imply reconceptualising notions like second language, ESL methodology, classroom, institutional context and so on. The aim of such an endeavour could be studying the broad theme of knowledge and control by identifying hidden dimensions.

2.10 Emerging issues in curriculum: a discussion

At this juncture, it is worth considering a critical review of technical issues as specified, for instance in Johnson’s framework. Several issues related to the curricular processes emerge from the preceding discussion. Of particular relevance to the study, are issues pertaining to the problems involved in the development of curriculum, perceptions of knowledge and the socio-political pressures that operate in the curriculum. A discussion of these issues is taken up in the following sub-sections.

2.10.1 Analysis of technical issues

The technical orientation to curriculum as discussed in Section 2.7.1 signifies a linear approach to curriculum development. The frameworks developed by Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962) are a case in point as their conception of the learners, the process of learning, the
nature of knowledge and the notion of evaluation follows a systematic, step-by-step procedure. Following this, Tyler's overemphasis on instructional objectives and his excessive reliance on behavioural psychology for formulating the objectives has come under severe criticism. (Stenhouse 1975, Schwab 1969, 1971, 1973, Eisner 1985). Similarly Taba's seven-step procedure as a systematized process of curriculum development provided an almost unrealistically neat and linear view of the process. At this point, a crucial question could be raised: is the process of curriculum development as linear as it has been designed by for example Tyler and Taba?

To answer this question, the concerns of the objectives-based curriculum should be carefully examined. In this model, the notion of objectives and the sources of objectives need a careful consideration. Moreover, as it advocates a controlled and experimental way of providing educational experiences to the learner, the conception of knowledge (content) and the learning process (method) were dictated by the nature of objectives. Furthermore, the assumption that by creating desirable conditions to learn, one can effect some amount of change in the learner is itself a questionable premise, for, a human process like learning cannot be equated with effecting observable or perceivable changes.
Having made these points let us now reconsider the notion of knowledge or content. In the objectives model, *content* refers to the corpus of knowledge that is already existing, prior to the human experience in the form of a social 'given'. The role of the teacher is to 'transmit' this content by classifying and organizing it according to the needs of the learner which are in turn dictated by the 'given' nature of societal needs that get expressed as curricular objectives. Thus, the concept of 'knowledge' and the means to deliver it and the method of doing so have come to be regarded as basic tenets of any curriculum.

Generally, in the context of any curriculum, the *method* refers to the nature of the process and the mode of 'transmission' one adopts. It could be a tightly structured one, leading to a 'controlled' process and a clearly defined product, or a loosely structured one, punctuated with scope for negotiation and deliberations. The *content* and *method* are determined by the view of knowledge one subscribes to and the *objectives* and *evaluation* (both these concepts include the process of selecting, organizing and prioritising something) bear a direct relationship to the nature of control that is exerted. Thus, knowledge and control are established as the broad determinants of any type of curriculum.
Depending on the conceptions of these we have 'linear' or 'non-linear' approaches to curriculum development.

However, irrespective of the kind of approach one adopts, linear or non-linear, curriculum development retains its multifaceted identity as a 'creative endeavour' and a collaborative activity' (Stenhouse 1975). In its most simplistic sense it is an interaction between two participants – a teacher and a learner within a specific context, at a given time. Similarly the nature of content acquires a 'simple' or 'complex' identity depending on the process through which it would be implemented or interpreted. The interaction, therefore, revolves around the teacher, the learner and the content.

2.11 Knowledge, power and subject formation

One of the most significant issues emerging from the foregoing interpretations of curriculum concerns the relationship between knowledge and curriculum (Apple 1989). Hence in this section, while establishing the social nature of knowledge as an epistemological basis for any curriculum, it shall also be demonstrated as to how a particular view of knowledge impinges on perceptions about a curriculum. Or conversely, how a curriculum functions as a device or a mechanism to control, validate and
legitimise knowledge, with an overt interest in forming subjects who fit into the system unquestioningly. There are two dominant approaches to conceptualising knowledge:

- Knowledge as given, out there, _a priori_
- Knowledge as constructed, negotiated, conflictual

The first position clearly subscribes to the view that knowledge is external to the knower and it can be mastered (Barton and Walker 1984, Eggleston 1974, 1977). It is like a corpus or quantum handed down historically as part of the tradition. This implies that individuals have very little or no scope for participating in the processes of its production. In fact such a view refutes the producibility of knowledge socioculturally, for it regards it as a universal monolith, amenable to taxonomical analysis, distribution and measurement.

However, it could be argued that even if knowledge is treated as a corpus existing neutrally as it were, it is still possible to unravel its social intent and political agenda. This is mainly because ‘knowledge like language, is not independent of its use and should be understood in its social and historical context.’ (Sarup 1978:61) Further, agreeing with Sarup, it may be said that
Knowledge and what is regarded as abstract thought should not be treated as a 'given', as something objective, context-free or universal and consensual (which shows that what is considered 'abstract' is socially and culturally situated) (ibid.).

It is here that the 'conflictual' view of knowledge becomes relevant. To develop this argument further, first, the proposition that knowledge resides beyond the sphere of historical conflict and shifting terrain of ideological struggle should be refuted. Second, any practical application of knowledge resulting in mastering of skills should be viewed as undermining the intellectual content of knowledge. Third, the very act of defining what counts as knowledge should be considered as a political intervention in including certain aspects of knowledge as culturally validated and certain others as excluded. It is this process of centring and marginalizing the selection and organization of knowledge that the relationship between curriculum and knowledge.

In other words, the preceding discussion reveals that, the very act of selecting knowledge implies an exercise of power. This further implies an authoritative effort at 'controlling' the flow of knowledge by branding certain types of knowledge as worthy of being learnt. Viewed from such a
perspective, curriculum becomes a device for privileging and perpetuating a particular conception of knowledge and learning. This view raises several questions, to suggest a few—what counts as useful and legitimate knowledge and who decides on it, how are the learning needs constituted, is its practical use the only criterion to measure and validate knowledge, how does one account for issues that were marginalized while selecting and processing a particular body of knowledge as worthy of classroom? These questions form the basis of curricular issues that need to be critically examined in the broader context of 'social reproduction' and 'subject formation'.

Another crucial issue that emerges from the discussion so far relates to knowledge as content of a curriculum and its role in reproducing the existing culture. This point could be illustrated with the help of what Bourdieu and Passeron have to say on education and cultural reproduction. They observe,

All pedagogic action, is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by any arbitrary power.' (1977: 57)

In this context ‘pedagogic action’ is understood as curricular action, as the act of transmitting the contents of a curriculum. The term ‘cultural
arbitrary' signifies the nature of knowledge. When curriculum is regarded as reproducing the existing way of life, preserving the system by maintaining status quo, it is undoubtedly an indication of moulding individuals to fit into the dominant social pattern and accept the scheme of things as they are, unchangeable, fixed and stable. In a similar vein, Zavarzadeh and Morton (1987) perceive that

The dominant curriculum constructs the subject in such a manner as it can be readily inserted into the existing social order. To say this is to say that the dominant curriculum is an ideological operation, the purpose of which is to maintain the existing system by producing subjects who will not only see it as acceptable but perceive it precisely as the way things are, ought to be and will be (p. 2).

In other words, here the goal is to form subjects who accept the order unquestioningly and also try to perpetuate and continue the present state of affairs. As a result what gets overlooked by the subjects is the 'hidden' motive of the state and society to ascertain and presence its hegemony by concealing its real educational goals. On the contrary, when curriculum is viewed as a site of struggle, an altered perception of issues suggests themselves. Issues like 'contest over content', 'an alteration of power relationships' and 'a recognition of the historical struggle over
constituting the meaning and determining the goals of education' become
the focus of deciding on what should get included in the curriculum.

Awareness to this extent entails an empowering interest in
overcoming the 'arbitrariness' of the system and authority in prescribing a
particular corpus of knowledge as 'educational'. Also, as individuals in the
process of making sense of themselves, teachers and learners or even all
the others who are in some way concerned with curricular decision-
making, find scope for liberating themselves from being agents of a certain
hegemonic scheme. Put differently, this constitutes the transformative
potential of a curriculum.

Thus, by taking cognisance of the historical contests over
knowledge and being aware of the implied meaning of their roles subjects,
by adopting a critical outlook, empower themselves by questioning the
dominant notions of knowledge as content and the resultant goals of
education. This act of questioning signals the unwillingness of subjects to
fit into the existing structures of the society and perpetuate the existing
system.
2.12 Research plan for the study

With a detailed examination of the issues involved in curriculum studies, I shall now proceed to delineate the research plan for the study. To begin with, it should be noted that the present study adopts an eclectic approach by creating a suitable blend of factors from among practical and emancipatory orientations to curriculum theorising. Furthermore, it may be reiterated that the site for theorising constitutes the ESL curriculum in an autonomous college. Curriculum theorising, in this study attempts to achieve two broad goals namely:

a. Understand and describe curricular concerns with reference to the curricular experiences on the site

b. Generate critical curricular knowledge by reflecting on the experiences. It may be noted that critical curricular knowledge refers to the holistic knowledge produced by reflecting on curricular issues at micro and macro levels.

In the process of realization of these goals, certain relevant research questions could be identified, such as:

1. How does the site which constitutes curricular context influence the processes?
2. How are the curricular objectives as exemplified in the syllabus, accomplished through teaching materials and teaching – learning processes?

3. Do teachers and learners have a role in decision making, if so what kind of a role they have.

The operational notions governing the questions raised above could be presented as the following points:

a. Question 1 seeks to explore and understand the curricular context at 'local' level by relating it to the sociohistorical level. This implies a study of micro level observations made at the site i.e., the Autonomous College, the classroom, and the syllabus and so on (Section 2.3) by placing it in the broader context comprising various sociohistorical and political factors.

b. Question 2 examines the actual classroom procedures and other curricular events in the college. It seeks a deeper understanding of the processes of knowledge creation, the nature of knowledge that is transacted by examining the content (prescribed syllabus and textbooks) and the teaching-learning processes.
c. Question 3 relates to the decision making power that rests with teachers and learners as the key participants in curricular events. An attempt will be made to understand the teachers’ role and its scope for empowerment. The learners’ role will be examined with the kind of subject that is expected out of the curriculum.

Now I shall move on to exploring the micro and macro issues by placing them within the eclectic approach adopted for the study.

2.12.1 Eclectic approach

The conceptual backdrop to the study is composed by concepts from practical and emancipatory orientations to theorising a curriculum. The study adopts an eclectic approach comprising the notions of ‘understanding’ and ‘critical reflection’ as defined in these orientations. Following are the some of the questions that exemplify the micro level curricular concerns:

- Who frames the syllabus and what are the processes followed at the design and implementation stages?
- Are the textbooks compatible with the objectives of the course?
• Do teachers plan for the lessons?
• How do teachers share their experiences with their colleagues?
• Are the teachers 'trained' formally in teaching particular textbooks using specific methodologies?
• What is the role for learners in the classroom, do they actively participate in classroom or they remain passive?
• Are the learners encouraged to express their learning needs? What are their learning preferences?

Following are the some of the questions that depict the macro level curricular concerns:

• Who has decided that ESL should be a part of the tertiary level curriculum?
• What are the social factors that create a need for teaching ESL?
• What role does a second language play in a multilingual country like India?
• What agencies are involved in crafting language policy and who exercises control on policy level decisions?
• Who sets the broad objectives of learning ESL, is it in consonance with the societal needs?
• What are the benefits of learning ESL, are students aware of it?
• Do teachers feel empowered while performing their role as a curricular participant?
• How much freedom do teachers have in adapting or modifying policy level decisions?
• What is the role of textbooks in promoting a particular notion of content and materials?
• Who produces the teaching materials, how far do experts and teacher education institutions exercise control on materials production?
• Who initiates innovation and change in the curriculum? What are the reasons for seeking a change?
• What are the sociocultural implications of granting autonomy to select colleges?
• What kind of a role is envisaged for the learners, are they encouraged to voice their problems or offer suggestions?
2.12.2 Nature of inquiry in the present study

Empirically, the study is positioned in the Naturalistic paradigm (see details in Chapter 3). It opts for research methods from ethnography, critical ethnography and critical social inquiry. The micro level questions will be studied using ethnographic methods like observing and interviewing the participants on the curricular site. Here, the objective is to identify the curricular themes by attempting a thick description and interpretation of curricular experiences.

In order to explore the macro level questions, first, the sociohistorical context would be reconstructed. Subsequently, themes emerging from the micro level will be placed in the larger matrix of sociohistorical context. For this purpose, conceptual insights will be adopted from critical ethnography and critical social inquiry. Here, the objective is to critically reflect on the curricular themes and theorise in the form of critical curricular knowledge.

2.13 Drawing together

In this conceptual chapter dealing with issues related to ESL curriculum, an attempt was made at elucidating various concerns of a curriculum. First, the distinction between syllabus and curriculum was
clearly established. This was followed by a discussion of various micro and macro level issues in ESL curriculum. The interpretation of curriculum as processes of creating, sharing, experiencing and preserving knowledge in an educational context was further elucidated with an explanation of key curricular terms. The definition proposed in the study brought out three generic themes of a curriculum namely, the context, the content and the participants. Subsequently, the concept of curriculum studies and curriculum theorising was discussed with reference to the ideological orientations and a discussion of key issues in each orientation by placing them in the context of ESL curriculum. To wind up the discussion on various matters pertaining to the broadening of conceptual framework, the research plan was presented as an indication of what the study seeks to achieve and how it will operationalise the research.

Having laid down the broad conceptual contours of the study, I shall now move on to the next chapter that aims to present the framework for research by elucidating the theoretical background and operational design of the study.