CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Syllabus design is a very crucial aspect of teaching and learning. Curriculum aims, objectives and innovations have meaning only if the syllabus is true to the features listed above. Syllabus underpins the success of a course since it affects very important aspect of teaching, learning and testing. Since a syllabus is intrinsically connected with classroom proceedings, it has to be designed with a lot of thought and care with due consideration given to the suggestions made by the other stakeholders such as teachers handling the course, students taking the course and as in the present research, the prospective employers of the students. If only these three important stakeholders are made part of the syllabus design process, the syllabus design exercise becomes a blue print for successful and meaningful learning within the classroom. Sadly, however, in India syllabuses are continued to be framed using the top down approach and therefore for the most part it does not include learning items that are in synchronization with the ground realities.

5.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The present research is essentially qualitative and ethnographic as it emphasizes on the emic perspectives of all the stakeholders involved. It broadly depicts the academic and target culture and the students’ learning performances to achieve target level communicative competence. This study attempts to develop a needs based placement course to enhance English
communication skills, being the most predominant requirements for seeking employability. Conducting needs and demands analysis have been quintessential to understand the present and the target situation in designing the language content and skill orientation of the programme. This proposed course is particularly benefitted with the views of engineering students and HR personnel as they provided adequate information on the contextual influences of present and target situation. The purpose, process and product orientations of the course are specified with the needs and demands of the engineering students and the HR personnel. With relevance to the instructional and performance objectives of the course, appropriate genre, task, skills, content, topic and theme are designed to fit the target context of the study. The integration of specialist (top-down), learner centred (bottom-up) and learning centred approaches (process analysis) are found to be substantial and useful in the design and the process of the course (Johnson 1982; Graves 2008).

Content, topic, theme, genre, skills, task and context are the multiple components integrated and are often found to be interrelated and interdependent in realizing the objectives of the course. With respect to the needs of the students and HR personnel’s views, oral and written genres, skills and tasks are widely recognized as the basic requirement for the process of learning. Business, technical and social genres are often preferred to perform through interpersonal and collaborative tasks to develop interactional skills. Students are able to present their disciplinary topics, theme and content in the technical rounds of the interview. As the HR personnel are more concerned about delivery, clarity and understanding of the content, mechanics of speaking and writing are practiced for making good presentations. Emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, accent and style is also given to develop their language skills. For developing self directed learning of vocabulary, the students are motivated to use printed and online dictionaries
to distinguish meaning, spelling, grammatical form and pronunciation. Through genuine observations, discussions, self assessment, peer responses, reviews and feedback, both formal and informal gap analysis are equally undertaken to examine the actual needs, lacks and deficiencies of the students (Spratt 1999; Sheen 2004).

As English communication skills are found to be essential in the advanced and technical education to seek professional echelons, engineering students are abound to display target level communicative competence with adequate language, discourse and strategic skills (Lockwood 2012; McArthur 2011). The students are found to be keen to develop relevant knowledge and skills for the sake of getting placements. They claim that peer review and teachers’ feedback are quite useful as they are able to perform in both interpersonal and group communication activities. The HR personnel found the students’ capability to speak about their personal profile; introduce themselves in the job interviews; and to draft a letter of application with a detailed CV. They are able to describe their achievements and articulate their potential talents with the panel members. Students also affirm that their report writing skills are found to be improving as they are able to discuss their observations with the team members. The teachers admire their readiness to communicate on any business or technical topics. Self researching the topics of interest and collecting the resources through extensive learning and beyond the specification of the syllabus is one of the most privileged credits of the trialled course. Searching for both online and printed resources helped them to adopt wide extensive study on the subject.

Students’ self prepared materials are encouraged for assessing their language, expression and information. The students who are informative and interactive are found to be confidently expressing in both oral and written presentations; the students who are informative but not interactive, are found
to be less confident as they resume in recalling the information from memorization; the students who are interactive, but not informative are not able to disseminate knowledge with utter clarity and precision; and the students who are neither informative nor interactive are found to be seen in reticent and disillusion. It can be inclined that language productivity can be made through exercising open ended tasks with sufficient comprehensible input (Krashen 1981). Information needs to be received through listening and reading and consequently reproduced through the skills of speaking and writing. Disciplinary content is primarily focused to develop both receptive and productive skills.

Most students were able to perform in job interviews and group discussions. They are able to reflect their critical insight in individual presentations. Discursive and functional tasks are encouraged to develop interpersonal business communication skills (Wilton 2011). Besides developing interactional activities, most students commend free conversation activities, as it also helps to develop pause, tone, degree of delivery, frequency of expressions and voice modulation. Teachers reflect that they are able to examine students’ enthusiasm in free conversations. They ensure that communicative language learning is made through both autonomous and collaborative learning. Students’ are able to confidently speak in both personal and group communication tasks. They are able to continuously engage in interviews, meetings and group discussions. The proposed course encourages add-on courses and comprehensible input activities for helping the students to become more informative on the topics undertaken to discussion. The students feel satisfied for they are able to make desired job oriented performances as expected by the HR personnel. They reflect that they are able to engage in technical presentations and group discussions. The HR personnel also reveal that their cognitive and strategic skills are notable as they could find significant improvement in their knowledge, expressions, and style.
The major findings of the study is

- Most students are found to be confident and responsible in participating both oral and written tasks. As they understand both speaking and writing skills are predominantly important to execute business transactions, they enthusiastically perform in personal, formal, and social conversations and writing emails and reports.

- It is noted that the LEP students are beginning to participate in individual, pair and group tasks, but their inability in displaying appropriate language components, postures and gestures are apparent.

- Some students are not found to be comfortable in chatting and casual interaction. As they lack sufficient knowledge on current affairs and positive attitude, they are found to be reluctant in engaging in social conversations.

- It is noted that the communicative needs and demands analysis has become the prerequisite research tool for investigating students’ and target personnel’ perceptions for developing target level competence. The students and the target personnel articulate their needs, demands, expectations, interests and preferences and share their opinions in light to develop employability skills.

- This study informs about the necessity of developing relevant employability skills for the recruitment process and reflects on the communicative requirements of the workplace.
• Specific language learning objectives can be achieved on the grounds of acquiring target level communicative competence and performance.

• The display of strategic and discourse competence shows that the students are more assertive and confident in interacting with the peers, teachers and the panel of recruiters and HR personnel.

• Competence and performance based learning has been carried out to elicit both oral and written performances of the students.

• The institution and the teachers are deemed to consider the course more seriously as it is meant for developing relevant skills for placement. This optimistic insight and professional fervor helped to reshape the students transfer required capabilities from institution to professional contexts.

• As speaking is conceived to be the most difficult skill, pragmatic approaches and eclectic methodology is adopted for practicing interpersonal and group communication skills.

• Soft skills, empathy and emotional intelligence are keenly promoted to build their positive attitudes to work with team spirit. As the general courtesy of language and human empathy form the major factors in influencing social and business relationships in professional communication, students are helped to develop soft skills and strategic competence.

• Consensus between teacher and students are found essential in understanding and framing a flexible syllabus to meet their communicative requirements. Managing classroom dynamics
and securing the autonomy of the learner are the prime concern of the teacher. Awareness of students’ incongruities and learning difficulties has been an essential competence of the teacher as they monitor and support students’ progress through reflective learning.

- As the engineering students are given a target to be ultimately placed in the campus interviews, faculties found the proposed course to be more application oriented. As the faculties recognize and understand students’ needs and target needs, they are able to control the learning situation and plan the mixed level students to present on par with the capable performers.

- The insistence of language and subject faculties for developing receptive skills and topic based learning is also found to be helpful for the students to become more informative to communicate their knowledge and experience (Xuyun-Zhu 1999; Cowling 2007).

- Self preparation and self assessment of their oral and written performances helped the students to acquire both receptive and productive ability for effective communication.

5.2 SYLLABUS MODIFICATIONS AND REVISION

Language policies and course planning should be systematically and periodically revised and examined for analyzing the changing needs of the target and present learning contexts. Genre, skills and task based instruction and procedures need to be constantly revised to meet the needs of the students. Any suitable modifications, revisions in the course of learning and evaluation need to be given due consideration reflecting the purpose of
the course. In an ESP course, stakeholder’s perceptions and reflections needs to be given more consideration while designing a needs based syllabus. The views of the third and final year students, the demands of the HR personnel of the target situation, the authorities involved in the present learning situation are necessarily taken to understand the framework, design, process, evaluation and revision of the course.

- Continuous revision of the course and the updation of the content and methods can be possible only if adequate language awareness, language use and teacher education can be visualized and analyzed through conducting needs based research investigations.

- It is unanimously found that the crucial role of the English department in a technical institution needs to be acknowledged by the institutional authorities.

- Core departments need to extend their fullest support and help English department to solve their technical issues at the earliest.

- It can be more practicable if the communication actions are supervised by two English faculties and one instructor to scaffold their learning difficulties and help them with their supportive feedback.

- English faculties continuously stress on applying remedial measures to improve grammar and vocabulary to the limited proficiency students and equally emphasizes on developing productive skills for interpersonal communication.
5.3 SYLLABUS REDESIGN AND ONGOING/CONTINUING SYLLABUS REVIEW

The recruitment ideologies of the HR personnel; the perceptions of the educational and placement consultants; the present and target needs of the engineering students; and the pedagogical insights and observations of English teachers were considered while revising the syllabus. The HR personnel revealed that the syllabus needs to be further improved with the following task production activities and case studies on working environment. Topics related to job specific situations, functional, administrative and technical communication are more expected. The topics and tasks undermentioned are essential for rendering routine jobs in their workplace contexts.

1. Briefing about the work, and the operations need to be undertaken.
2. Briefing about any instrument and their technical functions.
3. Leaving notes on emergency for the team members to continue work.
4. Sending telephone short messages.
5. Clarifying and explaining doubts on any serious technical issues.
6. Daily reporting of the routine work done.
7. Reporting positive and negative messages with tactics.
8. Confirming action taken on any urgent issues.
9. Enlisting the tasks to the personnel.
10. Referring circulars to update and sorting the job related tasks.
11. Communicating technical tips telephonically to repair team at site for proper and speedy repair.
13. Receiving feedbacks and monitoring the progress.
14. Keeping record of the data on all the technical issues.
15. Properly discarding the technical equipments in case need arises.
16. Ensuring the function, maintenance and repair of all machinery plants.
17. Conducting inservice training programmes on operation, repair and maintenance of the machineries.
18. Liaisoning with manufacturers for timely warranty repair cover.
19. Preparing and projecting annual resources requirement.
20. Arranging &/procuring spares locally for speedy repair.
21. Making correspondences related to technical and administrative matters with user units and higher headquarters.
22. Arranging entertainment to all the service personnel.
23. Judicial deployment of workshop machineries and manpower.
25. Ensuring proper accounting of all management properties.

Teacher training and development programmes need to be frequently organized and the teachers’ target situational knowledge updation is essential for the smooth conduct of a course. Teachers should be given proper training on recognizing students’ needs and their relevance to the process of teaching and learning. Teachers themselves need to be trained to understand the underlying principles of ESP. They should be able to correlate their instructional strategies with the theoretical concepts to practice. They should be familiar in adopting both available and innovative teaching and learning practices. Teacher’s knowledge on students’ needs and their involvement and constant support in promoting them to transfer their abilities from academic to workplace is most demanding.
Students consider that apart from giving adequate practice on conducting mock interviews, telephone conversations and video conferences need to be included. As some companies have telephonic interviews with their clients, students expect practicing both face to face and telephonic interviews. They expect that these direct and indirect communication skills need to be included in the syllabus. Online chatting and social sites are getting popular in identifying and scrutinizing relevant talents, skills and attitudes of the employees. Students are expected to use internet for seeking information and to entertain in social communication (Warschauer 2002). Since all the technical communication skills cannot be expected to be exercised and developed in a single semester, students expect a long duration programme to develop their capability to expertise these skills. Students’ specific interests in engaging in communicative classes are apparent as it is found,

I need an English related paper in every semester, which may enrich our values.
(Joseph. M., IV year, IT, KCT, 2012)

In the regular meetings with the students, it is noted that they wish to have additional library and internet hours for gathering more information on their desired topics. Though the students showed interest in communicating in English, they had different views in following them. Most of them confessed that speaking in English should be commenced informally without any external pressure on them. It is entrusted that when students are found to be comfortable in speaking English in casual situations, it will be more benefitting to use it in all demanding situations (Darling & Dannels 2003; Edwards 2014).

Students reveal that the mechanics of speaking can be better observed through audio and visual images. As suprasegmental oral features can be better captured through visual images, both faculties and students
prefer video recording of their performances. Some students and HR personnel consider reading aloud as a perfect task to exercise pause, degree of delivery, stress and pronunciation. It is also visualized that nonverbal cues, symbolic expressions and other graphical notions needs to be learnt through documentaries and short films. They should be constantly made to understand that how these nonverbal skills help to develop personality.

Students realize soft skills and personality development programmes can be demonstrated through case studies and multimedia presentations. They also expect that business etiquette can be best noted through the video documentaries of eminent personalities in meetings and conferences. HR personnel insisted that role model criteria citing various personages can construct more enthusiasm in developing personality. Students expect documentaries and short films to develop observing, listening, comprehending and analyzing skills rather than vague audio replay.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The proposed syllabus was trialled in only three colleges in the districts of Salem and Namakkal, Tamil Nadu. If the course had been trialled in more colleges then it would have greater validity. As the students are concerned more on developing relevant employability skills for immediate placement, the proposed course is limited to developing communication skills with specific reference to job interviews. Though this course aims at developing employability skills, it is restricted to relate with job specific oral and written business communication activities.

- The HR personnel views on developing productive and soft skills for sustaining employment are consistently worked out throughout the proposed course.
- Language teachers’ views have been elicited to understand the learning experiences of the students in the proposed course. They often emphasize on learning structures for developing language proficiency.

- As most of the students are beginning to participate, they are asked to present their topic of interest. They showed much interest in developing their knowledge and awareness on both general and technical topics.

- Students found themselves more engaged in developing interactional skills through both formal and informal conversations with teachers and peers. They also showed keen interest in developing their vocabulary skills through listening to their peers in group discussions and oral presentations.

- As the students are gradually becoming confident in delivering variety of topics, their involvement in collecting information through browsing various articles helped them to develop both rhetoric and discursive skills.

- Students’ access to use the computer and internet for browsing various topics and content helped them to engage in extensive learning. This helped them to enhance technology based language learning in both office hours and leisurely hours.

- It is expected that the students need to develop teleconferencing and video conferencing skills. Both the teachers and students need to be trained in developing technical communication skills.
5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Higher education policy substantiates the view to adopt standard language system. Paradoxically, it aims at making the students to achieve proficiency through achievement tests instead of proficiency tests. Proficiency tests need to be conducted on the grounds of developing skills competencies through interactional performances of the students. In the affiliated engineering colleges of Anna University, Tamil Nadu, the main focus of the study is academic achievement and it is specifically result oriented. Besides academic achievement, the students and the institutional management have begun to consider seeking placements in the campus recruitment drives as equally important. As it reflects a positive note to include employability skills for professional development, due recognition for more number of career and skills development programmes needs to be given in the academic curriculum.

Learning ESP has become a crucial requirement for the engineering graduates to acquire employability skills in their domain area. As the most prominent and pressing need of the engineering students is to enroll in ESP courses, they are found to be obligatory in learning English for job specific purposes. Still, massive awareness on the role of ESP in technical education is required and needs to be consistently recognized by all the academic bodies. The following suggestions can be incorporated in the future research,

- The nature of the learners and learning situation and the demands of the target situation needs are to be constantly updated for the revision of the course. The revised syllabus should intend to be more flexible in considering the preferred learning styles and autonomy of the students.
• As engineering students strive for job prospects, their language and communication problems are of immediate concern that needs to be resolved in both educational and professional contexts. The views and guidelines of the HR personnel on target contexts need to be followed in all the ensuing competency courses.

• The cooperation between the English and subject faculties is felt considerably important as the latter spends more time with the students and literally they need to extend their responsibility in helping and supporting the students to interact in English with them.

• English teachers need to be given adequate training to understand students’ needs and practice specific purposes based language teaching. They need to be more pragmatic in understanding students’ perceptions and their learning difficulties. They should be able to observe their improvements during the course.

• Language awareness, motivation and skills based training needs to be regularly conducted to teachers and students for understanding shared beliefs about learning ESP courses.

• English faculties and institutional authorities need to have professional consensus to work with sufficient awareness, knowledge and training on implementing and administering needs based ESP courses.

• It is most desirable to make the language faculties undertake industrial visits along the students to understand the actual requirement of the workplace. Teachers’ and students’
knowledge on the target field is quite important in planning the content, skills and learning strategies.

- For gaining better visibility and to educate them on present professional trends English faculties and students can be allowed to interact with the alumni students to map the real picture and the culture of the workforce. Alumni students can be interviewed by the students, faculties and placement coordinators. Their source of information can be particularly useful in understanding the norms and standards of the company, their attitude to language and culture, new trends of training and placement and present and future job prospects.

5.6 **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

An ESP course framework should incorporate both product and process orientations to develop a needs based course. In India, particularly product orientations are given more prominence and the university based curriculum is designed more on the end based perspectives. As the institutional authorities primarily stress on the product orientations, the process and procedures involved in language learning are least acknowledged. They are found to be more result oriented than understanding the process and proceedings that lead to achieve the product of the course. English faculties, principal and institutional management should necessarily understand and practically administer the innovative measures of ESP pedagogy in language learning.

- Intensive job related routine activities of different workplace contexts are to be extensively researched.
• It is commendable if the trained teachers are only considered to handle needs based ESP courses. It is expected that the trained teachers need to be more acquainted with the changing needs of the target situation and are more responsible in understanding the needs of the learner and learning situation. The incumbent teachers need to be recognized for their training and real classroom experiences in understanding the difficulties faced in the learning situation.

• It will be more helpful to the students if adequate and effective language learning measures are taken from school level education. Both the teachers and students need to be given enough space, time and resources to keep abreast with the latest developments in language education.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study entirely focuses on the factors of designing and developing an ESP course for satisfying institutional and workplace communication needs. As inquiries done on subjective and objective needs specify the means and the end of the course, this study emphasizes on understanding the purpose of language learning. All the stakeholders insisted on developing productive skills and personality for effective communication. The linguistic and nonlinguistic components like structures, genre, task, skills, topic, theme, content and context are braided together to design a communicative course. The proposed syllabus is trialled to satisfy the learning needs of the engineering students and the employment demands of the HR personnel. A comprehensive gap analysis is conducted to understand the learning process and the ambiguities involved in the learning situation. The HR personnel reflected that the instructional and performance objectives specified in the trialled syllabus are found to be substantive and practically
realized in the process of teaching and learning. Students reflect that they are completely satisfied with the syllabus as it promotes capabilities for communicating in job-specific situations. Self assessment, peer review and teacher feedback have been essentially proved to assess, evaluate and repeat students’ performance for gradually gaining advanced proficiency levels. Ongoing needs analysis is recommended to review and revise the syllabus with updated objectives, content and learning strategies in accord with the needs of learners and their requirements in workplace contexts.