Chapter-5

Findings and Recommendations

This research has been based on the belief that students need to have competence in English language to ensure facilitation in learning and ensure a better career growth. Annually, hundreds of postgraduates are churned out of Departments in our universities with minimal or nearly no English language skills, which leave them with linguistic and communicational disadvantage in the Globalized world. Proficiency in English certainly works to their advantage, for it helps supplement their domain knowledge and by English language skills.

This aim of this research was to help design short-term courses by keeping in its focus six objectives, each one of which had its own significance and a role to play. These short-term proficiency courses are intensive and holistic as they take into account the current professional arena, which demands candidates being adept in language use for being inducted into the system. Needs analysis was a major focus and a research tool in our research to check the undercurrents that teachers and students feel about needs and significance of a short-term proficiency course.

5.1 Testing of Null Hypotheses

We tested the following set of null hypotheses and the results are as follows:
**H01** Needs analyses have a role to play in shaping any syllabi for language enrichment of our students.

Needs analyses have a role to play in shaping any syllabi for students’ language enrichment stands accepted, for a majority of respondents surveyed show agreement (85% teachers and 67% students). The response from teachers in favour of needs-analysis is evidence about how efficiently this tool can shape any course in general and short term proficiency courses in particular, to cater to the language needs of students, which can include modules that can prepare them for professional needs as well. Students too, believe that this tool can voice their language learning and employability concerns, which can convert their needs into significant aspects in course design. This tool empowers students to become stakeholders in the teaching-learning process.

**H02** The expectations of the recruiters and employers need to be paid due attention in training our students for future professional careers.

The expectations of employers are given due attention in preparing the trainees or students for future professional requirements stands accepted because a majority agree that it is so (77% teachers and 66% students), and adds to employability of the trained personnel such courses help produce. Recruiters’ expectations are not included in the usual or core courses due to which, candidates are either rejected at the interview stage or are shown the door, immediately after joining, as they
lack language skills to carry out tasks. Teachers are aware of the existing challenges and demands that learners have to face once they are employed and so believe that employers’ expectations need to be a major feature of this course not only to make students employable but also to help them explore multi-career options. Students also corroborate this view and hence have responded in favour of expectations of the recruiters and employers.

**H03** The IELTS model would prove to be efficacious if incorporated at the postgraduate level within our curricular framework.

The IELTS model would be efficacious at the postgraduate level also stands accepted with 85% of the teachers and 58% of the students surveyed. This model can be used either as a starting point or a contextualized restructuring can be done to suit the requirements of students in short-term proficiency courses. IELTS tests students in four language skills in a rigorous manner and has a multi-disciplinary approach in terms of its content, which is a crucial factor in testing students’ preparation and skill in performing. Post-graduation is a stage, which can be treated as a launch pad for learners and so, they need to be prepared through holistic short-term proficiency courses, which has taken a cue from successful tests like IELTS.

**H04** Field work as a reliable tool used in training and project work as the product of such training are likely to pay rich dividends in terms of positive outcome.
A project based on field work is a reliable academic tool for ensuring greater learning as it provides practical experience stands accepted with 67% students surveyed. A project can go a long way in providing hands-on experience to realize the realities of professional pressure. They can observe and learn to handle the ups and downs rising out of unexpected situations. This training would prove to be an eye-opener for them and may provide them a buffer-time to get their language-skills polished before they enter the mainstream work. This can be a career changing training as they would get a chance to move forward into future and gain valuable insights about their own language drawbacks, while undertaking different tasks and so can improve it through short-term proficiency course, which they can pursue during their PG. An exercise of this kind would instil confidence in them to remain prepared and accept any kind of situations involving language usage.

H05 Teacher feedback is an effective tool in making short-term courses adaptable and reliable.

Teachers’ feedback is an effective tool in making short-term courses adaptable and reliable stands accepted with a majority of students surveyed. Teachers closely observe learners’ strengths and weaknesses giving the course designer a clear insight into their untapped potential and rough patches, which need attention. Students may have a limited understanding about their needs, whereas their unrealized needs may be recognized by their teachers given their proximity and experience. Teachers have a knack to judge students in an appropriate manner
and their viewpoints are reliable. Teachers have valuable experience to guide students and most of them can also predict language requirements that students need to learn.

5.2 Conclusions

We would like to enumerate and discuss the conclusions we have drawn from this research hereafter.

1. Needs analyses can be conducted of those enrolled on postgraduate studies in English in the main to address their needs. Needs analyses can be effectively used to assess what students wish to learn and with the necessary modifications they can be trained in areas which can not only improve their language but make them employable. This tool has been overlooked by many course designers as a ‘top-down’ course is often implemented without consulting the stakeholders, but with the introduction of this tool, students would become one of the major contributors in designing a course. This contribution from learners would make them more involved in the learning process as they would like to get their needs materialize for improving language usage skills. This tool is inextricably linked to employability as after analysis of the data collected; objectives can be framed that align with the requirements of employers.
2. Field work would have a long-term impact on students’ understanding about work-place challenges that they would face immediately after PG. This would be a sort of an eye-opener, which would definitely transform their life; language and career-wise. It would bring out the best out of learners as they would witness the kind of decisions they have to make and problems they have to solve. The modules that they would get trained in would come in handy, when doing any analysis or evaluation. This valuable experience can trigger and develop qualities of leadership, a sense of team-work, competitive spirit, work-ethics, commitment, meeting deadlines, planning-organizing-executing, judgment.

3. Employers are inevitable contributors in the process of course designing as they are eventual selectors of prospective professionals and expect them to be adaptable, problem-solvers and independent decision makers. To decrease the skills-shortage in any sector and supply well-trained professionals, employer consultation is unavoidable. This would ensure job on one hand for candidates and skilled manpower for the recruiters. Their feedback at regular intervals on the candidates would go a long way in making essential modifications in courses designed to train learners as they can sense the finer changes those are taking place at the work-place.

4. IELTS model can be effectively utilized with ‘contextualized restructuring’ to satisfy anticipated needs of students as a blanket adoption may be counter-
productive. The IELTS framework is well-suited to train and test learners in four language skills. Due to its multi-disciplinary approach students would get a flavour of diversity in terms of the information that they have to comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and apply.

**5.3 Recommendations**

1. There is a scope for further research in implementing three-prong approach for any stream as it is meant to improve employability by consulting three major stakeholders, namely; students, teachers and employers.

2. There is ample research possibility in designing a course that is purely generated by employers and is run along the core syllabus.

3. The researcher feels that there is an urgent necessity to do research in developing a holistic language course, that focuses specifically on problem solving, decision making and presentation, which caters to the management-oriented needs of the work-place for the heterogeneous students we have.

4. It is worth researching ways to assimilate flexibility in syllabus to tackle change that learners experience; academically and professionally.
5. It is going to be very useful in researching about the emerging trends across the globe in teaching-learning-employment and contextualize it to align with the needs of our students.

6. It is essential to do research to know the new or emerging sectors that employ candidates with communicative and other specific skills, which can help us to be well-prepared in advance and support students to compete locally and globally.

On the basis of these conclusions drawn and recommendations we have made, we have been able to successfully design and implement a revised version of course we had offered on an initiative taken by the Honourable Vice Chancellor of Sardar Patel University, Professor (Dr) Harish Padh. He had commissioned the Department of English to design and implement a course in academic writing and presentation skills for MPhil and PhD students registered in Sardar Patel University. The course we offered was a six-week intensive course 60 hours. The course outline offered below emerged out of the Three-Pronged Approach we had adopted and since we have received adequate feedback, this is a revised course we wish to implement in the academic year 2014-15.

**Week 1 Unit 1 (Monday to Thursday)**

**Day 1:** We propose to design a formal test to be used as a **Pre-test** to determine the level and develop appropriate content for learners to give them adequate training in all the four language skills. We would be more interested in getting
feedback on: (a) What are the obstacles that students face in learning English? (b) How students would overcome these obstacles? We would like to begin with a free discussion with the research scholars on their expectations from the course and get their end-of-the-course feedback to improve the same.

**Day 2:** One-to-one discussion with students; Indian English speakers (audio/video session) with tape scripts. A multi-disciplinary approach in which speakers from different fields would be chosen to give initial exposure to students and improve their language understanding.

**Day 3:** Cue card topics (with sub-points); Reading passage/s (source: IELTS books). Students would be instructed to approach each passage in their own way. This is an activity to assess their skills of dealing with it, which would prove to be significant in their further education and profession.

**Day 4:** Cue card topics (with sub-points); Writing task/s would be assigned on topic of students’ interest to assess the expressive skills of students.

**Week 2 Unit 2 (Monday to Thursday)**
**Day 1:** Cue card topics (with sub-points); Indian English speakers (audio/video session).

Students are expected to take notes while listening to these speakers. This will test the note-taking skills of learners and help us to guide them systematically at a later stage of this course.

**Day 2:** Cue card topics (with sub-points)
Types of research like descriptive, evaluative etc would be explained to students.
Day 3: Cue card topics (with sub-points); Reading passage/s (source: IELTS books). Students would be instructed to take notes about their understanding of the passage and highlight any significant patterns that emerge.

Day 4: Cue card topics (with sub-points): Students would make presentation on the evaluation that they did of the reading passages.

**Week 3 Unit 3 (Monday to Thursday)**

Day 1: Cue card topics; Functional task: Note-Taking: What is note-taking? Why is it important? How it needs to be done?

Day 2: Cue card topics; Review of literature: What is it? Why is it important?

Day 3: Cue card topics; Review of literature: How to do a review of literature? Critical reading and Presentation.

Day 4: Cue card topics
a. Reading passage/s (source: IELTS books)
Students would apply the skills of note-taking and critical reading to comprehend the given passages

**Week 4 Unit 4 (Monday to Thursday)**

Day 1: Cue card topics; Listening to achievers/well-known personalities. A checklist would be provided to students based on these videos and their grasp of the listening task would be checked.

Day 2: Cue card topics; Coming to grips with English through activities: Word-grid, correcting the jumbled words, and Creating meaningful articles using the available vocabulary.
Day 3: Cue card topics; Functional tasks: Assessing learners’ understanding of review of literature through assignments followed by a presentation from learners.

Day 4: Cue card topics; Academic Writing: An expert would talk about academic writing - What is academic writing? Why is it important? Sample tasks.

Week 5 Unit 5 (Monday to Thursday)
Day 1: Cue card topics; Academic Writing: Intensive writing activities to give students sufficient insight and exposure in it.

Day 2: Cue card topics; Functional task: Preparing a research proposal: What is a research proposal? How to prepare it?

Day 3: Cue card topics; Skill in Team work: Students would form a group of five and discuss every individual’s research proposal, take notes and a group leader (on rotational basis) would present the most ‘out of the box’ research topic from that particular group. Discussion on the emerging areas of research in different streams and its impact on the society.

Day 4: Cue card topics; Presentation: Each student would make a 2 minute power point presentation on the research proposal that they have prepared.

Week 6 Unit 6 (Monday to Thursday)
Day 1: Critical Thinking; An expert would talk about critical thinking: What is critical thinking? Why is it important? How can it be applied?

Day 2: Critical Thinking activities; Intensive tasks to give students sufficient insight and exposure to (a) measuring their grasp of critical thinking, (b) examining whether they can understand emerging patterns, (c) helping them formulate new ideas, and (d) explaining the subject being discussed, and applying this skill in various aspects of life.
**Day 3**: Video/s would be shown to students sans audio and learners would be expected to discuss in small groups and talk individually about the possible conversation. Each group leader (on rotational basis) would make presentation

**Day 4**: Cue card topics; Group discussion; Topics: education, sports, media, tourism, language/s, jobs, business, technology and youth

A **mid-test** to assess students’ learning so far

**Week 7 Unit 7 (Monday to Thursday)**

**Day 1**: Functional tasks: collecting data for research purposes; quantitative and qualitative; collecting primary and secondary data

**Day 2**: Functional tasks: analyzing data for research purposes; Quantitative and Qualitative; and analyzing primary and secondary data

**Day 3**: Project Work based on different concepts would be assigned to individual student and discussion would be held on the same. Each group leader (on rotational basis) would present the roadmap of their group’s project.

**Day 4**: Cue card topics; Interpretation of the images: Students would be shown pictures of different personalities, places and situations and asked to spontaneously speak about the same.

**Week 8 Unit 8 (Monday to Thursday)**

**Day 1**: Cue card topics; listening activity (source: IELTS books)
Day 2: Cue card topics: discussion on issues/matters pertaining to education, sports, media, tourism, language, jobs, business, technology and youth. Students would make presentation on their chosen topic.

Day 3: Subject-verb agreement: What is subject-verb agreement? Tasks on subject-verb agreement; Chain effect: Each group would be given initial lines of a story or any article and as soon as the initiator ends the other takes over and this needs to be done spontaneously for 2 minutes or more and create a meaningful conversation.

Day 4: Cue card topics; Reading passage/s (source: IELTS books): Students would analyze the given passages, add their own knowledge and/or opinion to that and evaluate different aspects.

Week 9 Unit 9 (Monday to Thursday)

Day 1: Case studies: Subject area would range on topics from education, employability, job satisfaction to professional ethics and multi-career scenario. Learners need to make a presentation on the same after discussion; Plagiarism: What is it? How to avoid it?

Day 2: Cue card topics; Functional Tasks: Structuring a research paper: Students would be guided in preparing a research paper involving discussion with teacher

Day 3: Cue card topics; Problem-solving activities: A partial problem would be presented to students and they are expected to discuss and offer solutions.

Day 4: Cue card topics; Personal traits: Learners would talk about their strengths and weaknesses in their respective groups. They need to talk about a blueprint to overcome their weaknesses.
Week 10 Unit 10 (Monday to Thursday)

Day 1: Project Work presentation: Each group leader would present the work that they did in the project, the planning involved, tools used to collect data and the outcome of their project.

Day 2: Cue card topics; Report-writing based on data in the form of charts with a multi-disciplinary approach. Students are expected to analyze the data and summarize it in approximately 200 words. They will present in the following forms: Bar and Pie charts; Tables; and Columns

Day 3: Research paper presentation: Students would make a power-point presentation on the research paper that they prepared

Day 4: Professional events and tasks: Students would be trained by a corporate trainer in making interesting advertisements; preparing appealing brochures; event management/arrangement for conferences, seminars; and professional and personal etiquette to be followed on such occasions.

Week 11 Unit 11 (Monday to Thursday)

Day 1: Guessing the story (Audio/Video sessions): Students would watch a video only partially after which they will have to predict the rest of the story by writing and discussing. Each group leader would make a presentation on the rest of the story

Day 2: Functional tasks: Comparing and contrasting activities. These activities help students to understand the significance of any given situation and/or experience. They can weigh the pros and cons of the same before making any decision.

Day 3: Functional tasks: Categorizing, sorting and grading activities. In this era of information overload, professionals have to be on their tenterhooks in organizing
and prioritizing their work, which is only possible if they do these three tasks efficiently.

**Day 4: Functional tasks: Analyzing:** This task is targeted at understanding patterns out of a larger set of events, which is essential in making precise decisions adequately supported by evidence.

**Week 12 Unit 12 (Monday to Thursday)**

**Day 1:** Two listening activities; Indian English speakers (audio/video session): Students would apply their skills of note-taking, compare and contrast the two listening tasks and do a critical analysis.

**Day 2:** Reading passages (source: IELTS books). Students would understand the given passages, analyze it, add their own knowledge and/or opinion and evaluate different aspects.

**Day 3:** Writing tasks: Academic and report-writing

**Day 4: End-of the-Course Test**