Chapter-2
Review of Literature

The topic of this research requires that we review literature in at least two areas: needs analyses and course design to locate the ‘research gap’ in them, and then delineate the process of teaching and testing language proficiency. We shall, therefore, elaborate on them throughout in this chapter.

Course designing is a multifaceted and an interesting process full of discovery. Designing a course is complex as it has to cater to the needs of several indispensible social, political, academic and Global factors. Moreover, syllabus designers, particularly in India have to face an intricate issue of heterogeneity, which makes their task all the more challenging and daunting.

The topic of our research work is “Preparation and Trialling of Short-Term Proficiency Courses for Postgraduate Students in Sardar Patel and Gujarat Universities”. We wish to ‘prepare’ and ‘try out’ and these two processes would involve taking a look at concepts such as ‘needs analysis’, ‘curriculum’, ‘syllabus’, ‘course design’, and ‘proficiency’. We shall begin at literature available on ‘needs analyses.

2.1 Needs and analysis

Need is a term that implies a certain want in someone, a certain essential
requirement that must be met, and given circumstances necessitating a particular
course of action that must be taken so as to enable us to overcome them
successfully. Analysis is a detailed examination we carry out on the outcome
available through a research tool administered to a chosen/randomly selected
population.

A researcher needs to survey literature available on needs analysis very attentively
keeping this at the back of his/her mind.

**Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis is a process involving a sound assessment of needs and a definite
statement on them. Brown (1995) uses this term in the context of academic work
and notes that it is a reference to a set of activities undertaken to collect relevant
information on what ‘a particular group’ of learners actually require to be able to
complete a course successfully. The information so collected enables our
academic planners to identify the deficiencies in the attainment of learning
outcomes so as to plan and design a curriculum aimed at plugging these gaps
effectively. We owe it to the genius of Munby (1978) who suggested this process
in his seminal work titled *Communicative Syllabus*.

Needs analysis can be considered as a starting point or a platform for a language
course for initiation. To avoid making a course top-down, needs analysis is an
essential prerequisite which also makes it student-oriented. It is a process which
begins with collection of data through a well-crafted questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative), interpreting the same and implementing the most common patterns of needs among students. We plan to implement needs-cum-observation analysis through a three prong approach of students’ needs-analysis, teachers’ observation and recruiters’ expectations or demands. Teachers’ suggestions are equally significant as they know them from close quarters and are well-positioned to judge, understand and opine about them. As teachers, they closely observe their strengths and weaknesses giving the course designer a clear insight into their untapped potential and rough patches, which need attention. Assessment of employer needs and expectations are hardly given any prominence and so courses may miss vital skill development aspects.

In his study of adult language learners, Brindley (cited in David Nunan, 2001, 24-25) suggests that:

…one of the fundamental principles underlying the notion of permanent education is that education should develop in individuals the capacity to control their own destiny and that, therefore, the learner should be seen as being at the centre of the educational process. For the teaching institution and the teacher, this means that instructional programmes should be centred around learners’ needs and that learners themselves should exercise their own responsibility in the choice of learning objectives, content and methods as well as in determining the means used to assess their performance.

Needs analysis has generated a lot of interest among teachers, sponsors, learners and administrators. The necessity has never been more acute than it is now due to paradigm shift in the work scenario. Needs analysis in a broad sense means, a tool that is administered to gauge the current level of understanding of English
language among students and turns out to be a starting point to fulfil what students lack in terms of language usage competence in familiar, unfamiliar and occupational situations alike. This kind of scenario is defined by Nunan (1988: 14) as,

Broadly speaking there are two different types of needs analysis used by language syllabus designers. The first of these is learner analysis, while the second is task analysis.

Learner analysis is based on information about the learner. The central question of concern to the syllabus designer is: ‘For what purpose or purposes is the learner learning the language?’

The second type of analysis, task analysis, is employed to specify and categorize the language skills required to carry out real-world communicative tasks, and often follows the learner analysis which establishes the communicative purposes for which the learner wishes to learn the language.

Singh (2008: 164) has defined needs analysis as,

The procedure of identifying/analyzing problems, types of needs, priorities of goals and performance in a programme. The procedure may be carried out by administering diagnostic tests, questionnaires, conducting interviews or observing the participants in target situations.

I.S.P. Nation and John Macalister (2009: 24) in their co-authored book define needs-analysis as a process which

is directed mainly at the goals and content of a course. It examines what the learners know already and what they need to know. Needs analysis makes sure that the course will contain relevant and useful things to learn. Good needs analysis involves asking the right questions and finding the answers in the most effective way.

Jack. C. Richards (2003: 54) cites Brindley (1984: 28) to describe the term
‘Needs’ as follows:

The term *needs* is not as straightforward as it might appear, and hence the term is sometimes used to refer to wants, desires, demands, expectation, motivation, lacks, constraints, and requirements.

Jack. C. Richards (2003, 54)² further elaborates the term and mentions that,

Needs are often described in terms of a linguistic deficiency, that is, as describing the difference between what a learner can presently do in a language and what he or she should be able to do. This suggests that needs have objective reality and are simply there waiting to be identified and analyzed.

Needs analysis has a special role in designing customized courses what is known as English for Specific Purposes. Such courses take into consideration the needs of students and accordingly the objectives are set, content is selected and assessment done. Jack. C. Richards (2003: 32) in his book, *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching* explains needs analysis in ESP in the following way,

An important principle of ESP approaches to language teaching is that the purposes for which a learner needs a language rather than a syllabus reflecting the structure of general English should be used in planning an English course. Rather than developing a course around an analysis of language, an ESP starts instead with an analysis of the learner’s needs.

Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (2010: 54) in their book, ‘English for Specific Purposes’, define needs analysis in two distinct ways, namely,

…target needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in target situation) and learning needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn). They further divide needs into three categories;
a) Necessities:
We can call ‘necessities’ the type of need determined by the demands of
the target situation, that is, what the learner has to now in order to function
effectively in the target situation.

b) Lacks:
To identify necessities alone, however, is not enough, since the concern in
ESP is with the needs of particular learners. You also need to know what
the learner knows already, so that you can then decide which of the
necessities the learner lacks.

c) Wants:
… learners too, have a view as to what their needs are.

Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St John (2011, 123-124) describe three kinds
of needs-analyses,

….a target situation analysis (TSA) and a learning situation analysis
(LSA); a third piece of the jigsaw is what learners already know, a
present situation analysis (PSA), from which we can deduce their lacks.
Thus, a TSA includes objective, perceived and product-oriented needs;
an LSA includes subjective, felt and process-oriented needs; a PSA
estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, learning
experiences.

It should be understood that the initial needs analysis should not be considered
final (once and for all), as the needs ought to change with the passage of time,
situations and new challenges. Harding (2012: 20-21) devised a 7-point procedure
to deal with the non-permanency of the outcome of needs analysis, which tries to
address the occupational needs of every fresh batch of students. The procedure is:

1. Give out the contents page (or ‘map’) of a standard General English course
book.
2. Focus attention on the topic, function and skills part of the contents map.
   They may use different labels (for example topic may be under
   ‘vocabulary’).
3. Ask the students to decide if any of the items in the General English
contents page are relevant to their ESP studies.

4. In groups, brainstorm items that they feel they will need to cover in the course under the headings: ‘Topic’, ‘Functions’, ‘Skills’.

5. The groups then present their ideas to the rest of the class, preferably in a relevant format.

6. Consolidate the students’ lists with any ideas of your own and produce a ‘Needs analysis’ master list.

7. Get the students to individually complete the ‘Needs analyses, scoring each item from 1-5 depending on how important it is for them.

Given the fact that, no needs analysis is final for successive batches of students, it should be administered before starting a course to every new intake of students to ensure addition of what is needed and deletion of the non-essential. In this regard Jordan (2012: 22) notes that “Needs analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabus, courses, materials and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place.”

This would ensure a close alignment to the occupational requirements, for which they will be, vying post education. This typical situation invites an experience based feedback from teachers to strengthen and plug any loopholes in a course. “Experience based feedback” precisely means an analysis of their experience of teaching students. This approach would help us realize students’ inclination for learning a specific skill, through any particular methodology and content. This ‘inclination’ or ‘why’ is explained by Hutchinson and Waters (2010, p. 53) in the following way;

We have defined ESP as an approach to course design which starts with the question ‘Why do these learners need to learn English?’ All the courses are based on a perceived need of some sort. Otherwise why would English find its way on to a school or college timetable: someone at some time must have
decided there was a need for it.

Students’ needs analysis and teachers’ “experience based feedback” would act as a two-prong approach to design a tailor-made course for that particular group of students, without compromising the requirements of the job market, which is ultimately where they will venture into, post studies. We cannot and are not supposed to neglect the learner needs as they are recipients of the curriculum designed by a superior academic authority. Adult learners are the stakeholders in the curriculum construction process and so we cannot afford to neglect their present and future language requirements. We need to give paramount importance to their needs as they will be facing a competitive world immediately after post-graduate studies, where they have to demonstrate and fulfil the job market requirements to bring their education to a logical fruition.

Learners are major stakeholders in the curriculum process as they are actual receivers of the course and teachers are close observers of students. This is a situation, which demands for a mutual teaching-learning understanding between them. In this regard, Nunan (2001, p. 2) in his book Learner-Centred Curriculum Development differentiates between learner-centred and traditional curriculum. He mentions:

The key difference between learner-centred and traditional curriculum is that, in the former, the curriculum is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught.
Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (2010, 53) in their book, ‘English for Specific Purposes’ try to explain needs analysis in the context of ESP:

We have defined ESP as an approach to course design which starts with the question ‘why do these learners need to learn English? …All courses are based on a perceived need of some sort. Otherwise why would English find its way on to a school or college timetable: someone at some time must have decided there was a need for it.

2.2 Curriculum, Syllabus, and Course design

Terms like curriculum, syllabus, and course design are used interchangeably used in literature on the subject. The reason is simple as Cecilia Braslavsky (1999) pointed out: the term ‘curriculum’ was used institutionalized in the classical Latin tradition as a reference to fields and subfields within a set of disciplines prescribed on a course of study in an academic setting. The curriculum prescribed in classical tradition consisted of trivium and quadrivium, with the former consisting of (1) grammar: the study of the rules of a language’s inflections or other means of showing the relation between words, (2) rhetoric: the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, and (3) logic: the science of reasoning; and the latter incorporates (a) arithmetic: the scientific study of numbers, (b) geometry: the scientific study of the properties and relations of lines, surfaces, and solids, (c) astronomy: the scientific study of celestial bodies, and (d) music: the art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds in a harmonious or expressive way. Thus curriculum, in its broadest sense, refers to the study of goals, content, implementation and evaluation of an educational system.
Syllabus on the other hand refers to outline of a course of study: teaching, testing etc on a particular academic training programme. There are six broad types within a language studies programme: (a) grammatical or structural; (b) communicative; (c) functional-notional; (d) situational; (e) skills-based; (f) topic-based; and (f) task-based, syllabi. The use of any of these types is dependent on the philosophy that one adopts in designing a course. Hence, this will differ from one learner group to another. This can only be decided on the basis of a thorough needs analysis. A combination of two or more types is necessary because a single syllabus type may have its own limitations.

Of the several models proposed by scholars, one is linear approach proposed by Hilda Taba (1962: 12) which has come to be known as ends-means model. This follows a series of steps like, (1) Diagnosis of needs (2) Formulation of objectives (3) Selection of content (4) Organization of content (5) Selection of learning experience (6) Organization of learning experience and (7) Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it.

This model may not suit the ever-changing and complex demands of workplace skills as it does not have provision to include the requirements of recruiters and utilize the feedback of teachers. Usually, a syllabus is decided by course designers and imposed on learners by not taking into consideration their needs, employer expectations and teachers’ feedback. There are several approaches adopted and adapted by various teaching institutions. One of the well-known or widely
practiced approaches is the traditional approach developed by Ralph Tyler. Tyler suggested a consideration of four fundamental questions for the systematic development of the curriculum in his well-known work, ‘Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction’ (1949, 1-2). He suggests the following questions,

What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
What educational experiences can be provided which are likely to attain these purposes?
How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

These four stages are shown by the following diagram:

![Tyler’s Model Diagram]

Lawton (cited in David Nunan, 2001: 12) criticizes this model as it represents an ends-means view of education and suggests that,

One objection to the whole curriculum model based on the four stage progression from objectives to content to organization to evaluation is that this is far too simple. For one reason, it is open to Bruner’s suggestion that
leaving evaluation until the final stage of curriculum process is rather like doing military intelligence after the war is over; in other words, evaluation should take place at every stage. This would make the curriculum model a cyclical one rather than a linear model.

It was criticism of linear models of curriculum development which led Wheeler (1967) to develop more integrated model. This has similar elements to Tyler’s – aims, goals and objectives, selection of learning experiences and then to the selection of content, organization and integration of learning experiences and evaluation. However, it differs from Tyler’s model in that it allows for recycling, so that evaluation feeds back into aims, goals and objectives. Thus evaluation becomes a guiding principle in modifying the aims, goals and objectives for a better and comprehensive course next time, when the course is taught. The Wheeler’s Model is as follows:

![Wheeler's Model Diagram]

Stenhouse (cited in David Nunan, 2001) developed a ‘process’ model of curriculum which is a new entrant to the field of curriculum and has been adopted
by many language specialists, however, we should not forget that this model emphasizes subject-centred view of curriculum which was championed by Stenhouse.

Citing Stenhouse, David Nunan (2001: 13) argues that ‘curriculum’ is:

An attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice.

His curriculum model consists of three major parts relating to planning, empirical study and justification. This model has three important aspects. Firstly, it has its prime focus on the curriculum that is actually, what we call as ‘ground reality’ (‘what is’ or ‘practice’), rather than what has been suggested or planned by curriculum planners. Secondly, it highlights the pivotal role played by teachers in the curriculum construction. Finally, it stresses the significance of effective teacher development through which they can become principal agents of curriculum change through critical analysis and reflection on their current performance. This approach has a ‘subject-centred’ orientation and so learners do not have any role to play in curriculum decisions. They are merely receivers of the superior academic planners’ curriculum concepts. As syllabus is imposed on students without any consultation with them, many of these have no objectives set and, they may not be able to test what the students might have learnt in the absence of the objectives of the course. There is a higher authority which decides on behalf of students. Such an academic attitude does not work in the favour of students as their interests get compromised and reduces their chance to achieve
and realize their professional aspirations. The students do not get a fair deal and end up with lack of language skills required to survive in the professional arena.

The belief that students should acquire years of accumulated knowledge leaves no room for the analyses of needs, learner experiences, professional requirements and market demands. Needs analyses is an effective tool to gauge the current demands in the job market and students’ abilities which would enable us to facilitate smooth transition of an individual student from being a learner to a professional. Syllabus design must involve a bottom-up process instead of the other way round.

The next approach is known as learner-driven approach. Theoretically, it is based on constructivism, a theory of learning in which learners relate new information or concepts with what they already know, try to apply the same in a favourable environment and get feedback on their performance. This approach gives primacy to the interests of students and helps create an environment for ‘student-backed syllabus objectives’, which can bridge the gap between what they yearn for and what they learn. This approach does not take into consideration the aspects which are indispensable like funding sources who may doubt the feasibility of learner-focused syllabus’ content and its outcome, parents of students who may not be convinced about a syllabus planned by their inexperienced children and finally teachers who may feel inferior or subordinate to their students.

The traditional approaches to language teaching focus on drills or repetitive
language activity to master a set of sentences or grammatical rules, which are assumed to help students in any situation once they internalize these aspects. The idea is to master a body of knowledge from which students can select the sentences and grammatical rules of their choice in any given situation. There has been a widespread criticism of such subject-centred curriculum due to lack of autonomy to the teachers and students in terms of teaching and learning respectively. Teachers merely become the implementers of the syllabus prescribed to them and students become receivers of the same. There is no provision for and scope of any innovation or creativity for the teachers who may wish to alter or include certain aspects of language teaching to facilitate learning.

Such a syllabus emphasizes only two language skills namely reading and writing, which we believe does not make this kind of syllabus a comprehensive one. Needs analysis does not have any role to play in this syllabus, which creates a chasm between what students require and what is taught. Memorized grammatical sentences or patterns cannot assist students for a variety of communicative requirements in real life scenario. Unless the learner needs are addressed, along with the teachers’ viewpoints and market requirements there cannot be a holistic syllabus for language learning. It was the dissatisfaction with such product-based or ends-means model, which necessitated a learner-centred curriculum. This type of curriculum focuses on language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge.
We need to remember that real-life situations and activities are highly unpredictable and so cannot be anticipated, which makes the course designing process a more challenging task. Mastering certain grammatical structures does not guarantee the production of appropriate sentences, when the requirement arises. The learner-centred curriculum opposes a centralized curriculum, which is planned or designed by a body of curriculum planners and disseminated to various academic institutions. Such ‘one size fits all’ assumption about the curriculum by the planners does not take into consideration the views of stakeholders.

Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain (2000: 3) in their book, Course Design explain the difference between curriculum and syllabus as follows:

The terms ‘curriculum’ and ‘program’ are used interchangeably to describe the broadest contexts in which planning for language instruction takes place, either on the national level or for a community’s school. A ‘syllabus’, on the other hand, is a more circumscribed document, usually one which has been prepared for a particular group of learners. In some places, the term syllabus has taken on a special meaning concerning the specification of language content alone.

There are multitudes of terms floating around to describe a program to be taught. These terms are used differently by different people. Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain (2000, 28) try to simplify the matter, noting that:

For what we are calling ‘syllabus’ might have the title of ‘curriculum’, ‘plan’, ‘course outline’, or any number of other names. Whatever it is called, it is a document which ideally describes:

1. What the learners are expected to know at the end of the course, or the course objectives in operational terms.
2. What is to be taught or learned during the course, in the form of
inventory of items.
3. When it is to be taught, and at what rate of progress, relating the inventory of items to the different levels and stages as well as the time constraints of the course.
4. How it is to be taught, suggesting procedures, techniques, and materials.
5. How it is to be evaluated, suggesting testing and evaluating mechanisms.

Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain (2000, 34-35) also describe the purposes of a curriculum and a syllabus as

1. A curriculum contains a broad description of general goals by indicating an overall educational-cultural philosophy which applies across subjects together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning with respect to the subject matter at hand. A curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well.

2. A syllabus is a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level.

David Nunan (1988: 5-6) cites Brumfit (1984) in his book, Syllabus Design to consider the differing viewpoints about curriculum and syllabus:

… I would like to draw attention to a distinction… between curriculum or syllabus, that is its content, structure, parts and organization, and, … what in curriculum theory is often called curriculum processes, that is curriculum development, implementation, dissemination and evaluation. The former is concerned with the WHAT of curriculum: what the curriculum is like or should be like; the latter is concerned with the WHO and HOW of establishing the curriculum. (Stern, 1984: 10-11)

…the syllabus is simply a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning.’ (Widdowson, 1984: 26)

… curriculum is a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational program. Syllabus, on the other hand, refers to that subpart of curriculum which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught (as distinct from how they will be
taught, which is a matter for methodology).

(Allen, 1984:61)

David Nunan (1988: 7) cites from Van Ek’s (1975: 8-9) unique work titled *Threshold Level English*’ to highlight the eight components necessary for a language syllabus:

1. The situation in which the foreign language will be used, including the topics which will be dealt with:
2. The language activities in which the learner will engage:
3. The language functions which the learner will fulfil:
4. What the learner will be able to do with respect to each topic:
5. The general notions which the learner will be able to handle;
6. The specific (topic-related) notions which the learner will be able to handle;
7. The language forms which the learner will be able to use
8. The degree of skill with which the learner will be able to perform.

Janice Yalden, (1989, 3) in her seminal book, *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching* explains how a ‘course’ is set up:

Setting up a new course implies a skilful blending of what is already known about language teaching and learning with the new elements that a group of learners inevitably bring to the classroom: their own needs, wants, attitudes, knowledge of the world and so on.

She notes how “needs” have been defined from the learner’s point of view as being, arrived at externally, and “wants,” internally. The term “knowledge of the world” is not used to refer to geographical knowledge, but to the sum of an individual’s experience of life.’
**Important Research Works**

Some of the important research works aim at designing learner-centred, potential-enhancing and interactive short-term course for postgraduate students offering English language as a specialization. We have to keep the requirements of adult learners in mind to remain focused on developing a course which caters to various language needs of post-graduate students. Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw (2003: 4 & 5) in their co-authored book ‘Materials and Methods in ELT’ mention about a professional ‘common core’ which applies and takes into consideration the interests of teachers irrespective of their location of teaching. This ‘common core’ rests on two strong factors: firstly multitude of criteria used in language teaching programmes, and secondly, pedagogic principles involved in designing materials and methods.

The combination of these two factors is known as a framework, which has again two branches namely ‘context’ and ‘syllabus’ the symbiosis of which is explained through the following figure:
Language teaching and learning took a new turn with the introduction of communicative language teaching. CLT, as it is widely known became prominent due to dissatisfaction with structuralism and situational methods of the 1960s and it got support from Council of Europe (a regional organization for cultural and educational cooperation). CLT pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language. It trains learners not only to produce grammatically accurate statements but also to enable them to make use of language in real-life situations. Language is subject to various situational variables like the context, topic and purpose of conversation, and the relationship between communicators in an interaction.

However, we should keep in mind the intention of the Council of Europe behind promoting CLT. They kept in mind a specified group of adult learners using the languages of Europe to carry out specified tasks which included not only economic and business activities but also recreational and tourist activities. So CLT users must be aware about the various perspectives promulgated and backed by Council of Europe as CLT is used across the world in various situations with adults of different background and needs which necessitates the step of making modifications or fine tuning in order to assimilate CLT in any given academic setting.

Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (2010, 21) use six wh- questions to design and define course design in the following way,
Designing a course is fundamentally a matter of asking questions in order to provide a reasoned basis for the subsequent processes of syllabus design, materials writing, classroom teaching and evaluation.

We need to ask a wide range of questions: general and specific, theoretical and practical. Some of these questions will be answered (at least in part) by research; others will rely more on intuition and experience of the teacher; yet others will call on theoretical models.

Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St John (2011, 145-146) in their book, Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach list and discuss parameters of course design. These are the basic questions we should be asking while designing a course:

1. Should the course be intensive or extensive?
2. Should the learners’ performance be assessed or non-assessed?
3. Should the course deal with immediate needs or with delayed needs?
4. Should the role of the teacher be that of the provider of knowledge and activities, or should it be as a facilitator of activities arising from learners’ expressed wants?
5. Should the course have a broad or narrow focus?
6. Should the course be pre-study or pre-experience or run parallel with study or experience?
9. Should the material be common-core or specific to learners’ study or work?
10. Should the group taking the course be homogeneous or should it be heterogeneous?
11. Should the course design be worked out by the language teacher after consultation with the learners and the institution, or should it be subject to a process of negotiation with the learners?

Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain (2000: 68) explain a curriculum developed on communicative goals:

…a communicative curriculum draws from three major areas: a view of the nature of language as seen by the field of sociolinguistics, a cognitively based view of language learning, and a humanistic approach in education.
2.3 Proficiency

Language proficiency, communicative ability, fluency, language competence are different terms used to explain the language usage skills of users, who use English to convey their thoughts (either written or communicated) about various aspects pertaining to their life, i.e. social, academic or professional in a way that the speaker is able to speak or write what he or she has actually conceptualized in mind and makes the listener understand that without getting the meaning diluted. There needs to be consonance between what one says or writes and what the listener or reader understands in a given situation without any room for ambiguity or misinterpretation.

Hymes (1972: 281) includes language and usage skills as a part of his proposal on ‘communicative competence’. Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2009: 159) cite him in their book *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* to offer a critique on it:

Hymes’s theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. In Hymes’s view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails
Janice Yalden, (1989: 24) explains two concepts of proficiency in her book, *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching* in the following words:

1. The concept of a *standard or generalized* definition of proficiency. It entails the setting of tests by some central body, whether it be a group of teachers, an institution, or an educational authority. It assumes some uniformity in instruction, and also that inputs in the form of items learned. It also means that teachers and those responsible for preparation of curricula and syllabuses can determine the syllabus upon which testing would be based.

2. The concept of *variable definition of proficiency*. It governs an approach in which input is believed to be affected by the learner’s processing before it can turn into output. Preparing a syllabus therefore becomes more complex, as there are several sets of factors (components of communicative competence) to be dealt with, and allowance must be made for variation in the goals and purposes of the learners, as well as for their personal characteristics.

Yalden (1989, 25-26) considers the definition of communicative competence by Savignon (1983: 303) to be the most acceptable and useful:

Politzer and McGroarty refer to “four English language proficiency measures: linguistic competence, auditory comprehension; overall oral proficiency; and communicative competence, conceptualized here primarily as the ability to convey information” (1985: 103). In this view, not only is communicative competence a component of proficiency, but it is very greatly reduced as a concept. In any event, it is not clear how one would convey information verbally without linguistic competence.

Functional language proficiency; the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community (communities), or between one person and a written or oral text.

For Jack Richards (2003: 36) ‘communicative competence’ is
The capacity to use language appropriately in communication based on the setting, the roles of the participants, and the nature of the transaction was referred to as communicative competence.

William Littlewood (2009: 1) believes that

One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view.

Lyle F. Bachman (2003: 83) cites Savignon (1983) to highlight the features characterizing communication:

Dynamic rather than…static…It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons… (It) is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one’s understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind. (Savignon, 1983:8-9)

Needs-analysis also needs to assess the professionally significant aspects apart from language enhancement to make students job-ready. Employability skills need to be intertwined to prepare the 21st century syllabus, which cannot be ignored. All course design orientations, whether ends-means or cyclical do not have the provision to include the requirements of recruiters, who actually absorb the students in employment. Employers’ needs were and are hardly given any importance as the focus revolves around learner-centred or teacher-learner collaborated curriculum.

Jacquelyn P. Robinson (2000) explains the concept of ‘employability’ noting how
Job readiness skills are clustered into three skill sets: basic academic skills, higher order thinking skills, personal qualities.

Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job.

Employers can be consulted in designing a course as they are the ones who would eventually employ students for work. So, it is all the more essential to involve them to sharpen the skills of students, before they join the work-force. It is often observed that employers are dissatisfied with the non-professional approach of students during interviews or group-discussion. This lack of satisfactory performance can be attributed to non-industry based syllabus that students pursue. It is high time that course designers got feedback from employers to understand the actual skills required by candidates to sustain at a work place.

Course designers need to realize that post education students would seek livelihood, which can only be obtained if they have the right set of skills that has currency in the job-market and which appeal the recruiters. Students cannot attain this through self-training and teachers cannot support them entirely and so they need a course that can amalgamate the viewpoints of teachers and the essence of skills required at the work place. The three major stakeholders need to be taken into consideration to design the entire course, which can prepare students to be employable across sectors.

The three-pronged approach that we propose involves setting objectives through careful consideration of students’ needs, teachers’ opinions and employers’
expectations. A single type of syllabus cannot have all the aspects required to implement the essential tasks meant to facilitate learning, which can sustain interest of learners. Additionally, the skill-set that employers expect, necessitates a multi-layered syllabus, which can assimilate interactive activities that can promote learning and motivate participation.

2.4.1 Needs-analysis of students

Following is a tentative checklist-cum-questionnaire for students:

The following checklist aims at eliciting the degree of your agreement or disagreement through the following options.

Following are tentative questions/statements to elicit response of students:

1. Communicative skill in my opinion is ability to………

____________________________________________________________

2. List employment-oriented components that you would like to be trained in

____________________________________________________________

3. How can group work be helpful in language learning?

____________________________________________________________

4. Interactive activities are more interesting because………

____________________________________________________________

5. Tests need to be conducted at regular intervals because………

____________________________________________________________
1) Fully agree 2) Partially agree 3) Cannot say 4) Partially disagree 5) Fully disagree

1. The traditional lecture method needs to be replaced with interactive activities
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

2. Listening activities need to be a regular characteristic of this course
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

3. There needs to be multi-disciplinary approach in choosing reading texts
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

4. Academic writing needs to be focused upon in this course
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

5. Speaking tasks need to be a daily feature of this course
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

6. Group tasks can improve team-work essential at work place
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

7. Tasks that improve our thinking skills need to be included
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)

8. Presentation skills need to be a vital component of this course
   1) 2) 3) 4) 5)
9. There needs to be rigorous tests at regular intervals in this course
   1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

10. Project-work in this course can help us realize our latent potential
    1) □  □  □  □  5) □

2.4.2 Following is a tentative questionnaire to elicit viewpoints and observation of teachers:

1. Please list the possible objectives of this short-term proficiency course.
   ______________________________________________________________

2. Please suggest the kind of content for listening, reading, writing and speaking.
   ______________________________________________________________

3. List employment-oriented components that learners must be trained in.
   ______________________________________________________________

4. How can case-studies and project-work be helpful in grooming students?
   ______________________________________________________________

5. Share your viewpoints on the kind of test/s to be included in this course.
   ______________________________________________________________

6. Communicative ability of students can be improved through……..
   ______________________________________________________________

The following checklist aims at eliciting the degree of your agreement or disagreement through the following options:
1) Fully agree 2) Partially agree 3) Cannot say 4) Partially disagree 5) Fully disagree

1. The traditional lecture method needs to be replaced with interactive activities
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

2. Listening activities need to be a regular characteristic of this course
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

3. There needs to be multi-disciplinary approach in choosing reading texts
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

4. Academic writing needs to be focused upon in this course
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

5. Speaking tasks need to be a daily feature of this course
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

6. Group tasks can improve team-work essential at work place
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

7. Tasks that improve our thinking skills need to be included
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □

8. Presentation skills need to be a vital component of this course
   1) □ 2) □ 3) □ 4) □ 5) □
9. There needs to be rigorous tests at regular intervals in this course
   1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

10. Project-work in this course can help students realize their latent potential
    1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

2.4.3 Following is a tentative questionnaire to elicit expectations of recruiters:

1. A short-term proficiency course is essential at post-graduation because……
   ______________________________________________________________

2. What specific skills would you expect from prospective employees?
   ______________________________________________________________

3. Please list the lacks that you find in the employed professionals.
   ______________________________________________________________

4. What can be the possible areas for project-work in grooming students?
   ______________________________________________________________

5. Which situations demand professionals to communicate in English?
   ______________________________________________________________

The following checklist aims at eliciting the degree of your agreement or
disagreement through the following options:

1) Fully agree  2) Partially agree  3) Cannot say  4) Partially disagree  5) Fully disagree
1. The traditional lecture method needs to be replaced with interactive activities
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

2. Listening activities need to be a regular characteristic of this course
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

3. There needs to be a multi-disciplinary approach in all tasks
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

4. Writing skills need to be developed in this course
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

5. Communicative tasks need to be the cornerstone of this course
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

6. Group tasks can improve team-work essential at work place
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

7. Tasks that improve analytical skills need to be included
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

8. Presentation skills need to be a vital component of this course
   1)  2)  3)  4)  5)

9. Case studies can be useful in promoting discussion among students in this course
10. Project-work in this course can help students realize their hidden abilities

The curriculum that we propose is known as a three-prong approach as it involves setting objectives through analysis of students’ needs, teachers’ opinions and employers’ expectations. In our opinion, analysis of needs is a process of discovery, as it leads us to various unknown requirements of students. A well-crafted questionnaire would help in eliciting these hidden learning desires from students. Though this course is designed for students with their inputs, we want to ensure that the observation of teachers and demands of recruiters are also to be included in framing the objectives so the package of the course is holistic. We also plan to include an interview schedule for all the three stakeholders.

We offer the following figure as the prototype of the three-pronged approach:

(Needs-analysis would be conducted through Quantitative and Qualitative approach)
We believe that an exclusive needs-analysis of students would not precisely help us in designing a watertight course as it may have loopholes and so we have extended purview of needs-analysis to accommodate opinions of teachers and requirements of employers. Teachers’ suggestions are equally significant as they know learners from close quarters and are well-positioned to judge, understand and opine about them. As teachers, they closely observe their 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 mentors given their proximity and experience. Teachers have a knack to judge students in an appropriate manner and have valuable experience to guide students.

Additionally, a crucial contributor to course designing is often overlooked; the recruiter or employer. Employers are the ones with whom students would eventually work and so their requirements and expectations from prospective professionals need to be part of short term proficiency course. This can be effective as candidates would not require any on-job training for which employers may not be ready or have a provision for. When the demands of recruiters are considered, then the matter of language skills for employability comes to the fore. The needs or demands of employers are a major component in the three-prong approach explained above. Recruiters usually consider language-competent candidates as more productive and result-oriented in their tasks as communication is the key for any discussion, presentation, negotiation and even training.

These selected candidates become the image representatives of the company, organization or institution they are working for. Recruiters are ruthless in the selection procedure as they want to select the best and drop the rest. This is a wake-up call for course designers, implementers and teachers in particular and education sector in general. The current students can only survive the onslaught of multiple tasks faced at workplace if they have considerable language skills. They cannot survive at workplace if they are armed only with a degree in hand as it is
one of the criteria to get an interview call but the real litmus test is during their actual work, which has multiple challenges. This is not a onetime activity as a course cannot remain eternally significant and useful for successive batch of students and so an annual upgrading becomes a norm rather than an exception to keep the course in-sync with employer needs.

Needs analysis can be considered as a starting point or a platform for a language course for initiation. It decides the content (what) and methodology (how) of a course. To avoid making a course top-down, needs analysis is an essential prerequisite which also makes it student-oriented. It is a process, which we believe, begins with the collection of data through a well-crafted questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative), interpreting the same and implementing the most common patterns of needs among students.

In short term proficiency course, we plan to amalgamate syllabus types that appeal students through tasks that would motivate them to perform. Preparing such a multi-faceted syllabus framework would demand inclusion of not only one syllabus type but the types which is appropriate as per the outcome of the three-prong approach. A single type of syllabus cannot have all the aspects required to implement the essential tasks meant to facilitate learning. The skill-set that the recruiters expect, necessitates a multi-layered syllabus, which can assimilate interactive activities that can promote learning and motivate participation. A single type syllabus may not appeal all students as it would not cater to their
learning urge and can turn out to be unfruitful. This can also make a course monotonous as it would lack aspects to sustain interest of learners and only learner interest can ensure its successful planning, organizing and execution.

We would like to do away with the traditional lecture method, which makes students merely spectators without any participatory role. We intend to make learners independent and confident by assigning tasks in small groups and giving apt duration for preparation and making a representative speak from each group on a rotational basis. The realization of being contributors in creating a course can go a long way in making a course acceptable and feasible. To assess students’ level at the commencement of the course we would implement a pre-test followed by a mid-test and post course assessment to fine-tune features of this course for the next intake of students and this would ensure a result that is observable in terms of their language improvement.

Students are sometimes informed or trained in conventional needs of employers; i.e. CV or résumé and commonly asked interview questions. All these are only minor needs as it does not address the actual expectations of recruiters, which is varied in nature. This three-prong approach is to avoid a lop-sided course, which may fail in training students in the language skills that they require. We intend to get students needs-analysis done through quantitative and qualitative approach in the form of checklist-cum-questionnaire (CCQ). The same approach would be adopted for teachers and recruiters. The first stage is to administer CCQ to
students, teachers and recruiters to get collective response of all the stakeholders. Interview session is also an integral part of this process.

The second stage is to analyze and interpret the feedback in order to understand the common pattern of needs, opinions and expectations. Followed by this, the objectives for the course need to be framed and based on objectives, relevant content is prepared or selected & graded. At the implementation stage we intend to conduct a pre-test to know the level of students before the initiation of course (it needs to have flexibility to change the content to suit the learning requirements of students), followed by a mid-test to assess their improvement compared to the pre-test level and a post-course test to know their overall performance.

The last stage is to get feedback from every batch from students and teachers, which is used to fine-tune objectives for the new intake of students. Students’ role in course design cannot be neglected anymore as including their implementable viewpoints can polish their latent skills, which would prepare them for the competition ahead. Students realize the demands of recruiters through various channels i.e. interview of employers in print and electronic media, opinion of professionals, parents, teachers and campus recruitment.

This is not a one-off activity as this process needs to be done with every new intake of students as their requirements may vary with the passage of time, so would be teachers’ observation and recruiters’ expectations with changing times
and new market trends. Apart from undertaking the above mentioned practice, course designing also needs to consider aspects like the milieu in which students get trained (a sense of competition among batch mates can encourage learning), their actual purpose to learn English, their priorities in life, their attitude or mindset for learning English and the necessary infrastructure. In such a scenario, teachers can help to unravel the unspoken or suppressed desires and priorities of students through a one-on-one or a group session before finalizing the objectives and content of the course. Students may be aware about their lack and so their contribution cannot be ignored. Teachers too, are in favour of a needs-analysis before implementation of this course as they understand the purpose and the precise juncture at which students are going to get their English improved and so there should not be any room for assumption as the stakes are high.

2.5 Feedback of students and teachers:

Students’ experience during the course is a treasure trove to be explored as they are the ultimate beneficiaries. They would be able to judge the efficacy of the tasks undertaken by them and the change that they observed in their own performance right from the pre-test to post-course test. The feedback questionnaire would elicit information that can reveal strength and weak spot in the course, which can further help us to fine-tune the course for improving the teaching-learning process.

Teachers can play a pivotal role in observing the changes that occur in students
during the entire training phase on the basis of their performance. They would be able to pinpoint the necessary changes to be done in the areas, which needs more attention and pruning. This observation can be useful in creating a course that keeps on improving with every fresh intake; including and maintaining what is effective and excluding items, which are not essential.

This feedback can have a salutary impact on the objectives, content and methodology for the following intake. This is very crucial information as it would be used to improvise the overall framework of syllabus for the next intake of students.

2.5.1 Following is a tentative feedback form for students:

1. Which task did you like the most in the course?
   ______________________________________________________________

2. Which task/s do you think need/s to be included for better language learning?
   ______________________________________________________________

3. Which task was not satisfactory (if any) and why?
   ______________________________________________________________

4. Please mention the change/s that you felt in your overall language usage after pursuing short-term proficiency course.
   ______________________________________________________________

5. How has short-term proficiency increased your job prospects?
   ______________________________________________________________
The following checklist aims at eliciting the degree of your agreement or disagreement through the following options:

1) Fully agree 2) Partially agree 3) Cannot say 4) Partially disagree 5) Fully disagree

1. The objectives of Short-term Proficiency course were achieved
   1  2  3  4  5

2. There were ample listening activities to improve listening skills
   1  2  3  4  5

3. There was variety in terms of reading texts
   1  2  3  4  5

4. Overall written expression improved due to this course
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Communicative ability improved drastically due to this course
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Group tasks enhanced our team-work ability
   1  2  3  4  5

7. This training would increase our employability chances
   1  2  3  4  5

8. This course is helpful in filling the skills gap at a pre-job stage
   1  2  3  4  5
9. The objectives and content were inter-related

   1  2  3  4  5

10. Project-work in this course helped us realize our latent potential

   1  2  3  4  5

2.5.2 Following is a tentative feedback form for teachers:

1. Which task/s do you think attracted maximum participation by students and why?

   ______________________________________________________________

2. What kind of language usage improvement did you notice in students post course?

   ______________________________________________________________

3. Which task did not elicit satisfactory response from the students and why?

   ______________________________________________________________

4. Please mention the strengths of this course

   ______________________________________________________________

5. Please mention the shortcoming/s of this course, if any

   ______________________________________________________________

6. How has short-term proficiency increased job prospects of students?

   ______________________________________________________________

The following checklist aims at eliciting the degree of your agreement or disagreement through the following options:
1) Fully agree 2) Partially agree 3) Cannot say 4) Partially disagree 5) Fully disagree

1. The objectives of Short-term Proficiency course were achieved

2. There were ample listening activities for students to improve their listening skills

3. There was variety in terms of reading texts

4. Overall written expression of students improved due to this course

5. Students’ communicative ability improved drastically due to this course

6. Group tasks enhanced students’ team-work ability

7. This training would increase students’ employability chances

8. This course is helpful in plugging the skills gap that exists among students at PG
9. The objectives and content were inter-related

1  2  3  4  5

10. Project-work in this course helped students to realize their latent potential

1  2  3  4  5

We expect an employer-created syllabus in the future as the current courses do not include components, which would satisfy the expectations of recruiters. Employers want to select candidates, who are professionally prepared to shoulder all the work responsibilities as soon as they are employed, without wasting time in screening tests or on-job training.

Employers would assign universities these courses, which would either be intermingled with the existing courses or run parallel to it. This would end the skills shortage in various sectors and save valuable time of employers training the newly hired employees. Recruiters would specify the necessary skills expected from prospective employees and would arrange a skills assessment test to know whether these candidates are fit into the set criteria or not. This would make the recruitment process streamlined as their relevant skills would be revealed during the test itself and make employers’ task of selecting the right candidate easier and productive.

We have designed a potential course that can be outcome of Three-prong Approach. It has all the elements of student needs, teachers’ observation and
recruiters’ expectations. This course has a careful balance of task and interaction-based learning, presentation, exposure to four language skills, case studies, project-work and analytical skills. We would like to cite Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St John (2011: 162) about designing a course before we propose a course outline:

Coming up with a course design is a dynamic mix of juggling and doing jigsaw puzzles. Juggling because there are a lot of different aspects to keep in mind and keep moving between- the balls a juggler has to keep in the air. Jigsaw puzzles because we are taking different pieces and shifting them around until they fit to make a satisfactory picture.

We plan to run this course from Monday to Thursday; 2 hours a day for 12 weeks. Each module has specific tasks or activities that students would undergo. These modules are not fossilized as it would defeat the purpose of Three-Prong Approach. We have made it a combination of academic and professional skills. Communicative ability, academic writing and presentation are three major areas students would be exposed to and activities would promote understanding of different language skills.

Flexibility in making the necessary changes, whenever and wherever required is the cornerstone of the course. We believe that no course can remain static and so it would evolve with the passage of time even after it is so called ‘finalized’. This happens because the kind of changes and challenges we observe today academically, socially and professionally are unprecedented, which makes it all the more essential for course designers, contributors and implementers to be
sensitive to and able to discern the subtle undercurrents of change that take place without making itself explicit. The teachers, who would train learners in this course, need to have a keen sense to realize and gauge the change in students’ needs and work-place requirements so as to include activities that address these changes.
Notes and References


23. Yalden, Janice, *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*,


33. Nation, I.S.P. and John, *Language curriculum design* Macalister Taylor &