Chapter-4
Analyses and Interpretation

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Teachers’ and Students’ Response pattern:

Any empirical research depends a lot on the data collected for the purpose. As our research deals with preparation and trialling of short-term proficiency courses for post-graduate students in Sardar Patel and Gujarat universities, it was necessary that we collected data from students and teachers alike; the two most important stakeholders in education. Total two sets of questionnaire-cum-checklists were prepared and administered to students and teachers.

We have analyzed the data from students and teachers item by item. Each item in the checklist-cum-questionnaire (CCQ) appended as annexure is taken up for discussion.

The discussed questions and statements are divided into three sections. 4.1 Section (A) discusses items from students’ CCQ (items: 2,4,7,12,14,16,18,21,22,23), 4.2 Section (B) teachers’ CCQ (items: 2,3,5,7,9,11,12,21,22,23,24) and 4.3 Section (C) includes interpretation of questions and statements, administered to teachers and students alike, which are common or similar in terms of the essence of meaning.
4.1 Section (A) Students’ Checklist-Cum-Questionnaire

2) 74% of student respondents believe that their career growth is firmly associated with their capacity to use language. This reveals the strong belief of student community in the inter-relation between language usage and career opportunities. It is a given in today’s highly competitive job market that a candidate must be proficient in English language. Language proficiency is considered a passport to the world of immense chances at local, national and global level. Globalization has created immense job opportunities and necessitated the need of professionals, who are proficient in English. Students should reap the benefits of globalization through the link-language English.

The significance of proficiency in English is spread across various sectors and nations and hence David Graddol (2006, 35) in his book *English Next* states,

One recent estimate suggests that over 20,000 American school children now receive e-tutoring support from India. This is an evidence of youngsters, who made optimum use of their language-skills to get selected and employed. They work either from the comfort of their homes or in a supportive professional environment. They provide this e-training service from across the country and it is not concentrated at one place, which further corroborates the fact that anyone equipped with proficiency in English can get employment. Moreover, outsourcing seems to be the most viable option for
employers for being cost-effective. Significance of English is highlighted by Nandan Nilekani (2008, 94-95) by explaining its benefits in the BPO industry,

In the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector in particular, over 65 percent of jobs are defined as voice-based jobs, and English language proficiency is the main requirement for these companies.

Recruiters in any sector expect and even make language proficiency in English as an eligibility criterion for selection of candidates. Employers do not believe in investing time to train prospective employees and so wish to employ job-ready professionals, in which communication skills is a crucial component apart from efficiency, work ethics and critical thinking. Before they join the workforce students are supposed to be well-equipped to use language effectively. Training in language proficiency needs to be implemented on war-footing, which can enable students to gain a firm foothold in their profession.

Educational institutions play the role of a catalyst as they are a bridge between students’ skill development and industry needs. These two aspects need to be interlocked as it would be a win-win situation for both. It is high time that industry experts are consulted in creating, upgrading and implementing a course to convert students into professionals before they actually start working in any sector. In such industry consulted courses a major focus is on language aspect as it is a skill, which they need to exhibit at various junctures of their pre and post
work; facing interviews, participating in group discussion, presenting views on a given topic, presentation, report-writing, minutes making, interacting with global clients or colleagues, negotiating.

The trinity of industry-university-course need to be strengthened and utilized for nation-building through students’ language skill development, which plays a pivotal role in making India an attractive investment hub and turn helps in nation-building. Investors favour destinations, where they can get a pool of well-trained people, specifically candidates, who are proficient in English as they need to interact with colleagues or cater to customers across the globe.

4) Two statements were presented to students: (a) a proficiency course would make us realize our lack in any area of four language skills and improve the same support and (b) it is fruitful to undergo such training before entering the job market. 24% students opted (a), 26% (b) and 46% students chose the option; both (a) and (b) which further emphasizes the readiness of students to undergo a rigorous training to deserve appropriate placements. One of the objectives of this course is, “To assimilate the four language skills at post-graduate level following and adapted form of the IELTS model to satisfy anticipated needs of our students”.

We believe that this is an essential step in plugging the gap in four language skills, without which the communication process is incomplete. The regular subjects that
they study do not address their lack of communication skills and so a proficiency course is need of the hour, which provides necessary language training after a thorough needs-analysis. This course, we believe, is going to be a game-changer as it can prepare students to face competition at any level or stage. There would be an unprecedented interest in this course as students are one of the contributors in designing this course, which identifies their lack and solves it.

Students usually do not receive any training in four language skills either during their PG as a result of which they are not at par with their global counterparts in language usage or confident enough to apply for a job opening post education. Every student has lack in some or the other language skill and so they want to fulfil that shortcoming/s and join the work-force and avoid any professional setbacks in future. Our effort is to provide them comprehensive language training so as to improve their adaptability and prepare them to face the unexpected.

Students understand the significance of pre-job language training as it can make their career graph move upward and would open doors of opportunities in various sectors. With competitiveness increasing with the passage of time and employers being non-compromising on the employee quality front, prospective employees need to be aligned to market needs or else they may fade into insignificance. Lack of language proficiency would be difficult to hide at the interview stage itself and even if a candidate gets selected he/she may soon be identified as the odd one out among other skilful users of language.
Interview process is more or less meant to separate wheat from the chaff during various evaluative stages during which candidates need to answer and prove themselves on various fronts. They need to convey in English; knowledge of their subject-area, vision in life, interests and may need to participate in group discussion, make presentation, take writing and reading tests, which checks their language expression and understanding power respectively.

The current screening procedures for candidate selection is stringent and do not have any room for compromise from the employers’ side and so the inevitability of a short-term proficiency course is well-established. This pre-job language training not only helps them to get a well-paid job but they can be self-employed as well, if their language is up to the mark. Proficiency in English can also open new avenues for them in the form of online jobs, domestically and internationally.

7) 61 % student respondents believe that, short-term proficiency courses should be mandatory for all PG students. This response may be attributed to the fact that 85% of students study through vernacular medium. These large numbers of students often compare themselves to English medium students and consider them superior and get demotivated. As a matter of fact, English is not a prerogative of a community, group or a segment of people but it belongs to one who uses it. These students may also have come across uncomfortable language situations, where they were not able to respond or perform as expected. This would have instilled a
deep-rooted fear in them to learn, participate or contribute in English. The fear-factor in them cannot be removed if they are allowed to decide, whether to pursue the course or not but it needs to be understood that this language fear is dispelled once they undergo a rigorous course, which is mandatory by nature.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that these students may often achieve higher percentage in exams than their English medium counterparts. However, they usually lag behind in the communicative aspect of the language, which is a concern that they would like to get addressed through a mechanism of compulsory course as it would not only satisfy their language need but also would save them a lot of embarrassment post education. The word ‘mandatory’ does not have a negative connotation of a dictatorial approach as it is meant for students’ improvement and involves their equal contribution in getting the course prepared. Many may not be able to convince themselves to pursue such a course but if they are made to pursue it, they would surely be better in their language usage and may realize its far-reaching benefit post-course. This is more or less like parents trying to make their children study even if they do not want to.

If it is a voluntary course, then it would provide an escape route for students, who are reeling under the phobia of learning English, given any awkward or embarrassing experience they had in the past. Students may also consider it non-essential training if it is optional and would distance themselves from the same, which will not serve the purpose. It cannot be considered as a top-down approach
as students too are consulted and needs-analysis conducted which reflects their viewpoint, suggestions and expectations helpful in melding a course with them being significant contributors.

The compulsory nature of the course is an attempt to have language-proficient work-force in various professions and so to avoid flooding the job-market with unprepared professionals. It would provide them a platform to perform and a chance to prove themselves, which they could not do in the past. The aspect of language-skills has not been prioritized or given any due prominence during this crucial transition in which they get transformed from students to professionals by default. The lack of proficiency can only be addressed if the course is not optional because then it would not serve the purpose of preparing market-ready candidates. They expect a comprehensive language training that can plug the loopholes in four language skills. They are aware of their own lack in language usage and have a hidden wish to get their English improved. From a psychological point of view, as grown-ups they are hesitant to reveal their feeling of inferiority as it would mean allowing access to their inner world, which they guard at any cost. Being participants in this course gives them a chance to open-up and make the most out of the course.

12) 75% students agree that, Short-Term proficiency course would get a clear direction with a needs analysis, as it would help meeting students’ language needs. This course aims to have a laser focus on students’ language needs, so that we do
not miss any important component that they are weak in. The words ‘clear direction’, in our opinion, falls in the realm of or associated with ESP; English for Specific Purposes, as it indicates understanding the requirements of students through needs analysis. Needs analysis forms the cornerstone of ESP and has a far-reaching impact in designing a course. In fact, the last few decades have witnessed many “varieties” of ESPs, which have mushroomed to define specific courses meant for people from a spectrum of different sectors and purposes. Needs-analysis is a reliable tool to assess and realize their suppressed feelings or desires to develop language skills that they lack.

The course that we are planning to design is based on the premise of needs analysis, primarily of students, recruiters and observation of teachers. In our opinion, analysis of needs is a process of discovery, as it leads us to various unknown demands of students. A well-crafted questionnaire may help in eliciting these hidden learning desires from students, when posed with specific questions or statements. Though this course is designed for students with their inputs, we want to ensure that the observation and viewpoints of teachers and demands of recruiters are also to be included in framing the objectives so the package of the course is holistic.

However, a course purely based or designed through student feedback may miss some crucial points as they are neither keen observers like their teachers nor aware of precise expectations of recruiters. We plan to make this course one of its
kind, which is firmly rooted in, what we call learning-teaching-market reality. This combination would create a course that can enhance students overall performance as it has three vital contributors. This three-prong approach can hit the bull’s eye and help us design a need-satisfying course with clearly laid objectives, which would facilitate learning and motivate students to improve language skills.

By the time students complete their PG, they have a growing sense to achieve job-security for which they need to undergo a screening process, which can materialize their dreams. In this scenario they need a course that is in-tune with their needs and market requirements. Students also need to realize that PG is the last juncture, where they may have ample time to focus on the training received and do rigorous work in order to get long-lasting professional benefit. Hence, instead of experimenting with variety of methods and achieving no fruitful outcome, we can create a provision to run a parallel proficiency course to help students at the right stage.

14) 67% students agree that, an intensive field-work involving public and private institutes would give them ample insights into the reach, usefulness and power of language in securing a job. It is believed that first-hand experience has a far-reaching impact on a person’s understanding about any particular scenario. An intensive field-work in public and private institutes is a kind of internship, meant to give the necessary exposure in language usage, its inevitability and deficiency
in these sectors. The rationale behind this step is to immerse students in day to day situations, where language has a crucial role to play in getting work done in several institutes, organizations or companies. They can observe and rub shoulders with professionals at different levels, who undertake different tasks which involve language usage.

The word intensive field-work suggests the activities or responsibilities that students have to perform or shoulder for which they are accountable. The angle of accountability is a crucial one as it helps prospective employees to get an actual outlook into the work done. Given the kind of challenges awaiting them at workplace they are expected to be pre-trained in the pressure they would experience to avoid any unexpected shock. Both public and private establishments are taken into consideration as students may work in either of these and so are supposed to know the significance of English. Moreover, when they refer to any advertisement of job for any field, either in print or electronic media, it highlights a conspicuous eligibility criterion, which states that an applicant needs to be fluent in English.

Usually, students are completely unaware or ignorant about the kind of language skills they need at a work-place and so such an intensive training would help them at least to be prepared psychologically and language-wise. The reach of English language would be evident to them as they may observe how there are no boundaries for communication due to advanced technologies available. In the 21st century work-place communication is not inter-departmental, as was the case
before the advent of widespread technological use. Presently, a company, institution or organization may have a branch or a sister concern in other geographical region or continent, where the language to convey and receive information is only English.

An employed professional may have to deal with varied language situation on daily basis, where he/she has to talk to a colleagues based in a different country, negotiate or discuss with client/s about their requirements or complaints, exchange e-mails with their counterparts asking to give feedback or guidance about a project or upcoming events, arrange for a webinar, sending newsletters to concerned people, arranging conferences or seminars and participating in a paper presentation. These situations can be managed professionally only if a person is proficient in all the four language skills and students get the required motivation and purpose to learn them if they are exposed to the work done by professionals through an intensive training. If a student can be prepared to balance all this pressure through an intensive training and course, then we think he/she can benefit in the long run.

16) 65 % students agree that, an annual upgrading of short term proficiency course is important to align needs of every new intake of students. To prove the significance of annual upgrading of this course, we would like to explain it through the Japanese concept of Kaizen. Josh Kaufman (2011, 145) in his book *the personal MBA* mentions,
According to *Lean Thinking* by James P. Womack and Daniel T. Jones, Toyota’s approach is based on the Japanese concept of Kaizen, which emphasizes the continual improvement of a system by eliminating muda (waste) via a lot of very small changes. Many small improvements, consistently implemented, inevitably produce huge results.

This is also true for any course meant for the improvement of students’ skills. It needs upgrading at regular intervals to avoid monotony and add value plus interest through incremental additions of recent developments in that field. Annually, various changes take place in a particular field and so students need to be kept abreast of all these developments to upgrade their skills and knowledge as they would face a globalised work-place, where latest aspects are in vogue.

We often observe in various streams that for couple of years the same syllabus is maintained without inclusion of changing trends or practices because of which it fails to strike a chord among students and it also does not take into consideration students’ requirement. Furthermore, such courses are top-down and theoretical in nature, whereas an activity-based approach proves productive and enhances the understanding of students. Upgrading a course would help short term proficiency course to move from strength to strength. If no required changes are undertaken then the course would become a run-of-the-mill routine, which may disinterest students. For example, many companies conduct regular training sessions to
upgrade knowledge of their employees and make them capable to handle work pressure effectively.


Syllabi will have to be revised rapidly to keep pace with changes in the world. Rote learning, the bane of the Indian higher education system, has to give way to a problem-solving orientation.

A fossilized course has no scope for improvement as it has no provision for any upgraded or significant aspects of needed in a profession. Such unchanging courses become stereotype, ineffective and unpopular among students compelling them to find other options to learn and polish their skills needed to sustain professionally. For instance, if after conducting tests of four language skills, it is found that the test content is either too difficult or easy then it is supposed to be modified in a way that assesses their actual performance. Apart from this problem-solving activities must also be part of the course to improve their thinking skills.

As change is a permanent feature of teaching-learning process, annual upgrading becomes an essential feature of this course. Necessary items need to be included otherwise the course would become stagnant and stop being fruitful. Upgrading a
course is equal to re-inventing the same for better participation and outcome or else it may take a backseat in students’ priority list. In order to maintain or encourage student participation, addition of interesting aspects and deletion of non-productive components are needed. After conducting needs-analysis and implementing short term proficiency course, it cannot be neglected and considered a one-off activity as a lot of changes may take place in a year. By the time new intake of students pursue this course in the next semester or year the course may have some outdated items, which may be unnecessary. Keeping the same course objectives and content for years together may make students lose interest in that course as it may not have segments that are useful to them in their professional life.

In the current globalised scenario only change is a permanent feature, whether it is on professional, social or academic front. Unlike the past, when change was an almost unknown phenomenon, it has now become conspicuous by its absence. Almost all aspects of our life have undergone a sea change and different professions are no exception. With the increased industrialization, especially in developing nations, the range of job responsibilities are not limited to students’ specific field as they are supposed to do multi-tasking, when necessary at the work place.

18) 74% of students believe that getting feedback from employers on those already recruited can further help us to make short-term proficiency course
Employers can be considered as a driving force to design or modify a short-term proficiency course as they amalgamate well-trained candidates into the workforce. Their outlook and suggestions are filtered and perfected through their experience of recruiting scores of candidates and observing them work under them in different circumstances.

To make the course effective, recruiters’ contribution is equally important along with teachers and students. Their perspective may be sharper and better than teacher or students as they want employees to strive for perfection in case of work performed and so are not ready to compromise on any front. This performance – oriented expectation from recruiters would help course designers to frame specific course objectives in-tune with market needs.

Employability-quotient of students improves with the crucial step of employer feedback as they inter-mingle with candidates during variety of work and so are well-positioned to air their views. We plan to involve employers/recruiters in designing this course to keep the objectives industry or profession-oriented to sustain the interest among students. Usually, employers’ opinions and expectations are not taken into consideration when formulating objectives and selecting content for the course. We would like to reverse this trend and elicit valuable information from them to create a course that actually bridges the gap between industry needs and students’ skills.
Employers can be major contributors in constructing a course as they are the ones under whom students would work and flourish. So, it is plain common sense to involve them to strengthen skills of students, before they join the work-force. It is often observed or learnt that employers are not satisfied with the kind of lacklustre performance of students during interviews, group-discussion and skills test. This lack of satisfactory performance can be attributed to non-industry based syllabus that students pursue. Employment is the last stage, where prospective employees reach after various stages of education and so at PG level, students need to be trained in four language skills to avoid being misfits in the professional arena.

Nandan Nilekani (2008, 49) in his book, Imagining India, mentions that,

Particular kinds of population growth could dramatically drive the country’s growth, not impede it as economists used to believe. David called this effect the ‘demographic dividend’, a phrase that has quickly caught on. When demographers went back and looked at previous periods of sustained economic growth from Europe to the United States to Asia, they found that they coincided time and again with similar patterns of large numbers of young people.

We have a very young work-force and would continue to have it for the coming few decades and so it is the responsibility of course designers and implementers to utilize the advantage that India has over other countries by supplying competent
professionals for the industry. It is true that English language is the door of opportunities and knowledge of the world, which in turn would help our youth to contribute in the growth of Indian economy. Our youth does not lack on any front except English language skills. It can be made their strength if we take a no nonsense approach to train them by developing a course with employers assistance. It can be a win-win situation for students and employers alike.

21) Successful language learning also depends on the kind of content taught and the way it is modified and implemented for appropriate learning. In this item students were supposed to choose from five options, namely a) Grammar, b) Vocabulary, c) English Literature, d) All three (a, b, c) and e) None of the above. 61% of student respondents chose the option ‘all three’. This, we believe, is a natural response as all the three are closely related to one another. This combination can be considered as ideal pillars to learn language in a particular situation, especially for students those who have opted English literature as their main subject. English literature can become an important component to train students as it can be a medium to teach grammar and vocabulary. Usually, students understand the taught text or literary work very well but are not able to express themselves convincingly.

As per our experience, the first common reason that they cite, due to which they are unable to express themselves is their inability to use the right words for expression (either they are aware of words but are not confident of using them as
they may not have got or given chance to utilize these during their study or they have not learnt ample and apt words that can be used in an academic context). The second reason, in their opinion, is their lack of clarity about grammar and its usage. Most of the students who hold this opinion about grammar have tried learning structures in grammar through mechanical tasks. The structures that they learn through repetitive activities do not assist them at all as the language situations in life and work are unpredictable.

The incapacity to express themselves in various situations instils in them an unfounded phobia of language usage and makes them believe that their previous language learning had no value. In order to learn language, tasks must be developed around the text and need to have hidden components of vocabulary and grammar. Learners must get or be given sufficient opportunity to discuss about the text in small groups and asked to present their views verbally and in written format. This would surely be a confidence-booster and can help them learn the language even without the feeling of diffidence.

However, this combination or factors may change completely with the change in stream as their requirements and specialization would vary with learners of a different field. An important point to be kept in mind is that grammar and vocabulary are essential aspects irrespective of the field and need to be taught in an implicit manner. Grammar lays the foundation of any language and vocabulary helps a speaker to convey meaning in an appropriate manner and context. When
we say teaching in an implicit manner, it means, the content of grammar and vocabulary need to be intertwined with the pertinent text or content of that particular subject-area to maintain interest among learners. Grammar and vocabulary cannot be learnt in isolation as they are indivisible elements in any area of study.

22) This item asked students’ opinion about the necessity of the chosen response in item 21. Out of numerous responses, we have chosen the ones, which compose the majority.

1. Grammar, vocabulary and English literature are useful in language learning.

2. All the three are very useful as we can learn writing, understand anything and are very useful in our future to get a job.

3. These three are essential to strengthen the foundation of any subject. (Translated from Gujarati)

4. The teaching process can be facilitated easily by including these three. (Translated from Gujarati)

5. Our overall English can improve and fluency can be developed. (Translated from Gujarati)

6. These are closely related with each other and so help in language learning at a better level.

7. Grammar is important to speak, read and write. When we speak, we need vocabulary and English literature.
8. All three are indeed important for improving language learning. If anyone is not taken care of then it would affect us.

9. It is necessary to ensure consistent language exposure for improvement.

10. Language should be taught keeping in mind all aspects to develop complete competence in English.

Many students wrote their response in Guajarati language, which speaks volumes of the kind of lack they have in their language proficiency, in spite of pursuing their graduation in English.

23) The source of content for the short term proficiency course is of significant interest, which needs careful consideration as it decides the learning effectiveness of students. Respondents were asked to opt from 5 options, namely a) English Literature, b) Current affairs, c) IELTS and TOEFL books, d) None of the above and e) If any other, please specify. For a), b) and c) the percentage was 32%, 30% and 31% respectively. No single source in its entirety can be depended upon to extract content for the course. So we believe that the blend of the three is essential to get a comprehensive content necessary to sustain interest and boost learning. The combined percentage of a, b and c is 93%, which is an evidence of the reliability and inclusive nature of these sources.

Sources are very essential aspect of any language course as it can attract learners to involve in variety of tasks. The traditional approach has been to prescribe texts related to the subject area without any focus on language learning. In our opinion,
students those who opt for English literature can learn language if it is combined with other two options and tasks are created around them. We believe that students face difficulty in understanding literature because they may not be able to realize the extensive usage of language aspects included in it. By making literature as one of the sources for language learning we wish to make their learning experience interesting. Language learning through their subject specialization can sustain their focus in gaining command over language.

Usually, learners are made to learn English language through specifically created exercises or tasks, which does not take into consideration their main subject and so there is a gap between what they learn and what they need to be skilful at. Their main subject is something that they study inevitably and if at the same time language learning is made an important component then that would help them post-study. We want them to discuss the text’s salient features in a group, write a summary of the same and make presentation on the content learnt and discussed. This can have a positive impact on the overall psyche of students as they would feel empowered and satisfied.

We also consider current affairs as a useful tool to train students in language aspects, which would make it informative and equally motivating. Technology has played a pivotal role in disseminating information at a tremendous pace and uniformity. The current student community is well-informed about various issues and elements of the society compared to their counterparts in the previous decade.
The point that we are trying to drive home is that language learning can be intermingled with any recent news that is non-controversial in nature to train students. This we believe can enhance their understanding in terms of four language skills. Students can relate to the news story with ease as they are exposed to it either through print or electronic media and we wish to utilize this opportunity for their learning. We would like students to come up with their own chosen news story that they would discuss with their fellow batch mates and draw conclusions. They would also be supposed to highlight the frequently used words (what we call ‘register’ in technical terms) in a particular genre of news and share with their counterparts. These exercises are meant to instil a sense of awareness in them about language and provide them a starting point or platform to perform.

The third front, IELTS and TOEFL books, can be a rich source for language learning. These tests include four language skills meant for students going abroad, either for further studies or permanent settlement. We do not intend to implement it in an ‘as it is’ manner as it would may not interest students. We would like to customize it as per the needs of students after needs- analysis. We plan to include a modified version of these tests to sustain interest of students and enhance learning. Modified version simply means to extract content from their main subject and mould it suit their needs.

**4.2 Section (B) Teachers’ Checklist-Cum-Questionnaire**
2) Teaching grammar to students have been an academically over discussed and a controversial matter. Fortunately, there is no widespread consensus in the teaching fraternity to have a course with a primary focus on grammar. Grammar is considered by many teachers as too holy an element that cannot be avoided in language teaching and needs to be taught to make learners understand the ‘structures’ of English language to strengthen their ‘foundation’. This mindset is prevalent not only among teachers but also course designers, who believe that expertise in grammatical forms is the base of language learning. Grammar-translation method was pre-dominant in language teaching from mid 19th to mid 20th century and has still occupied a considerable mind space of many teachers.

This attitude must undergo a sea change to usher in a new wave of language teaching that actually enables students to interact confidently, understand clearly and think critically. Teaching and learning cannot be put in a mould of any method that is inflexible and has no provision to include the needs of students and requirement of employers. The way ahead is to give due consideration to students’ potential and make them realize it through tasks, which can expose them to grammatical aspects, interspersed in the assigned activities. The traditional way of learning English would not cut much ice with students as they have now become conscious and active in demanding a course that can make them employable and improve their thinking skills.

45% teachers chose the option ‘the course is not grammatically sequenced but the
grammatical points are explicitly taught as they arise’. To avoid the monotony of learning grammar explicitly, we need to train them in the same as and when they require assistance. Beginning a course by teaching grammar can demoralize students as they would not be psychologically ready to get trained in such an element of language that can be tedious and sometimes phobic as many students were trained in the same traditional manner most probably at school and were not successful in either understanding it or using it in communicative situations. There needs to be a paradigm shift in the way we train learners in English because a traditional approach may prove to be irrelevant for their learning attitude and requirements. We are not anti-grammar but we think that the method to tackle it must change so as to sustain learners’ interest and promote learning. However, 36% respondents believe that ‘the course is grammatically sequenced and the grammatical points are explicitly taught’. This response seems to be a hangover of the ‘structural mindset’ that still prevails among many teachers, who wish to pass on this unhealthy tradition of ‘drills’ to next generation.

3) A useful output of short-term proficiency course is only possible if the inputs are made carefully, when the course begins. Implementation must enthuse learners to participate and learn from the process of learning. It is essential to have a clear set of objectives in a course, which needs to be prepared after three-prong needs analysis to enhance the employment quotient of students. Every batch of students have altogether different expectations, level of confidence, type of awareness about language, inclination and purposes to learn. These all aspects can only be
understood and utilized after needs analysis. In this regard, 51% teachers believe that, “Recurrent learner types should be identified to prepare general course outlines, which can be utilized with successive intakes of students”. On the other hand, 49% teachers believe that, “Treating each intake of learners as unique and to construct a program anew from the ground up, as it were for each group”. It is more or less a split verdict for these options, which slightly tilts towards preparation of general course outlines for recurrent learner types meant for successive intakes of students. We believe that learner types can be recognized only to a limited extent as it is quiet complicated to decide or perceive these types as there are no clear definitions or juncture from where a particular learner type begins and ends. There can be as many learner types as there are students in a batch.

We do respect teachers’ response but this opinion may be motivated due to years of conditioning that they have undergone in terms of implementing the same course year in year out. They start believing that learners can be compartmentalized into certain categories and the courses meant for them can be used by identifying learner types. Particularly in our teaching-learning context, where number of students range from 50 to 80 makes it difficult to identify specific student types. Even if we identify some learner types, we can cater to the needs of a limited few in a batch, which cannot serve the purpose short term proficiency course as it would become a lopsided course. Recognition of certain learner types would make it a fossilized course and may not assimilate widespread
changes taking place around us, which directly or indirectly influence the course.

To manage the fluidity and diversity that we experience and observe in teaching-learning, we need to devise strategies and course objectives that can focus on interactive training for each intake of learners without depending on course outlines of previous batch. R. Bruce Williams (2003, 38) in his book titled, Higher Order Thinking Skills: Challenging All Students to Achieve, cites Gardner (1999, 217) to explain diversity in our life;

We now live in a global village, with rapid change and constant contact with thousands of others. The more experiences we have, the more media we are exposed to, the more people we interact with, the greater the differences that are likely to emerge. Diversity is the order of the millennium

These changes are so constant that permanent course outlines may not cover aspects of the changing world in general and work-place in particular. For instance, various approaches have shown their presence and utility for a limited time before being replaced by a more holistic and effective approach as per the changing demands in the field of language teaching. The tool of needs analysis can be employed at the initiation of the course so as to frame course objectives in sync with student needs, teachers’ viewpoints and work-place requirements. This is to ensure that we are not missing any significant aspect that students need to
engage in.

5) Teachers have a rich pool of experience teaching different batches of students with a variety of needs and interests. Their viewpoints are not raw but are perfected with the experience they gained from training heterogeneous groups. They have faced innumerable challenging language teaching situations in which they were supposed to innovate, modify or adapt to keep pace with the ever changing world. We would compare their position with a watchtower, which helps to have a comprehensive view with the situation at hand. This creates a situation in which they can make valuable judgment and prediction about student requirement, weakness and strength. Apart from this, several teachers also undergo professional training in teaching, which prepares them to handle and understand various academic situations.

90% of teacher respondents believe that their academic experience can significantly contribute in designing a holistic short-term proficiency course. This response exhibits the significance that teachers attribute to their feedback and active involvement in designing a course. We have considered their role to be vital because of which they are a major contributors in the three prong approach. Teachers know the necessity and urgency of such a course as students do not stand a chance without being proficient in English. A training of this kind would ensure at least a job in any sector in this recessionary time.
Traditionally, students preferred jobs in their respective fields as it was considered a norm and there was availability of jobs. This situation changed with widespread globalization in all fields, due to which many avenues were created in various fields, which needed language proficient candidates. Teachers are aware of this paradigm shift at the workplace and so believe that such a course is essential.

Teachers are aware about this aspect of students work related skills and they also realize the needs of a diverse work-place, which considers language proficiency as a priority. Teachers know the attitude of recruiters and their knack of choosing candidates, i.e. employers give consideration chiefly to applicants, who have sound knowledge of their field and are essentially proficient in language. Many candidates, whom they interview, do have awareness about their subject specialization but are unable to convey the same in the form of language expression. Teachers being interviewers, many times, witness the same scenario while choosing candidates.

Employers, sometimes, give their feedback to teachers about their dilemma in selecting candidates. In a scenario where there is already cut-throat competition in job market, getting selected purely depends on that extra edge of proficiency that a candidate has over others. It can be a deciding factor, when there is uniformity among applicants in terms of profile and knowledge of a given subject. The current work place has multi-layered responsibilities and tasks to be executed as a result of which, employers look for people who are multi-skilled and can perform
a range of activities. These tasks may involve administrative work, coordinating with other counterparts, event management, leading a group, members in various committees, conducting or attending training programs, preparing formal speeches, writing research papers or submitting reports. These all activities require a candidate to be proficient in language due to which teachers believe that they can be facilitators. Teachers can act as a bridge between students and recruiters by sharing their observation with course designers and help shape a comprehensive proficiency course.

7) Adopting and adapting IELTS and TOEFL would be helpful only if essential changes are made to the short term proficiency course basically based on needs analysis of students as they would be the actual beneficiaries. These changes need to be implementable and effective for student learning or else entire effort would be futile. These tests are widely used in various countries to check the proficiency of students, either planning to study or settle in a foreign country. We are supposed to make contextual changes as cosmetic alterations would be short-lived, inefficient and make students hesitant about participating in any tasks as they would soon realize the superficial adjustments. Though these tests are based on global standards, we need to do, what we call ‘contextualized restructuring’, which means to make changes in the kind of content, difficulty level of content, duration of activities, variety, which promote language learning and learner participation.
It is essential to create a platform for the students to perform through the right kind of course, which encourage students to participate willingly in the assigned tasks. Usually, courses do not take into consideration students’ requirements, though it is supposed to be the starting point of any course, especially a language course. In spite of students being the epicentre of any learning process, they are not consulted for their views or opinions about their expectations or needs. We believe that this situation is gradually changing as the CELT program implemented for MPhil and PhD students proved. This program was based on their needs, though there were some pre-determined objectives for training them in academic writing and presentation skills. This was a 60 hour, six week; 4 credit training course. In the initial week we interacted with the learner-researcher to know their views and expectations from the course. It was these insights that guided the future course of action for the training. In the following days, we made them speak on some general topics in the first hour of the two hour session in a day. This proved to be a successful move, as they responded positively and participated. We felt as if they were just waiting to grab an opportunity they had never had earlier. They also did activities in small groups and presented their views confidently. This gradual shift in their attitude was a useful food for thought for us. Their performance was evidence that the catered needs of learners motivated active response from them.

The point that we are trying to drive home is that students need a stage to perform through interactive activities. These tasks need to be carefully chosen and
implemented for a fruitful outcome. 82% teacher respondents believe that, when adopting these models, care should be taken to make Short term proficiency course compatible with student needs. Such a course must be interesting and interactive for language learning and so ‘contextualized restructuring’ or compatibility with student requirements becomes essential. The compatibility factor is the element of change that needs to be managed in teaching-learning scenario to motivate students and innovate at the same time to break the monotony of non-interactive and lecture method in the class. Change has become an inevitable aspect of any field and language courses need to amalgamate activities that make students perform the most and making teachers facilitators.

However, 18% teachers thought that the change ‘may be helpful’. This doubtful approach must change, so as to accept the flow of change, manage, utilize and channelize it for student learning. It also needs to be understood that this percentage of not-so-sure teachers is a part of limited number of respondents, so it can be interpreted that this number is much higher, when entire teaching fraternity is taken into consideration. Not only that, but the teachers, who opted for ‘yes’ may have done so to hide their disagreement and sound optimist. We need to be cautious of this sensitive matter pertaining to student learning. We do not intend to criticize teachers but believe that change can only be managed by changing our collective outlook in training students for a challenging work-place scenario and to achieve this goal we need to focus on ‘contextualized restructuring’ as mentioned earlier. Fine-tuning test models is essential to gain and sustain student
attention and avoid any friction in the implementation and functioning of this course.

9) We received a scattered response for the question, ‘Towards which language skill do you find students more inclined?’ 27% teacher respondents believe that students are interested in listening. It is quite natural to ask how teachers realized this fact, as more or less there is no listening component during PG. The percentage of teachers who chose speaking was a meagre 16%, which is abysmally low. Surprisingly, only 10%, 27% and 20% teachers thought that students were interested in Reading, Writing and All the four respectively. These percentages are a wake-up call for the teaching fraternity, as, if this data is to be believed, the students’ four language skills need urgent attention. This percentage is too less and so it necessitates a proficiency course in order to fill this skills gap. This course needs to be holistic in its design and implementation, which includes tasks that can promote participation, improve students’ thinking skills and prepares them for a professional role. The conventional courses do not prepare them for all these and so a proficiency course can play this role.

The regular teaching scenario may not have provision to include training of these skills but we need to develop a system in which a proficiency course can be run parallel to the regular course that they pursue. The percentage above reveals the passive involvement of students in education. We need to transform this inactive approach of learners to an active one by creating language learning tasks that can
sustain their curiosity throughout the course. The paper degrees with which students pass out do not command much value unless they are able to prove their worth by translating their know-how of their subject in English. Communicating ones thoughts in English can go a long way in convincing interviewers about their capability to adapt to any given situation once employed.

The inclination of students for language skills seems to be inadequate and hence unsatisfactory, which speaks volumes about the lack of essential training and exposure that they must have received. This kind of academic situation must change if we want students to be capable of attaining not only job in their own field but also in other sectors. These skills can no more be considered ‘optional’ as it has become inevitable and valuable for overall professional performance. A course that can cater to their language needs is very crucial at this point of their education as the next phase of their life would be a professionally challenging one. The day to day workplace targets do not leave any room for language leaning and moreover, recruiters are shrewd enough to select candidates with appropriate language skills so as to avoid on-job training, which may not be practical in all situations.

The lukewarm interest among learners can also be due to a non-interactive teaching-learning environment, which must undergo a drastic change, so as to facilitate language learning and not make it seem as a holy grail. Along with the usual syllabus, tasks which motivate learners to involve themselves in improving
language must also be included. Students can only develop interest in language if they are exposed to all four skills at regular intervals and assessment is done to measure their understanding.

11) English is aptly considered as a link language as it has presence across a spectrum of fields. This language enables users to access knowledge of different subjects, cultures and countries. Inter-disciplinary study has become possible and interesting only due to English language proficiency. Short term proficiency course would generate interest among learners to improve their current level of English. We believe, this would also help them realize that their understanding of other areas of knowledge. During their PG, students often limit their study to the prescribed syllabus as they lack the necessary or adequate language skills to extend their curiosity to other sources of knowledge. This trend of limitation would end with the implementation of this course as it would train and motivate students so as to face the competitive job-market and make them confident to venture out of their comfort zone and explore new areas of interest.

75% teacher respondents are of the opinion that this course would not only generate interest among learners in language but also expand their comprehension of other subjects, which they study. Even teachers are aware of the ground reality and want students to be able to realize their latent potential through the medium of language. Learners may lack interest in learning a language due to innumerable factors. It can range from lack of motivation, opportunity, training, interactive
activities, awareness of its reach, to a non-appropriate syllabus construction, which does not take into consideration their current short-comings and future needs. This course aims to fill the vacuum that is existent between the course that they study and their needs aligned with future work-place requirements. This course would effectively play the role of a bridge and create a useful platform to learners. In these changing times, the course objectives must match the context and student requirements. The expectations of employers have increased multifold over the last few years and so they are not ready to recruit candidates who are not multi-talented. Students can only be multi-skilled if they can read and understand relevant books and concepts in English and communicate about it convincingly.

An example in context is the feedback that we got during CELT program from research scholars from Gujarati stream. They were enthusiastic to learn English as they wanted to know the different viewpoints in the western world in the area of their research. They admitted that it would empower them to read, understand and grasp concepts in English itself rather than translation, which may not reflect the actual meaning what the original author meant. These few students’ viewpoints can be considered as a microcosm of the general mood of students across streams. We believe that, sensing this widespread mood and catering to their needs by merging work-place requirements can make them empowered skill-wise at a pre-job stage. This is a palpable feeling among students and teachers have sensed this as they observe them and witness their actions and reactions in the class or outside it.
On the other hand, it was quiet disheartening to know that 23% of teachers were not certain about the effectiveness and need of such a course, which would help students to not only take interest in language learning but also to gain access to other fields through link language. We suppose, their opinion has developed over a period of time as they witness an urgent need for such a course but do not experience anything implemented in real-time. Their response may also be due to lack of any academic mechanism, which considers their views in course designing. In our opinion, the attitude of teachers would change once this course is implemented, which would change the way students learn and utilize language.

12) Post-liberalization, India opened its gates for private investors as a result of which job opportunities grew and competition became a byword. Competition was witnessed in private and public enterprises for new vacancies as expansion became a norm. As new avenues opened, the demand for skilled manpower also rose, who were not only supposed to be competent subject-wise but also in terms of their communication skills. Competitive and entrance exams for various government designations and entry into institutes have become quite common given the steady economic growth and creation of jobs in the last 20 years. Many students may fare well in other units of these tests but when it comes to English, their shortcoming is exposed. The civil services and entrance exams have a rigorous testing method in which English proficiency is a given.
This proficiency course is a consolidated course that includes tasks, which makes them think and apply their critical thinking capacity to accomplish these tasks. These tests too, check them on this front as prospective civil servants and professionals are meant to display quick and critical thinking when taking the test and post-selection have to negotiate and interact with people of different designations, stature and requirements. These officials and professionals have to be prepared for relocation as well, where they have to deal with a new culture and people and they can function efficiently only through English with their counterparts. To support our view, we would like to cite from a research paper by Ms. I. Padmini (2012, 93) in *International Journal of Management & Business Studies*,

Ability to think critically, creatively, innovatively and analytically, ability to apply knowledge and understanding to new and different problems, critical thinking skills, skills to organize and interpret data and information, ability to think in time-to forecast, to think ahead, and to plan and finally the ability to separate number, quantity, quality and values.

In order to pass these exams, one need to be well read and to increase ones accessibility to information across spectrum of subjects, they must learn English. They cannot get all the necessary literature in their first language and they cannot get a reliable translation of every book they wish for. Getting trained in all four language skills can help them gain a satisfactory command over English, which
they can utilize in their favour. They need to undergo rigorous screening stages, which check their in-depth command of subject-matter. Selection of candidates through group interview is a major component, which lays stress on interpersonal skills in English followed by a personal interview. A candidate with a balanced performance can hope to get a job. Balanced performance can be understood in terms of expressing one’s thoughts in writing, participation in group discussion or debate and answering interviewers’ questions convincingly. These tasks assess candidates overall personality; subject knowledge and communication skills.

A short term proficiency course can definitely support them in getting through these tests as it would improve their language and infuse confidence in them to explore new avenues. In this regard, 62% teachers believe in the role of such a course for filling the vacuum in language skills. This course helps learners aiming for government positions as it strengthens their language accessibility to information spread around the world through internet and other sources. Students can gain an intensive-cum-interactive practice at an important juncture of their pre-job level.

On the other hand, 38% teachers opted ‘sometimes’, which means that they were not completely sure, whether such a course would help. We think this attitude has got ingrained in teachers due to some of the possible reasons, such as, lack of connect with the students, lack of provision in core syllabus to include interactive activities and challenging tasks and lack of response from students, which can be
attributed to non-motivating academic setting. Teachers would definitely change their viewpoint once short term proficiency is implemented and students are involved in teamwork. The course preparation has provision to include the viewpoints and observations of teachers in designing a comprehensive proficiency course, which can convince teachers about the long-term merit of their contribution.

In the following questions and statements (21to24), teachers had the liberty to choose more than one option as in each item choosing combination of syllabus, reasons, techniques and type of content was necessary or unavoidable.

21) A syllabus construction need to be a precise process as it involves setting objectives through careful consideration of students’ needs, teachers’ opinions and employers’ expectations. Preparing such a multi-faceted syllabus would demand inclusion of not only one syllabus type but the types which is appropriate as per the outcome of the three-prong approach discussed in Review of Literature. 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 to 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. Interest in a course can ensure its successful planning, organizing and execution.

In short term proficiency course, we plan to amalgamate syllabus types that appeal students through tasks that would motivate them to perform. 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 by assigning tasks in small groups and giving apt duration for preparation and empower them as leaders in each group to make them realize that they are not receivers of a course but stakeholders.

The realization of being contributors in creating a course can go a long way in making a course acceptable and feasible. To assess whether the course is able to generate response among students we would implement a pre, mid and post course assessment and fine-tune features of this course, which would ensure a result that is observable in terms of their language usage performance and perception.

30%, 37% and 37% teachers preferred functional-notional, skills and task-based approach respectively. These approaches need to be adapted that can be
compatible with respective teaching-learning situation, what we call as ‘contextualized restructuring’ to enhance the interest of students and sustain the same throughout the span of this course. Task-based approach gives learners ample opportunities to participate in variety of tasks that motivates them to involve themselves confidently in activities without any psychological fear. They get a chance to initiate and perform with appropriate feedback and assistance from teachers at regular intervals to improve with the passage of time. They are encouraged to participate with their available language resources instead of trying to learn grammar initially and then implementing these learnt grammatical aspects in communicative situations. A skills-based approach focuses on training students in a specific skill, which would be helpful in language usage. These skills make learners competent enough to utilize and apply these learnt skills in unpredictable situations. A functional-notional approach is a combination of aspects or functions that can be used in expressing one’s thoughts in a given situation, i.e. requesting, apologizing, offering, informing and notions such as time, size, location, colour are important facets of language learning.

22) The 22nd item on CCQ wanted teachers to choose appropriate reason/s for opting for the combination of syllabus in the previous item (21). 55% respondents chose the option ‘relevance in the current teaching and learning scenario’ and 48% teachers believe that students can learn faster and better with the combination of opted syllabus types. A contextualized restructuring as explained in earlier discussion is needed to maintain consistent focus, interest and
In today’s era of fluidity, where change has become a fulcrum around which many aspects of our life revolves has also influenced teaching-learning process. Given the kind of experience teachers have, they know the ground realities and understand the necessity of implementing a syllabus that can ensure employability and an ability to think critically and evolve as a productive professional. A course cannot have objectives that bypass students’ future requirements as only through such a course can they be trained to handle situations, which demand communication.

In various language courses, students do not learn to communicate because they are not engaged in interactive activities that motivate them to utilize their thinking skills. This prompts learners to tag that course or the method used in the class as irrelevant and they simply become receivers of a top-down course. We can only make them realize the relevance of a course. If we include tasks that appeal their attention and make them aware about the significance of their contribution in a group. Task-based and functional-notional approach can have a far-reaching impact in inculcating confidence and a sense of achievement in learners. This can ensure a faster and better learning throughout the course as students are empowered through accountability as a team leader.

20) to explain task based approach in the following way,

Tasks…..are activities which have meaning as their primary focus. Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use. So task based instruction takes a fairly strong view of communicative language teaching.

This definition explains the primary aim of tasks, is to allow students use the language without interruption even if they commit mistakes and the assigned tasks need to focus on language they would come across in the actual situations in life. If we do not allow them to even initiate communication through tasks then they can never imagine developing communicative ability to deal with language situations in professional life.

23) The two options that most of the teachers opted for were computer assisted instruction and group-discussion with 62% and 53% respectively. Computer assisted instruction (CAI) has been in vogue for quiet come time and teachers use it to facilitate their experience and teaching to help students learn better. There are both pros and cons to this approach. Technological resources may not be available to all the teachers and even if it is accessible then overdependence on it must be avoided as computers cannot replace teachers. Computer can be utilized to make students learn various aspects of language like listening to genuine pronunciation of words, recording one’s version of the same and comparing both to reach a
satisfactory level of accuracy. Using this facility, learners can learn at their own pace. Some other computer assisted activities include; listening tests for which they can get immediate answers, learning videos, arranging jumbled words into an appropriate statement. Teachers’ instructions are very essential and must precede the use of computers because this device cannot have the human qualities of empathizing with students, motivating them and identifying the true potential of students and guide them accordingly.

Computers can help in practicing tasks, which are already taught and can keep students interested for a while after which their attention span would vanish. CAI can be visually attractive but can only be fruitful when supplemented with teacher initiated interactive tasks that can maintain learners’ interest. Group discussion is an effective tool to make every student perform as per the assigned task. Usually, GD is an activity in which students can take a stance and can play the roles of an initiator, shaper, motivator and finisher. They can also change their stance once the statements made by others are more convincing and justifiable.

Our version of GD would be a different one, which would include variety of topics, with small groups, a task-based approach, would be more interactive and to sustain their interest by keeping task duration of only 20 minutes. This would propel them to act, as each learner’s contribution is considered. Teachers need to make them work in small groups so as to fix accountability on everyone in every group and make them function and represent the respective group as a leader. This
kind of responsible role can have a transformational impact on learners’ psyche.
Teachers need to act here as facilitators of tasks that can ignite a feeling of
answerability in them. The activities that teachers assign them must be based on
needs analyses. They need to be given graded tasks beginning with easy followed
by semi-difficult and then difficult. This would ensure an element of challenge,
which can make them apply their critical thinking for solving tasks and discussing
and performing in given topic.

24) 50% teacher respondents chose multiple-choice questions (MCQs) as a
reliable tool to be included as an activity for student learning. We believe that this
is a completely misplaced choice as MCQs have many flaws that need to be
considered before implementation. Henry L. Roediger III and Elizabeth J. Marsh
in their co-authored research paper mention the negative consequence of MCQ in
the following words:

However, there can be negative consequences of relying exclusively on
multiple-choice tests. Students expecting a multiple-choice test (relative to
an essay test) spend less time studying for the test (Kulhavey, Dyer, &
Silver, 1975) and they take notes on different material than do students
expecting an essay exam (Rickards & Friedman, 1978).

Activities in any language course can only be interesting if the appropriate kind of
content is included as a part of the course. The materials used in a proficiency
course can either stimulate students’ interest in learning and would motivate them to participate whole-heartedly or if it is incompatible with the objectives of the course then it can demoralize learners’ spirits that they may avoid attending the sessions altogether. The role of materials is prominent as it can transform their passive approach in learning to an active one. If the objectives of a course are not framed after due consideration to market or job requirements and the materials are not in-tune with the same then it can disappoint learners and make their interest subside in getting trained. It would defeat the purpose of three-prong needs-analysis and the set objectives.

The chosen content needs to be relevant to the context that learners are going to learn as this would enhance the curiosity of students to participate and learn. The other materials can be utilized to make classroom tasks more interesting. These materials need to be changed, reshuffled or assimilated into new materials keeping in mind the additional needs of new batch of students. This content can neither be very difficult nor very easy for students. It needs to be challenging and manageable for students or else the content may not achieve its purpose of involving students as participants. Materials also need to be implemented in a graded manner, i.e. in the order of increasing difficulty.

4.3 Section (C)
This section includes interpretation of questions and statements, administered to teachers and students, which are common or similar in their essence of meaning.

The 1st item in CCQ for teachers asked the significance of a short-term proficiency course for students in today’s globalised world. 92% teacher respondents agree that it is essential to make students adept at language skills. This is a natural response from them as they are witness to the changing competitive scenario in the job market. Teachers know strengths and weaknesses of students as they often interact with them about academic and professional matters. This informal discussion helps them to realize that learners need a rigorous training in language through a well-structured course, with clearly laid out objectives, tasks and tests. Teachers are aware that such a meticulous course needs to be run parallel to the regular course as it is not possible to inter-mingle the same with the regular study that they undertake.

Teachers’ response is further substantiated, as there is 78% (1st item) agreement among student respondents that the short-term proficiency course is extremely essential to fine-tune their current levels of language skills while pursuing their masters. This percentage is an indicator of the underlying need or longing to get their language polished and overcome difficulty of proficiency once and for all. Even they are aware of the prevalence of English across sectors and so want to be well-prepared to face and tackle their work without hurdle of language weakness. They need a course, which enables them to learn English, parallel with their
prescribed syllabus.

The term ‘short-term’ means intensive, holistic and process-oriented in its implementation. Students generally become conscious and alert about their lack of competence in English, when it is too late to take any constructive action. They are suddenly in a can-do-anything mode only after graduation or post-graduation as they are under the scrutiny of recruiters. There is a filter process that is conducted by employers, in which prospective employees come across various language situations i.e. they are posed questions in English, are supposed to participate in group discussion, interact and air their views, appear for reading or writing tests.

The percentage of agreement among teachers and students makes it quite clear that at masters they should undergo language proficiency training to compensate for the skills that they have not developed, were not able to develop or did not get an opportunity to develop it. It also confirms that a short term proficiency course is the need of the hour to make students confident and efficient in the professions that they are planning to join. Additionally, it is a testimony that their language proficiency needs an overhaul, which is only possible through a training program that is holistic in its approach. This data is an eye-opener and need to be considered and catered to. Both, teachers and students are equally aware about the intense demands that the job-market has.
We need to understand the gravity of situation in the right perspective and turn the tide in favour of students. Students undergo study of graduation and PG for five years but then too they lack the necessary skill and confidence to perform. At least two years of PG out of this half a decade can be put to optimum use by implementing short-term proficiency course and to equip them with language skills. Though students understand what lecturers explain but cannot express themselves convincingly. Competition has become intense in the last few years and students struggle to cope with this unexpected and unknown force. Their only way to stay afloat, stabilize and gain a firm foothold professionally is to improve their language competence.

60% (item 3) of student respondents believe that PG is the right point for introducing short-term proficiency course as students are more focused and subjects are streamlined. During Masters, students have streamlined subjects compared to graduation, which makes it possible to integrate short term proficiency course as a major component in their studies. This stage is considered to be a turning point in their lives as it is supposed to prepare, sharpen and develop their latent skills. This is a stage of transition, where they are preparing themselves to play the role of a professional from being a post-graduate student.

This is a juncture, which would decide their future course of action and makes them more receptive to understand and accept the far-reaching impact of a proficiency course. The next phase after PG faced by them would be rigorous
screening in the form of job interviews, assessment of language skills and demonstration of their work. The level of enthusiasm among students at this stage is apt to implement such a course and get a satisfactory outcome. The active interest of learners is very significant in making this course effective in language learning and usage. Students at PG are aware that they are in need of such a language improvement course to increase their chances of getting employed, either in their field or opting for the available opening.

On the other hand, only 34% (item 10) teachers believe that the short-term proficiency course can be a one-stop solution for language needs of students at PG level, whereas 56% opted for ‘sometimes’. This response is unexpected as it is in contrast to what they opined for the first item in CCQ, which sought their opinion on the necessity of a short-term proficiency course at PG level to gain employment opportunities in this competitive era; 92% teachers supported the statement and this response is substantiated by 85% teacher respondents in the 13th item, which stated that, “A focused language proficiency course at PG level would inculcate in students a great measure of confidence in the use of language”. PG is a threshold level, which can be considered as an ideal stage to train students, as the required spark to learn would be present in them. Additionally, as this course is designed with an amalgamation of student needs, teachers’ observation and employers’ requirements, it can ensure learning that can assist learners in professional life.
A natural question that may follow is, “why this course cannot be introduced at graduation level?” An equally natural answer is students’ lack of serious approach and non-clarity of aim, which may sideline the course and make it an academic misfit. The subjects are aplenty at graduation and they are percentage-oriented in their approach and so such a course would not strike a chord with them and hence render it useless. They are only keen to gather ‘material’ for their next exam and are least concerned about any such course. We believe that they are in a trance at this stage and have a cluttered mind. They only become conscious during their PG, when social pressure mounts around them to get a job or join a family-run business in order to settle in their personal and professional lives. The pressure and demands from various quarters makes them more cognizant of their needs of immediate and distant future. We believe that a combination of factors would make the course all the more necessary and inevitable for them.

Moreover, most of the students prefer to work only after pursuing a professional course or post-graduation and this would make the short-term proficiency course appealing and fruitful. The need and effectiveness of this course can be realized by students, when they assess their lack of skills to use language and understand or foresee employers’ requirements. This training would act like a facilitating course to learn what is not learnt, and to face competition head-on. Given the nature of job-market in which there can be hundreds of applications for a single vacancy, would motivate them to accept and perform in the course whole-heartedly as it may be their last chance to get trained.
I would like to draw a parallel from engineering field, where an initiative from MIT Pune, trains post-graduates for job oriented or skill development courses. It prepares students to be industry-ready by training them in the areas of their lack (www.mitskillsindia.com). An initiative of this kind can also be extended to other streams of study so students are not deprived of skill development, while others are privileged. Students are usually ignorant about the uphill tasks awaiting them at workplace, which involves communicative ability.

Awareness and implementation of short-term proficiency course at this crucial stage would definitely encourage them to put their best foot forward as the course is meant to enhance their skills and make them future and job-ready. The stage of PG helps the course designers/implementers to create a focused learning content in tune with their needs, teachers’ observation and recruiters’ expectations giving the course a fair chance to reach an acceptable level with a foreseen outcome. This three-prong approach is meant to give a necessary impetus to the course and make it a trump card.

80% (5th item) of student respondents believe that, Globalization has made it necessary for them to have considerable language skills to benefit from opportunities globally. The inevitability of globalization is corroborated by teachers as 92 % (1st item) teachers believe that, the sophisticated nature of Global competition necessitates a short-term proficiency course or a set of courses at PG
level to make students adept at language skills. These responses from teachers and students are a proof of their realization of ground-reality at local, national and international levels. Students are aware that to be market-aligned they need to develop communicative skills, which would convince recruiters. They are well-informed about various openings in different sectors and so language proficiency is a requirement that cannot be neglected or sidelined. Before widespread Globalization set in, students had limited options but now it is possible to work beyond one’s own educational background and be satisfied with one major skill; English language.

There are several opportunities in different sectors and this scenario is ideal for candidates who were well-trained language-wise during their education. However, there is a section of students, who are not in this ideal situation and hence need to develop or polish their language skills required in their profession. These students are not even able to face a mock-interview, lest a real one. The ground realities are clear and indicates that a short but calibre-enhancing course is required to make students market ready. This kind of course is need of the hour to help students to handle and satisfy pre-requisites of a job. Our current courses hardly cater to these needs and even if it does, it is cursory or an eyewash.

In a recent newspaper article by Reema Nagarajan (2013, 14) mentions that,

…of the five million odd graduates that India produces annually, only a
little over half are employable in any sector of knowledge economy. Inadequate English and computer skills are key factors holding back students.

This is a ground-zero reality, which holds students back from reaping benefits of globalization as they lack the basic skill to communicate. In our opinion the very concept of globalization is a combination of global industrialization based on the premise of smooth communication across sectors to get work done from any corner of the world, by employing a pool of English-speaking candidates without any preference to any particular field.

The spectrum of chances that comes across students is varied and so it is in their favour to fine-tune their language. A job advertisement for any field often states the need for the applicant being communicatively effective. Irrespective of any sector, they are exposed to situations, which demands participation in seminars, conferences, interviews, meetings, training sessions, exchange programs, leading a team or following instructions, submitting research papers, pursuing skill-enhancement courses; the list is endless. The gap between opportunities and current language skills need to be filled to reap the benefits of a globalized world.

85% (6th item) of teacher respondents believe that, four language skills should be assimilated in short-term proficiency course emulating IELTS or TOEFL models.
For a synonymous statement, 58% (6th item) students agree that, short-term proficiency course can be structured on the lines of IELTS or TOEFL. These two tests are meant to test students’ proficiency in four language skills, who aspire to study at a foreign destination. IELTS tests students in four language skills and measures their competence in terms of band score, which ranges from 1 to 9, whereas TOEFL measures their language skills in points. Here ‘structured on the lines of’ does not mean a blanket implementation of these tests, as it may compromise the needs of students. We do not want to follow these tests blindly as we are planning to elicit, analyze and implement students’ needs to create a proficiency course, which would include the observation of teachers and requirements of recruiters. Learners need to be given a flavour of a training pattern that is challenging, interesting and proficiency-oriented. We plan to prepare the training content and tests in a graded order, to assist students in understanding and learning language skills in a step-by-step manner.

A single course cannot have the entire components essential to train and test students. It always needs to be an amalgamation of characteristics in alignment with student needs, teachers’ observation and recruiters’ demands. This kind of course design has provision to include the opinions of students, teachers and recruiters, which are inevitable in the current competitive setting. We want to do a ‘contextualized restructuring’ to enhance learnability of students so as to bring about change in their language performance. The point that we are trying to drive home is that, the designed course is supposed to include the contextual socio-
psycho-economic requirements of students instead of being influenced by teaching approaches and methods that may not support student learning. IELTS or TOEFL can be used as a blueprint or model on which we may base the design of our course, as these are rigorous tests. This does not imply that we are going to ‘copy’ this course structures and impose it on students but means that we can gain valuable insights from these tests, keeping the larger picture of student needs in mind.

Students do expect a course that can enable them to understand and communicate in English. This keen sense to learn English at PG is more than ever before as they have become aware about its certainty at work place. This awareness makes their urge grow even intense and motivates them to put their best foot forward, as they know that if they do not undergo such training at a pre-job stage then they may face an uphill task to attain a job or sustain it once they are selected. In case if their inclination to improve their English does not get fulfilled then they try to get trained by joining ‘spoken English classes’, which have sprouted at many nooks and corners of various cities and towns, promising their own version of ‘proficiency’. The desire to learn overwhelms them so much that they are ready to accept anything that is offered by various ‘classes’. Students usually tend to invest their time, money and effort, thinking to go that extra mile to achieve proficiency. They are often disappointed by the kind of half-baked syllabus they have to study, which does not have any clear objectives and do not take their needs into consideration.
It is our observation that, every student is not competent in each language skill and so they need intensive training for which the structure of the syllabus can be based on the basic premise of these two proficiency tests. We need to understand what students actually lack and want to learn, plus teachers’ outlook about the possible reasons for their lack of participation or performance and employers’ demands, which are hardly taken into consideration while designing a course. Any given course can be considered incomplete if it does not do justice with its stakeholders namely students. As these two tests are purely meant to assess students’ language ability, it cannot be adopted in its entirety to train students in language skills as it does not include aspects and needs, which actually make them proficient in English. So the essential fine-tuning, modification, additions need to be done in order to design an effective course, which can cater to student needs. We intend to include tasks that can ignite the hidden interest in students to make them participate, perform and learn effortlessly. The short-term proficiency course would not impose the IELTS model on students as it may prove counter-productive. Instead, we would take into consideration students’ future needs and make addition and omission, where necessary before administering the tests. This is to ensure that, no need of students remain unaddressed providing them a reason to be consistently interested in the course.

The 8th item wanted students to choose any one of the following options vis-à-vis skills in which they thought a short-term proficiency course should give them
ample exposure in.  
a) Listening, b) Reading, c) Writing, d) Speaking and e) All the four. 54% student respondents chose the option ‘all the four’. 72% (8th item) teachers also chose the option ‘all the four’ in terms of the skills significant as per their experience in the academic field. We cannot deny the fact that these skills are essential for gaining a firm grip over language aspects, which would help students to convey and understand the intended meaning. Training in the four language skills is essential to improve one’s language usage skills either for academic or professional purpose. This training can be provided with the necessary modifications keeping in mind the outcome of three-prong needs-analysis.

Usually, students realize their lack of language usage skills, either when they perform at graduation or PG level or during a job screening process. Though they recognize their weakness on the language front, they do not receive the necessary training, which transforms them into proficient or confident users of language. This absence of training in four language skills at PG is well-understood by teachers also and so their response lends ample support for a suitable language training for students, which prepares them for any future academic or professional endeavour.

Essentially, changes are necessary to the listening, speaking, reading and writing content as implementing it in a top-down manner can discourage students’ morale of learning and make them feel dominated. These changes would be based on the
needs of students, recruiters and opinions of teachers. At the same time we need to bear in mind that these changes cannot be considered as a final version and implemented year after year. Students of every new intake would have a different need for or opinion about language learning. Teachers may also have altogether a fresh outlook regarding language teaching-learning and recruiters would expect completely a new set of skills after a span of some time.

Dudley-Evans, T and M.J. St John (2011, 95) mention about four language skills in a different light in their co-authored book, *Developments in ESP; A multidisciplinary approach*. Their treatment of these skills is in the following way,

We shall, in fact, treat them as five skills: reading, listening (to monologue), listening and speaking, speaking (a monologue), and writing.

These specifications, we believe, reflect what we have already explained in item 2 above, which is as follows; it is high time that industry experts are consulted in creating, upgrading and implementing a course to convert students into professionals before they actually start working in any sector. In such industry consulted courses a major focus is on language skills, which they need to exhibit at various junctures of their pre and post work; facing interviews, participating in group discussion (this involves listening and speaking), presentation (speaking; a monologue), report writing (writing), minutes making, attending seminars
(listening to monologue), summarizing an important text for a superior or subordinate after reading, presenting views on a given topic, interacting with global clients or colleagues, negotiating.

These functions include all the five skills explained by Dudley-Evans, T and M.J. St John. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that every batch of students has different needs plus teachers’ viewpoints may also change overtime and employers’ demand may vary as per the market requirements. Hence, this course needs to remain flexible in terms of the type of content chosen and the way it is implemented as it would help students to learn efficiently without any barriers.

60% (9th item) of student respondents believe that, short-term proficiency course should be taught throughout the year, to ensure consistent language exposure for improvement. To bring any endeavour to its expected fruition, consistency is a key component. Exposure to any activity on a regular basis can have a lasting impression on learners’ motivation and ability to perform that respective activity with finesse. The central theme of consistency and exposure can be understood through an analogy between an implemented course and a child’s growth. As a child needs to be nurtured consistently throughout its formative years to mould his/her psychological, intellectual and social bent of mind. In the same way, a course must consistently give ample exposure to students in language and its components or else the purpose of training would be defeated. The essence of comparison is duly reflected in the response of teachers, as 80% (15th item) of
respondents agree that short-term proficiency course should be spread throughout the year instead of teaching it as a crash course at the end of the academic year or semester.

Language learning is not an overnight process and so it needs regular participation of students in tasks to augment their understanding and usage of language. This aspect of consistency has a far-reaching impact in developing the overall personality of students. Students lack confidence and a positive outlook before joining the course and so apart from the purpose of language learning, this course aims to cleanse the cobwebs of language confusion, help them overcome diffidence, make them realize their latent potential, inculcate a sense of competition; which was missing earlier, raise their self-esteem and create an equal opportunity for competition. These multiple improvements can only take place if enough importance is given to the factor of consistency in language exposure. To generate and maintain interest of students in learning language they need to be regularly involved in and exposed to tasks, which can help them to learn through the process of trial and error. This process and regularity would provide ample room to get their language assessed at regular intervals and make changes where necessary to improve their language with the passage of time.

Short-term proficiency course cannot be taught as a crash course, as it would not live up to its expectations of making students proficient in English. We plan to train and make students proficient in four language skills through a range of
activities, which is possible through reinforcement. Reinforcement in this context means substantiation of skills, in due course, that they are getting trained in. When students realize the gradual improvement they make during the course, they would definitely open up to air their views, participate and ask for additional exercises. With the uninterrupted training that they receive, their needs may evolve during the course itself and would help trainers to cater to this need. This situation may not manifest, if the course is not regular and intensive. Student interest would wane before it takes root and would waste all the efforts put by the course designers/implementers if the course is not a regular feature of their studies throughout the year.

Learning is a process, which requires continuity, patience, perseverance and passion to sustain student interest and achieve the set objectives of the course. With the passage of time, students start realizing the nuances of the language and are better positioned to gain a firm command in using English language without hesitation. When students are exposed regularly to language activities, they gradually get interested and motivated to perform and learn. They show incremental progress in their learning and start involving themselves more in interacting with their peers and teachers. Many times, trial and error become a way of learning as learners know that there are sufficient chances for them to rectify their errors or mistakes. These chances are nothing but a platform to perform and a kind of laboratory to experiment without fear of inviting flak from anyone. These all above indicators of learning and performance are only possible,
when the course is run throughout the year, instead of few days or weeks. Consistent exposure of language is a sure way to help students gain insight into their weakness and strength, which can further support them to fine-tune their language.

67% (10th item) student respondents believe that needs analysis is a reliable tool to measure their current language skills and their needs and 85% (4th item) teachers opined that a needs-analysis is essential before a short-term proficiency is implemented. Dudley-Evans, T and M.J. St John (2011, 121) define needs-analysis in the following way,

Needs analysis is the process of establishing the **what** and **how** of a course;

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. We plan to implement needs-cum-observation analysis through a three-prong approach of students’ needs-analysis, teachers’ observation and recruiters’ expectations or demands.

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 to one 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.

We believe that only the analysis of students’ needs 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.

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. Ms. Susima Samudrika Weligamage (2009, 119) in her research paper titled *Graduates’ Employability Skills: Evidence from Literature Review* mentions about the necessity to include expectations of recruiters in the following words,

Current business environment is dynamic. Graduates from universities should compete with professional qualification holders in a job market where employers prefer to recruit professional qualification holders which can be taken evidence from job advertisement. Therefore there is a need to match the skills of university graduates with the needs of the industry if they are to be successful in the job market. Hence, there is an urgent need of identifying the employers’ perspective on the skills and attributes of potentially employable graduates and their opinion regarding comparability of graduates with professional qualification holders.

Assessment of employer/industry needs and expectations are hardly given any prominence and so courses may miss vital skill development aspects. The job market is highly competitive and so we need to understand that recruiters wish to hire candidates, who are equipped with two basic skills, namely communicative ability and computer skills. In the latter, majority of post-graduates are skilful but in the former, many of them still have difficulty or hesitation to perform. Employers are basically looking for language proficiency, adaptability, critical
thinking and problem solving skills. They also prefer candidates, who can
welcome, tackle and utilize change for the benefit of the company or organization
they are working for.

57% (11th item) students agree that, needs-analysis is a way to empower them for
designing a course, which suits their needs. For a very long time students have
been receivers of top-down approach in many courses, which makes them
followers of that particular syllabus rather than contributors. Teachers,
academicians or course implementers may be the ultimate decision makers about
the course, who hardly take into consideration the actual need of the students.
They may either follow a traditional approach, which may be out of tune with the
current work-place needs or implement a combination of approaches without any
consideration to long-term necessity of students. In that scenario, their needs are
never cared for and a syllabus is imposed on them, as a result of which they may
lack interest in pursuing it, may join a course that satisfies their requirements, get
disillusioned from their current course as they do not find any relevance between
their needs and the course.

Empowerment through student participation is a way to motivate them and elicit
their real needs, which usually remain suppressed due to lack of an appropriate
channel to reveal the same. When students realize that they are one of the major
contributors, who are consulted for designing a course, then their confidence level
rises. It is like a referendum in a country for any crucial decision in which people
opine through various media. The sentiment of being accountable for designing a proficiency course can motivate them to perform like never before. This attitude can be beneficial as they would participate in the learning activities without a second thought.

In this regard, 85% (13th item) teachers believe that, a focused language proficiency course at PG level would inculcate in students a great measure of confidence in the use of language. A proficiency course at post-graduation can galvanize them into action as they would be aware about its inevitability and their realization of being a stakeholder in the same. When they are in the forefront of such a role they would be bound to contribute and that too in a realistic and productive manner. They may share an array of needs, which may not have been revealed before in any way. The self-assessment of students can be useful in getting a peek into their understanding and view. A course without student involvement may be counter-productive like a class in which they are simply listeners or spectators.

We consider needs analysis as a tool for creating equal opportunity for the stakeholders to air their views and choice in a constructive way. It would make sure that students’ viewpoints and needs do not take a backseat as they are at the centre of any education process. If the major participants are not consulted in creating course requirements, objectives and content, then we think the course may digress from its trajectory, resulting in dissatisfied, disinterested and language allergic
students as it is evident from their under average performance. Needs analysis would ensure, that the skills training is not a top-down approach, which makes them simply follow it blindly rather than being active participants.

Empowerment through needs-analysis would help students to open-up and take responsibility of their own future. It would encompass most of their views and requirements, which they may not have revealed so far or would not have got chance to do so. Due to variety of media, students are aware of the trends in the job-market and the essential skills to be eligible for such jobs. So needs-analysis would precisely ask them about the language skill/s that they would like to learn, their lack, ways to train them (through industry exposure), approach to be adopted and other necessary questions considered essential as per the students concerned.

66 % (13th item) students agree that short-term proficiency courses should include language aspects to meet the demands of recruiters. 77% (14th item) teachers opine that, language proficiency is one of the parameters set by interviewers for selection, and makes short-term proficiency course inevitable. It can usually be observed in the vacancy columns in the newspapers, about the language expectation of recruiters in the following words, “Fluency in English is a must” or “Candidates with good communication skills would be preferred”. This demand for proficiency is evident across all sectors as English has become an integral part of corporate culture and preferred medium of communication.
Employers, in an interview, initially ask basic questions to check whether the candidate is able to put his message through in English or not. These initial questions give them a fair idea about a candidate’s calibre to sustain communication. They may proceed with questions regarding subject-area only if a candidate is proficient in English or else they bring a pre-mature end to interview. This suggests that in addition to subject-area knowledge (which is a given), students are expected to be proficient in English and such a course is all the more important at PG.

Language aspects by definition is the skill of a candidate to understand the communicated content without any misinterpretation and convey ones actual thought in response without any room for multiple interpretation for the listener. This clarity is required not only in receiving (listening) and responding (speaking) thoughts but also in writing and reading to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding. The activities included in the course need to cover all language skills and learners need to be exposed to them at regular intervals, which would ensure learning.

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.

The term employability has been in vogue for quite a long time now. The crux of the term is or indicates the necessary skills of a student/candidate to perform as per the benchmark or criteria set by industry experts and get selected without any further necessity of intensive training. In short, they need to prove themselves in an interview by translating their thoughts in English convincingly. In our opinion, employability is a package which includes assessment of their overall subject-area information, communication skills, team-work, organizing-planning-implementing of assigned work, being innovative and able to re-invent oneself with the changing times, flexibility to work for any project.

Employability also means a candidate’s ability to get employed in any sector. It is specifically observed that students cannot convey their thoughts in English about
their subject-area, though they may be well-versed in the same. English is their Achilles heel, which is actually supposed to be their USP. It is a requirement that cannot be compromised or neglected.

Students’ employment-gaining quotient is low without language skill-development training. The short-term proficiency course is an effort to help students to gain a strong foothold in their area of study and additionally it would make them mentally ready to prove themselves in the sector they are planning to work in. They cannot afford to lose opportunities just because they lack language skills to tackle work-place challenges. We need to have a paradigm shift in our collective viewpoint towards language enhancement, which can change the student employment scenario. The proposed course can fill the gap between the demands of industry and students’ lack of language skills through three-prong needs-analysis.

60% teachers (16th item) believe that short-term proficiency course needs to be grade-based to ensure interest among students, whereas 64% of students (15th item) believe that, grades should be provided at the end of short-term courses to judge student performance and these should be treated as extra courses completed in terms of credit. The CCQ administered to teachers and students asked their opinion about the role of grades as a confidence-booster and a credit gainer. The response of either community is almost a similar one, which is a clear indicator of their support to grades. Interest for any activity can be maintained by providing
some kind of incentive or encouragement. Grade has a positive impact on the students’ psyche as it motivates them to push their limits to accomplish the given task. Grade is a useful tool to generate and sustain interest among students, which can provide them a reason to remain involved.

Teachers are keen observers of students and are aware about their motivation to undertake any task. As teachers, we believe that, one reason that may motivate students is appreciation in the form of grade. This grade proves students’ performance level, which helps them realize their current stage and is a worthy target to aim for. Students invest their valuable time and effort in pursuing any course and if they are not rewarded academically, their dedication would wane from the said course. So, without any kind of academic advantage, students would find the entire exercise of pursuing this course futile. When they are working towards a target, their consistency and concentration would be maintained for the course or else it would only be a non-responsive activity.

Apart from maintaining interest in the course through grades, teachers are supposed to play a crucial role, on three fronts termed as key features of mediation by M. Williams and R. Burden (2004, 68-69) in their co-authored book, *Psychology for Language Teachers*. The key features of mediation means, to provide learning experiences which are truly educational, the teacher or other adult can ‘mediate’ in a number of different ways. Feuerstein
identifies twelve features of mediation. The first three features are considered by Feuerstein to be essential for all learning tasks.

These three features are significance, purpose behind the here and now and shared intention. The first feature needs teachers to help students understand the importance of the undertaken task, so they realize its worth for themselves. Second feature makes students aware about the far-reaching impact of the learning activity they are pursuing, in the present and future. The third one is all about convincing students about the tasks implemented and the active participation of learners in the tasks.

Student respondents opined that, grades should be provided at the end of short-term courses to judge student performance and these should be treated as extra courses completed in terms of credit. It is a fair opinion of students as they expect academic reward and judgment for the tasks undertaken. Additionally, credit associated with extra course also needs to be an integral part of short-term proficiency course. We would like to draw an analogy from the CELT programme, which was a six-week pilot course meant to improve the writing and presentation skills of MPhil and PhD students. This was a sixty hour course spread across six weeks for which students gained 4 credits. The involvement and presence of students was more than satisfactory, which could be attributed to the 4 credit award. In order to gain credit, they would be dedicated to and involved in learning activities, which would make them skilful from a language point of view.
essential for their career.

67\% (17\textsuperscript{th} item) students believe that, an annual upgrading of short term proficiency course after a fresh needs-analysis is essential only if major changes have taken place in the job market. Whereas, 80\% (17\textsuperscript{th} item) teachers believe that, upgrading the course is important to keep it in-tune with ever changing professional requirements. Teaching components in a syllabus cannot be kept the same eternally, when crucial shifts are taking place at work place. These changes cannot be taken for granted and so it needs to be assimilated in the course to make it comprehensive. Usually, it is observed that after a course is implemented, there is hardly any fine-tuning done as per the market demands. This makes students followers of an imposed course, which does not take their skill-development or career into consideration.

Once at work, they find it difficult to cope with the challenging tasks that they are supposed to undertake as they are not well-equipped to handle them. They are in a tight corner as the course that they pursued did not sharpen their skills to tackle work related activities efficiently. The confirmation for upgrading the course is well supported by students and teachers alike. We believe that, they understand the significance of getting trained in skills in advance, rather than regret a future situation in which their performance suffers.

Due to newer avenues in various fields students have high hopes from their career
for which proficiency in English is an inevitable tool. The nature of work keeps on changing with new trends on the global front, which tests a candidate’s calibre to handle such work with élan. A short-term proficiency course is an appropriate platform in which there is provision to include all the essential aspects discovered through a three-prong needs-analysis. Students cannot be left to fend for themselves so this course need to be upgraded annually to align with the demands of recruiters. Students believe that the course needs to be updated annually if a lot of changes have taken place in the professional arena to avoid getting caught off guard. Teachers too, firmly believe that students can face competition confidently only if the course keeps on accommodating necessary trends to make it a course worth pursuing.

Given the ever changing situation that can be witnessed at workplace, it becomes vital to include components significant for students to function efficiently at work. These changes can be confirmed and assimilated in the short-term proficiency course through the three prong needs-analysis to avoid missing any aspect at work and would train them at pre-job stage itself. The trends in job market have been changing at regular intervals and employers need candidates, who can adapt and fit themselves into new roles without any struggle. We believe that the work-place scenario is in a flux now and it would only be unusual to expect regular or routine work on daily basis. One needs to expect the unexpected and accept change as the new norm.
The 19th item in the CCQ asked students to choose an option about the involvement of ideal contributors in upgrading short-term proficiency course. 60% respondents chose ‘all the three’ namely students, teachers and recruiters. In a similar vein, 72% teacher respondents also chose ‘all the three’ namely currently enrolled students, former students and recruiters. Additionally, 82% teacher respondents (18th item) believe that supervision of experienced teachers is essential in upgrading the course annually.

Upgrading a course is equally important as designing it because it involves a re-evaluation of all course objectives considering social, academic, economic and professional aspects or changes. In the one year span of this course, innumerable changes would take place, which would need inclusion necessary in it and there may be outdated aspects, which need scrapping. In the case of a top-down course, no stakeholders or significant contributors are consulted as it is designed by a bunch of course designers as per their own belief and allegiance for any approach. This bunch is unaware about the reality of student needs and future requirements. This kind of lop-sided attitude towards course design and upgrade needs immediate change as it compromises the interests of students and deprives other valuable contributors of airing their views.

The above responses of teachers and students confirm the importance of getting feedback from everyone involved in or associated with course design, which can make it compatible with market needs. We consider students as the major
stakeholders and so they are supposed to be the prime contributors, whether current or former, followed by teachers and recruiters, whose feedback cannot be overlooked. As explained in the 10th item, needs analysis is an initial stage for designing a course through a three-prong approach. 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-tune with employer needs.

It is clear from the response of students that they are aware about the importance of their contribution along with that of teachers and recruiters in developing a course. 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. They become aware about the noteworthy contribution of recruiters and a difference they can make for a course.

72% teachers (19th item), on the other hand, believe that, currently enrolled students, former students and recruiters can also be consulted to get feedback for upgrading the short-term proficiency courses. The response of students is validated by teachers’ support for all the three.
We recognized four categories under which PG students can be classified as per their level. Students (20th item) were expected to choose the appropriate one and what we found was very interesting. The percentage of response was almost the same for each option, which, we believe, suggests that students need a comprehensive training to improve communication and grammar usage. 1) 21% respondents think that PG level students are grammatically competent at language and communicatively incompetent, while (2) 26% think that they are communicatively competent and grammatically incompetent, whereas (3) 26% think that they are communicatively and grammatically incompetent and (4) 27% respondents consider them as communicatively and grammatically competent.

The first one is a very common language aspect experienced by students from vernacular medium as their grip over grammatical structures may be firm but when it comes to express oneself, they fail miserably. They must have practiced these so called ‘structures’ endlessly believing to become proficient in speaking as well but as and when they try, they are disappointed. This reveals the lack of efficiency in the structural way of learning language. The second set of opinion suggests about an interesting trend that can be observed at PG.

There is a bunch of students, who studied throughout English-medium school and are well-versed as far as fluency is concerned (but it may be otherwise). It is possible for them to translate their thoughts in English, even though they may not be precisely aware of the grammar aspects involved in that. These students may
have got the right kind of training and exposure to language situations. The third set of response is about the kind of students who are not able to express their ideas and are equally not aware about grammar aspects. This may be due to lack of appropriate training and exposure at school or graduate level. The fourth one is the category of students who are well-versed in communicating their thoughts conveniently and also understand the grammar aspects.

Interestingly, when these four categories were presented to teachers (20th item), 47% respondents opined that students are structurally competent at language and communicatively incompetent. This response from teachers can be considered as closer to reality as they are keen observers of students year after year and so it is based on their valuable academic experience and can be more reliable. 21% believe that students are communicatively and structurally incompetent. The former response is a reflection of the common scenario that teachers often observe and try to tackle. The students are trained in grammatical structures through repetitive drills, which they practice day in and day out without any prominence to speaking skills. This response reflects the ground reality that teachers experience in terms of students performance. Students are conditioned to focus on rote learning of various language structures and so the only skills that they try to acquire is reading and writing. Learners do not get an opportunity to involve in any kind of interactive tasks that motivates them to speak or do challenging activities.
On the academic turf many students turn out to be able to recall the structures that they learnt but are not able to extend this skill, when responding to an unpredictable situation, i.e. communicating with a person fluent in English, a formal situation like interview and group discussion. R. Bruce Williams (2003, 3) in his book, *Higher Order Thinking Skills* mentions that,

Teachers cheat their students if they ask of them is recall. By asking only for recall, teachers convey the message that the students’ own thinking is not valuable and that questioning and challenging ideas is not welcome-this makes for very boring class situations and creates minds that are dull and lazy.

Recalling cannot be the only requirement in language usage as it is limited in nature because situations, which demand English usage, are multi-faceted and so users must be competent enough to adapt to new language circumstances.

This lack in competency warrants a course, which is comprehensive in its making, has provision to involve students in interactive tasks that keeps them interested and motivates them to participate and perform with a focus on improvement. Learning structures is like putting oneself in a mould, which is difficult to break when the situation demands. It is a straightjacket that restricts one’s language movement across a range of language situations. Through short term proficiency course we intend to break this ‘moulded mentality’ by including tasks that provide
learners exposure to different critical thinking activities to realize their latent skills.
References


