Chapter 7

Conclusion: Recommendations and future directions

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters in the thesis explored and described the existing practices of course delivery of distance ELT programmes in India. They showed that the study began with an exploratory approach and moved towards a description of the phenomena relating to effective course delivery of the selected programmes. After setting the context of the study in Chapter 1, the literature review in Chapter 2 pointed to the existing lack of research studies on the effective course delivery of distance ELT programmes from a pedagogical perspective. Chapter 3 familiarized the readers with the profile, structure and curricula of the selected programmes. The next chapter discussed the methodology followed in the study and the research procedure followed. Chapter 5 presented the data (both subjective and objective) gathered through field work which tried to throw light on the practices of course delivery as they are evidenced through perceptions of groups of stakeholders and objective analysis of course delivery mechanisms. Chapter 6 dealt with the interpretation of the insights obtained from the data through a pedagogical framework, and explored how far the course delivery practices of the programmes have contributed towards facilitating professional development of the learners.

This chapter begins by locating the programmes in the context of distance education pedagogy models and attempts to situate the programmes within the strands of development of distance education pedagogy. The analysis in the previous chapter revealed the very limited amount of interaction between teachers and learners that affects the development of
reflective skills. It showed that teachers and learners in the selected programmes have limited contact, through a very limited number of course delivery mechanisms, and that learners felt the need for more contact. Distance education pedagogy has come a long way towards incorporating various elements in the DE system to overcome these challenges of limited contact, through several ‘generations’ of systemic measures. The discussion in this chapter will focus on where the existing practices of distance ELT programmes are situated in terms of these generations of distance education pedagogy, and the extent and ways in which they can catch up with recent developments to achieve more effectiveness of course delivery. This is followed by some recommendations towards effective course delivery of the programmes. Then the chapter points to some areas that need to be further investigated in order to better understand the phenomena relating to course delivery of distance ELT programmes in India.

7.2 Locating the English language teacher education programmes in India in the context of distance education pedagogy models

Discussions on distance education pedagogy often revolve around developments in the field of technology and its use. As stated in the literature review (Section 2.3), distance education pedagogy is integrally related to the use of technology, and quality distance education exploits the technological advances to enhance interaction among learners.

Technology has an indispensable relation to pedagogy in the distance education context. As shown by several researchers, the use of technology has implications for both distance education and face-to-face education. As early as 1995, Taylor discussed what is termed the ‘tyranny of proximity’ (Taylor 1995: 1) where he talked about the reluctance to use technology by regular education due to complacency. Nunan (2012) talks about the ‘tyranny of distance’ (p. viii) where he maintains that though technology can enhance the frequency of contact in distance education, such contact will be different from face-to-face interaction in
quality. However, the limitation of face-to-face contact in distance education and the means provided by technology for interaction makes technology more relevant to its context.

7.2.1 Generations of distance education pedagogy

The concept of tracing the evolution of distance education through ‘generations’ of use was proposed by Taylor (2001), who discusses five models of distance education in terms of generations that he claims have relevance to the quality of teaching and learning. He has presented his model as as shown here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of distance education and associated delivery technologies</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Highly refined materials</th>
<th>Advanced interactive delivery</th>
<th>Institutional variable costs approaching zero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation: Correspondence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Generation: Multimedia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiotape</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videotape</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-based learning (e.g. CML/CAL/IMM)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive video (disk and tape)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Generation: Telelearning</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videotape</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audigraphic communication</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast TV/radio and audio-teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Generation: Flexible Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive multimedia (IMM) online</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-based access to WWW resources</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-mediated communication</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Generation: Intelligent Flexible Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive multimedia (IMM) online</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-based access to WWW resources</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-mediated communication, using automated response systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus portal access to institutional processes and resources</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 7.1: Generations of distance education (Taylor, 2001)

As shown in the framework, Taylor indicates the evolution of distance education in terms of the following generations.

a) Correspondence model (based on print technology)

b) Multi-media model (based on print, audio and video technologies)
c) Telelearning model (based on telecommunication technologies for synchronous communication)

d) Flexible learning model (based on online delivery via the Internet)

e) Intelligent flexible learning model (based on further exploitation of new technologies)

His conceptual framework of the distance education models is based on the technologies used in each generation, and also indicates the flexibility of learning with regard to time, place and pace, use of highly refined materials, advanced interactive delivery and institutional variable costs approaching zero with regard to each technology, i.e. increase or decrease of costs with fluctuations in the volume of activity.

Taylor believes that it is the fifth generation model of distance education which has the potential to offer ‘a valuable, personalized pedagogical experience at noticeably lower cost’ (2001: 12) in comparison to the other models. About the relevance of these models to the teaching-learning process, he says,

‘Previous generations of distance education are essentially a function of resource allocation parameters based on the traditional cottage industry model, whereas the fifth generation based on automated response systems has the potential not only to improve economies of scale but also to improve the pedagogical quality and responsiveness of service to students.’ (ibid)

Taylor’s conceptual framework is based on the dominance of technology, though he talks about the potential of technologies impacting teaching-learning process.

Criticizing these classifications as being solely based on technology, Anderson and Dron (2011) has discussed three generations of distance education pedagogy with focus on
pedagogy, which are cognitivist-behaviourist, social constructivist and connectivist pedagogy. The following table is a summary of distance education pedagogies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation of distance education pedagogy</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Learning activities</th>
<th>Learner granularity</th>
<th>Content granularity</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Teacher role</th>
<th>Scalability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive–behaviourism</td>
<td>Mass media: Print, TV, radio, one-to-one communication</td>
<td>Read and watch</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Fine: scripted and designed from the ground up</td>
<td>Recall</td>
<td>Content creator, sage on the stage</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Conferencing (audio, video, and Web), many-to-many communication</td>
<td>Discuss, create, construct</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Medium: scaffolded and arranged, teacher-guided</td>
<td>Synthesize: essays</td>
<td>Discussion leader, guide on the side</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivism</td>
<td>Web 2.0: Social networks, aggregation &amp; recommender systems</td>
<td>Explore, connect, create, and evaluate</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Coarse: mainly at object and person level, self-created</td>
<td>Artifact creation</td>
<td>Critical friend, co-traveler</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Summary of distance education pedagogies (Source: Anderson & Dron, 2011)

The first generation, i.e. cognitive-behaviourist pedagogy focuses on the individual learner with the help of high quality content and multi-media. Though it has the advantages of maximized access, student freedom, and cost effectiveness, there is significant reduction in teaching, social presence and formal models of cognitive science, and thus it fails to deal with full richness and complexity of human learning.

The second generation (social-constructivist pedagogy), on the other hand, shifts the locus of control away from the teacher, and acknowledges the social nature of knowledge creation and
construction as opposed to information transmission. It emerged in conjunction with the development of two-way (both synchronous and asynchronous) communication and gained popularity after the availability of many-to-many communication technologies. It believes that knowledge is derived from experience, and focuses on human interaction to guide and evaluate authentic tasks in realistic contexts. However, this focus on human interaction through interactive electronic communication results in more costly models of distance education (Annand, 1999).

The third generation (connectivist model) relies on the abundant access to networked technologies and focuses on building and maintaining current and flexible networked connections for mental processing and problem solving. Instead of following pre-determined content, learners collaborate with teachers to create and re-create the content.

Anderson and Dron (2011) opines that all these three generations need to be used effectively in order to address the needs and expectations of the learners towards a well-rounded educational experience in a distance education programme. The cognitive-behaviourist models, which mainly reflect theories of teaching, offer a strong structure to learning by clearly defining the path to knowledge. Though this structure is lost in social-constructivist models (which are mainly theories of learning), it is compensated by dialogue with emphasis on scaffolding to help learners meet individual needs and contexts. Unlike these two models, though is difficult to clearly define the methods and processed for teaching in connectivist models (which are distinctly theories of knowledge), connectivist models encourage more collaboration between learners and teachers to create and re-create the content of study. So, good distance education exploits all the three generations of pedagogy as decided by the learning content, context, and learning expectations.

Keeping these models and generations of distance education pedagogy in mind, the following section attempts to discuss how far the programmes selected for the present study use the
generations and accordingly locate them in the context of the distance education pedagogy models.

7.2.2 Distance education pedagogy in the selected programmes

In the programmes selected for this study, the media used is primarily print materials. Telephones and emails have long been used in distance education, primarily to collect or share information rather than for pedagogic purposes, and the selected programmes have also used this medium to transmit programme information to the learners, helping learners stay motivated in the programme. These means indirectly contribute to effective course delivery. However, this support was not constantly available for learners due to interrupted connectivity and other reasons.

In the programme where blogs are used, the trend of blog interaction shows that the blogs served more as a platform for interaction between the monitor and a learner than between a learner and a learner. Moreover, learners were seen using them for both academic and non-academic issues. The academic issues were mostly related to the assignments. The non-academic issues were mostly related to logistic support, which may not be a direct contributor of sustained learner motivation.

Though one programme (MAELT-NSOU) did use another media i.e. radio, for some time, this was discontinued after the lack of responses and due to issues with the radio channel.

The media other than the print materials in the selected programmes are thus used more for information and other logistical support rather instructional purposes. This implies that the programmes are yet to exploit the advantages of technology for instructional purposes.

Whereas many programmes throughout the world have already started using both synchronous and asynchronous communication with the help of recent (fourth and fifth generation) technologies discussed above in the typology of generations of distance
In education, the distance ELT programmes in India still heavily rely on the first generation technology, i.e. print materials. Though there were random efforts to use technologies in the second generation, i.e. multi-media model, these efforts had failed to sustain for various reasons.

On considering the programmes in the light of the models proposed by Anderson and Dron (Section 6.1.1), the pedagogy followed in the programmes mainly falls into the first generation, i.e. cognitive-behaviourist pedagogy. In terms of technology, the programmes mainly use print materials, though some of the programmes also attempted to use radio for instructional purposes. The process of learning is largely individual, as learners have to negotiate the texts often in isolation. Some of them also partly follow the second generation of pedagogy, as learners are sometimes provided with CDs for their use. The contact programmes also sometimes provide learners with an opportunity to participate in group-learning in order to construct knowledge. However, elements from the third generation pedagogy (Web 2.0 technologies for connectivist pedagogy) are almost missing in the selected programmes, since learners are hardly offered any network-based learning. No web-based network was found to in use in the programmes except the two blogs in one of the programmes, that too mostly for informational purposes, and not for instructional purposes.

The profile information about the selected groups of learners as presented in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1) shows that most of the learners are from the age group of 20 – 39 and only a small portion of them do not have access to computer and Internet. Though the frequency or consistency of their access to computer and Internet is not available, most of the learners belong to an age group that is familiar with technology. For this reason, the programmes would benefit from incorporating more technology based learning models.

With regard to the use of media for pedagogical or instructional purposes, and the ways in which effective use of course delivery mechanisms is achieved, there are several ways in
which ELT pedagogy programmes offered through distance mode may be designed or modified. The next section presents a few recommendations for more effective course delivery of the programmes.

7.3 Recommendations for effective course delivery

The examination of the course delivery systems of the selected English language teacher training programmes in India has led to the identification of various factors relating to the effectiveness of the course delivery as discussed in the last chapter. These factors along with the discussion on the course delivery of the programmes in terms of the generations of distance education pedagogy models point to some areas where intervention is needed for more effective course delivery. The following are some recommendations towards more effective course delivery of distance English language teacher education programmes in India.

a) More accessible course materials which encourage reflective practice

Course materials of the selected programmes need to be designed in such a way that they are more accessible for the learners, and promote more reflective practice. This can be facilitated through the use of the features of self-learning materials along with proper scaffolding for helping learners to use their reflective skills. A more inductive approach in presenting the materials will enable the language teachers to experience a good practice (inductive teaching) and reflect on the practice for their classroom use.

An illustration of how course materials for distance learners can encourage reflective practice is presented in Section 7.4.1 below.

b) A more robust assignments feedback mechanism with regular and timely quality feedback

Assignment feedback systems need to be robust enough to facilitate regular and timely feedback with quality, and proper emotional environment (free of anxiety) for knowledge
Strategies for improving the assignment feedback mechanism for better communication between learners and teachers will vary depending on the institutional context of each programme provider. For example, programmes with a high number of enrolments (for example, EFLU programmes) need to assign manageable number of learners to one teacher for giving assignment feedback so that the teacher can give feedback with sufficient individual attention. This will enable the teacher to give regular and timely feedback and support the learners personally and academically.

c) Demonstration of good teaching practice in contact programmes

Contact programmes should demonstrate good teaching practice by giving learners opportunities for experiential learning. Learner-centred sessions can play a vital role in this regard. Instead of the tutor or counsellor giving all the solutions, if the trainee teachers are grouped or paired to discuss their difficulties, then that will give them opportunities to communicate among themselves. For example, if a trainee teacher has questions in his/her mind about the applicability of a particular suggested technique (like use of group work or pair work) in his/her own classroom, the counsellor can make them sit in groups and discuss possible solutions. That will make them reflect on their own contexts and share them with peers. In this way the trainee teachers will get exposure to varieties of teaching modes, and that will help them to get insights for implementing such modes in their teaching situations.

d) Inclusion of a compulsory practice teaching component

Practice teaching needs to be a compulsory part of distance language teacher education programmes to facilitate the reflective cycle of received and experiential knowledge. Without practical experience, professional development of the learners remains incomplete. This is even more relevant in case of the selected programmes as their target learners comprise both pre-service and in-service teachers of English. Practice teaching remains the only opportunity for the pre-service teachers to familiarize themselves with the teaching strategies learnt.
during the programme, and implement these in their own teaching contexts. Teachers’ professional development will be complete only when learners are given the opportunity to participate in the reflective cycle of received knowledge gained through theoretical inputs and experiential knowledge gained from practical experience.

e) Interconnectedness of course delivery mechanisms

Convergence of received and experiential knowledge needs to be facilitated through interconnectedness of assignments, contact programmes and practice teaching. There needs to be a holistic plan for using the course delivery mechanisms to help learners to be reflective practitioners. Instead of considering course delivery mechanisms as isolated components of the programmes, the timing, duration and structure of the mechanisms need to be designed in such a way that they serve as cogs in the same process, involving learners in the reflective cycle of received knowledge and experiential knowledge.

f) Incorporation of technologies to facilitate more participation of the learners

Appropriate technologies need to be incorporated to facilitate more participation of the learners in the process of knowledge construction by integrating elements from second and third generation distance education pedagogy. Multi-media instructional modes will enable the programmes to offer a variety of presentation modes, which is an essential practice in distance education where there is limited contact between teachers and learners, thereby demonstrating good teaching practice virtually. This will also facilitate interactive engagement with course materials and communication with teachers and fellow learners. An increased amount of interaction in the process will help learners to actively participate in the process of shaping their beliefs, attitudes and of constructing their own knowledge. This, in turn will reduce the ‘transactional distance’ (Moore, 1993) between the learners and teachers. However, programme developers must be careful while choosing particular technologies for a programme. The mere application of technology does not necessarily result in an
enhancement of the pedagogical effectiveness of a course. It requires efficient human intervention to carefully incorporate the technologies in the programme according to the need of the programme. Rather than technology driving the pedagogy, the pedagogy needs to exploit the advantages of technology in order to stimulate more interaction and the desired kinds of interaction during the programme. Whether that interaction will promote reflection as required in language teacher education or not will depend on human intervention, i.e. how effectively they are incorporated in the programme. Generating interaction can be considered to be a prerequisite for promoting reflection and social construction of knowledge which are crucial in any language teacher education programme. Technology can provide this forum for interaction by carrying out different roles as a carrier of content, a practice tool, a learning management device, and a communication tool in instructional contexts (Nunan, 2013) These multi-directional roles will ultimately help learners to feel connected with each other and with the programme providers and create a comfortable environment for higher level thinking.

g) Conduct of orientation for learners which can also demonstrate good teaching practice

There should be an orientation programme in the very beginning of the programme to orient learners about the ways that they are expected to participate in the training and to help them understand the inter-connectedness between the course delivery mechanisms. Moreover, such a programme can also be used as an opportunity to demonstrate good teaching practice by conducting learner-centred activities. For example, as this is the first opportunity where the trainee teachers meet each other, simple icebreaking tasks may be used to bring familiarity/affinity among the learners. A task like the following is a simple example.

_Everyone will write four things (in the form of numbers/words like ‘1983’ or ‘Hindi’) about himself/herself that he/she wants others to know. Then everyone will go to at_
least three persons to look at their lists of things and ask guessing questions to find out what they are about.

h) Training and workshops for teachers

Teachers need to be trained about how they need to cater to the requirements of personal and academic support for distance learners.

Teachers in a distance language teacher education programme need to be specially trained on the skills demanded by the programme. The data in the previous chapter showed that teachers in the selected programmes need to be involved at various stages (contact programme, assignments, practicum, etc.) to carry out different responsibilities (conducting sessions, checking assignments, observing practice sessions, giving feedback), and the responsibilities demand skills specific to the needs of the distance learners. Their involvement during the contact programme is expected to be different from regular classroom teaching. Their feedback in assignments needs to be more self-explanatory in a distance programme from how they mark in regular programmes where teachers are always available for learners for immediate clarification. Teacher feedback after practice teaching needs to be more sensitive towards adult learners’ emotions, sense of self worth and previous experience in a distance language teacher education programme as adult learners have limited personal access to the counsellors/tutors. As William (2016) puts it, ‘The only important thing about feedback is what students do with it.’

i) Training and workshops for course writers

Course writers need special training on materials design for distance learners of language teacher education programmes so that they can make the materials more relevant for the learners.
A training programme or workshop before writing the course materials of a programme will help course writers not only to be aware about the skills and strategies needed for materials writing in the specific context of distance education (for example, use of access devices), but also to realize the interconnectedness of the components of the syllabi. Some course writers feel that making materials relevant for distance learners is a near impossible task since learners are from diverse backgrounds. Appropriate training will help change such attitudes and familiarize course writers with various inclusive strategies for materials design, which in turn will bring a positive impact on the actual materials writing process.

For such recommendations be implemented, institutions and programme providers will have to take the necessary administrative and academic decisions. For course materials to be designed in ways in which they are more accessible to learners and can promote more reflective practice, an approach to materials design will need to be adopted which promotes reflective learning. The following section discusses an attempt to suggest such an approach to distance materials design that may promote more reflection among the learners.

### 7.3.1 A sample of materials design for encouraging reflection

This section gives a demonstration of how we might incorporate reflective activities in the text, using Bloom’s revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001).

![Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy](image)

**Fig 7.2: Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy**

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1 This section presents, in modified form, some portions of the researcher’s article ‘The Role of Printed Materials in Promoting Reflection in distance ELT Teacher education Programmes’ (pp. 148 – 155) published in ‘Innovation in English Language Teacher Education’ edited by George Pickering and Prof. Paul Gunashekar (2015)
Though this is not a specific model for reflection, the continuum in this model can provide strategies for moving from acquisition to reflection, the first two aspects of the academic process as stated by Wallace (1991), which are important for ‘handling’ (Wallace, 1991: 43) received knowledge in teacher education. As shown in the diagram above, the arrow shows a continuum from lower order thinking skills to higher order thinking skills. Following this continuum, activities in the materials can engage learners in various steps which will gradually enable them to use their reflective skills. The following activity attempts to demonstrate such a process by proposing an alternative design to an original section of a text from the PSTU materials.

7.3.1.1 An alternate set of activities to promote reflection

The original text (Source: Paper 4 (pp. 8 – 9), MAELT, PSTU, Year 1)

Inter-language Interference

Properties of the L1 are thought to have an influence on the course of L2 learning. The learners ‘transfer’ sounds, structures and usage from one language to the other. There are two kinds of ‘transfer’: the ‘positive transfer’ and the ‘negative transfer’. Similarities between the L1 and L2 cause ‘positive transfer’, while differences between the two cause ‘negative transfer’. The latter is generally known as interference. Positive transfer makes it acceptable to use the L1 habits in the L2 settings. For example, the assumption that the subject goes before all other units in a positive sentence satisfactorily transfers from Telugu to English. On the other hand, in negative transfer L1 habits cause errors in L2. For example, ‘Subject-Object-Verb’ order does not satisfactorily transfer from Telugu to English. An example of typical interference that results from the influence of Telugu re-duplication in English is ‘I want some big big mangoes.’ Problems of interference provide a major source of difficulty.

An outline of the re-designed text

In the following sections the same content is presented through the sequence of stages suggested in Bloom’s taxonomy. The names of the stages are included here to illustrate the sequencing of the activities.
Understanding Language Transfer/Interference

(STAGE: REMEMBER AND UNDERSTAND)

English is not our mother tongue. In most cases in our daily life, we talk in our mother tongue, i.e. in Tamil, Telugu, Assamese, etc. When we speak in the second language, i.e. English, it is often influenced by our mother tongue. This is called interference or language transfer.

For example, Assamese people often find it difficult to pronounce /f/ or /ʃ/ because it not there in their mother tongues. So while speaking in English, they often pronounce ‘ship’ as /sip/ instead of /ʃɪp/ and /pʰan/ instead of /fæn/.

*Have you ever noticed such influence among the people in your region? If yes, make a list of them below. (If you are an in-service teacher, you might think of your students coming from different regions, and note if you observed any such influence among your students.)*

…………………………………………………………………………………………

In the example given above for Assamese speakers, the speakers transfer sounds from their mother tongue to English.

Sometimes the structure or other features might also be transferred. For example, in Telugu, the subject goes before all other units in a positive sentence. When Telugu speakers learn English, this knowledge helps them structure positive sentences in English language easily, because the feature of sentence-initial subject is present in both the languages.

For example,

\[
\text{Manamu} \quad \text{andaramu} \quad \text{Bhаратeyulam. (Telugu)}
\]

1\textsuperscript{st} person + plural verb + numeral Indian + reflexive (speaking about ourselves)

We are all Indians.

From the above two examples (the first one from Assamese and the second one from Telugu), we can
see that language transfer can be of different types. In the first case, transfer happened due to differences between the two languages (Assamese and English). This phenomenon is called negative transfer. In the second case, transfer was the result of similarities between the two languages (Telugu and English). This is called positive transfer.

(STAGE: APPLY)

Now think of some more examples of positive and negative transfers from your own mother tongue to English language. Make some notes in the following space.

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

(STAGE: ANALYZE)

According to you how is language transfer relevant to language teaching? In case of positive transfer, we don’t need to worry much, as positive transfer may actually aid language learning. But negative transfer calls for specific strategies for language teaching. As a language teacher, which of the following things would you do with your learners if you find instances of negative transfer?

1. Ignore it and wait for the learners to realize the mistake themselves
2. Explain the concept of negative transfer
3. Ask the learners not to be influenced
4. Design activities focusing on areas of negative transfer to minimize it

If you are aware of the areas of where negative transfer may occur in your learners’ language, it will help you to identify the areas to work on to help your students improve their English. For example, if you find that many of your students find it difficult to use the verbs ‘drink’
and ‘eat’ because there is one single word to refer to both in their native language, you can design activities around this learning point. Out of the four options above, therefore, Option 4 would be the most appropriate answer.

Now look at the following case study.

Case study of a teacher designing an activity focusing on an area of negative transfer

Below is an outline of the next steps to help understand how the rest of the section will proceed.

(STAGE: EVALUATE)

A list of a number of activities can be presented. Trainees will choose which one appropriately shows a particular case of negative transfer.

(STAGE: CREATE)

Trainees can be guided to design an activity appropriate for addressing a particular case of language transfer.

7.3.1.2 Analyzing the redesigned activity

Here is an analysis of the above activity, highlighting the changes made and the rationale for these.

Scaffolding for reflection

Reflection is a complex process. As the learners/trainees in a distance education programme study on their own, it will inappropriate to expect them to be able to apply advanced reflective skills from the very beginning while presenting new content. The process used here facilitates reflection step by step. The first stage (Remember and understand) provides a foundation for reflection. The following structure can be seen in this stage.
Fig 7.3: Scaffolding in the first stage (Remember and understand)

Though it is a long drawn process, each activity needs to prepare trainees for further reflection on the issue, especially while presenting any new content. The next few stages illustrated above demand application of the skills of applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating respectively. The activity presented above thus attempts to help trainees move gradually from awareness to reflection and the application of reflective skills. The whole process is a kind of scaffolding facilitating higher levels of reflection. This structure of scaffolding in this particular presentation of contents can be illustrated through the following diagram.

Fig 7.4: A structure of scaffolding
A more inductive approach

The redesigned text has introduced the new concepts ‘positive transfer’ and ‘negative transfer’ only after giving relevant examples and eliciting information from perceived learners’ experience as opposed to introducing new terms at the very beginning in the original text. Besides aiding learners’ comprehension, such an inductive approach is also considered as a good practice in ELT methodology. The presentation of a new point or concept using such an inductive approach can also help learners reflect on the use of such a practice in their own classrooms.

Input between steps

In distance education contexts, as the teacher is not physically present to give instant feedback, the course writer needs to give some additional inputs between the activities. For example, in the analysis stage, the question asking the trainees to decide the appropriate option is followed by a discussion of the solution. Moreover, case studies have been used at various places to help clarify concepts.

Other features of SLM (Self-learning materials)

Research in distance education has established the need for using various features in order to make materials self-learning for distance learners. In the above re-designed text, various such features have been incorporated. Some such features include use of personalization (personal pronouns like ‘you’, ‘I’, ‘we’ etc.), informal language, direct questions (like ‘Have you ever noticed such influence among the people in your region?’), simple language (short sentences, small paragraphs, etc.) and so on.

However, it cannot be claimed that this is the only way to promote reflection among distance teacher trainees, or that one needs to follow the model rigorously to facilitate reflection. What is suggested is that incorporating elements of such a model might guide the course writers
regarding ways to promote reflection through print materials in distance teacher training programmes.

Though every care was taken to conduct a holistic and comprehensive study on the area of distance language teacher education in India, the study suffers from certain limitations as discussed below. The following section also indicates some areas that need to be further investigated for better understanding of phenomena relating to effective course delivery of distance language teacher education in India.

7.4 Limitations of the study and further research directions

The limitations of the study include the inability to observe practice teaching sessions due to practical problems, small sample size due to difficulty in reaching out to the groups of stakeholders, indirect observation of contact sessions and possible oversight of diverse contextual factors while analyzing the data.

Some possible areas that need to be investigated to better understand the factors relating to pedagogical effectiveness of course delivery of distance ELT programmes in India are as follows:

• Learners’ ability to relate the received knowledge to their teaching contexts

• Applicability and impact of the experiential knowledge in their own pedagogy

• Incorporation of technological advancements as means of effective course delivery in distance ELT programmes possibly through an experimental study

• Evaluation of the impact of a programme in learners’ beliefs about and practice of teaching skills
7.5 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the fact that the existing practices of distance ELT programmes in India are still largely in the first generation of distance education pedagogy and need to move towards integrating elements from second and third generations of distance education pedagogy for more effective course delivery. Following this discussion in the first part of this chapter and the exploration of the other factors relating to the effectiveness of course delivery in the last chapter, it presents some recommendations for more effective course delivery of the distance ELT programmes in India, which include

- more accessible course materials which encourage reflective practice
- a more robust assignments feedback mechanism with regular and timely quality feedback
- demonstration of good teaching practice in contact programmes
- inclusion of a compulsory practice teaching component
- interconnectedness of course delivery mechanisms
- incorporation of technologies to facilitate more participation of the learners
- conduct of orientation for learners which can also demonstrate good teaching practice, and
- training and workshops for teachers and course writers.

As a means of demonstration of good practice, an alternative way of designing course materials has been suggested. It is hoped that the modest illustration gives potential course developers a framework to design and present materials that allow learners to move from awareness and understanding to creativity and reflection. The chapter concludes by stating the limitations of the study and by presenting directions for future research into the area in order to better understand the effectiveness of course delivery of distance ELT programmes in India.
To conclude, this research study has scratched the surface of a little-explored area in the field of distance English language teacher education programmes in India. Starting with a discussion of the relevant literature exposing the scarcity of studies in this area, the thesis went on to present the real picture of the existing course delivery systems through actual data from the selected programmes. Then it analyzed the data from a holistic perspective to comment on their effectiveness in facilitating received and experiential knowledge of learners for their professional development. Finally, it situated the programmes in the course of developments of distance education pedagogy which helped to see how the programmes had responded to such developments for effective course delivery. Thus the study has initiated the description of the phenomena relating to effective course delivery from pedagogical perspective, which has also led to some insights on the challenges in the process of professional development of teachers through such programmes. It is hoped that this study will pave the way for more focused researches on areas as indicated in Section 7.5.