CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the competitive business scenario, written communication, especially business letters decide the business prospects of the companies and customers. Business letters are written by or to the companies/individuals in different situations such as sales, purchase, credit settlement, problems such as delay, cost etc. The situations demand the use of tone, tone change and point of view. Use of wrong tone and unsuitable point of view in a business letter deprives the writer of a business opportunity. Hence the students of Engineering need to be trained in using appropriate tone and point of view in business letter so that they can be successful in their professional career. But the present English Language curricula focus more on grammatical and structural aspects rather than linking them with career situations. Further, the books and researches on tone and point of view, which are scanty, provide inadequate guidance to the students. Hence the researcher attempted to focus on tone, tone change and point of view in business letters.

6.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY

ELT (English Language Teaching) experts, in an effort to provide a need-based syllabus design focus on the specific areas of language. EAP (English for Academic Purpose) and ESP (English for Scientific Purpose) have suggested a different approach to English language learning and teaching. Experts like H. G. Widdowson and A. J. Herbert introduced technical vocabulary and impersonal passive structures to express scientific and technological facts. But the career needs of the Engineering students also demand business communication especially business letter writing. Adequate training in the use of tone, tone change and point of view in business letters would enable the Engineering students respond suitably to purchase, sales, complaint, persuasion etc., later in their professional career. But the available material on tone, tone change and point of view are so scanty that the students of Engineering could not identify the components which concretise them. Having
been an English teacher for the past twenty three years to the students of Engineering, the researcher felt the imperative need to focus on tone, tone change and point of view in business letters. Hence the Researcher had chosen the topic for his study.

6.3 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RELATED STUDY

Business letter is a form of written communication. Communicative competence, in general, embraces linguistic skills but not the reverse (Widdowson, 1973). Bell (1975) argues that communicative competence is an innate knowledge, which permits the user of a language to create or comprehend utterances, and adds that such knowledge is clearly concerned with the level of discourse in which language operates as an open system in constant interaction with its environment. Breen and Candlin (1980) suggests that communication is not merely a matter of following convention, but also negotiating through and about the convention themselves. Jupp and Hodlin (1975) propose that what the student has to learn is not language but communication (emphasis mine) and the test of the success is in successful communication in real world. Thus the 'communicative competence' indicates the performance of the students in English language in specific situations.

Books and research works on business letter writing deal with format and the techniques of presenting the content such as precision, clarity, appropriate words, politeness etc. Shurter, L. (1948) emphasises 'you' attitude and friendly tone in business letters. Sydney Stevens (1957) suggests that abstract terms, meaningless cliché, circumlocutions should be avoided and clarity in language should be maintained.

King and Ann Cree (1962) deal with persuasive techniques in business letters especially in sales letters and stress the use of friendly tone. Gartside, L. (1973) reveals that a competent knowledge of words and a mastery over their use is necessary to write effective business letters. James, L. (1965) suggests that good-will building functions are performed by the opening and closing of
the letter. Murphy, A. and Peck, E. (1972) identify the specific writing principles for effective letter writing which include completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy and correctness.


Leech, N. and Short, H. (1981) discuss two categories of points of view: i) discourse point of view and ii) fictional point of view. Stanzel (1984) deals with the three oppositions which form the constitutive basis of the narrative situation - person, perspective and mode. Quible, K., Johnson and Mott (1996) discuss the upward directed, downward directed and Horizontal communication. They mean letters to higher officials, subordinates and equals in rank. They suggest that depending on the official of view differs.

Saraswathi, V. (1981), in her research study, analyses the letters written from or to banks, offices and universities and identifies the global conventions in letters with reference to tone. She also identifies local conventions. In her attempt to find out to what extent the students meet the requirements of writing successful official letters, she concludes that (i) the students are not capable of adopting different tones according to the variations in role
relationships and (ii) the students tend to use exaggerated tones. Rohtas Singh (1993), in his experimental study on writing effective letters by defence personnel with special reference to tone and coherence concludes that the students of defence academy lack the skill to use cohesive devices and present ideas in sequence. Koh Moy Yin (1998) attempted a study of “ESP for Engineers” and analyses the problems of administrative heads of industries in business communication. He concludes that inappropriateness of tone and language is a serious problem which will affect not only the inter personal relationship but also the organization to which he belongs.

Thus books and researches on business letters mostly deal with (i) the format of business letters, (ii) theoretical points such as precision, clarity, straight forward expressions etc., (iii) grammatical accuracy and language, (iv) formal and informal tone in general. the researcher came across only scanty material on tone and point of view in business letters. Even the available books and research studies hardly deal with tone and point of view which are very essential in business letters. Hence the researcher ventured to make indepth study by identifying the components of tone, tone change and point of view in business letters and attempted to assess the enhancement of efficiency of the students through an experimental study.

6.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A business letter is a written communication between the company / industries and the customers / dealers in connection with sales, purchase, complaints, despatch etc., for mutual benefit. The operation of the language is of crucial importance in creating a long - lasting / dependable relationship between the writer and the addressee in business letters. Hence efficient and appropriate use of language is imperative for the success of business.

‘Efficiency in language’ includes choice of words, use of appropriate cohesive devices, sequence of function, expression of content stage by stage in sequence and using suitable structure of sentences. In addition to accuracy in
grammar, the integration of these components reveal the tone, tone change and point of view. Though different tones could be expressed in language, the researcher has chosen the mostly needed tones - anger, threatening, persuasion, complaint and reconciliation. Under tone change - Anger to persuasion and Anger to reconciliation are selected. Four points of view - Company to customer, customer to company, company to company and government official to company are chosen.

Since books and research works related to study are very scanty, the researcher resorted to deductive method to identify the components of each tone, tone change and point of view. In the first phase of the experiment the students were given tasks which would involve highlighting only one tone, tone change and point of view. From the response of the students the exponents, which express the tone, tone change and point of view are identified.

Five tones, two tone changes and five points of view are selected in the following sequence. Function sequence and exponents are also attempted.

**Tones**

1. Anger Tone
2. Threatening Tone
3. Persuasive Tone
4. Complaint Tone
5. Reconciliation Tone

**Tone Change**

1. Anger to Persuasion
2. Anger to Reconciliation

**Points of View**

1. Customer's Point of View (in letters to company)
2. Government Officer's Point of View (in letters to company)
3. Company Officer's Point of View (in letters to customer)
The tasks framed in pre test are intended to assess the initial level of acquisition followed by progressive tests (treatment).

In the second phase of the experiment i.e. in progressive tests tasks which involve the use of the identified components were administered. The last task in each of the tone, tone change and point of view is so framed that it involves the integration of the suitable components.

Finally post test is designed to assess the enhancement in the functional efficiency in using tone, tone change and point of view in business letters.

6.5 Objectives of the Study

i) To identify whether the students are familiar with the format of business letters.

ii) To identify the constituents of business letters with special reference to tone, tone change and point of view.

iii) To find out the students’ level of attainment on business letter writing especially in using tone, tone change and point of view at the entry level.

iv) To design, validate and apply the tasks to enhance the functional efficiency of students in business letter writing especially in using tone, tone change and point of view.

v) To find out the effect of the implementation of tasks on enhancing the functional efficiency of students of Engineering in business letter writing with special reference to tone, tone change and point of view.
6.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

i) The students of Engineering are familiar with the format of business letter.

ii) The students' functional efficiency in using tone, tone change and point of view at the entry level is very low.

iii) The students could not distinguish between tones and they lack the competence to assume different roles and write business letters from different points of view (e.g. as a customer, manager, government officer etc.,)

iv) The students competence in identifying the constituents of tone, tone change and point of view is very low.

v) The students’ level of attainment of writing function sequence in business letters is below the expected level.

vi) The constituents of tone, tone change and point of view could be identified.

vii) Tasks can be designed suitably which would demand the application of the constituents of tone, tone change and point of view.

viii) The tasks could be applied to the students in a phased manner in the classroom.

ix) The functional efficiency of the students could be enhanced by the application of the tasks.

x) The enhancement of functional efficiency in using tone, tone change and point of view could be assessed.

xi) The effect of the implementation of the task could be assessed.

6.7 HYPOTHESES

i) The level of attainment of students in writing business letters with special reference to tone, tone change and point of view at the entry level is below average.
ii) There will be significant mean difference between the pre test and post test score of the students on tone, tone change and point of view.

iii) There will be significant interrelationship between function sequence and exponents of functions such as sentence structure, cohesive device and choice of appropriate words.

iv) The predictive efficiency of each of the constituents of tone, tone change and point of view differ significantly in identifying the functional efficiency of the students.

6.8 Delimitations of the Study

1. The experimental study was conducted only in Alagappa Chettiar College of Engineering and Technology, Karaikudi and confined only to (I year B. E.) Electronics and Communication Engineering students.

2. All the 56 students admitted in Electronics and Communication Engineering branch were selected for investigation.

3. The study was conducted in 3 months (50 periods each of 40 minutes duration).

4. The factors such as socio-economic background, background of the parents, exposure of English language at home, mother tongue, rural - urban background and medium of instruction at school level lie beyond the scope of this study.

6.9 Experimental Design

In this experimental research, the researcher has adopted single group pre test - progressive test - post test design. In the pre test tasks on tone, tone change and point of view were administered to assess the performance of students at the entry level. In the progressive tests, tasks (including one on format of business letters) on anger tone, threatening tone, persuasive tone, complaint tone, reconciliation tone, tone change and points of view were
administered. Before administering the tasks in the progressive tests students were given guidance on the use of cohesive device, choice of vocabulary, sentence, structures - condition, cause - effect, purpose and concession. The same tasks given in the pre test were repeated in the post test to assess the enhancement in the performance.

6.10 Construction and Validation of Tools

To assess the performance of the students at different stages of the experiment, the tools are to be applied. It is necessary to fix the items while constructing the tool. In the present study the researcher has constructed 53 tests out of which 11 tests under pre test and post test each and the rest 31 tests (including one on format of the business letter and one on recapitulations) under progressive tests. Each test is designed in such a way that it requires the use of different independent variables. Naturally, the maximum score allotted to each test vary depending on the nature of the task.

The content validity of the tools was established through experts' views and their evaluation. Reliability of all the tests from the beginning to end were established and were found to be significant. In the pre test, progressive test and post test, the range of reliability values varied from 0.78 to 0.95. All the reliability coefficients were found to be statistically significant. Hence the reliability and the validity of the tools were established.

6.10.1 Pre test

The pre test includes 12 tests and for each test two phased assessment scale was adopted. The first 5 tests under Part A which includes one test each on i) anger, ii) threatening, iii) persuasion, iv) complaint and v) reconciliation were given. In each tone independent variables such as choice of words, cohesive device, fill in the blanks etc., were included. Naturally marks allotted to each task varies depending on the nature of the task and the expected
answers. Two tests under Part A on tone change was also administered in the pre test i) Anger to persuasion, ii) anger to reconciliation.

Under Part B of the pre test 5 tests were conducted (i) Customer’s Point of View (in letters to company), (ii) Government Officer’s Point of View (in letters to company), (iii) Company Officer’s Point of View (in letters to customer), (iv) Company Officer’s Point of View (in letters to another official of the same company) and (v) Company Officer’s Point of View (in letters to customer). Maximum mark for each task is fixed based on the number of marks and the use of exponent of each function. If the students write grammatically correct sentence which express a particular function, he is awarded 2 marks (one for using appropriate function and one mark for accuracy and sequence of sentences). 1 - 1/2 - 0 scale is adopted in the assessment of the tests.

6.10.2 Progressive Tests

34 tests are administered under progressive tests out of which one on format of business letter and the other on recapitulation. The rest of the 32 tests focus on independent variables such as sentence completion, cohesive device, choice of appropriate words, function sequence and writing exponents of each function. 7 tests on anger tone, 2 on threatening tone, 6 on persuasive tone, 4 on complaint tone and 6 on reconciliation tone, 2 on tone change and 5 on point of view were administered. 1 - 0 scale was adopted in assessing tests which involve one word answer, use of cohesive device, fill in the blanks exercises and 1 - 1/2 - 0 scale was adopted in assessing the tasks which involve writing complete business letter using appropriate tone, tone change and point of view.

6.10.3 Post Test

The same tests given under pre test were given in the post test and the same scale of assessment was adopted. Thus the tests were administered and
objectivity and uniformity in assessment were maintained. As the maximum marks varied from 5 - 14 the raw scores were converted into out of 10 scores for the purpose of statistical uniformity.

6.11 EXPERIMENTATION IN PHASES

The tasks were administered in three phases i.e. in the first phase pre test was conducted followed by progressive tests in the second phase and in the third phase the post test was conducted. The pre test which includes 12 tasks (under Part A & B) which could be completed in 40 minutes each were administered in the classroom. Under Part A 5 tones (Anger, Threatening, Persuasive, Complaint and Reconciliation) and 2 tone changes (Anger to Persuasion and Anger to Reconciliation) are included. Under Part B, 5 points of view - i) Customers' point of view, ii) Government Official's point of view, iii) Customer to Company point of view, iv) Company official's point of view (to another official of the same company) and v) Company to Customer point of view are included.

In phase II - i.e. progressive tests 34 tasks were given to students which include one task on business letter format and one on recapitulation. The remaining 32 tasks deal with the components of each tone. The last two tasks on anger, two tasks on threatening, 2 tasks on persuasion, one task on complaint, two tasks on reconciliation involve the integration of the exponents of each tone. All the 3 tasks on tone change and five tasks on points of view demand the synthesis of all the components of tone change and point of view.

In phase III, the post test in which the same 12 tasks given in phase I i.e. pre test were repeated so as to assess the enhancement of the efficiency of students in using tone and point of view in business letters.

6.12 DATA COLLECTION

The tasks were prepared in a sheet leaving sufficient space below for the students to write their response. In short answer questions and fill in the
blanks tasks adequate space was given to write the response. In case the space was found to be inadequate, the students were permitted to use the next page which was also left blank. Depending on the nature of tasks 40 minutes / 20 minutes time duration was given to the students to complete each task. Soon after the test, the responses were collected from the students. Extra time was not given.

6.13 Scheme of Data Analysis

The marks secured by the students are tabulated and the scores are converted into out of 10 and mean and standard deviations were calculated. Four types of statistical analysis were applied i) Description, ii) Multivariate, iii) Relational and iv) Regression analysis. The interpretations and implications are given on the basis of statistical analysis.

6.14 Findings and Conclusion

To sum up, a diligent study of the responses of 56 students to the given task on five tones, two tone change and four point of views reveal the following implications which are presented as findings:

1. At the surface level ‘tone’ and ‘point of view’ look difficult to express. But the study revealed that they lend themselves to scientific analysis. Hence, tone and point of view, which are abstract and embedded in language can be easily concretised through functions and language.

2. Tone emerges slowly and gradually. If the function sequence and exponents of each function are meticulously followed.

3. If the writer leaves out any function and moves to the next or alters the sequence of functions, the tone emerges only partially. The deficiency in the total effect of tone could be identified by the reader himself.

4. Anger tone is revealed if the functions are sequenced in ascending order and the sentence structures are used appropriately.
5. Threatening tone emerges only towards the end of the letter. With regard to exponents conditional structure should be followed.

6. There is room for emergence of the persuasive tone only when the positive aspects of a product are mentioned and appropriate language components are used. But for the highlighting of the special features the way to persuasive tone will prove to be difficult.

7. Complaint tone is the result of the inconveniences faced by the writer. So complaint tone emerges only if the inconveniences / problems / consequences which affect the writer are focused. Further, the sequence of the functions should be followed.

8. After highlighting complaint tone, if questions beginning with auxiliary verbs and negative statements are used, anger tone emerges. If the statement of inconvenience / difficulties caused by the action of the addressee is followed by the statement expressing the writer’s readiness to put up with it, reconciliation tone emerges.

9. Point of view depends upon the point from which a thing is looked at. The engineering graduates are placed in positions such as production engineer, sales engineer, quality engineer, purchase managers etc., in companies / industries and in Government service as junior / senior engineers (in PWD, TWAD, Highways, Transport Corporations etc.). As persons occupying senior positions they use language which is expressive of instruction.

10. Letters written on behalf of the company (by officials of the company) to the customers justify the product / decisions / action of the company. The interest of the company is implied in every exponent of the function.

11. The point of view of the customer (in his / her letter address to the company) gets expressed gradually through the sequence of functions and content reflecting the writer’s right to claim.
12. A writer of a business letter could reveal his point of view in isolation if he uses grammatically correct sentences in continuous writing. But careful planning of the function sequence leads to effective and specific expression of a point of view.

13. There is a natural order in the emergence of tones and tone change as mentioned below:
   
i) Anger tone can follow complaint tone.
   
ii) Threatening tone will always follow anger tone.
   
iii) Persuasive tone is followed by reconciliation.
   
iv) Complaint tone can be followed by persuasive and reconciliation tones.
   
v) Complaint tone can be followed by anger tone.
   
vi) Anger tone will shift to persuasive and reconciliation tones.

6.15 Educational Implications

☞ The engineering students should learn to use sentence structures such as negative statements, questions beginning with ‘be’ verbs and auxiliary verbs for expressing anger tone in business letters.

☞ Crude expression of anger would reflect upon the industry in which the students would be employed and so the students should learn to use appropriate words to express anger tone in such a way that the addressee could understand the writer’s mind and rectify / clarify / solve the problem early.

☞ The students must concentrate on conditional structures and the use of ‘unless / otherwise’ to express threatening tone.

☞ The students should plan the function sequence which is the major contributing factor for expressing the tone.

☞ The engineering students’ creative talent in role play by using words / sentences which would persuade the addressee should be developed.
The students must learn to use cohesive device, appropriate words and sentence structure so as to highlight reconciliation tone in business letters.

In writing business letters, the students should learn to change from one tone to the other tone - e.g. anger to persuasion / anger to reconciliation etc., using suitable tone changers ('However', 'Anyway' 'It's alright' etc.).

The students must learn to project / highlight different points of view.

English teachers at plus two level focus on improving vocabulary so as to choose the appropriate word to express different tones and point of view in business letters.

The curriculum designers for Engineering / Commerce and Management Courses in English language can give due emphasis for business letter writing.

The Academic Council in Universities can pass a resolution to the effect that the syllabus committee in Engineering / Commerce and Business Administration should introduce tone and point of view in business letter writing.

6.16 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The area, which the researcher has chosen, has the potential for focussing on different aspects of the issues. It is not possible to exhaust all the aspects of the issues in a time - framed research study. Hence the researcher has delimited his study only to a few mostly needed tones, tone change, point of view.

The above research necessities and highlights the need for conducting other pertinent researches which would enable the academic research community to pursue a comprehensive and integrated aspects of this research.

The researcher has not dealt with the impact of the students’ rural / urban back ground on the expression of different tones / tone change.
and point of view in business letters. Hence the following topic is suggested.

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF STUDENTS’ RURAL / URBAN BACKGROUND ON THE EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENT TONES, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS.

The difference in the level of enhancement of efficiency between boys and girls in using tones, tone change and point of view has not been attempted by the research. Hence the following study may be pursued.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE LEVEL OF ENHANCEMENT IN USING ‘TONE’ AND ‘POINT OF VIEW’ IN BUSINESS LETTER WRITING BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATE BOYS AND GIRLS.

The researcher has not attempted to study the influence of socio-cultural background of the students on the use of ‘tone’, ‘tone change’ and ‘point of view’ in business letters. So the following topic can be taken for research.

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDENTS ON THE USE OF TONE, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTER WRITING - A STUDY.

In the present research study, the longitudinal study of the slow learners’ performance in using tone, tone change and point of view has not been attempted. Hence the following topic can be pursued:

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SLOW LEARNERS IN USING DIFFERENT TONES, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS.

A comparative study of the performance of English medium and Tamil medium students has not been attempted in this research work. Hence the following title is suggested for further research.
THE PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH MEDIUM AND TAMIL MEDIUM STUDENTS ON THE USE OF TONE, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS - A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The performance of students in the plus two final examination in English language indicate the level of achievement at the school stage. The students' performance in using tone, tone change and point of view in business letters (at the UG level) can be studied in relation to the performance at the school level. But the researcher has not attempted such a study. Hence the following topic can be taken up for research:

A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PLUS TWO AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS IN USING TONE, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS.

The researcher has not compared the performance of UG students of Engineering studying in different branches. Hence the following research topic is suggested:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF CIVIL, ELECTRICAL, ELECTRONICS, MECHANICAL AND BIOTECHNOLOGY IN USING TONE, TONE CHANGE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS.

A study of the performance of the UG students of Commerce and Business Administration in using tone and point of view in Business letters. Hence the following topic is suggested:

PERFORMANCE OF THE UG STUDENTS OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN USING TONE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS - A STUDY.

The researcher has not attempted to study the effect of the interaction between company official industrialists and the students of Engineering
on the use of tone and point of view in business letters. Hence research on the following topic can be pursued:

THE EFFECT OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE COMPANY OFFICIALS AND STUDENTS OF ENGINEERING ON THE USE OF TONE AND POINT OF VIEW IN BUSINESS LETTERS - A STUDY.

6.17 CONCLUSION

In the present study, the researcher has concretised the abstract terms ‘tone’ and point of view in business letters and given a detailed conceptual framework for implementation to wider samples. The study would be helpful to the teachers and the students in perceiving how tone and point of view emerges in language if the components are used appropriately. The researcher hopes that his study would motivate the teachers and students to pursue further and read and write letters keeping tone and point of view in business letters in mind.