CHAPTER - III
RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

The third chapter entitled ‘Research Design’ discusses the design of the present study. It highlights the methodology of the entire study. This research design is a plan of investigation which includes an outline of what the researcher has done, from writing the objectives, hypothesis and their implications to the final analysis of data. It includes the subjects called ‘sample’, tools needed for the collection of data, procedure followed for collection of data and its analysis. It focuses on the functions as mentioned below. It conveys the facts about the nature and type of data required along with where such data is found. The design of the study answers many questions like: what, where, when, how much and by what, concerning the study. The chapter also answers to the questions such as, ‘How has the sample been drawn’? ‘What was the sample size’? ‘How were the tools designed”? ‘How have valid and reliable tools been constructed”? Thus, the present chapter encompasses the research design adopted by the researcher. It also contains the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, explanation of the terms, type of the study and the delimitation of the study.

3.1 Rationale of the Present Study

Being able to communicate in English is an absolute prerequisite in today’s world of the cut-throat competition. Many times it is found that people lose the prospective jobs due to their inability to communicate properly. English is the only language that can help in communicating even internationally. There are still many graduates all over India, who find it difficult to draft a simple official letter in English appropriately. This lack of command over the language adversely affects their career and it becomes the main cause for missing valuable opportunities for them.
Moreover, with the rise in career options including overseas, education is now available and affordable to Gujarati students. English is looked upon as a visa to a stable and lucrative professional future. The State Government has taken initiatives in favour of the English which is seen as the window to the world. In order to level Gujarat state with the globe, the Gujarat Government supports the projects like Society for Creation of Opportunity through Proficiency in English (SCOPE) for improving the Communication Skills of the youth in English. It indicates that there is a great need to enhance the Communication Skills in English especially of the youth. SCOPE offers English learning opportunities to civic society and also that of language labs in colleges. The State Education department has also made English a compulsory subject right from the Std. I to the higher secondary school level now. But the concrete results are yet to show. Students belonging to the Gujarati middle class continue to have minimal exposure to the English language. They hardly get to interact in English or familiarize themselves with the English language. At the most the English textbook is all they have encountered during their school years. Students aspiring for fluency in spoken English still complain that their peers laugh at them when they attempt to conduct all conversations in English. Nevertheless, as a corollary of the promise of lucrative opportunities, the craze for ‘English Medium’ education is on the rise at the school level and college level as well. The clear result is the increasing number of ‘English Medium’ classes in educational institutes being sanctioned by the universities in Gujarat in the recent years.

The researcher of the present study felt it to be necessary at this juncture to know the English teaching situation in the Commerce faculty in the Kachchh University level set-up as she carried out the present research work in a college, affiliated to the Kachchh University of Gujarat. Previously, it was affiliated to the Gujarat University. At the undergraduate level, there used to be English medium, ‘A’ stream as well as ‘B’ stream. Higher Secondary School Education (H.S.S.E) students of Gujarati medium (with English Lower Level) used to study ‘A’ stream course in English. H.S.S.E students of Gujarati medium (without English) used to study ‘B’
stream course in English. Not all Commerce colleges had ‘B’ stream. This means that there were two different texts and grammar topics to be taught to students of these two streams. This arrangement was only for the First Year B.Com. There was no separate stream for the students of the Second Year B.Com. and the Third Year B.Com. The students of the Second Year and Third Year B.Com. were tested through only theoretical questions, based on the text prescribed for study. It had been than six years that ‘A’ stream was further bifurcated into ‘English Medium’ and ‘other than English medium’. While two different texts were prescribed, the grammar syllabus, however, for the two branches of ‘A’ stream was the same. In all, there were three different texts, one each for ‘A’ stream (English medium); ‘A’ stream (other than English medium but having English as one subject in higher secondary) and ‘B’ stream (No subject like English at the higher secondary level). Then with English made compulsory in higher secondary education, the ‘B’ stream has ceased to exist from the academic year 2008-09.

As mentioned earlier, in Kachchh region, especially at the undergraduation level of Commerce faculty, English is offered as compulsory subject. Its objectives are such as, learning comprehensive and expressive skills but in Commerce faculty ‘English’ is taught as a compulsory subject only in the First Year Degree course with more emphasis on comprehensive skills and in the remaining years of Commerce graduation ‘English’ serves the purpose of a tool to learn ‘Commercial Communication’ which is one of the compulsory subjects in all the three years of B.Com. Degree. The objectives of teaching ‘Commercial Communication’ are different from the teaching of general English i.e. business letter writing, correspondence with different organizations, report writing etc. so it is obvious that only ‘written communication skills’ are emphasized in the F.Y.B.Com. Spoken and Presentation Skills are almost ignored. Therefore many vernacular medium students generally remain passive listeners and try to memorize the subject contents in order to succeed in university examinations.
Moreover, Gujarat state is known for its ‘Business’ qualities. Here, most students prefer to go for Commerce education in order to be the successful professionals. But sometimes these students lag behind in communication skills in English. Not only this but the researcher, as a lecturer, observed that “there is a direct link between language and communication skills. Some of the F.Y.B.Com. Students are best in obtaining excellent results in both these subjects but the majority of these Commerce undergraduates get just above average marks in the same subjects due to various reasons like ‘lack of prior foundation in English, lack of their knowledge of English, poor personal motivation, deficiencies in interpersonal communication skills in English, no practical exercise, lack of extensive and intensive reading in English’ etc. Due to their lack of communication skills in English their self-concept, self-confidence and self-esteem remain low and a kind of ‘inferiority complex’ develops. Such students make use of readymade books and lectures to understand ‘Communication Skills’, but the skills cannot be strengthened without systematic practice which is necessary for making them competent communicators in English. Now the question arises, ‘what would be the depth of Communication Skills possessed by these Commerce undergraduates if they are unable to convey their ideas to the world?’ Their inability to cope-up with the present scenario of Privatization, Liberalization and Globalization (PLG) might affect their personal and professional development at many levels if they do not have properly enhanced communication skills in English.”

Furthermore, during the phase of the review of related literature, it was found that many studies had been undertaken that are related to the area of developing different skills and strategies for teaching various aspects of English and other disciplines. There was hardly any study concerning the strategy for enhancing four communication skills, particularly LSRW skills in English for the Commerce undergraduates. Even the review of related literature by the researcher for the present study indicated that various efforts have been undertaken to cover up the area of school and colleges and attempts have been made by various studies to enrich linguistic skills and language aspect in the area of teaching and learning English language as
well as various computer mediated technologies, programmes and strategies were developed and implemented. Many studies were carried out related to various aspects of English language for different levels of students.

Considering the reviews as presented in the second chapter of the present study, it seems that the studies related to the importance of English language were concerned with the improvement in English comprehension and English usage. Studies which dealt with the ‘importance of English’ as a language in the field of communication were mainly concerned with the issues such as ‘Teaching and Learning English’ by Dewal (1974), Desai (1975), Vandalatta (1976), Usha Kumar(1978), Saraswathi (1982), Sundara (1984), Shivpuri (1982), Jyothi (1993), Soumign (1984), Rao and P.Sunanda (1993), S.Veena(1982), Keskar(1984), Kumar Karuna (1985), (Pendyala 1990), Barot (1995), Jacob (1985), Khare(1986), and Singh,N.(2001). The studies related to the ‘communication skills’ by Sinha (1967), Dave (1974), Mathew (2001), Jadeja (1988), Tedla (2007), Pillai (1988), Gade (2005) Raja (2005) and Al.Shamiry Rafik (2000) and the review of related literature focusing on the areas of ‘strategy’ development by implementing different approaches, methods and techniques, laid stress on the ‘Development of Strategy and its Effectiveness’ by Pal (1978), Lalitha(1981), Joseph (1983), Menon and Natraj(1984), Sheth(1984) Vimala Devi (1986), Ekbote (1987), Skanthakumari(1987), Jadeja (1988), Amita (1989), Dave (1996), Vishwanathan(2003), Raja (2005) and Gurpreet (2004) and some studies emphasizing on the ‘pedagogical aspects’ by Pandian(1983), Patted(1984), Pillai(1984), Sundra (1984), Jataluddin(1985), Jacob(1985), Miyan (1986) and Piyavadee (1988) have provided the researcher the idea awareness and the timely perception for initiating the present study. The reviewed studies focused on either English language or communication skills or a strategy for developing one or two skills. Those studies had focused on either school level or college level or university level or the general level students. Some had selected undergraduates as the sample of their study but did not have the aspect like developing all the LSRW skills or those studies did not have the sample of the undergraduate students or if the studies had a sample of the undergraduates, those undergraduates belonged to any other faculty except Commerce.
Thus, throughout the review phase, the researcher could not locate any study related to developing a strategy to enhance the LSRW skills in English for the Commerce Undergraduates. Therefore she felt that if a sincere attempt is made to utilize the period of graduation in teaching of language and enhancement of communication skills of these undergraduates along with the other studies, it would do a world of good, both personally and professionally. And as India seeks to bridge the gap between the first and second economies, the intensifying efforts of growing the first economy, these graduates’ skills will be most advantageous for the national development too.

As far as the present study is concerned, the researcher believes that under graduation is the stage, where these undergraduates try to promote their academic achievements, where they seriously think and plan about their future to be moulded, where they begin to evaluate their strengths. Therefore, at this juncture, it is very much essential for these Commerce undergraduates to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full potential to become productive and contributing members of the world community.

So far as Commerce education is directly linked with the economy and since English is having its global importance, the researcher felt that in the present global culture, it was a need of the hour to enhance the Communication Skills of these F.Y.B.Com. students in English by developing and implementing a comprehensive and standard-based strategy that can be effective and efficient for them for their entry in the job market, leading to their personal and professional growth.

Considering all the aspects as mentioned above, the researcher proposed the present study in the area of developing and implementing a strategy to enhance the First Year Commerce students’ Communication Skills in English in its right perspective.
3.2 Statement of the Problem

Development and Implementation of a Strategy to Enhance Communication Skills in English for the Commerce Undergraduates.

3.3 Objectives of the Present Study

1. To study the initial level of Communication Skills in English possessed by the First Year B.Com. students.

2. To develop the strategy to enhance Communication Skills in English possessed by the First Year B.Com. students.

3. To implement the developed strategy for the First Year B.Com. students.

4. To study the effectiveness of the strategy developed.

   a) In terms of the achievement of the Communication Skills of the F.Y.B. Com. students.

   b) In terms of the students’ reflections about the strategy.

3.4 Explanation of the Terms

3.4.1 Communication Skills

For the present study, the term ‘Communication’ was considered as defined by Leagans (1960), ‘Communication is the process by which two or more people exchange their ideas, facts, feelings or impressions in ways that each gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent and use of message’.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word ‘skill’ as an ability, mastery and competence. It can be considered as a learned power of doing something competently that is developed.

‘Communication Skill’, for the present study, was considered as the learned power of doing something competently in the area of communication.
For the present study, ‘Communication Skills’ were learned by the students and used effectively to deliver their message in context of the given situation with the help of the implementation of a developed strategy by the researcher. The skills practised by the students were identified with four general areas of communication.

1. Receivers’ Skills (such as the study skills, information, retrieval and note taking).

2. Oral and Written Presentation Skills.

3. Skills in Communicating with Person to Person by interviewing and being interviewed.

4. Skills while working in groups i.e. participation of every individual in group, group leading and running meetings.

3.4.2 Strategy

The Oxford dictionary defines the term ‘strategy’ as a ‘plan of action’, ‘a master plan’ and ‘long term: plan’.

The term ‘strategy’ generally refers to such designs, worked out for solving a specific situation. The strategy of the present study was a suitable combination of different components such as methods, media, approaches and techniques, utilized for enhancing the communication skills of the First Year B.Com. students in the context of teaching contents of ‘English’ and ‘Commercial Communication’ subjects and certain situational requirements. The strategy of the present study encompassed different situations as per the requirement felt for the development of Communication Skills for the F.Y.B.Com. undergraduates.

3.4.3 Effectiveness

An increase in the grades/scores, from pre-test to post-test and the positive reactions given in the questionnaire by the First Year B.Com. students, have been considered as the effectiveness of the developed strategy for the present study.
3.5 Hypothesis

'There will be no significant difference in the results between the pre-test and the post-test, conducted for the First Year B.Com. students.'

3.6 Type of the Present Study

The present study is the ‘Developmental-cum-Experimental’ study by nature. Hence, at this point of time, it is imperative to give details about what do the words ‘developmental study’ indicate?

3.6.1 Developmental Study

The developmental type of investigation provides facility to bring instructions process under scientific scrutiny. It shows great possibility of understanding the complex interplay of the process in real instructional situations.

Highlighting the importance of the developmental type of study, Wiles (1972) suggested the use of the developmental study in educational research in order to increase the applicability of fairly stable models, inputs, materials, procedures etc. developed in controlled conditions. In these experimentations, which are carried out in real settings, the researcher may manipulate certain variables of his or her interest but does not control all unwanted variables, both organic and environmental. Although the presence of large number of variables makes the replication of the study difficult, but the field experimentation becomes more realistic and life like.

While discussing the necessity to evolve a new methodology to carry out the developmental studies which was called a-experimentation, Guba (1971) came out with various ways of designing studies. He described a technique of continuous time analysis of data that might enable the field of investigator to identify the crucial events in the processes he or she is studying. What runs through such views of Guba(1971) and Wiles(1972) is the significance in conducting research in real conditions where all related variables function in a natural fashion. A complex interaction operating among these variable provide new patterns of relationships possibly different from those which arrive from research in controlled conditions.
Considering the views of the developmental research signified by Guba (1971), the researcher applied the developed strategy in a natural situation without controlling the extraneous variables. With the purpose of sustaining the interest of the students and to develop their communicative skills, the researcher made the use of interesting and need centered instructional process and materials. She used different teaching methods with various components. The researcher also made the use of multi media package including audio-aids, visual aids and audio-video aids. The strategy components also comprised of various methods, media, techniques, approaches and human-non-human resources that were useful to enable the students to enhance their communication skills in English. The present study also fulfilled the criteria of continuous time analysis of the obtained data as were considered crucial for the developmental study. It can also be seen from the various views discussed above that it has been the need of an hour to conduct experimentations in real conditions for the effective applications of generalizations.

3.7 Delimitation of the Present Study

The present study was delimited to the First Year B.Com students (who had studied in Gujarati medium schools at the higher secondary level) of Tolani Commerce College, Adipur (Kachchh) affiliated to the Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kachchh University, Bhuj –Kachchh (Gujarat, India).

3.8 Population of the Present Study

The First Year B.Com. Students (who had studied in Gujarati medium schools at the higher secondary level) constituted the population for the present study.

3.9 Sample of the Present Study

The purposive sample was selected for the present study from the First Year B.Com. class. The sample constituted of 54 students out of which 27 students were randomly assigned to the Experimental group and 27 students were assigned to the Control group.
3.10 Design of the Present Study

The present study is a Developmental-cum-Experimental study, using Pre-test - Post-test design. The study was conducted in four phases as mentioned below.

PHASE - I

- The Information Sheets were given to the F.Y.B.Com. students (of Gujarati medium having English as one subject at their Higher Secondary School level) to get some basic information about the students’ academic and family background and the adequate basic knowledge regarding communication skills possessed by the First Year B.Com. students.

- An Achievement Test was administered by the researcher to collect relevant data regarding the initial level of the Communication Skills in English other than oral possessed by the First Year B.Com students.

- A structured interview, followed by the group discussion, was conducted by the researcher to assess the oral Communication Skills in English possessed by the F.Y.B.Com. Students. Every interview was tape-recorded.

- A group discussion was arranged by the researcher to assess the Communication Skills possessed by the First Year B.Com. Students. The video-recording of the group discussion was done.

- This combination of an achievement test, the structured interview and the group discussion was considered as the pre-test of the present study.
PHASE - II

- After the administration of the Pre-test, the analysis of the Pre-test was done by the researcher.

- The instructional inputs were developed using different methods, techniques, media, resources (Human/Non-Human) and approaches in context of the initial level of the Communication Skills possessed by the First Year B.Com. students and the required desirable changes related to their Skills and certain situational requirements such as group presentation, interview etc.

- On the basis of the analysis of the result of the Pre-test over the selected sample of the students the strategy was finalized and it was implemented on the Experimental group. Thus, the implemented strategy for the intervention program was considered as the Developed strategy for the present study.

- The developed strategy was implemented on the Experimental Group of the students during one academic year where 45 sessions were allotted for enhancing the Communication Skills in English of these Commerce undergraduates. Each session was of 1 hour to 2.30 Hours per day. The Experimental group was given the special treatment whereas the Control group was not given any special treatment. Thus, the evaluation of the Experimental Group of the students helped the researcher understand the suitability and effectiveness of different components utilized in the strategy implementation.
PHASE - III

- In this phase, the researcher administered the Post-test over the Experimental Group and the Control Group of the F.Y.B.Com. Students.

- This Post-test was parallel to the Pre-test.

- After the administration of the post-test, the Evaluation of the post-test was done by the researcher.

- After the evaluation of the post-test, the researcher gave Feedback to the selected sample of the Commerce undergraduates, utilizing the results of the pre-test and the post-test in context of the students’ initial level and the progressive development of their Communication Skills after the implementation of the developed strategy during the treatment.

- These pre-test and post-test were meant to assess all the communication skills in English possessed by the F.Y.B.Com. Students, before and after the implementation of a developed strategy.

- These tests were constructed on the selected contents which took care of the evaluation of LSRW skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) of the students by arranging possible tests (such as the written test as well as the oral test) related to various skills utilizing suitable activities.

- The pre-test and the post-test were of parallel type, where the content items considering the LSRW skills were similar but not identical, bearing the same weight age and the time duration for administration.

- These LSRW skills encompassed all those skills such as Receivers’ skills, Presentation skills, Skills in communicating with person to person and group, Skills while working in groups.
PHASE - IV

- In this phase, the researcher arranged a session for the students of the Experimental Group in order to get their reflections regarding the developed strategy.

- Then the researcher also studied the effectiveness of the developed strategy, keeping in mind the following measures.
  
i) Comparison of the results of the Pre-test and the Post-test.
  
ii) Analysis of the responses received through the Reflection Session.

In order to achieve the objective 4 b), a questionnaire was designed by the researcher to get the reflections of the First Year B.Com. students regarding the developed strategy. The questionnaire consisted of various items to know the reflections related to different components of the developed strategy. These reflections were received from the Experimental Group of the Students. The questionnaire included the open-ended and the close-ended items. It was also referred to the experts in the field of education for finalization.

3.11 Tools for the Present Study

To achieve the objectives of the present study, the following tools were prepared by the researcher for collecting the required data. These tools were finalized by the experts having specialization in the field of communication skills in English.

3.11.1 Information Sheet

The Information Sheets were designed and given to the F.Y.B.Com. students to collect the information regarding their academic and family background. The items of the Information Sheet were framed to know whether those students had ‘English’ as one of the subjects at the higher secondary school level, whether those students could feel free to communicate in English, whether their parents were ‘Working Parents’. Some of the items of the Information Sheet were framed to know the
academic qualifications of the parents of the F.Y.B.Com. students and their socio-economic background. Thus, the information regarding the students was helpful to the researcher to decide the level of the content of the English text to be selected, a set of vocabulary to be utilized for designing the content part of the strategy. The tool ‘Information Sheet’ is attached in Appendix D.

5.11.2 Pre-Test and Post-Test

The researcher organized the pre-test and post-test for the realization of the objectives 1 and 4 a) of the present study. The pre-test was consisted of three components such as an achievement test, structured interview and group discussion. The post-test was parallel to the pre-test. Those pre-test and post-test meant to assess all the communication skills possessed by the F.Y.B.Com. students, before and after the implementation of a developed strategy. Those tests were constructed on the selected contents which took care of the evaluation of LSRW skills (Learning, Speaking, Reading and Writing) of the students by arranging possible tests (such as the written test as well as the oral test) related to various skills utilizing suitable activities. The pre-test and the post-test were of parallel type, where the content items considering the LSRW skills were similar but not identical, bearing the same weight age and the time duration for administration. These LSRW skills encompassed all those skills such as Receivers’ skills, Presentation skills, Skills in communicating with person to person or group, Skills while working in groups. Those tests were finalized by the experts having specialization in the field of Communication Skills.

A. Achievement Test

An Achievement test was administered by the researcher to collect the relevant data regarding the Communication Skills other than the Oral Communication Skills possessed by the F.Y.B.Com. Students. It included the questions related to the Communication Skills possessed by the First Year B.Com. Students. The test contained open-ended and the close-ended items. It was referred to the experts in the area of the Communication Skills.
“An achievement test for the present study was a collection of test items selected to represent much wider body of information in each separate subject matter area, the exact extent and nature of which was determined by the curriculum makers and textbook guidance testing.” It was an instrument designed to measure relative accomplishment of the students in a specified area. It helped the researcher rank the students with respect to their individual differences in their achievements in a test. Its evaluation helped her recognize the students’ level of writing skill. The tool ‘Achievement Test’ is attached in Appendix number E1 for the Pre-test and F1 for the Post-test.

B. Structured Interview

A structured interview was designed by the researcher to assess the oral Communication Skills possessed by the First Year Undergraduates. It was finalized with the help of the experts. In the structured interview, the questions were framed in advance, seeking the help of the experts, to judge the Oral Communication Skills of those students. Each student of the sample was interviewed by the researcher. Every interview was also tape-recorded. The tool ‘structured interview’ is attached in Appendix number E2 for the Pre Test and F2 for the Post test.

C. Group Discussion

For the present study, a group discussion was arranged by the researcher to assess the Communication Skills possessed by the First Year B.Com. Students. It enabled the researcher to know whether those students were able to present their views on particular topic, whether they were able to discuss the particular topic by sharing their views with the others in group, whether they could debate on any issue and so on. She also assessed the students’ ability and patience to listen to others. The researcher also did the video-recording of the group discussion. The tool ‘group discussion’ is attached in Appendix number E3 for the Pre test and F3 for the Post test.
3.11.3 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is ‘a systematic compilation of questions that are submitted to a sampling of population from which information is desired’.

In order to achieve the objective 4-b) (in terms of the students’ opinion about the strategy), a questionnaire was designed by the researcher to get the opinion of the First Year B.Com. students regarding the developed strategy. For the present study, the questionnaire was consisted of various components related to the strategy, group discussion, approaches, methods, media, tests, items taught etc. It included open-ended and the close-ended items. It was very carefully constructed keeping in mind the main aspects of questionnaires viz., the general form, question sequence question formulation and working. The questionnaire was referred to the experts in the field of education for finalization. The tool ‘questionnaire’ is attached in Appendix number G.

3.12 Data Collection

For the present study, the data collected were in the form of achievement scores/grades obtained from the students of the Experimental group and the Control group as well as the responses received from the questionnaire given to the students of the Experimental group. Achievement scores/grades were obtained from the pre-test and the post-test administered to both the groups while the responses received through the questionnaire were in terms of the reflection given by the students to the different items of the questionnaire.

3.13 Data Analysis

In this research, the data collected as mentioned above were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The data obtained through the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed using mean, median, mode and the significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test results while the data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively (i.e. Content analysis).