CHAPTER - FOUR

THE EXPERIMENT
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The Experiment

4.1 Introduction :

This chapter reports on the profile of the target population, various types of Syllabuses and the actual procedure of classroom tryout. It also describes how the sample selected for the study was representative of the universe.

4.2 The Target Population :

The present study aimed at preparation and field trial of instructional materials for the F.Y.B.Com. students. The Investigator intended to focus only on those students who had passed their 12th standard with English as one of the subjects. The scope of the study was delimited to those students who had to study English as a compulsory subject. The study intended to cover students from diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Both male and female learners were represented in this study.

The sample was drawn from the Commerce Colleges in Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar, as Sardar Patel University's
Colleges are located in these towns. All the students were from the faculty of Commerce. They were from both Gujarati and English medium school backgrounds, from middle and upper economic classes, from rural and urban areas and of both male and female sexes.

4.2.1 Profile of the target Population:

The profile of the target population can be presented in terms of the following five categories.

(I) Age Group:

Generally the students who seek admission at F.Y.B.Com. level belong to the adolescent age-group. Mostly at the F.Y. B.Com. Level, Students try to put a good show in their academic field, because it is their first year of collegiate life. They are very keen to do well. Sometimes the rural and urban background of the students seems advantaging or disadvantaging because the rural students would start going to the school at the age of 5, 6 or 7 years until when the urban students would have reached to the third or may be forth class.

The Profile of the learners in terms of sex and age is given below in the form of a chart:
Chart 4.1 Learner's Profile

Sex

Below 18 & 18

Learner's Profile

20 & Above

Boys

Girls

Percentage

60

40

65

25

10

Sex

Below 18 & 18

19

20 & Above

Learner's Profile

Boys

Girls
Chart no. 4.1 is a bar chart which has clustered items on its horizontal axis indicate sex and age-group of the learners and vertical axis indicate their percentage. It is evident that:

(A) Of the total sample, 60% of them are boys and 40% are girls.

(B) 65% of the sample are below or 18 years of the age.

(c) 25% of the students fall in the age group of 19 years and 10% of them are in the age group of 20 years and above.

(II) Socio - Cultural Background:

The socio - cultural background of the learner is very important for shaping his language behaviour. In a way social and cultural background of the learner is of supreme importance because it shapes the mind of the learners. The students of Sardar Patel University come from both the rural and urban backgrounds. Moreover, those students who are from the rural background, have to work in the fields, in order to support their study, and sometimes at the cost of their study.

The profile of the learners in terms of medium of instruction at std. XII and their social background (in terms of rural and urban) is shown in the bar-chart no.4.2.
Chart 4.2 Learner's Profile

- Gujarati: 85%
- English: 15%
- Rural: 55%
- Urban: 45%
Chart 4.2 shows the learners' medium of instruction at std. XII level. It also indicates the social background of the learners in terms of rural and urban settings. The items and figures on the vertical axis suggest the percentage. It is evident that:

(a) 85% of the students were from the Gujarati medium schools and only 15% were from English medium.

(b) 55% of the students were from rural background and 45% of the students were from urban background.

(III) Linguistic Background:

The learners' context can also be discussed in terms of sociolinguistic background. Since India is a multilingual society, many of our students know more than two languages. Generally, the students of Sardar Patel University use Gujarati as their mother tongue, Hindi as a national language and limited amount of English. Since their exposure to English is restricted to classrooms only, they find it difficult to use English fluently. Even in the classrooms, students are supposed to read or only listen to the teacher's lecture either in English or Gujarati.
(IV) Competence in English:

In the given context, the students do not develop competence in the four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The students do not get sufficient chance to listen to good English, and so they can hardly speak and communicate in English. The students might be exposed to the reading of good English language material, but that reading hardly even leads to writing.

(V) Aspirations and Needs:

The syllabus should be prepared taking into account the needs of the students. The syllabus of English, which is taught at present, does not contain need based materials and so the students have to learn those things also which are not at all important and necessary for them. The learners aspire to learn English language in such a way that they can fluently communicate in English. Lack of need oriented material subsides the motivation of the learners for learning English language and their only goal remains to pass the examination. This leads them in the direction of some cheap materials may be in the form of bazaar notes.
4.3 The Communicative Syllabus:

According to the 'Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary' (1991) the word syllabus means:

"A list of topics, texts, etc. included in a course of study"

D. A. Wilkins (1976) expressing his views about communicative syllabus says that it is based on an analytic approach. According to him there are two types of syllabuses: synthetic and analytic. In a synthetic syllabus, each language item is taught separately. Items are arranged in order according to certain criterion. It is known as 'descrete point' teaching. After learning a number of language items, learners have to synthesize them for the purpose of language use, i.e. communication. A good example of synthetic syllabus is structural syllabus where linguistic forms are presented linearly and addictively.

In the analytic approach, the learners will be exposed to actual discourse and later they will analyse it for components. Wilkins classified communicative approach as analytic. A communicative syllabus is one, which incorporates components like purposes for which the learners wish to acquire a second language, the setting in which they want to use the language, the communicative events in which the learner will participate.
4.3.1 Components of Communicative Syllabus:

For evolving a syllabus, certain extra-linguistic factors like: educational setting in which the course is to be taught, the characteristics of learners, the circumstances under which the educational system operates etc. should be taken into consideration. So to make the syllabus efficient a large number of components should be incorporated. According to Yalden (1983) the following are the components of a communicative syllabus:

(I) A detailed consideration of the purposes for which the learners wish to acquire the target language;

(II) Some idea of the setting (physical as well as social) in which they want to use the target language;

(III) The socially defined role of the learners will assume in the target language, as well as the roles of their interlocutor;

(IV) The communicative events in which the learners will participates; everybody situations, vocational or professional situations, academic situations and so on;

(V) The language functions involved in these events or what the learner will have to do with or through language;
(VI) The notions involved or what the learners will need to be able to talk about;

(VII) The skills involved in the knitting together of discourse: discourse and rhetorical skills;

(VIII) The variety of the target language that will be needed;

(IX) The grammatical content that will be needed;

(X) The lexical content that will be needed.

In the traditional syllabuses like Grammar Translation method or Structural method, the main focus was on grammatical content and lexical content. This doesn't mean that the other components were absent, but they were either ill-arranged or included unsystematically. But in the 70s and 80s, a number of syllabus types emerged where most of these components received prominence and caught the eye of many education policy makers.

4.3.2 Various types of Communicative Syllabuses:

As mentioned above, 70s and 80s was the period when the educational policy makers started paying attention to the reframing of the communicative syllabus in a more scientific
way. During that period various types of communicative syllabuses were developed. They are as under:

(I) Structural - Functional types of Syllabus:

Wilkins (1974) in his "Notional Syllabuses" proposed Structural - Functional type of syllabus in which two components of form and functions were separated. It is very easy from implementation point of view because it involves adding of language functions to an already existing structural syllabus. It is merely a reorientation of the Structural syllabus.

(II) Structures and Functions:

Brumfit (1984) put forward "structures and functions" type in his "Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching". It represents a structural progression in a communicative framework. According to Brumfit, the syllabus should be concerned with accuracy more at the early stages than fluency. While maintaining structural progression, both accuracy and fluency can be developed.

(III) Functional Type of Communicative Syllabus:

Jupp and Hordlin (1975) expressed their views on communicative syllabus and especially on linguistic items, ideational
contents etc. Although the centre of attention might be on various topics, the central objective lies in terms of communicative functions. This issue is often discussed and explained whenever vocational ESL courses designed.

(IV) **Fully Notional Syllabus**: 

The idea of 'Fully Notional Syllabus' was defined by Wilkins (1976) and Van Ek (1975). Later on this idea was elaborated and extended by Munby (1978) in his book "Communicative Syllabus Design". This idea of 'Fully Notional Syllabus' is suitable for learners, whose proficiency in the second language has to be specified for a very particular and essentially narrow purpose.

(V) **Procedural Syllabus**: 

'Procedural Syllabus' is also known as communicational syllabus. This idea of 'Procedural Syllabus' has been developed by N.S.Prabhu (1987). According to him, "Structures can by best learnt when attention is focused on meaning". Prabhu prepared a number of 'tasks' which are graded conceptually and grouped by similarity. Prabhu does not advocate any formal teaching procedures like; motivation, presentation etc. He advocates natural language control and self-correction by learners.
4.4 Classroom Try-Out:

In the previous sections, the Investigator has tried to review and examine the possibilities and needs for the new communicative materials for the teaching of Business English to the students of F.Y.B.Com. The Investigator has prepared the material in context with whatever is being taught to the F.Y.B.Com. students at present. In this sub-topic the investigator has tried to record his experiences while carrying out the tryout with the target population, in the form of procedures, steps and followed by remarks.

4.4.1 Procedures:

Step-1: Each student received a copy of the handout. This handout contained a business letter, comprehension questions based on the letter and some exercises.

Step-2: Them the students were given some papers in which they had to write their Surname, Name, Father's name, date of birth, Name of the college, Date and time.

Step-3: The students were instructed to fill in the identification forms and return them to the Investigator.
Step-4: The students had then to listen to the Investigator's instructions for performing the tasks in the instructional materials. The Investigator provided instructions to the questions but avoided giving general information because then the students may be required to process more complex language.

Step-5: Time Duration was not given for these exercise because the investigator did not want the students to read and answer the questions randomly. Not only this, our classrooms are heterogeneous, so there are students who differ in their abilities.

Step-6: After the completion of the task the students were requested to examine their responses and check whether they had committed any mistake.

4.5 Problems Encountered:

The Investigator kept a record of the entire tryout of the instructional materials for the teaching of Business English. Several problems were encountered while the Investigator was engaged in this work.
The major problem that the investigator faced at the time of tryout was that of language. The Investigator had to use Gujarati Language in order to explain the details of the tasks and what they had to do.

It was not easy to explain to the students the purpose of the study and to convince them that their responses were going to be used for research purpose. The students were hesitating as their responses may be grammatically wrong.

Some of the students had initially left some questions unanswered, as they would do in their actual examination.

Some of the students were not careful in filling the instructional material hand outs.

4.6 General Observations:

Once the students got accustomed to these tasks they really started enjoying the work. Some of the students even said that such exercises should be introduced in their course work.

Some of the students were so eager and excited, they would come much before the stipulated time.
4.6.3 The encouraging signs started emerging after a couple of tasks, some students brought some paper cuttings and puzzle books with them.

4.6.4 The students were thrilled when they looked at what they had written in English. Because they thought they could never write even five to ten sentences correctly. So it was a pleasing and encouraging experience for both the teacher and the students.

4.6.5 Some students even tried to talk in English. In a way this was a greater surprise for the Investigator than anything else.

4.7 Conclusion :

This Chapter was devoted to the profile of the learners, the communicative syllabus and the actual procedures of the classroom try out. The penultimate chapter will deal with data analysis and findings of the study.