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Findings, Implications, Suggestions & Conclusions

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CHAPTER VI

Findings, Implications, Suggestions & Conclusions

This chapter presents an overview of the present study and the implications of the findings for the teaching of Functional English course at undergraduate level. Based on these findings, suitable pedagogic recommendations can be made. This chapter attempts to present the findings of the study and also makes necessary recommendations and suggestions.

6.1 Overview of the study

This study traces the development of ELT in India and Particularly in Gujarat. It is pointed out that the general English courses have made learners linguistically competent.

In the wake of globalization and liberalization only the linguistic competency in English is no longer desirable for Indian students. Today's student has become much more vocal. Instead of sitting passively in the class, he wants to be an active participant in teaching-learning process. He is also aware of the recent developments taking place around. He knows what is required in the market for making further progress in career making. For him, knowledge of English is of the utmost necessity to pursue higher studies and for getting desirable jobs. In other words, his need is not confined to acquire mastery over structures of English but he yearns for learning use of English to perform various functions in real life situations, which cannot be fulfilled by the traditional courses of general English. Therefore, the need for the vocationalization of education is felt severely in the global market.
Having sensed the need of the time arising from the drastic changes that had occurred in the last decade of 20th century, UGC launched a series of vocational courses to meet the new challenges. The introduction of ‘Functional English’ (FE) as a vocational Course at the undergraduate level was the foremost step taken in the direction of meeting those challenges. It is intended to fulfill needs of the Indian classroom. The sole aim of the course is to make the learners effective speakers of English. In the study, an attempt is made to understand what FE is, what does it involve, what are the contents of the course and teaching and testing patterns etc. It is followed by the description of the present scenario of teaching of Functional English Course in the colleges of Gujarat.

FE students were taught with the help of imported (tailor-made) materials using communicative language teaching (CLT) in the class. It has been observed that these materials were far away from the culture, level and the need of the FE students. On the other hand institutions like CIEFL and several RIE’s have taken initiatives in the field of materials production to fulfill the demands of the Indian classroom but not specifically. Hardly any effort was made to prepare teaching materials for the Functional English course at the undergraduate level keeping in view the FE students communicative needs.

Hence, the research study “the preparation and try-out of teaching materials for teaching FE at the undergraduate level in the colleges of Gujarat” has been undertaken.

The second chapter reviews the various theories of second language learning, the materials in print, and the researches done in the field of FE teaching as well in the materials production. It is followed by the description of several topics such as importance of instructional materials, their place in
the curriculum, various models of language learning, factors considered for preparing materials, objectives of materials, input, activities and task design model suitable for communicative language teaching etc. This helps in drawing implications for the present study, which helped the researcher to prepare two questionnaires in order to know the needs of FE learners. Interviews with the teachers of FE were recorded. The questionnaires made for the students were sent to different colleges of Gujarat where FE course is offered as one of the optional subjects. The analysis was made on the basis of the data gathered from the 130 students’ questionnaires and 10 teachers’ questionnaires. Several functions, topics of their interest and forms of communications used frequently were selected. Using the selected functions, topics and forms of communication a syllabus for the experiment was designed. Then a package of materials was prepared using principles of communicative approach in the learners’ familiar setting and cultural contexts. The materials prepared were sent to a pool of experts for their suggestions and materials were revised in the light of the suggestions made by the ELT materials producers and teachers trainers.

For the experiment, three colleges were selected as the experimental group and the controlled group. The equalization of groups was made on the basis of marks of class xii and the scores of pre-test. ‘SPT Arts and Science College, Godhra’ where the innovative materials were used was treated as the experimental group and ‘R.R. Lalan College, Bhuj’ and ‘Anand Arts College, Anand’ were chosen as the controlled groups. These groups were taught with the help of existing materials. Tests (pre and post) were administered to both the groups, in all the three colleges. The results are compared to find out the effectiveness of materials prepared. The experiment is reported in detail in chapter four.
Chapter five 'The analysis and interpretation of data' covers qualitative and quantitative analysis of the tests covering classroom procedures, external teacher's observations, researcher's observations and students feedback.

The results obtained from the tests prove that the new materials are more effective than the existing materials for FE students of Gujarat. The experimental group has obtained 4.092 in 't' test (table11), which is significant at 0.01 levels. The control group has only 0.73 't' (table 10), which is highly insignificant.

On comparing the pre-test scores of experimental and control group with the post-test scores of experimental and control groups, we find significant improvement in the experimental group (11.07) in comparison to the improvement in the control group (1.92). Moreover, when the comparison was made in the pre-test and post-test scores of female students of the experimental group the 't' value was found 2.92, which shows a significant difference in the scores. In the same way, when the performance of male students of the experimental group was compared in the pre-test and post-test the significant difference was found. (t- value: 2.96). Finally, the comparison of mean scores of pre-test and post-test of the students was made on the basis of their parental education. In both the cases (Low and high parental education) 't’ value was found highly significant. Thus, it can be concluded that the package of innovative materials is more effective for all the FE students irrespective of their sex and parental education.

Apart from the statistical analysis, analysis of classroom procedure, which has been reported in the Chapter V further, validates the effectiveness of the new materials for enhancing the communicative competence of FE learners. A number of conclusions are drawn from the present study and several
suggestions are offered to teachers, materials producers, syllabus makers and others involved in ELT in the following sections.

6.2 Major Findings of the study

Under this section, the major findings are given which have been drawn from the present study.

i) The present study reveals that students and teachers both are aware of the objective of the FE course. Students perceive that it is helpful in developing skills needed for self-employment while teachers view it as a remedial course by stressing more on the improvement in students English. Thus, the objective of the FE course clearly understood by them is to enhance students’ ability to communicate effectively.

Students opt this course as it enhances their communication skills, and facilitates them in developing their personality. Students believe that personal attention, exposure of English and constant guidance of the teacher will enable them to be a fluent speaker of English. All the FE teachers accept the usefulness of the course for learners. The reasons of its usefulness are small classes, more practical exercises, related to real life situation and self-motivated students.

ii) Majority of teachers and students of FE course are in favour of the inclusion of the course as one of the main subjects, which will be more beneficial for the learners. They argued that induction of the course, as one of the main subjects will definitely bring changes in the existing General English course.

iii) The study emphasizes that the course contents prescribed do not match with the objectives of the Functional English course. Moreover, the majority of teachers are found dissatisfied with the course contents. They stressed that
syllabus should emphasis more on the functions of language rather than forms. Phonetics, writing skills, broadcasting media and conversational skills are considered to be useful components of the FE course. Six lectures per week is a satisfactory amount of time. While the regarding the practical utility of the vocation 'Radio and Broadcasting' at the T.Y.B.A. level, even teachers are found in a dilemma.

iv) Poor vocabulary, grammatical mistakes, lack of confidence while speaking, limited exposure, pronunciation, proper sentence structure are the main problems of students pointed out by their teachers.

v) The present study shows that 'Form filling, job application (curriculum vitae), letter writing, discussion, interviewing and dialogue writing and reporting are considered to be the important forms of communication. The less preferred forms are 'diary writing' and messaging (e-mail or mobile) and slogan 'thought important.' Telegram' and 'notices' 'minutes' and 'orders', 'News item' are considered the least important. Definitions', 'articles' and 'jokes' are not considered to be important for FE students.

vi) Students are keen to take part in classroom activity, provided topics of their interest are used for preparing materials for FE course. Following are the topics, which are considered important: 'your experiences', 'likes\dislikes' and 'your favourite book\teacher\game\ hero\ leader\ program'. While expressing social and political views, different occupations, current affairs, entertainment (films, serials), household articles\electrical appliances, recipes, customs and festivals, monuments, travel, problems of their life\town\family, education', 'feelings\emotions', and thoughts and proverbs, law, crime and women, youth and related to youths and environment are the next preferred topics for learning English in the class.
vii) The teachers and students of Functional English favoured the functions directly related to the day-to-day life. Given below is the order of the functions. 'Form -filling', 'Giving instructions', 'Giving advice', 'Making requests', 'Making complaints and apologies', 'Expressing sympathies & offering help', 'Describing objects\places\persons', 'Making suggestions', 'Asking for permission', 'Giving invitations', 'Greetings\good wishes'.

ix) Students use English mainly for expressing feelings and emotions, gathering and sharing information, for form filling, for correspondence, writing diary.

A good number of students read English newspapers and magazines, watch English programmes like TV serials and news items, read English novels and short stories, and write letters. It shows that their keenness to learn English.

viii) The study indicates that majority of the students are interested in jobs like tutor\teacher. Many of them wish to set up their own coaching institution of English. A few of them like to choose high profile jobs such as newsreader and journalist. Some students want to choose job of a receptionist in govt\private sector.

ix) Dictionary, newspaper, maps, charts, diagrams, photographs, materials from different books based on communicative language teaching and audio-visual materials are frequently used in the FE class. In these books both the aspects of the language communicative and structural are highlighted.

x) Analysis of teacher’s questionnaire reveal that the materials which are being used in FE class do not suit the level and need of learners. Hence, there is an urgent need to prepare need-based materials for FE learners.
xi) Teachers are acquainted with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. In the classroom group discussion and pair work, drilling in Phonetics, creative interaction, class presentation, role-playing, simulation, discussion and other communicative activities used. It was found that students’ feedback was also taken for making necessary changes in the teaching of Functional English. Learners are corrected either by uttering the correct response or discussing the mistakes in general without pointing out the student who has made that mistake.

xii) The present study reveals that the package of innovative materials has immensely helped the learners in enhancing their communicative competence. It has developed their communicative skills and made them confident while using English in the social interaction. It has also provided them enough opportunity to interact in English with other students. The test results are found to be highly significant at 0.01 levels in the experimental group where the innovative materials have been used. (Section 5.6.4) The null hypotheses stand rejected as the communicative tasks help the learners to enhance their communicative competence. (Section 5.6.2)

xiii) During tryout, it was observed that the tasks designed are successful in producing authentic communicative situations inside the classroom. The analysis of the classroom procedures establishes that the activities based on the tasks foster greater language use within the classroom. The learners’ response shows that problem solving tasks viz. role-playing; simulation, miming etc. are the most useful ones.

xiv) The analysis of classroom procedures (section 5.2) shows that use of integrated skills for preparing materials has made the tasks life like. At the same time it has also been observed that use of authentic materials not only
makes the students curious about the tasks but also sustains their interest in the class.

The materials prepared for the experimental group incorporating communicative activities such as miming, role-playing and simulation, taking into consideration the local situations, involves the use of natural language thereby providing appropriate models for enhancing the communicative competence of the learners.

6.3 Implications of the Study

The study provides an objective picture of the impact of the prepared materials. It will be useful in deciding effective ways of creating classroom situations which could be helpful to FE learners, teachers, teachers' trainers, and materials producers and teacher training institutions. Following are the suggestions given for them.

6.3.1 For Materials producers

Lack of suitable teaching materials, non-availability of sourcebooks\resource books for teachers to teach the FE course in general, has been the major drawback in the implementation of the FE course.

The materials available to the teachers and students of FE course are an imitation of either a few BBC English Courses or of a Cambridge series, which do not have any cultural or linguistic links with India. Therefore, these books are not relevant to Indian learners. Moreover, the books are dealt with in a uniform manner without taking into account the socio-linguistic backgrounds of the students. It leads to a mismatch between the students' level of proficiency and need, the materials used and the aims and objectives of the course. The study also showed that the majority of teachers
do not frequently use any supplementary teaching materials or aids in the class. The study shows that there is an urgent need to encourage FE teachers to prepare teaching materials keeping in view their learners' local needs. Following are the suggestions given for the preparation and adaptation of teaching materials for FE course.

- First of all, the teachers should be sensitive enough towards the needs of learners. Secondly, The teachers need to be thoroughly going through the available teaching materials and resource books, from which they can select and adapt different activities for the development of Communicative skills, to suit the requirements of FE learners.

- Guidelines should be provided to the teachers of FE on how to improve the existing teaching materials available with them and to utilize authentic materials in innovative ways.

- Teacher should design their own authentic teaching materials keeping in view the needs of his learners using pictures, stories, news items, advertisements, different forms, leaflets, brochures, cartoons, editorials and program schedules etc. Teacher trainers can give further guidance to both the FE students and teachers on the imaginative creation, adoption and use of teaching materials.

- Pre-task should be used to prepare the learners for the forthcoming task and for motivating learners. It must be based on their familiar settings.

- This study can be helpful in designing more authentic materials depicting realistic models and natural language by using the learners'
familiar situations, culture and level for making them communicatively competent.

- Use of local customs, culture, festivals and fairs for designing materials make the learners curious and also able to sustain their interest in the class. It reduces their anxiety level and makes the atmosphere of the class informal.

- Maintaining correspondence contact with UGC, teacher training institutes, and resource persons to share experiences and to exchange ideas on how to prepare and improve the teaching materials for FE course.

- Conducting workshop on the improvement and modification of existing teaching materials to create new materials, using authentic materials from newspapers and magazines to supplement other teaching aids.

- It can be for preparing computer assisted teaching materials and also for audio-visual materials.

6.3.2 For Teaching Methods

The teaching methods used at present in the FE classes are relevant to the Functional English course. Listening to audiocassettes, and participating in mock lectures, debates and interviews and writing of a report or a letter were the commonly used tasks and activities for the course. Following are the suggestions for the use of teaching methods in FE classes.

i) However, more emphasis needs to be laid on encouraging the students to interact and share ideas in the Functional English course in general. The classroom observations show that students are often diffident to speak in
class. They should be encouraged to speak spontaneously rather than repeat sample dialogues spoken in a particular situation.

ii) For this, students should be given maximum exposure to target language and encouraged to communicate better, integrating two or more skills of language.

iii) The study shows that both teachers and classmates can play a major role, in improving the fluency and the confidence of students in any situation.

iv) Each class requires its own method, keeping in view the course objectives, the students' needs, the teachers' innovative ability and the examination requirements. Therefore, a generalized conclusion on the teaching method is not realistic.

v) Learners should be motivated to work in groups. Heterogeneous groups should be used and the groups should be reshuffled after the completion of each task.

vi) Learners should not be corrected when s/he is speaking. It was often seen that if they are supplied words and sentences during their speech, it disturbs their rhythm. It is better to let them think what could be said.

vii) Learners should be encouraged to go through one another's answer sheets and point out mistakes and discuss and also suggest appropriate responses, if possible.

viii) Learners should be allowed to use their mother tongue if they are not able to explain in English but teacher should use only English in the class.

ix) Students should be made aware of the processes of writing i.e. pre writing, writing and rewriting and encouraged to follow these processes in the act of writing. Hence, it is necessary that the syllabus as well as the instructions should focus on the processes of writing in order to help the students to write cohesive and coherent texts.
x) Teacher’s role is very crucial in teaching writing as a process. A teacher needs to adopt different materials and methods that would involve the students in the process of writing rather than focusing on the product. Separate modules can be prepared pertaining to different professions and students given the option to choose a module according to their needs, interests, aptitudes and employment expectations.

xi) Encouraging the FE teachers to maintain a work-schedule diary, which would help them to evaluate their own teaching methods, and to share their experiences of innovative ways of teaching with other FE teachers,

6.3.3 For Testing and Evaluation

The study has also revealed several gaps in the examination procedures adopted in the FE course. There is a need for clear guidelines for testing students’ ability.

- On-going assessment through oral\written assignments, presentations and small projects are also useful.
- Periodic assessment, formative evaluation, feedback from learners and their achievements and deficiencies should be taken into consideration. It has been noticed that evaluation criteria influences learners’ learning objectives.
- Examinees should be assessed on the basis of topics similar but not identical ones to those, which are discussed in the class.
- The link between the theoretical and practical components of Functional English needs to be clearly established.
- Since periodic assessment is useful to judge learners’ achievement and deficiencies, it should be incorporated. The criteria should focus more on fluency of language rather than accuracy. Students’ mistakes
should not be focused because sometimes it demotivates the students and at least one positive remark should be given on each student’s written text.

The present study also indicates that while examining students instead of asking questions in isolation tasks should be contextualised.

### 6.3.4 For Syllabus Designers

The sole aim of the syllabus is to enhance the communicative competence of learners. Therefore, the focus should be on the development of all the four skills of learners through which students analytical, critical thinking and problem solving strategies could be developed.

It has been observed that at present, the contents of the FE syllabus do not adequately equip students with the skills needed to communicate better in day-to-day situations in their environment. Very few teachers are familiar with the prototype syllabus for materials production and teacher training. There is thus a disparity between the syllabuses used as guidelines for the course by the FE students and teachers on the one hand, and the teacher trainers on the other. Though the underlying aims and objectives are the same in each of the syllabuses, it would be more useful if there were a greater degree of co-ordination in terms of the use of syllabuses among all the three groups. The study indicates that there is need for greater interaction and coordination between the syllabus designers, material producers, institutions, teachers and learners. In this way, the teacher training institutes can cater to the requirements of specific colleges and universities based on the modifications that may have been carried out the FE syllabus.

The study shows that more emphasis needs to be given to the skill based materials development according to the requirements of students.
Most of the students who opt for the FE course are often not interested in broadcasting or print journalism. Few students expressed their desire to be news reporters or announcers. It would be more realistic to include a range of vocational areas in the FE curriculum.

Further clarity on the syllabus content for the various components of the course can be obtained through interactions between the FE students and teachers. Guidance can also be sought from the teacher training institutes like CIEFL, Hyderabad and RIE, Chandigarh, H.M.Patel Institute of English, Vallabh Vidhyanagar and the UGC vocational Education Cell, New Delhi.

Teachers-students involvement in designing syllabus is required to make them aware about objectives and to take into consideration their expectations and problems.

Different colleges affiliated to other universities of Gujarat should come together to discuss various problems pertaining to syllabus, methods, materials, and testing and possible solution to these problems. University should take initiative. Similar links can be established and maintained with other FE teachers in the country in order to share experiences of transacting the FE curriculum.

6.3.5 For Teacher Training Institutions

This study provides data for analysis and discussion on the preparation of materials based on CLT. In task based pedagogy the teacher and the learner have a remarkable degree of flexibility, for they are presented with a set of general objective and problem solving tasks and not a list of specific linguistic items. The present project throws light on such an experience. The teacher training institutions can adapt the tasks as a course and train teacher
trainees and in-service teachers to improve their own competence in English and to train them to prepare communicative tasks to use in actual classroom.

6.3.6 For FE teachers and teachers’ Trainers

The materials designed help the FE teachers to understand the rationale behind a certain procedure or technique for preparing teaching materials. Thus, it helps them to adapt it to teach their own students. A task based teaching programme begins with a need analysis. Then we need to design different types of tasks, which is the basis of classroom activities for teachers and learners. Selection and grading of tasks is the final specification of the ‘what of a task based teaching programme’.

Initially the teacher begins as a co-contributor, then facilitator and lastly the classroom manager.

The tasks prepared provide opportunities for individual work and pair and group work. For the success of the tasks learners’ co-operation is essential. They can also be involved in preparing tasks.

6.3.7 For FE learners

The tasks designed are justified on the ground that they help the learners to develop the skills they need for carrying out real-world communicative tasks beyond the classroom. These tasks are learner centred, as they allow learners take an active, negotiative role and have relatively high degree of control over the content language production. The interaction between groups and groups, group members, teacher and students provides a basis for language learning. The language used in such situations is nearer to the one used in real life.
While interacting in small groups learners are required to put language to a range of uses and to negotiate meaning. In other words, they need to draw upon their own resources rather than simply repeating and absorbing language. They learn through self-discovery and through discussion on various themes and in different situations with their partners the appropriate use of language.

These tasks help them to be imaginative by experimenting with the different ways of creating and using language e.g. inventing their own texts while playing language games, guessing games.

Moreover, in task-based learning they learn to live with errors and prevent errors from blocking their participation in tasks.

6.4 Suggested areas for further research

Some of the areas related to the FE course in which further research seems necessary are the following:

1. To prepare teaching materials mainly focusing on the speaking and listening skills.
2. Studies on how FE teachers develop and evolve their own teaching materials for the students of FE course. The socio-geographical relevance of the materials can also be investigated.
3. Try-out of the proposed package of materials for FE students can be made on a larger sample.
4. A detailed study of the patterns of evaluation and testing of the oral communication skills of the FE course, with emphasis on working out a common evaluation scheme for the FE course.
5. Studies on linking up entrepreneurship development and the components of FE course.
6. A multi-disciplinary experimental study linking up the broadcasting component, the conversational English component, the writing component, on the job-training and entrepreneurship training of the FE course can be tried out on a limited group of students.

7. Studies on the relevance and implementation of other components of the course (e.g. writing, reading, study skills, entrepreneurship development etc.)

8. Comparative surveys of the vocational aspect of the Functional English course with similar English courses if any, offered at the IITs and Polytechnics.

These are some areas in which further research can be done based on the Functional English course. Discussions with FE students, teachers and teacher trainers' could give further insights into other research issues related to the course.

6.5 Limitations of the study

In this study the researchers has mainly focused on the preparation of teaching materials for the FE course. A detailed examination of all the other aspects was beyond the scope of the study.

In the materials production he has incorporated all the four skills of language but emphasis could be found on the reading and writing skills.

Another limitation of the study is that the data form the FE students were collected from a few colleges.

Try-out was made in three different colleges, which were offering FE course. Due to the geographical constraints and others, it was not possible for the researcher to teach all the three groups simultaneously.
6.6 Conclusions

Functional English as a vocational course has tried to deepen and diversify the knowledge of language skills used by the learner, by linking it with potential vocational areas. Since good communications skills increases career choices and entrepreneurship prospects, it is necessary that the materials should be designed in such a way which could generate interest among the learners and also enhance their communicative competence. Review of related literature provided a theoretical framework for the present study, which has focused on the preparation of teaching materials in view of the learners' needs, and familiar setting. The conclusions drawn from the study point towards the need-based materials which could be the only last resort for making the learners an effective communicator and also for opening new job avenues for them.

At the same time, through this study, it was also observed that the eclectic view of language learning is quite helpful. One should neither rely on one theory, nor discard another theory of language learning. In the present study implications of all the theories of language learning including the behaviorist model of learning have been used.

The analysis of the communicative needs of learners through questionnaires provided an insight to the researcher for preparing the innovative materials for the present study. Then the prepared package, which was modified keeping in view the ELT experts suggestions, was tried out. The results of qualitative and quantitative analysis brought out the supremacy of the innovative materials over the existing Communicative materials and the students were found communicating in English immediately after the class.
Form the present study, it can be concluded that both the type of materials pedagogic as well as authentic are required for the enhancing communicative competence of learners.

Secondly, it has been observed that learner’s feelings or their affective state determined the quality of the learning that takes place in the classroom. Their personal attributes and feelings should be taken into account, if individual development and growth is to take place.

Thirdly, if a detailed study is made keeping in view different regions, gender and cultures of learners, variety of materials can be prepared which can make learning better and faster.

In the end, it can be said that in order to fulfill the prime aim of the Functional English Course i.e. to make the learners efficient and effective communicator of English, the proposed package of materials can play a significant role particularly in Gujarat.