

FORTELL

Newsletter

FORUM FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE

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Empowering the Student

One of the several programmes that FORTELL organised during the last academic session was a seminar on learner independence at the local Khalsa College (Evening). A report on the proceedings of the seminar appears elsewhere in the Newsletter. But the subject is far too important to be 'covered' in one seminar. Learner independence is an idea to which a great deal of time and effort is being devoted in the West. At present there is almost a movement there to promote learner autonomy. The idea, however, is neither new nor western in origin. Wasn't the legendary Eklavya in *The Mahabharat* among the first truly independent learners? And good teachers everywhere have always tried to *empower* their students with skills so that they can learn by themselves. So we need to give the idea our continued and focussed attention. We need to understand it in all its dimensions - we need to ask : What is learner independence? What is the theoretical basis for it? What are its implications for our classroom practice? And; finally, how can teachers help to promote the idea among their students in spite of the ubiquitous *kunjis* and other help books?

We propose to devote the next issue of our News-

FORTELL Programmes 1993-94

A Seminar on "How to be a More Effective Resource Person" was organised at the School of Correspondence Courses in October, 1993 wherein the Coordinators/Principals of various orientation programmes (organised by SCERT) and the resource persons were invited. The purpose was to obtain feedback from the Coordinators and resource persons which would facilitate proper planning of these refresher courses in future. The interaction and exchange of views provided effective and useful information.

Seminar-cum-Workshop on the *Teaching of Drama* at the British Council on 5 November 1993

A seminar-cum-workshop was held at the British High Commission, British Council Division on 5th November 1993, led by Prof. Alan Maley, Visiting Professor, National University of Singapore. The programme was organised by FORTELL in collaboration with the British Council.

Prof. Alan Maley presented before the audience a number of varied contemporary and classical

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letter to this subject. The issue will carry the papers presented at the seminar referred to earlier. In addition, we would like you to share with your colleagues your ideas on any of the several questions raised above. Also, if you have tried out an experiment with your class in this direction, do share your findings with your colleagues by sending a report to us.



texts to bring out the specific advantages of teaching drama. The stress, he suggested, should not be on covering the text in the class room but on enabling the learner to discover the text, keeping in mind the word, tone and the gesture behind the utterance.

Group activity was also stressed in exploring the text. Different groups of students could be helped to concentrate on different parts of a play. Gaps could also be left in exploring the text so that the learners can be forced to anticipate and fill the gaps.

It was through group activity that the speaker was able to bring out the crucial importance of the spoken form of the language, the possibilities of varying interpretations of the text and the need for improvisation, anticipation and reformulation while exploring and discovering the texts. It was in the course of discovering the texts that the learners became aware of the role of silence, pauses and rhythm. And they also got a chance to identify themselves with characters and situations in the play. In the process they also got a considerable exposure to language in operation.

The seminar-cum-workshop was attended by nearly thirty participants from colleges and schools in Delhi and outside.

N. P. Singh
Rajdhani College

Abstracts of some papers presented at the Seminar on Teaching of Poetry at ARSD College on 12 April 1993.

Teaching of Poetry

It is true that poetry makes a creative use of language. But it is equally true that a

poet does not impose a poem because he wishes to display his capacity for a creative use of language. The fact is that a poet is moved by larger concerns and the said creative use is a by-product of that larger pursuit. Approaching a poem through linguistic analysis of a micro-level order (or a colonial discourse) has the similar effect of limiting the power of a poem as a construct. Essentially speaking, we may best consider a poem in terms of its own light (which contributes to its value or autonomy) rather than in terms of any light (biographical, historical, philosophical etc.) external to it. Being an inspired piece, it is best suited as a source for a focused light on the world in which it is produced.

A defect of the common critical approaches to a poem from a teacher's point of view is that they do not provide a common ground whereon the poet, the teacher and the student can conveniently meet and make further productive moves on a cooperative basis.

A poet's attitude to the world and his view of life both tend to be reflected in his poem. A poem, strictly speaking, is the record of encounter of a sensitive mind with the course of history at a particular time. It is in this vision of the world embodied in a poem that we have the necessary common meeting ground for the parties involved in the teaching/ learning enterprise. The teacher, in this case, starts from a position of advantage because modern students' early and frequent exposure to, and experience of, the world will facilitate his grasp of the broad particulars of a poem.

It is with this background in mind that offered in my paper an analysis of three romantic poems, "Kubla Khan", "Ode to the West Wind" and "London".

The importance of the principle of delight, combined with the asserted superiority of identity on the poet's part in "Kubla Khan" brings out the dreary character of the world of Coleridge's times with its low view of the poet and of his calling. In Shelley, the mixture of the literary modes - ode, sonnet, lyric in the structure of the poem, taken along with the radical nature of the wild and the violent as exemplified in the west wind, gives us a glimpse of the collapse of old distinctions and sanctities along with a view of the world as a debilitating and dichotomy-ridden presence. The poem offers us a picture of the unawakened earth enveloped in wintry darkness. William Blake's "London", the shortest and the sharpest of the three poems offers an account of the poet's direct encounter with the characterised-world of the times - the dark and dismal world of the Industrial Revolution with its mind-forged manacles, its misery and distress mitigated only by the alien presence of the poet.

Once the broad particulars have been grasped, the minute details fall in their place in the frame and pose no problems. The psycho-historicist strategy of teaching brings a poem nearer the bosom and the business of the learner.

Sikandar Lal
Shivaji College

An Approach to the Teaching of "Breaking out"

by Marge Piercy.

The poem has to be read aloud by the teacher. The class may be asked questions related to the overall comprehension of the text. First, who is 'I', the speaker in the poem? A male or a female? an adult or a child?

Having established the identity of the speaker, the attention of the class would be focussed next on the last unit of the poem beginning, "When I was eleven..." This unit is very exciting and shows how an eleven year old girl was suddenly transformed into an adolescent aware of her power to shape her destiny. From a state of powerlessness she leapt to a state of power. There would be no reference to the word 'Sisiphus' at this stage.

Then the teacher would draw the attention of the class to the third unit beginning "When I had been judged truly wicked..." The point that the speaker was beaten by both her father and her mother would be stressed. It could also be checked from the girls in particular if they also had an experience similar to that of the speaker. They would also be asked if they were beaten more fiercely by their mother. The class would also be asked why the speaker made a study of those red and blue mountain ranges on a map.

It is unit two of the poem beginning "A mangle stood there" that is likely to cause the utmost difficulty to the students. They would be asked to find out where the girl's house was located. The factories raining ashes and sludge are perhaps an index of the fact that the speaker lived in a working-class locality. The students would also be asked to make a list of the gadgets used in a working-class home in America. Do we use the same gadgets in our homes in India? The students would also be asked to find out any phrase in the unit that betrayed the speaker's sympathy for her mother (for example, raw knees). The speaker hated the drudgery of her mother and at the same time felt an intense sympathy for her.

The teacher would give one more reading of the poem and then ask the students to attempt the following questions in writing:

- (a) Why did the speaker hate her mother? (50 words)
- (b) Who was Sisyphus? (50 words)
- (c) Why is the speaker's mother compared to Sisyphus? (50 words)
- (d) Who was the nasty stark king? (100 words)
- (e) What was the first political act performed by the speaker?

After the students had attempted these questions, first orally, and then in writing, the brightest student in the class would be asked to read the poem aloud with proper stress and intonation. Sound is very important in poetry. Therefore, reading a poem aloud becomes very, very important.

N. P. Singh
Rajdhani College

Learner Independence: A Report

In the last two decades or so many changes of far reaching significance have taken place in the context of teaching and learning, particularly in language teaching. Researches in linguistics, psychology, philosophy, anthropology and other allied areas have given us new insights and these have affected our conceptions of teachers, learners, and teaching materials and their roles; learning and the management of teaching and learning. It has become customary to represent the traditional and new con-

cepts in binary pairs: teaching-learning, transmission-interaction, learning-acquisition accuracy-fluency, product-process — the list is too long to repeat here. One often finds the proponents of both these views at seminars and workshops held every now and then but nowhere have I seen them so clearly marked as at a seminar on 'Learner Independence' organized on 12th January 1994 at Khalsa College (Even), Delf University by the Department of English of the college in collaboration with FORTELL.

Prof. Amrik Singh who was the chief guest expressed the view that learner could not really be independent of the teacher-not until he has reached the research stage. Even at that stage he felt, one needed guidance of the experienced teacher-supervisor. His concept of a good teacher, he said, was that of one who is more knowledgeable than his learner; someone who represents a combination of wisdom, knowledge and experience and can put across his message clearly and effectively. His views on all aspects of teaching and learning appeared to incorporate the traditional concepts: the guru as an all-knowing, more knowledgeable being, perched on the platform and delivering his lecture to a spellbound passive audience; the relationship between the two being one of 'dependency' on the latter on the former; and teaching as transmission of knowledge from the guru to the *shishya*.

Those who spoke on the occasion after Prof. Singh sharply disagreed with him. According to Mr. P.S. Mathur, who presided, teaching and learning was a process of activating the faculties and skills that gradually led to greater autonomy for the learners so that they could access knowledge on their own, a process in which teacher's role is a complex one: that of being a participant, manager, planner, guide and a monitor. Teaching in this sense is a process of creating contexts for learning that

into account the learner; his age, interests, background knowledge, motivation, purpose, etc., and the nature of language and of language learning (in the context of language learning).

Dr. Naresh Jain dwelt at length on the concept of learner independence, its rationale, implications for teachers, and how to make learners autonomous. He demonstrated through some tasks and activities how 'self-access', one of the successfully-tried methods of empowering learners to learn how to learn, worked in practice. Self-access, he cautioned, did not mean simply 'availability' but also 'accessibility'. Later speakers spoke about how learners could be made autonomous in both the productive and receptive skills. Ms. Kusum Virmani concentrated on writing skills; Ms. Tara Chadha and Dr. S.C. Sood focussed on empowering learners in accessing reading materials and developing oral communication skills. Mr. Charanjit Singh emphasized the resourcefulness of the teacher in motivating his learners, selecting the right type of materials, and the introduction of reading as a subject towards achieving learner autonomy.

The discussion at the seminar became quite lively and interesting, though it had to be cut short for lack of time. A large number of students of the college who keenly participated in the discussion later took time and discussed their views and problems with the speakers even after the seminar formally came to end.

S. C. Sood
Dyal Singh (Even.) College

WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTION
TO FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF FORTELL

FORTELL Family

Academic Update

Ahluwalia, J. (S.P.M.): published her Ph.D. dissertation under the title *The Comedy of the Eighteenth Century* (Delhi: Atlantic, 1993).

- Worked as resource person in the orientation programme for school teachers organised by SCERT.

Bhasin, Kamal (ARSD) : Fullbright scholar for 1993-94 at the Department of English, University of Maryland for research in American Drama.

Bhasin, Veena : now Principal Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, was a facilitator at a CBSE ELT Inset Workshop at St. Mary's School, June 1993; attended a 4-day workshop on qualitative analysis of question papers for English at class 12 level; attended a week-long CBSE-British Council-CIEFL workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation at Dharmasala, H.P. September, 1993.

Chadha, Tara (SPM) : published an article on Badal Sarkar 'From Proscenium to Free Theatre' in "New Dimensions in Indian Drama".

- Worked as resource person in a programme organised by SCERT.

Chopra, Vikram (ARSD) : has done his doctorate on "Shakespeare's Major Tragedies: A Study in the Context of Indian Approaches."

- Presented a paper "Christ and Krishna in King Lear"

- Review/Write-up of Alyque Padamsee's *Othello* (presented at Siri Fort, New Delhi) *Shakespeare Bulletin* : A Journal of Performance, Criticism and Scholarship, International Shakespeare Issue 12.1 (1994):41-42.

Desai, R.W. (Dept. of English, DU) : published a novel *Frailty, thy Name is Woman!* (Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1993).

- "Hamlet as the Minister of God to Take Vengeance," *English Language Notes* (Dec. 1993).

Dickinson, Leslie (Moray House College, Edinburgh): published *Learner Autonomy: Learner training for language learning* (Dublin: Authentik, 1992).

Garg, Ramesh C (Dyal Singh): published his Ph.D. dissertation under the title *Speech Perception in Bilingual Setting* (Delhi: Publication Division, Delhi University, 1993).

- Perception of Nasals in Hindi" in *Topics in Hindi Linguistics*, Vol. III ed. O.N Koul, New Delhi, Bahri Publication, 1992.

- *et. al.* "Measuring textbook language readability" in *On Language Comprehensibility* ed. I.S. Sharma, New Delhi, NCERT, 1993.

Jain, Naresh (SCC): Resource Person at Orientation Programmes organised by the SCERT at different centres.

- made a presentation on the Profiles of Distance Learners and Their Use at the Seminar on Distance Education organised by Centre for Professional Development in Higher Education, University of Delhi, Sept. 1992.

- taught on the Refresher Course for DAV School teachers, held at Gurgaon May 1993 as an introduction to the new course in English Course 'A', CBSE.

- was a Special Invitee at the CBSE-ELT Project for the preparation of Self-Access Package for Teachers of English, Course 'A', Class IX at Ramjas School, Sector IV, R.K. Puram, New

Delhi, 4-8 October, 1993.

- made a presentation on Learner Independence at the SGTB Khalsa College (Even), New Delhi 14 January 1994.

- General editor of a series entitled New Orientations published by Pencraft International Delhi.

Kumar, Gita (SPM): an article on Vija Tendulkar - in "New Dimensions in India Drama".

- worked as resource person in a program for PGTs organised by SCERT.

Malik, S.D.: Principal, Lovely Public School Delhi; coordinator, resource-cum-study cent of National Open School at Lovely Public School since 1986; has published several books for children.

Nindra, P.S. (SCC) : edited *Ancient Mariner Coleridge* (Delhi: Pragati Publications, 1993)

Sethi, A. K. (Aurobindo) : got his Ph.D. on Social Criticism in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Nathanael West from the University of Rajasthan, 1992.

Sharma, Neelima : conducted 3 in-service courses in 1993 at Chandigarh and Gujarat Trained Graduate Teachers of English of C.I. affiliated schools.

- attended the CBSE-ELT project for the preparation of Self-Access Package for Teachers of English course A, Class IX, 4-8 October, 1993.

- attended the CBSE-British Council work at Teachers Training College, Dharmasala, October 1, 1993.

- now Principal of a Govt. Sr. Sec. School.

Sharma, Sham Sunder (MLN/E): obtained his Ph.D. degree on *A Stylistic Study of Lowell's Poetry*, Meerut University, 1988.

- attended International Workshop on 'Disciplines of Thought' at CIEFL (Hyderabad) June-July, 1993.

- presented a paper on 'Some Poststructuralist Readings of T.S. Eliot's Poetry' at S.P. Mukherjee College, Delhi University.

- edited with Ms. Shashi Mutatkar, an anthology for B.A. Pass II Year (Elective English) Students of Delhi University '*Renaissance to Modern*' published by Macmillans India, New Delhi.

- presented a paper on 'Postmodernism in Canada: Implications for Indian Writers' at Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar.

Sharma, Vijay K (RLA/E) : Fulbright scholar for the year 1992-93 at the Department of English Brandeis University, Massachusetts, USA, for research work in the area of Contemporary American Fiction.

- attended the British Council summer school on British Cultural Studies at University, College, or School, held at Oxford and Glasgow in 1992.

Sharma, V.P. (SCC): co-ed. *Writings of R.N. Srivastava*, Vol. I New Delhi (1993).

Singh, N.P. (Rajdhani): edited *Shelley, An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, Delhi: Pencraft International, Delhi 1993; was honoured with the Editor's Choice Award (1993) for "outstanding achievement in poetry" by the National Library

of Poetry, Maryland, USA; organised a Seminar "Shelley Through Indian Eyes" at the British Council Auditorium on 26 February 1993; presented a paper at ASRC, Hyderabad on 30 June at a special seminar on "Feminist Carol Oates".

Sood, S.C. (Dyal Singh Even.) : taught on Refresher Courses for school teachers, TGT/PGT, during June and December, 1993.

- taught on Refresher Course for DAV School teachers, held at Gurgaon, May 1993 on Introduction to the new course in English Course 'A', CBSE.

- gave a demonstration on Teaching Poetry, ARSD College/ FORTELL seminar-cum-workshop held on 10 April, 1993.

- wrote and implemented a course in communication skills in English for grade V staff, British High Commission, BC Division, New Delhi, May-June, 1993.

- wrote and implemented an ESP Course: English for Tourist Guides for a batch of Malayalam-speaking students from Lakshadweep, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Delhi, Nov. 1993 - Feb. 1994.

- presented a paper "Teaching Literature: From Theory to Practice" at a seminar at SPM College, Delhi, Jan. 1994.

- taught on Refresher Course for college teachers organized by the Academic Staff College, HP University, Shimla, December 1993.

- co-authored *Developing Language Skills Part III* (Delhi: University Press, 1993).

Trama, R.S. (SSN) : obtained his Ph.D. on "D.H.

Lawrence and Agyeya as Novelists: A Comparative Study" from the Department of Modern Indian Languages, University of Delhi in 1989.

Verma, Rajiva (Dept. of English, DU): has taken over as Head of the Department of English, University of Delhi.

Verma, S.K. (CIEFL):
Talks/Papers

- on Linguistics at the Refresher Course in Urdu, organised by the Academic Staff College, Osmania University on 29 May and 2 June 1992.

- on 'Bhasha: Sanrachna and Artha' at the Department of Hindi, Cochin University of Science and Technology at Kochi, 14 October, 1992.

- on "The Three Language Formula" at the UGC Orientation Course in Distance Education at CIEFL, 23 October, 1992.

- on Multilingualism in India: A Boon or a Bane? at the Academic Staff College, University of Hyderabad, 23 November, 1992.

- on 'New Directions in the Teaching of English at the Tertiary Level' at the silver jubilee celebrations of the Department of English, Kakatiya University, Warangal, on 24 January, 1993.

- on 'Perspectives on Word Order' at the National Seminar on Word Order in Indian Languages at the Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics, Osmania University, 26 February, 1993.

- presented a paper on "English in India: Focus on Functions" at the Conference on Deteriorating Standards in English Teaching in Uttar Pradesh, ELTI, Allahabad, 7 September, 1992.

- at the invitation of the Universities of Aden

and Sa'na (Republic of Yemen) visited their departments of English from 27 December 1992 to 7 January 1993. As a result, the CIEFL has been requested to give academic assistance to the Departments of English in Aden and Sa'na.

Books:

- *Modern Applied Linguistics* [w/ Krishnaswamy & Nagarajan], Madras: Macmillan India Ltd. Madras, 1992.
- *Aspects of English Language Teaching*, Madras: TR Publications, 1993.

Papers in Journals:

- "English in India: Focus on Functions", *University News*, Vol. XXX, No. 47, Nov. 23, 1992, AIU, New Delhi.
- "From Contact to Contrast to Convergence", *Language Sciences* 13:2 (1992):255-64.

Other papers:

- "Learning as an Interactional Activity", *Newstime*, 3rd September 1992, Hyderabad, p. 5.
- "English in Indian Scenario", *Newstime*, 10 September 1992, Hyderabad, p. 5.

Virmani, Kusum (SPM) : presented a paper on "Learner as an Independent Writer in K. J. Somaiya College (Even.) on Jan. 1994.

- taught on Refresher Courses for School teachers held at Gurgaon and Delhi.

Kusum Virmani, Tara Chadha, K. C. A.L. Khanna: edited *A Foundation English Course for Undergraduates Book III* (Delhi: University Press, 1993).

Welcome to the FORTELL Family

Life Members

1. Dr. Sagar Mal Gupta,
P.G. Art College, Alwar
2. Ms. Leslie Dickinson
Senior Lecturer
Moray House College
St. John's Land, Holyrood
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ
3. Ms. Babli Moitra Saraf
Reader, Ramjas College, Delhi
4. Dr. N.P. Singh,
Reader, Rajdhani College, New Delhi
5. Prof. Rajiva Verma,
Dept. of English, DU
6. Ms. Seema Khanduja,
School of C.C.
7. Mr. J.K. Dua,
Principal, Govt. Sr.Sec.
School, Vijaynagar, Delhi
8. Mrs. Sunita Mehta,
Govt. Composite Model Girls
Senior Sec. School,
Jahangirpuri, Delhi
9. Mr. Swadesh Sharma,
PGDAV College, New Delhi
10. Mr. R.G. Kapoor,
Formerly Head, District
Education Office, Dist. West
Karampura, New Delhi.
11. Mr. B.L. Singhal,
Principal, Devan Chand
Arya Sen. Sec. School, Lodi
Road, New Delhi.
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Bhopal Nobles PG College
Indore
13. Ms. Sarvjit Maan, Karnal
14. Dr. S.P. Jain,
Reader, Ramjas College, Delhi.
15. Dr. S.D. Malik,
Principal Lovely Public School
Priyadarshini Vihar,
Delhi
16. Mrs. Sheela Srivastava,
Reader, Kamla Nehru College
New Delhi
17. Mrs. Manjit Singh,
Reader, Kalindi College, New Delhi
18. Ms. Indira Kaul,
SGTB Khalsa College (E)
New Delhi
19. Dr. S.S. Sharma,
Reader, Motilal Nehru College (E)
New Delhi.
20. Ms. Neelima Sharma,
Principal Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Delhi
21. Ms. P. Sisodia,
Kendriya Vidyalaya, Gole
Market, New Delhi.
22. Dr. A.K. Sethi,
Reader, Aurobindo College, New Delhi.

23. Mrs. R.S. Kariyal,
St. Xaviers' School. Delhi
24. Mr. W.E. John,
Satyawati (E) College
Delhi
25. Ms. Kanta Vadehra,
British Council Divn.
New Delhi
26. Mr. P. Dhanavel,
Tripura University,
Agartala-799004
27. Dr. K. K. Sinha,
Reader, Moti Lal Nehru College,
New Delhi.

Annual Members

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Indira Gandhi National Open
University, New Delhi
2. Dr. Anju Sahgal Gupta,
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Raj Rishi College, Alwar.
9. Ms. Anita Kothari,
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12. Ms. Dolly Verma,
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13. Ms. Usha Sharma,
Alwar Public School, Alwar.
14. Ms. Aradhana Sehgal,
Alwar Public School, Alwar.
16. Ms. Vinita Mutreja,
Alwar Public School, Alwar.
17. Ms. R. Massey,
Alwar Public School, Alwar.
18. Fr. Edward Oliveira,
St. Anselm's School, Alwar.
19. Ms. Negi,
Silver Oak School, Alwar.
20. Ms. Renu Mathur,
Silver Oak School, Alwar.
21. Ms. Manju Tyagi,
Chinar Public School, Alwar.
22. Ms. Neeti Parti,
Chinar Public School, Alwar.
23. Mr. D. Mishra,
Retd. Principal, Govt. Arts College, Alwar.

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Pitampura, Delhi
25. Ms. Sudarshan Arora,
Delhi
26. Ms. Sudha Sharma,
DAV Public School, Sector 14
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Haryana Education Service. (Retd.)
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I.P.C.L. School No. 2 (Eng. Medium)
Baroda.
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Hyderabad
32. Ms. Chandra Lekha Nair,
New Delhi
33. Ms. Geetha Kumar,
Mother's International School,
New Delhi

Note: Members from serial nos.3 to 23 are part of a chapter of FORTELL formed recently at Alwar, Rajasthan.

Alwar Chapter of FORTELL

We are happy to report that as many as 21 teachers of English from schools and colleges in Alwar have formed the first chapter of the FORTELL in the city. The initiative in this respect was taken by Ms. Malati Mathur, Govt. Arts College, Alwar who had come to attend the Seminar-cum-Workshop on the Teaching of Drama, led by Prof. Alan Maley in New Delhi on 5 November, 1993. Congratulations!

Book Reviews

Poem into Poem by Alan Maley and Sandra Moulding (Cambridge: CUP, 1985, rpt.1992).

This is a collection of selected, memorable poems. Chosen very carefully the poems would not only make their reading enjoyable but would also initiate students into discussions, into trying various combinations of words and sentences and in composing and writing poetry. The writers' aim at encouraging and developing confidence in the readers in order to express their personal feelings and ideas. In fact, one can say the same thing in many different ways if the process recommended is followed.

The themes selected are symbolic of human experiences. There are fifteen writers, the most striking poems are on 'days', 'love', 'pain', 'old age' and 'loneliness'.

The most attractive element in the units is that each of them begins with a picture, thus motivating the readers to read and think about the picture. This is followed by warming up activities ranging from listening to the recorded cassettes, reading brief passage or discussing the themes in pairs or groups. This is followed by a section on 'Writing' where activities lead the students into creating their own work including small poetic compositions.

Though the book is meant for college and advanced learners, the activity approach for the enjoyment of poetry can be tried out at the secondary stage in schools.

The style of the units is attractive: here each theme has two matching or two parallel poems to increase students' awareness of stylistic variations.

The book reinforces one's belief that there are few things as enjoyable as poetry, that poetry reading and poetry teaching is an intrinsic part of literature which is neglected today but can be fostered once again. Also, poetry is flexible enough to accommodate innovations and linguistic creativity.

The title of the book is significant. One begins by reading poems and ends up in forming, creating and writing poems.

Usha Dutta

A Matter of Words - The Lexical Syllabus : A New Approach to Language Teaching by Dave Willis (Collins COBUILD, 1990).

Is it possible to construct a syllabus around a "grammar of words" - one is not talking about vocabulary control based on a list of frequency counts such as Michael West's?

COBUILD has researched word frequency in English and found that 70% of the contemporary English usage comprises 700 words only; add another 800 and you cover an extra 6% of the language, and for the next 4% you will need another 1000 words!

That does not suggest vocabulary control but rather vocabulary *focus*. The exposure to learners should be in natural language i.e. through authentic texts and some spontaneous language

used in the context of specific tasks designed for the course.

Willis argues that a combination of communicative methodology and lexical syllabus would be far more effective than the contrived, structurally controlled or grammar focussed syllabus. He also shows that functions of a language are automatically taken care of if the approach is communicative.

But why not the traditional grammar-based syllabus? Firstly, one has access only to very simplistic and often quite misleading rules. See the following :

A: I've broken my arm.

B: Oh dear. How did you break it?

Why does B use the past tense for present relevance? Or see,

a) Have you been to church this week?

b) Did you go to church this week?

What does the present perfect rule say?

What decides the choice of structures is what we want to *mean*, and the school grammars fail to guide us on this.

Willis has many convincing examples and theoretical ground for his thesis. He refers to Rutherford and Prabhu (Rutherford W E (1987) *Second Language Grammar*, Longman; Prabhu N S (1987) *Second Language Pedagogy*, OUP ELBS) to remind us that the language user's grammar is an "internalised system" which operated unconsciously, while a formal grammatical description is only an attempt to describe and categorise that internal system. However, our grammatical descriptions and pedagogic practices are very inadequate (see examples above); also the bit-by-bit exposure to controlled, planned language, starves natural language learning processes.

But why "lexical"? Well, we mean with words

and words have typical collocations - semantic and syntactic. The COBUILD corpus provides concordances (example on page 53 in the book) which gives the basis for categorising meanings of words. The COBUILD dictionary gives meanings and examples from the same source on which Dave and Jane Willis have based their *COBUILD English Course*.

A main feature of the Course is 'awareness raising' (grammar focus) exercises that come after language use, thereby making the knowledge inputs not only more comprehensible but also "intakable"; the illustrations are from the language already used by the learner so that the context of use as well as the functions are associated with the forms or structures in focus.

It is impossible to capture in this brief review the richness of the insights in the book, expressed in very simple language—clarity and simplicity go together, I am convinced.

What is described is both a process of writing a course based on research and training, as well as an illustration of a communicative approach at work, which includes teaching of grammar and vocabulary, but in a novel way.

Finally a quote, to bring home a simple truth:

Intuition alone would not have identified the most frequent words and phrases of the language, or recognised their importance. In the past course writers' reliance on intuition has led to distortions in the treatment of the language. Pedagogic grammars have placed great emphasis on the verb phrase to the detriment of other aspects of language.

Hence the importance of COBUILD.

Prem Mathur
British Council Division

English Language Teaching: From Theory to Practice by Mullick, Ratna and Shefali Ghosh (Calcutta: Spectrum Inc., 1993), pages 305 plus glossary, appendix and select bibliography, Rs. 126/-.

This ambitiously planned volume is a compendium of essential information on the theory and practice of teaching English as a second language. The book is meant primarily to cater to the needs of teacher trainees offering English as part of B.Ed. in West Bengal and elsewhere in our teacher training institutions. The authors also intend it to be useful to the classroom teacher and the teacher trainer.

Obviously much thought has gone into the organisation of the book. The book is divided into three sections - Section A on "Theory", Section B on "Practical Methodology" and Section C on "Language Description", which includes chapters on Grammar and Phonology. The first section on theory is the largest covering as many as 193 pages. After stating the objectives of teaching English as a second language, it focuses on the psycholinguistic principles of second language acquisition, a systematic description of past and present approaches to language teaching, the strategies needed to develop language skills - receptive or interpretative skills (of listening and reading) and productive skills (of speaking and writing), and finally the principles and design of English language testing.

Each chapter begins with a detailed list of headings, sub-headings and sub-sub-headings under which the topics dealt with in the chapter are discussed. The discussion itself is generally clear and, considering the limitations of space, quite adequate. A positive aspect of the book is that the authors are able to touch upon most of the important aspects of an issue. This is particularly clear in the portion dealing with communicative language teaching. This portion

deals, among other things, with the factors that led to the emergence of CLT, features of CLT, the contributions of Chomsky, Dell Hymes, Canale and Swain to the evolution of the theory of competence, cognitive psychology and its implications for language learning, syllabus designing, the new approach for changed roles of the teacher, learner and instructional materials, and the implications of the new approaches for teaching procedures. The chapter ends with a big table that gives a comparative analysis of past and current approaches to ELT (pp. 52-3).

There are similar useful tables elsewhere in the handbook - that dealing with the classification of skills, according to the cognitive complexity and many more. (p. 57).

Also, each chapter ends by setting exercises, problems and questions for discussion, which are meant to encourage the teacher to arrive at his/her own conclusion.

The chapter on Developing Literary Skills takes up a very important topic. The authors rightly emphasize that the main objective of literature teaching is to develop independent readers but the treatment is much too brief.

The glossary terms in use in ELT literature should prove useful. However, this otherwise useful book is marred by several avoidable proof reading errors. The chapter numbers don't correspond to the numbers given on the *contents* pages. While the chapters in the contents pages are indicated by Roman letters, i.e. I, II, III, the chapters themselves begin with Arabic numerals, i.e. 1, 2, 3. Also while the heading for chapter 3 is Developing Language Skills, the heading given on the folio pages 71-83 is Developing Language Skill.

In spite of these errors, however, it is a useful reference book. Though meant for English teach-

ing at the secondary and senior secondary levels, I feel it should prove useful to teachers who are required to teach language at the college level also.

Naresh Jain

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American Drama**

NARESH K. JAIN

This book is a comprehensive study of general patterns in the presentation of love in modern American drama from the 1920's to the 1970's. While the principal focus of the study is on O'Neill, Williams, Miller and Albee, it also deals with the works of other American dramatists like Maxwell Anderson, Elmer Rice, Sidney Howard, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman and such contemporary playwrights as Arthur Kopit, Lanford Wilson, David Rabe, Sam Shepard and David Mamet.

The first chapter identifies the socio-cultural and psychological forces that have shaped the contours of love in American society. The second, while giving an overview of the literary treatment of love, discusses the emerging new love ethic as reflected in the changing conventions of love and the language employed in the plays. The core of the book deals with five faces of love, which are: *Love and Redemption*, *Love and Sex*, *Love and Marriage*, *Love and Success*, and *Forbidden Love*. In the process the book offers close and insightful readings of 17 plays including such American classics as *Desire Under the Elms*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *After the Fall* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Love is a perennially interesting theme in literature and this study, written in a lucid and jargon-free language, is an important contribution to the growing scholarship on the subject.

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