Language, Culture, and Identity: Issues and Challenges

AKU-CEL Seminar 2005, Karachi
A Report by Dr. Sabiha Mansoor

Minister for Education and Literacy, Sind, Dr Hamida Khuhro, on Saturday, July 16, 2005, expressed the need to have forums to discuss sensitive issues which are needed to be resolved to change Pakistan into a liberal society. Dr Khuhro was addressing the inaugural session of a two-day international seminar organized by the Centre of English Language (CEL) of the Aga Khan University. The theme of the seminar was "Language, Culture, and Identity: Issues and Challenges". Dr Khuhro, who was the chief guest on the occasion said, "The role of English for access to higher education is undeniable, and the government fully realizes this fact." She also expressed a need to train teachers, especially from the public sector, in the latest English Language Teaching approaches and methodologies to ensure quality teaching. She also expressed her support to the idea of introducing multilingualism in the classroom so that the students developed command over their mother tongues as well.

> "There was a positive relationship between multilingualism, mental growth and educational achievement; therefore, there was every need to promote multilingual education in schools."
>
> – Prof. R.K. Agnihotri

In his welcome speech Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, President AKU, H.I., S. I., stressed the need for such scholarly activities which provided opportunities to public of hearing scholars and experts discuss issue which could be fruitful in shaping opinions and attitudes. He also said that "encouraging bilingualism in Pakistan will be a service to the country." Dr Lakha also thanked the chief guest for gracing the occasion.

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The year 2005 has been very productive for FORTELL. Besides interacting with teachers and experts with issues relating to the teaching and learning of English Language and Literature, FORTELL was involved in several activities. We organised a workshop on strategies of vocabulary building in Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Kishen Ganj, Delhi, in February this year. In the month of March, FORTELL organised a book release-cum-paper reading seminar in collaboration with Emerald Publishers, Chennai, in which several experts took part. Some of active members took part in workshops organised for drafting national curriculum and syllabus of English for schools and participated in Text books Evaluation Project of SCERT, New Delhi. FORTELL members crossed Indian territory to participate in seminars and workshops. Prof. R. K. Agnihotri, one of the advisors of FORTELL, gave the key-note address in the seminar, *Language, Culture, and Identity: Issues and Challenges*, organized by Centre of English Language (CEL) by Aga Khan University, Karachi. Soma Bhattacharjya of National Open School, New Delhi, took part in the two-week course on *Material Development for Language Teaching* at Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds.

FORTELL is also organising a workshop on English Pronunciation on October 21, 2005, for the benefit of school teachers. Besides that FORTELL for the first time will be holding a creative writing competition for school children to encourage creativity among them.

Our Kolkata chapter has not lagged behind us. It has organised several programmes. Above all, very soon they will have their own Newsletter.

FORTELL Newsletter is in the present issue introducing a section

on interviews called Tête-a-tête. One of our life members, Barun Kumar Mishra has interviewed Prof. Rama Matthews, a famous linguist teaching at CIE, University of Delhi.

With the partnership of Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, the dream of having Newsletter of the organisation on regular basis has become a reality. The society has been very co-operative and has encouraged us bring out the Newsletter as elegantly as possible. I hope these activities of FORTELL will one day be a forum for interactions among teachers and experts of English around the world.

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Dr Rama Kant Agnihotri from Delhi University, India, in his keynote address highlighted the importance of human multilinguality in the march towards peace, justice, and equality. In his speech he said that there was a positive relationship between multilingualism, mental growth and educational achievement; therefore, there was every need to promote multilingual education in schools.

Charles Walker, Director, British Council, shed light on the long history of collaboration between AKU and CEL, calling CEL its invaluable partner. He also said that the core aim of the British Council was to develop lasting and productive relationship between people in Britain and Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion Dr David Taylor, Acting Provost called the seminar an opportunity to share expertise, opinions, and research with like-minded people worldwide.

Dr Sabiha Mansoor, Head, CEL, commenting on Dr Agnihotri's visit to Pakistan regarded it as a symbol of strengthening of friendship between the academia of India and Pakistan. She also reiterated CEL's commitment to play a role in the development of ELT not only in Pakistan but also in the region.

The seminar is being attended by prominent ELT experts and educationists from India, UK, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, as well as Pakistan.

The author is presently Associate Professor and Head, Centre of English Language, Aga Khan University, Pakistan. She has been a British Council Scholar and guest speaker at several international universities. She is a member of the National Committee on English (HEC) and the editor of The Journal of Asia TEFL.

Teacher Training : Suggestions for Curriculam Design in the Indian Context

by Dr. Anju S. Gupta

Introduction

The hiring policies of schools in India lay great stress on a one-year pre-service programme (e.g the B.Ed), which it is believed fully equips a teacher with knowledge and skills to last a career spanning several decades-an assumption which is as absurd as it is widespread.

From time to time, government and some "enlightened" private institutions engage in subject-based intervention programmes. These are of short duration (one day to one month) and in the case of English concentrate on an update of the different "skills" e.g. Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Communicative Grammar, Testing, and so on. It is felt that any Teacher training programme will benefit more from "whole" curriculum approach, where the learner in his/her socio economic and socio cultural environment with his/her own personality and style is at the center and issues such as classroom management, self-reflection, action research, material selection are considered along with the teaching of linguistic skills.

The Central Question

The central question, which is considered crucial in any teaching-learning situation is "what are the sensible and efficacious ways of promoting language learning through a programme of instruction?" In other words, what is it that makes up the main professional work of the 'classroom' teacher of English? Of course there is a system of pre designed and pre determined inputs, for instance a syllabus, course books and examination scheme. But there is also the dynamic and unpredictable process of implementing such a system in the real setting of a classroom. Any teacher-training programme must address key areas from the 'planning' stage to the actual 'process' of teaching. Some of these issues would be 'lesson plans, classroom management, classroom interaction, methodology of teaching and above all the learners themselves with their different learning styles and diverse socio-economic-linguistic and cultural situations.

> For any teacher-training programme to be successful it must provide insights into the learner, specifically the language learner.

Much research has been carried out in all these areas in the West (see Carter and Nunan 2001 for State of Art on different aspects of ELT). For example, if we take just the case of teaching 'methodology', it is tempting to follow a linear approach starting from the grammar-translation method to the audio-lingual approach down to communicative language teaching(Richards and Rodgers, 2000). While, we should be aware of these methods, the best teacher intervention programme should provide an indigenous model, which would truly integrate it with the plurilingual, and pluricultural community in which it would function. A truly meaningful teacher-training programme should steer clear of the monolingual Anglo centric assumptions and ideologies that underline most courses.

For any teacher-training programme to be successful it must provide insights into the learner, specifically the language learner. Unlike knowledge based subjects, which involve different kind of "learner readiness" where the context of learning is not totally embedded in the teaching-learning situation, language learning is inextricably linked with the socio linguistic background of the learners, the role of L1 and L2 as well as the status and role of the other languages in the verbal repertoire of the learners. Few courses look at learners as social beings functioning in a multilingual environment with their own learning styles.

Most teacher-training programmes do not include learner factors in second language acquisition in India. There is a well-researched area(see Agnihotri et al.1998for State of Art in this area) where it is shown that affective factors such as motivation, intelligence, attitude and aptitude as well as sociolinguistic factors such as parental background, schooling medium of instruction, gender and age help a learner acquire an L2. A knowledge of

these learner factors would give the teacher insights into the language learning process. In fact, one of the major pit falls of teacher intervention programmes is that while there is huge talk of a "learner-centered" approach, the preparation of the teacher to deal with the learner is more based on popular perception and belief rather than on any research based understanding of the learner.

Cultural norms play an important role in learner behaviour in classroom interaction and assessment. The turn-taking behaviour of Asian students showed that their participation is strongly guided by what they believe to be proper classroom behaviour (Tsui, 1995). Research (Blue 1994; Heron 1988 cited in Carter and Nunan 2001) has also shown that the concept of self-assessment may be quite unfamiliar and threatening to many learners since it alters traditional teacher-learner relationships. None of this understanding/research gets reflected into teacher training programmes. To address this dilemma (Bax, 1997) has called for 'context-sensitive' teacher education practices which involve trainees in ways that has a close bearing to their teaching concerns and contexts.

More recently teacher questioning, techniques "wait time" after questions, turn allocation by the teacher and turn-taking by learners have received considerable attention (see state of art article by Tsui). While this is an important dimension of classroom interaction, it has not yet reached the ordinary classroom teacher.

As Freeman (2002) states, there has been an expansion of theoretical concepts and research issues.

However, few who are engaged in developing this knowledge base or research agenda would claim any direct relation between their work and preparation of language teachers. A good teacher-training programme must attempt a direct relationship between research and practice. While enhancing the knowledge base of teachers, it is imperative and sensible to draw on really valuable insights from their own experience. Most of these insights are anecdotal in nature, "narrative webs of past and present experience" (Freeman 2002). However, for the teacher to reflect and 'profit' from her experience, it is important to include teachers into the research process by giving them the knowledge and the tools to participate in classroom research. This is, in fact, critical to their professionalism and it serves two functions: it teaches them the skill of reflectivity (Stanley, 1998); it also provides them with the discourse and vocabulary that can help them in articulating and publicially representing the complexity of the teaching-learning process (Elbaz 1991). Moreover, it helps them share information, insight and best practice. In fact, training programmes in India must include a 'mentoring' component that would connect new and experienced teacher in a meaningful way.

Problem of Teacher Proficiency in English

Raising the Proficiency of teachers should be an important part of any teacher training programme in the Indian Context where English is a second/third language. In fact, poor linguistic proficiency of teachers is a problem which crucially needs to be addressed because it necessarily leads to poor performance in English by their students. This often becomes a formidable task-on the one hand there are teachers with great facility in the language, while there are more English teachers whose proficiency is quite low. How does a teacher training programme deal with such heterogeneity? How does one enhance the proficiency of the latter, while keeping alive the interest of the former?

Most teachers of English are familiar with sentence based grammar, even if they lack both fluency as well as accuracy in the language. However, to understand the true nature of language and to use it effectively in the teaching-learning process, we could follow a top-down approach, where we could look at patterns of organization in language which go beyond the sentence level to a more holistic level which incorporate the discourse perspective. Such an approach would be meaningful and useful to both the more proficient teacher as well as the "weaker" participant. Such a perspective will also help in teaching the reading and writing skill.

Conclusion

Finally, while, I have suggested a 'holistic' rather than a skill based approach to teacher training in ELT, this is not to say that inservice teacher education based on specific needs and interests has to be negated. But while custom- made courses address a small group of already (somewhat) enlightened teachers we need to set our view on the very large population of unreached teachers. Probably

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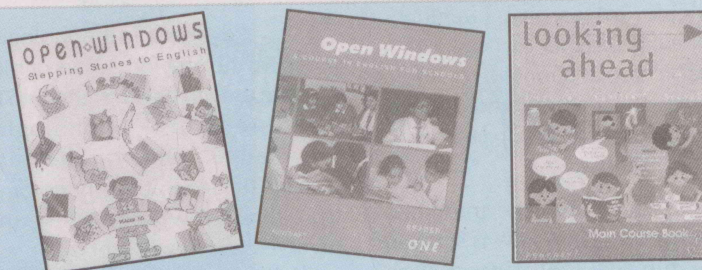
Distance Education using multimedia support is the answer to address such large numbers. There are also some Distance Education programmes such as the post graduate certificate and diploma run by CIEFL and two Teaching of English programmes run by IGNOU (where the entry level is primarily a B.A...). I feel that it is in these Distance Education programmes, which, if well thought out, can impact large numbers and where the teacher/aspiring teacher can learn, reflect and try out the innovations, that will play an important role in improving the standards of English teachers and teaching across the country. For example, IGNOU because of its mandate has to necessarily cater to immense heterogeneity at several levels. The curriculum has to attend to (i) both aspiring and practicing teachers with different education qualifications— from post graduates to 10+2 ii) teachers with variable proficiency in English (from very little English to high level of proficiency in English) iii) teachers who have some knowledge of current trends in ELT to those who are accustomed to a teacher-centered approach with repetition and practice drills iv) teachers who have to deal with immense diversity of students.

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Teaching English Pronunciation : Current Perspectives

by Prof. Pramod Pandey

I shall be concerned here with three main points, namely, the technological advances that are available for learning languages, theoretical insights that help us to focus on crucial phonological topics with new viewpoints, and deciding on what to include for learners of English in India.

1. Apart from the traditional language lab, there now is software available for analyzing speech. These require data to be fed to the computer either directly or through a tape recorder, and submitted for acoustic analysis. The acoustic analysis gives a picture of the composite features of the data, which may be a sound segment such as p or e or a longer stretch such as a word or a phrase or a sentence. It is the separation of the acoustic features, such as duration or pitch contour, that is of direct use for the language learner. For instance, the pitch contours of a Yes/No sentence said with a Rising tone can be reproduced, against a native speaker's output available on the screen, until the two contours are found to match. Learners to achieve desired results can use facilities such as these freely. Many of the software are available on the Internet and can be freely downloaded. One of these

is widely known as "Praat", with the following address: "www.fon.hum.uvan.nl/praat"

2. Advances in phonological theory in the past forty years or more provide us with new insights into the structure of phonological knowledge. One of the main insights of Generative Phonology is that the knowledge of sounds involves two levels, the underlying level and the surface level. These levels roughly correspond with the abstract level at which words are stored in the mind/brain and the surface level of articulation. The teaching and learning of languages need to take both these levels into account. In a nutshell, facts of the underlying representation demand priority over those of surface representation on the ground that a difference at the former level between a native speaker and a second language speaker can lead to a major difference in the system and cause unintelligibility.

There have emerged at least two more sub-theories of phonology

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>
> – Raja Rao

that have consequences for language learning. These are the theory of Lexical Phonology, and the theory of Prosodic Phonology. Lexical Phonology claims that phonological processes are organized into two components, lexical and post-lexical. The former involve phonemes and relate to specific groups of words; the latter involve allophones and relate to the whole of the vocabulary.

The theory of Prosodic Phonology deals with the organization of sounds in a hierarchy: Segment-Syllable-stress Foot, Word, Phonological Phrase and Intonational Phrase. Many processes of pronunciation that appear to be complex can be shown to be simpler when described using these concepts. For example, the process of Aspiration (e.g. tà tH), /r/-Deletion (e.g. river: /riv*/) and l-Velarization (e.g. l in milk), can be neatly described in terms of the concept of the Syllable (having Onset-Peak-Coda structure). In the case of both Aspiration and l-Velarization, the relvant sound must be in the Coda position.

It should be noted that the insights from the sub-theories of phonology have admittedly to be adopted for pedagogic use in textbooks rather than be used directly.

3. A crucial question that has varied answers is, What features of English sound structure should be taught to Indian learners? The answer largely depends on the target level that the learner wants to achieve. For those of us who believe

that a standard form of Indian English, largely known as General Indian English, should be taught at the college level, it is important to ascertain that a linguistic variety like this exists. On close scrutiny, it can be shown that indeed it does. Such a variety has many features that can be accounted for in terms of at least three main properties of second language varieties, namely Novelty, Historicity, and Stability. As example, we can look at the following:

Novelty: Indian English has retroflex stops in place of alveolar stops in a large number of its variants. It has one vowel (e.g. in cot and caught) in place of two in Native English...

Historicity: The reason why /e:/ and /o:/ are 'pure vowels', not diphthongs in Indian English, is that when English was introduced in India in the eighteenth century, Native English itself did not have the diphthongs /ei/ and /ou/.

Stability: In spite of so much difference among the languages of India, Indian English still has features that are found across the board, especially in the speech of learners of English medium schools.

("Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it." Raja Rao, 1938, Kanthapura v-vi)

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"A Vast Majority of School Teachers are not Comfortable with English":
Prof. Rama Mathew,
C.I.E. University of Delhi

In her Interview with Mr. Barun Kumar Mishra

Barun: What kind of political implication is there, if there is any, behind making teaching of English compulsory at all levels. Because English to some academicians and scholars is the language of cultural imperialism and is in no way Indian. It is believed that a majority of Indians cannot identify themselves with English because of its alien origins. Since it does not belong to Indian culture it is a threat to Indian culture and it may uproot Indians from their socio-cultural roots. Teaching English is conventionally understood as teaching western values. So does the NCERT's wish to teach English at all levels address this linguistic debate or not, because from certain parts of the country people have put a strong opposition against English in the form of social movement?

Prof. Mathew: You say that teaching English is teaching Western values, but I just don't agree with that because English has been with us for a long time. It has become part of our culture in a way. But there is one version of English which is trying to become western. That is a very narrow view and I don't think any of us subscribe to that. We have lived English, we have been with it, and therefore it is a very important and necessary component of our education. And with English becoming a vehicle for achieving all the positive effects of globalization, we will need to exploit it to our end.

Barun: So you are talking of Indianisation of English?

Prof. Mathew: Yes, it has been recognised the world over that our English is also as good if not better than other kinds of English, and it is also not a foreign language for us. Of course it came as a result of colonialism, but definitely it is a part of our life. We are, in fact, even without English, a multi-lingual society and we have the ability to learn not just one language but more than two or three languages. Learning English therefore for us is very easy provided we don't interfere with the natural way in which one learns languages. I do understand that teaching it in a formal setting, i.e. in a classroom brings with it lots of accompanying problems.

As I said earlier, we need English for social, academic and professional purposes, not only outside India, but also in the country itself. Long ago we recognised this and made English a second language. We did not introduce English in mother-tongue medium schools from class I, since we believed, and research also supports this, that for children's concept and cognitive development to happen properly, formal education has to begin with mother tongue medium. We introduced English in class V, VI or VII depending on the State concerned, we hoped it would be learnt well enough for communication purposes, as a library language for reading writing and academic purposes. But unfortunately we haven't succeeded in teaching English to mother-tongue medium students in those four or five years at all, so at the end of class 10th they haven't learnt much or any English. We are to blame for that. We treat English also as a content subject, we treat it as something to be memorised, not as a tool which we should wield effectively. Therefore the method we adopt in the classroom to teach it are faulty, if not impoverished, and restricts the learning of a language to memorisation of some predetermined questions to prescribed texts. The evaluation system corroborates this approach. Conversely, the washback of the exam system which emphasizes fixed and 'correct' answers has a negative influence on what is taught and how it is taught in the classroom. The exam system (which also totally neglects oral skill development) in a sense, has been the major bottleneck for teaching and learning English as a language of communication.

In a majority of the States English has been introduced from class I in response to public

demand. I am here essentially talking about the disadvantaged class, I am talking about the government schools and they all have reacted to the fact that the other children in private English medium schools have an edge over them and they have not been able to compete with the rest of the world. So in response to that it has been a political decision rather than an academic decision to introduce it from class I. I remember when I went to U P more than five years ago, the feeling I got from the government officials was that they were not in favour of introducing English at the elementary level. They firmly believed that English need not be introduced until class VIII because students didn't want to learn it. On the other hand when I met teachers, students and parents it was the contrary, they all wanted English. So, in fact, it has been the right decision to respond to it this way although I think introducing English from Class I would not have been necessary, if we had done a good job of teaching it well from classes V or VI to X. I think four or five years of English would have been more than enough to attain general proficiency in English, including listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Since that has not happened we have had to bring it down to class I, and now if we don't do a good job of that, the next thing that people are going to ask for is English medium education for everybody. It seems that we don't manage to do any job very well.

And that applies to teaching of English at the primary level as well.

***Barun:** May be that is the reason why English medium schools have flourished everywhere in the country.*

Prof. Mathew: Yes, everywhere, but what has happened is unfortunate: it is not as though public school children know their English, it is not as though they can use English effectively. In fact what I realise especially in Delhi schools is that they have been disadvantaged on two counts: children don't know either Hindi or English. What I notice in classrooms is that there is no dialogue happening among students and teacher, no negotiation, no interaction. It all happens in 'Yes' and 'No' form if it is 'two-way'; most often it's a lot of teacher talk, mostly in the mother tongue, which doesn't challenge the students. Students are not involved in thinking out things, in any challenging activities which they struggle with. This is the kind of teaching going on in most schools.

***Barun:** You mean quality of education vis-à-vis language culture?*

Prof. Mathew: Not exactly the language culture but it is because of the kind of emphasis that we have given to language learning by way of getting them to rote-learn answers to exam questions. In response to that what teachers have managed to do is treat English language as a subject, so the language is not developed at all. Even in English medium schools, teachers say they feel the need to use the bilingual method, with Hindi and English alternating; I refuse to call it a bilingual method. This much of code-switching is not going to make the student competent in either of the

languages. So while of course you need to use students' home background, home culture, I think we should build on what they bring to class and go on from there. This way, they can't process English (nor Hindi for that matter), let alone use it for different purposes.

***Barun:** How does the NCERT'S decision affect language learning at the elementary level? How could second language acquisition correspond with the acquired first language, the regional language of school instruction and more specifically the mother tongue? In some cases English may not be the only language after mother tongue, in various societies regional languages become the second language before English. So with English there may be a three - tier language system?*

Prof. Mathew: Are you saying that in some cases English will become the third taught language and in some cases English will be the second language? But it should not be of too much concern for us. English is any way not the first language and we don't want to teach it as though their mother tongue doesn't exist, we want to build on their mother-tongue, it's a rich resource that teachers/students have. The second formally taught language could be English or any other local Indian language—the principle would be the same. Students have to get an idea of how languages function, so that would be my main concern when I introduce a second language.

***Barun:** So you don't see any clash between the mother - tongue and the second language?*

Prof. Mathew: I don't think that there is any clash. I think I am better off if I am able to handle more than one language. And if I am able to perceive the universal grammar and structure underlying languages, I'll

be a better language learner. Children should be enabled to see these commonalities, how languages work. Whatever language children bring to school whether it is a dialectic variety or standard variety I should be building on that in my class. But I wonder what will now happen after the introduction of English at the elementary level when teachers are not equipped to handle the situation at all. So we need to do something very drastic about training of teachers, helping them to understand how this should be done at the elementary level.

As far as teacher – development programmes are concerned we need to do it urgently before they all declare that this is a failure. First of all teachers' own language proficiency needs to be developed, because a vast majority of school teachers are not comfortable with English and do not know how they can engage students in a natural, meaningful and challenging conversation. We need to equip teachers with language proficiency as well as language pedagogy.

Barun: Second language learning is viewed as a matter of skill acquisition whereas in India still largely the necessary social environment does not exist. We are interested to know whether the decision will help the learner's achievement of some kind of proficiency in English or it will just be a mechanical exercise resulting in a mere literacy of language?

Prof. Mathew: The way we are doing it, it will result in mechanical literacy. It is very simple and clear, we don't know how to teach a language. This does not apply to English alone; the same can be said of any mother – tongue. It is unnecessarily made very artificial, difficult for the student. It is like another school subject being taught. Of course, it is a school subject, but

then we have forgotten the fact that students bring their own culture to school and (already) possess certain basic interpersonal social skills. We need to take cognizance of that and build our language curriculum around it. We have made language learning a mechanical and uninteresting exercise instead of creating a rich language environment in class.

Barun: In India now-a-days English is a social demand, it has become a language of opportunity and development. English medium schools (privately managed) have become a large scale industry. Now States too have shown interest in providing infrastructure for teaching of English probably at all levels. Now the point on the one hand is the academic belief that men, materials and method are the three cardinal factors that are responsible for the success or failure of a teaching programme. On the other there is a wider socio-economic disparity in the country. So what are the chances of overcoming such disparity for efficient language teaching at all levels? What kind of methodology and material will match the learners' requirements at elementary level in State funded schools?

Prof. Mathew: I will tell you what I'm planning to do, in answer to this question. I plan to go to a State with a small team for a long term teacher development programme, to help teachers to understand the nature of English at the primary level and how to do it well. It will be a two - three years' project where we wish to make teachers aware of how to modify and supplement the given texts into meaningful tasks and activities, that will address children's varied background and repertoire. And in the process they will be able to learn the language themselves. Teaching English to the teacher and the

student under the project will go on simultaneously. Once such an experiment is done in one small place, we will be in a position to see difficulties in teaching English at the elementary level. We can then scale it up for a larger context.

Barun: Do you see any kind of difference from one State to another regarding their response to teaching of English?

Prof. Mathew: I have worked with teachers in Maharastra. When they have to implement a educational policy, they do it with full force. They are very reform oriented. They do it whole heartedly. I have not seen this in many other States.

Barun: What are the implications of a multi - lingual class, both at lower level and higher level? What kind of teacher - training programme do you conceive of? Do you need any specialised teachers for this multilingual class?

Prof. Mathew: I don't visualise a class where two/three different kinds of languages are being simultaneously used. I do believe in an English medium class or a mother tongue medium class or something like that because you need to acquire a language and become proficient in it and therefore you need to use it in different kinds of meaningful situations. But then a multilingual class for me would be a class where knowledge of two - three languages is already available which we can capitalise on. Teachers should also be similarly multilingual to incorporate and integrate that into their teaching. A competent bilingual is very important. I like a model where we teach in Hindi/mother tongue medium up to class I, with English as just one subject from, say, class III. Then they gradually change the medium of instruction from Hindi to Hindi and English, i.e. some subjects

in Hindi and some in English, so that students can be proficient in both the languages by the time they come to Class X. I don't see why we can't have such a model.

Barun: Or may be also because of prevalence of one language over others in one case it is English and in other Hindi because it is not the first language of majority of the Indians, so we see mother - tongue

being neglected here for the common language?

Prof. Mathew: Why should it be neglected, what is the rationale behind. English medium, it should not mean that you forget your mother tongue. And in that way you get alienated, and concept development suffers. Somehow teachers of English have been looking at teaching of English as

teaching of four skills. Language and thought have not been combined at all. Your thinking happens through language and language happens through thinking. Our classes are so impoverished. For cognitive development to happen there should be something solid for the learner to engage with.

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PROFILE

Prof. M.L. Tickoo

Prof. M.L. Tickoo who has achieved great heights as a Teacher Trainer, textbook writer and ELT expert, was born in a humble family in Srinagar. His mother died before he was two years old, and his father, a shopkeeper, played the role of both father and mother with great success. The only likeness he has seen of his mother is when she was a girl of seven years. His father he remembers was a "very kind and simple man." — qualities that Prof. Tickoo himself is well known for.

His initial education was in Srinagar where he completed his schooling, B.A, B.T and Master's in English. His first job was in a Teacher Training college in Srinagar.

It was a chance advertisement in the news paper which actually changed his fortune. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages had come into existence and announced its first course, Professor with no grant from anywhere enrolled himself as a student in 1958. That was the CIEFL of the three greats–Jack Bruton, Barron and George; Professor Gokak joined soon after.

Professor Tickoo has nice things to say about all his teachers, but was particularly inspired by Professor George, who although very eccentric, was also exceptionally bright and very helpful man. Prof. Gokak he remembers with affection as a brilliant academic but an indifferent administrator.

CIEFL, in those initial days was the den of the structuralists and Professor Tickoo emerged as a "satyagrahi' of the structuralist tradition which he at time believed with the passion of a cut. Professor Tickoo has gone far away from structuralism as his books clearly suggest, however one thing stays with him-his commitment to action, i.e. practicably in the classroom as against woolly theorizing.

He performed brilliantly at CIEFL and was soon awarded a British council scholarship to study at the Institute of Education, London. This was followed by an M.A at University college London, where he encountered Quirk, Svartvik, Leech and Greenbaum and worked closely with Randolph Quirk.

CIEFL wanted him back and appointed him on its faculty in 1963. Professor Tickoo joined CIEFL, but his wife stayed on in England with their two daughters, unwilling to disturb their education.

After a year he applied for a Ford Foundation grant; not only was he awarded but interestingly, he was allowed to continue his education in England where he completed his PhD from London university. Ford foundation also partially funded his wife who also completed her PhD in comparative education the same year as her husband.

They returned to India in 1968 and Professor Tickoo continued to teach at CIEFL until 1984. Heading the text book unit, he along with his team produced 40 books which were taught in various Indian states for almost 25 years. In fact, he is the pioneer in text book writing in India.

This innovative and pioneer efforts led to other offers from private publishers and his Gulmohar series is a landmark in text book writing in India. After 20 years, it still continues to be the best seller.

After his contributions in CIEFL, the foreign lands again beckoned him and he decided to go to Singapore. Here his major contribution was on curriculum development, teacher training, the RELC journal where he invited papers on issues such as learners' dictionary, language across the curricula and new strategies in reading and writing.

After twelve and a half year in a Singapore home beckoned him again and while the institute that he and Orient Longman had decided to set up did not work out' he continues to be their major writer and editor. His recent book Teaching and Learning of English is a bestseller where academic books are concerned. He is an expert for several IGNOU courses and is contributing to academics all over the country .

Anju S. Gupta is Reader in English, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi.

NCERT's English Syllabus Committee : Report

by Dr. Sandhya Sahoo

A number of meetings of the syllabus committee were held in the NCERT under the chairmanship of Prof. R. K. Agnihotri, Delhi University. Prof. R. J. Sharma, Head, Department of Languages, NCERT was the convener of the meeting. Eminent linguists, ELT experts, teacher educators, and teachers attended it.

Position papers 'Teaching of Indian Languages' and 'Teaching of English' were read out and discussed at length. The issues raised in the focus papers were underlined for the preparation of syllabuses in Urdu, Sanskrit, Hindi and English. The members thrashed upon the issues related to instructional materials and classroom transaction strategies

and also deliberated upon the feasibility of the multilingual approach to language teaching.

The draft syllabus in English underscores language learning is essentially a matter of acquiring the important skills of LSRW in an integrated manner, and harnessing these skills to the performance of

formal as well as informal communication tasks. Children's mastery over all four skills becomes a key factor affecting success at school. Higher order language skills can be developed once the fundamental competences are ensured. It is expected that at the end of class XII, every child would become an autonomous learner, and have acquired the whole range of skills and abilities subsumed under the continuum ranging from the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) to Cognitively advanced Language Proficiency (CALP).

The syllabus highlights the emphasis on teaching language use in meaningful and often multilingual contexts and to ensure basic fundamental competence in the

Members of the Syllabus Committee - English

Prof. R. K. Agnihotri, Chairperson, Prof. Rama Mathew, Dr. A.L. Khanna, Dr. Nisha Singh, Dr. Rimli Bhattacharya, Mrs. Snehalata Gupta, Mrs. Geeta Kumar, Mrs. Meeta Kumar, Dr. Sadhana Parasher, Mr. N. Khan, NCERT, Dr. Sandhya Sahoo, NCERT, Prof. R. J. Sharma, NCERT, convener.

target language. English does not stand-alone. The aim of teaching English is the creation of multilinguals who can enrich all our languages. The strength of our country is its linguistic diversity and the complex challenges it poses along with a range of opportunities. The draft NCF stresses that several linguistic and socio-linguistic features are shared across languages; and different languages and cultures have co-existed in India for centuries enriching each other. Proper classroom strategies could be evolved to use multilingual classroom as a resource. Bi-lingualism or multilingualism confers definite cognitive advantages. There is a need to create in the classrooms, and to the extent possible outside them, socio-cultural contexts that would encourage children to participate actively in understanding and creating appropriate communicative practices. It is repeatedly reminded that children learn as much outside as in the classroom, particularly in the case of language since it is there all around them, all the time.

Language is learnt when it is not being taught as language, it is learnt through exposure in meaningful contexts. Input-rich communica-tional environment are a prerequisite for language learning, which include textbooks, learner chosen texts, big books, class libraries, parallel books, news papers, radio, authentic texts, etc. This also argues that children appear to learn much better in holistic situations that make sense rather than in a linear and additive way that often has no meaning. It is futile to teach isolated grammar items to students. Grammar would emerge from an active engagement in communicative practices.

> There is a need to create in the classrooms, and to the extent possible outside them, socio-cultural contexts that would encourage children to participate actively in understanding and creating appropriate communicative practices.

Approaches and methods to be used in the teaching learning process need not be exclusive but may be supportive within the broad cognitive philosophy. The innovative activities and exercises will enhance the motivation level of the learners. Apart from the acquisition of all the different skills of language, the development of life skills such as negotiation/refusal skill, decision/problem solving skill, coping/self management skill, etc. are very critical for dealing with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

A precise emphasis is given on child's talk as resource and errors are a necessary part of the process of learning. Suitable level specific activities should be developed and sources like folk tale, fantasy, community singing, story telling, theatre, mystery, folk and classical music, popular composition, etc. should be exploited for language learning.

The course material should incorporate suitably the core components and values enshrined in the Constitution and NPE and also the contemporary concerns. At each stage it should be in line with learner's cognitive level, interest and experience. Themes and sub-themes should be in conformity with the learner's immediate environment- physical, social and cultural. The textbooks need to be contextually rich and provide incentives to the innate curiosity and creativity of learners.

Language evaluation should not be tied to 'achievement' with respect to particular syllabi, but must be re-oriented to the measurement of language proficiency. Evaluation is to be made an enabling factor for learning rather than an impediment.

Dr. Sandhya Sahoo is Reader in National Council for Education, Research and Training.

Programmes of Kolkata Chapter (FORTELL) : Report

From the Desk of the Programme Co-ordinator

FORTELL Kolkata organised on Syllabus Design at the Ter tiary Level in West Bengal in a seminar from 12 - 14 March 2005. Dr. Jayashree Mukherjee, Reader at the State ELTI presented a paper on *Syllabus Design at the Tertiary Level in West Bengal.* Dr. Sampa Chatterjee presented a paper in the same on *'English and the Social Context in ELT'.* Ms.Sohini Dasgupta, Saibal Chatterjee, Joyee Lahiri, Manasi Paul Choudhury, Yagyaseni Das, Somali Sen, Dolonchampa Das, Anwesha Jana, Debanjana Chakraborty were actively involved in the same programme.

The members are working on our own Newsletter to be published in October 2005. Ms. Susmita Bhattacharya, our Newsletter Co-ordinator and Ms. Sohini Dasgupta have been busy in interviewing academicians on the state of ELT in West Bengal. Ms. Nandini Mukherjee, our Finance Co-ordinator is busy in the publication of the Newsletter.

A literary campaign for disadvantaged learners is under a planning process. This will be taken up as a project in early 2006.

Material Development for Language Teaching: Report

by Soma Bhattacharjya

The Leeds Metropolitan University University,U.K. organised a two week course on " Materials Development for language teaching" from the 25ᵗʰ July – 5ᵗʰ august 2005 at the School of Languages, Macaulay Hall, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds.The course was attended by a total of 6 participants from different countries of the world namely- India, Iran, Poland, Italy and Indonesia. There were 4 tutors for the course. They were- Dr. Brian Tomlinson, Dr. Hitomi Mashuhara, Dr. Ivor Timmis and Jayne Barnes.

During the course the participants who were all by profession material producers, were exposed to various aspects of materials development, that is, issues in materials development, materials adaptation, evaluation and visuals and layout. The participants also had hands on experience on writing language lessons for the development of language skills after having sufficient theoritical inputs on the same topic.

In the 14 days course participants learnt from each others experiences by working in groups and pairs. All the sessions which began at 10 in the morning and ended at 5 in the evening focussed on one particular aspect of material development. In each session participants had sufficient opportunities to relate their work practises' with current trends and theories. In each session participants were also given a number of handouts that explained various theories and researches on the topic in focus.Some of the main points that were focused upon during the course were-

- Issues in material development
- Importance of developing culture sensitive materials
- How to develop culture specific materials
- How to adapt materials to suit learner profile
- How to draw up criteria for materials evaluation
- Importance of assessing learner needs
- Importance of developing materials that affect and effect learner's lives
- Importance of good appropriate visuals
- Visuals as carriers of messages

In the discussions that took place during the course, participants agreed that materials (print medium) occupied a place of importance in learners lives.

The author with other participants

There were many reasons for this. Materials, it was felt reflected values. These value were crucial for contemporary healthy living and also introduced visions of change in the learners lives. Well developed materials also had the advantage of expanding learners vision of the world and increased general knowledge. Thus it was very important to develop culture specific and culture sensitive materials that would be in consonance with the

> Well developed materials also had the advantage of expanding learners vision of the world and increased general knowledge.

educational aims and policies of the society in focus. In the discussions that took place during the sessions, developing learner specific courses that would affect and effect learners lives was discussed. The importance of assessing learner needs and drawing up a learner profile before developing materials was stressed. Participants were made aware of how textual materials, visuals and layout and methods of transaction of the course contributed to the development of the learner and improved the learners linguistic competence.

Finally, at the end of the course all participants were asked to develop materials suited to the English Language Learner profile of their country and present the same on the last day. All participants were also given a certificate of attendance by the university.

Soma Bhattacharjya is in National Open School, New Delhi.

BOOK REVIEWS/ NOTICES OF BOOKS
relating to the teaching of English Language/ Literature are invited from members.

NCF-2005 & English Language Teaching : Observations

by Dr. Kusum Sharma & Dr. Savita Bahl

The draft paper of National curriculum Framework -2005 focuses on many vital issues related to school education . As far as English language teaching is concerned , the draft emphasises on developing child's innate language faculty and multilingual competency. The reason of low level proficiency could be the lack of understanding of nature and structure of language or the inactive / dull process of language teaching.

The NCERT's revised draft curriculum frame work - which was approved by the council's steering committee has suggested that learning English be included in all forms of education, including the Serva Shiksha Abhiyan (for six - fourteen years old).

The draft curriculum says ," with in eight years of education constitutionally guaranteed to every child , it should be possible to achieve basic English language proficiency in a span of four years."

It however says , " Home language (mother tongue) should remain the medium of learning in classrooms.

"A multi -lingual approach of schooling from the very onset will counter possible ill - effects such as the loss of one's own language and the burden of sheer

> From class 3 onwards, oracy and literacy should be tools for developing higher order communication skills and critical thinking.
>
> -NCF Report

incomprehension," says the report. "The aim of English teaching is the creation of multi -linguals who could enrich all our languages .English should be taught along with the child's home language ," it added. The report is clear on the motive behind seeking such a paradigm shift : to make the country's universal language ." The level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to people's aspirations rather than an academic or feasibility issue, " says the report.

On how to take students to a higher stream of language change , the report says this can be done in three steps. At the primary stage , a child's language should be accepted as it is , with no attempt to correct him . From class 3 onwards, oracy and literacy should be tools for developing higher order communication skills and critical thinking by class 4 , if rich and interesting exposure is made available , the child will himself acquire the standard variety and rules to correct orthogrphy , the report states.

Another major change recommended in language education is the creation of multi-lingual class rooms in order to enhance a child's learning ability . There are still certain good

recommendations related to teacher's proficiency in the draft such as :-

All teachers should have basic proficiency in English and also skills to teach English in ways appropriate to the situation and levels.

- An input - rich curriculum focusing on meaning should be developed. Language across the curriculum perspective should be adopted. Multilinguality should be the aim of schools.

For evaluation of language, recommendations in NCF 2005 suggests that it should be made an enabling factor for learner rather than an impediment. Continuous assessment should document a learner's progress and language evaluation need not be tied to achievement with respect to particular syllabi but must be reoriented to measure language proficiency through set of English language tests which may be evolved as national bench-mark for language proficiency. In the recommendations, higher degree of proficiency in language has been mentioned time and again which appears to be achievement - oriented. Standard national bench-marks for language skills allow school and individual student to get a sense where they stand -their strength and weaknesses and progress .It also delinks failure in

English at class 10 from complete failure at class 10.

To lessen the woes of students and to make English and Maths a little simpler than it seems to be for many student who appear for class 10 examinations two levels in the subjects have been proposed . English is already being run at two levels in many schools. But for Maths it's a very good recommendation . Pleasant changes in examinations system by making 10 th board optional , introducing 15 minutes cool off period, grade system in evaluation , eliminating examination till 8 th std by continuous evaluation system based on monday test proposed in N.C.F 2005 have been incoporated in the system by CBSE.

All recommendations are good and valuable as far as these are meant for the welfare of students and society . It is yet to see their implications. How far these will be practical and feasible in school environment. Therefore, the manner in which these are implemented depend on availability of resources, effective transactional strategies and a positive approach.

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Dr. Savita Bahl is PGT, English, in Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Nai Basti Kishan Ganj, Delhi.

Orientation Programme on Strategies of Vocabulary Building: Report

Report by Anil Kumar

An Orientation Programme on Strategies of Vocabulary building was organized by FORTELL on January 28, 2005, for the TGT's in English of all Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas with the kind permission of D.D.E.R.P.V.Vs. in RPVV Nai Basti Kishan Ganj. Dr Mrs. Savita Bahl (PGT Eng.) o the host school took the initiativ of inviting and arranging ever thing. Dr. Mrs. Kusum Sharma (S Lecturer in DIET, Keshav Puram Dr. Ms. Tulika (Reader, Universi of Delhi) and Mrs. Savita Ba took over as Resource Persons. was an interactive programme four hours. Out of 14 schoo teachers from 12 scho participated in the programr Word building strateg commonly made mistakes, on homophones, homony phrasal verbs, idiom expressions and sight vocabu etc. were some of the topics which discussion was held.

Mr. Anil Kumar is Principal of R Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Nai Kishan Ganj, Delhi.

Ruth Jhabvala's India : Image of India in the Fiction of Ruth Prawar Jhabvala

by Dr. Neeta Gupta

Written by Pankaj Bhan and published by B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, in the year 2005, *Ruth Jhabvala's India* at first glance seems to be yet another book about Jhabvala's over-analyzed novels. The title, synchronous with phrases like 'Kipling's India' or 'Forster's India', raises ones expectations on the one hand while on the other it is a clear indication that this is being looked at through the eyes of *a* particular author who in this case is Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The one point that comes across even in Bhan's analysis is merely a reiteration of what has been voiced earlier by many critics – namely that Jhabvala's novels remain largely one-dimensional and defy any comprehensive and in-depth view of India and Indians. Having said that the next step is to look for a fresh perspective in the matter and Bhan does promise us one in attempting to look at the entire oeuvre of the author from the point of view of a Post-Colonial interpretation of her works.

The main focus of Bhan's argument is that despite having spent twenty four years of her life in a land which became hers by marriage and by choice, Jhabvala's image of India after the initial euphoria quickly veers towards negativity and remains consistently so till her final abandonment of the country of her domicile. It is Bhan's purpose in this book to investigate the reasons behind this persistently negative image and he locates them in the author's social and literary background.

The book is well organized and moves logically from one step to the other covering seven chapters in all. The first chapter is devoted entirely to a discussion of the burgeoning of two literary traditions namely Anglo-Indian Fiction and Indian Writing in English. Bhan gives us a 'thumb nail sketch' of the British response to India as embodied in English literature from Shakespeare's time onwards. Going through this extensive account one does begin to wonder whether the book is about Jhabvala's writings or a general estimate about the image of India as evidenced in the works of various authors. Bhan concurs with critics like Edward Said that the image of India in Anglo Indian Fiction is a 'western construct' and not based on reality as it operates in the Orient. The image of India in Indian Writing in English on the other hand is seen to be more authentic even though the language is alien.

Our query whether such a lengthy discussion was required is answered at the outset in the next chapter which discusses the perennial problem of 'placing' Jhabvala in any one particular tradition. Bhan points to the emerging critical canon which sees her as a post-colonial expatriate writer who cannot be pinned down to any particular nationality or literary tradition. Where does she fit in? Is she an outsider writing about India as a foreign land or an insider writing about her own country even though an adopted one? This question has been discussed threadbare by various readers and critics and Bhan does make a convincing case for considering Jhabvala as an outsider writing about India. He bases his observations on the biographical details of the author, her Judaic ancestry, her lack of rooted-ness which in turn gives

Book Reviews

her the famous 'chameleon or cuckoo quality,' her interviews and autobiographical writings which reinforce Jhabvala's outsider ness, but above all noticing a pattern of movement away from India even in her novels and short stories. The detailed biographical references do make for interesting reading.

In the next four chapters Bhan takes us through an exhaustive discussion of Jhabvala's novels. The discussion progresses in a linear and chronological manner and we are taken through the entire gamut of Jhabvala's writings from beginning to the present. Within these novels Bhan traces a parallel movement which demonstrates a gradual but steady disenchantment of the author with the land and its people. The country that had initially attracted Jhabvala with its newness, its mysticism, its spirituality and its exoticism ultimately becomes intolerable enough to lead to a physical break. Bhan convincingly demonstrates how despite this physical break Jhabvala remains shackled to the land both emotionally and 1

ideologically. In his analysis of her 'American Fiction' Bhan amply illustrates how India continues to impinge on her consciousness as a negative metaphor. As Bhan observes, in these novels 'India has ceased to be a palpably visible protagonist but continues to impinge on her consciousness as a brooding metaphor. '

The analysis of Jhabvala's novels is divided into three phases which incidentally is also shown to be concurring with the three stages in the pattern of any European's reaction to India. In Jhabvala's own theoretical construct about this pattern of behaviour the three stages are outlined as follows: In the first stage everything Indian is marvelous. In the second stage everything Indian is not so

marvelous. In the third stage everything Indian is abominable. Working on this premise Bhan astutely traces a similar pattern in the fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala where in the first flush of her writing her early fiction fits in to the first stage; the middle fiction into the second stage while the third stage is evident in her recent fiction, which she has written after having left India for good and having settled in America.

In the first phase of Jhabvala's writings, Bhan takes up the early novels for a discussion and observes that in these novels her 'delineation is circumscribed by a constricted vision, superficiality of approach and a detached stance' where irony remains the principal literary device for distancing the author from the subject matter. At this stage however, this irony is 'gentle and sympathetic.' As we progress into the second phase of Jhabvala's writing, the growing sense of negativity is amply reflected in the irony which now becomes bitter and inexorable. The East-West encounter remains the principal theme in this phase of writing where most western characters are seen to be on some kind of quest or the other but all their quests are shown to be ending in failure. India is seen as 'a country still steeped in orthodoxy, social iniquity and ignorance.' It goes without saying that Jhabvala's view about India continues to remain one-dimensional. Bhan dwells considerably on what Jhabvala sees as wrong in India but does not try to balance the picture by pointing out even briefly all that she ignores. Surely a newly independent and resurgent India had much more to offer than just stereotypical figures of hypocritical swamis, the decadent royalty, the pretentious middle class, the poverty or even the heat and dust!

Having rejected India for good and having relocated herself Jhabvala continues to write from America. India continues to hold sway over the writer's imagination and makes its presence felt in the Indian characters, Indian settings or cultural references included in this phase of her writing, Though India becomes a metaphor it is an intensely negative metaphor indicating the persistence of the author's personal negative reaction. A post colonial interpretation brings in a fresh perspective when Bhan points at Jhabvala's Eurocentric and Orientalist approach in his observation that the images of India, whether 'complimentary, neutral or derogatory, seem to have been created by a writer who is part of a different culture and is hence distanced from it.' The distance is not just physical and temporal but ideological as well. Bhan concludes that the east remains a western construct in Jhabvala's novels. She belongs to that group of writers who represent this post-colonial response to India. A response, that in Bhan's words, 'is free from the Raj trappings but that is replete with the images embodying orientalism in a changed and (changing) Orient.'

The post-colonial perspective and post modernist themes point at the possibilities of a fresh look at Jhabvala's novels and the emerging canon of Jhabvala's criticism. The book is well researched and supported by detailed footnotes. An exhaustive bibliography is invaluable for any interested reader of Jhabvala's novels.

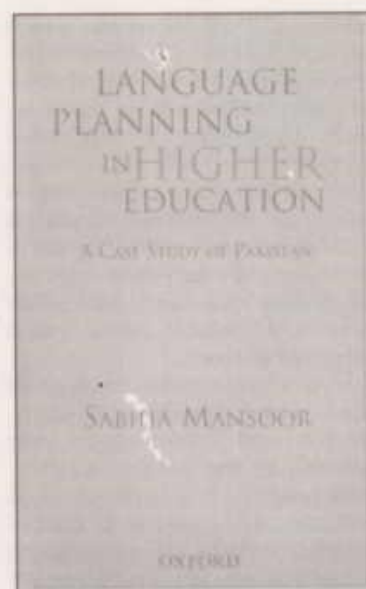*Dr. Neeta Gupta is Reader in English at School of Open Learning, University of Delhi.*

Sabiha Mansoor's Language Planning in Higher Education : A Case Study of Pakistan

by Prof. R.K. Agnihotri

Dr. Sabiha Mansoor's book is indeed a landmark addition to the area of the sociology of language in general and the domain of language policy and planning in particular. I am not aware of a comparable comprehensive book in South Asia focussed so sharply on higher education and drawing strength from all conceivable resources including careful and sensitive analysis of constitutional provisions, extant policy and planning documents and implementation strategies, quantitative data collected through extensive surveys and in-depth qualitative interviews and all these analysed through a triangulation of different kinds of analyses in a sound theoretical framework.

How a given society should plan its education and language policy and planning and implementation strategies depends really on the kind of vision it has not only for itself but also for the rest of the humanity? We need to be constantly aware that we have to, with all our might, struggle hard towards building a just, equal and tolerant society that nourishes cultural and linguistic plurality; plurality and variability are not just cosmetic concepts for academic study; they are constitutive of our identity as being human. In spite of a variety of striking differences in the post-independence India and Pakistan, it is the similarities of existing sociolinguistic situation that catches our attention. In both the countries, Hindustani was split into two languages, Hindi in India and Urdu in Pakistan; in both the countries there was a severe neglect of mother tongues and in both English, which was to disappear form the scene 15 years after independence, became the most dominant and powerful language. The people who suffer most in such circumstances are the underprivileged masses who have no access to English which becomes increasingly associated with a ruling elite, seen in both the public and the private world. Such situations demand not just equal opportunity for all; they cannot be resolved world. Such situations demand not just equal opportunity for all; they cannot be resolved through processes of consensual democracy; they demand proactive affirmative action directed in particular in favour of the underprivileged minority groups in a substantially skewed financial policy. Dr. Mansoor brings out the need for such action very effectively. It is not only that we need to improve access to English; it is equally important to provide all possible support to mother tongue education and nourish multilinguation and pluriculturalism as sources our strength. Dr Mansoor says that we need to 'adopt pluralistic and not assimilationists policies so as to provide a boost to the mother tongue of students and regional languages at all levels of education. In addition, the setting up of bilingual education programmes that allow all languages (Urdu, English and regional lauguages) to play their due role is highly recommended... (there is a need to) strengthen English language teaching programmes through a revision of courses, development of local materials, and training of teachers so as the meet the students' learning and targed needs' (p. 366)

Located in a rich and comprehensive theoretical framework developed over a period of time by Haugen, Fishman, Coulmas, Fairclough, Phillipson and Skutnab-Kangas among others, Dr Mansoor's study is based not only on the analysis of extant documents but a rich

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Rs. 595.00

survey of 2320 informants which include 2136 students, 121 teachers and 63 parents. That by any standards is a huge database, and given that it has been carefully collected and meticulously analysed keeping in mind all the relevant statistical considerations in mind, it has to be taken seriously not only by academics but also by policy makers, educationists and language planners.

As a result of her analysis of data from students, teachers, parents and administrators, she arrives at the rather alarming conclusion that people in Pakistan, as of course is true of several other developing countries, are fast losing respect for their own languages, consistently rating English higher than them on all kinds of paremeters. Several studies done in India have shown comparable

alarming results. This is indeed a paradoxical and painful situation. On the one hand, we know that conceptual clarity and lucidity of articulation are best achieved through the mother tongue or neighbourhood languages; we also know that languages are enriched through their constant use rather than through codification and elaboration in government offices. On the other hand, it is clear, as Dr. Mansoor argues, English, in spite of its association with elitism, societal divisiveness and power is essential for participating in a global world. She proposes a solid bilingual education programme which should receive serious attention from all the concerned authorities. The ideological underpinnings of this programme would be that it would be pluricultural and multilingual and not assimilative; in addition to

providing proactive affirmative access to English, it would promote the use of Urdu, Panjabi, Sindhi, Balochi and Pashto.

I would go a step further and suggest that we should make efforts for a truly multilingual policy and implementation strategies where multilingualism as constitutive of human existence becomes the basis not only for teaching discrete languages but also for teacher training, material preparation and classroom transaction.

I'd once again like to congratulate Dr Mansoor for her highly significant contribution to our knowledge about language and society. I should also like to thank OUP for, as usual doing a nearly flawless job.

*Prof. R.K. Agnihotri is in the Department of English, University of Delhi.*

Fluency in English

by Divya Bajpai Jha

The Department of English, University of Delhi has recently revised the syllabus for the B.A. Programme Stream A course. The new course aims to bring about a synthesis of the learning of the English language and its effective use in real life situations, especially in the fast changing job market. Over a period of two years, this new syllabus seeks to develop students' skills of reading, writing speaking and listening and enhance their vocabulary and knowledge of the English Grammar. Fluency in English, edited for the Department of English, University of Delhi by

Pramodini Varma et.al. is the prescribed text book for the first year of the new B.A. programme. Along with Martin Hewing's Advanced English Grammar, the book is designed to give extensive practice in reading, writing listening and speaking through a wide variety of selections and passages.

The book comprises of eighteen chapters, of which five are concerned with poetry. Satire, humour, biography, narrative and drama are tackled by one chapter each. Following a communicative and interactive approach, the book's initial chapters are devoted to ways of reading, discussing reading
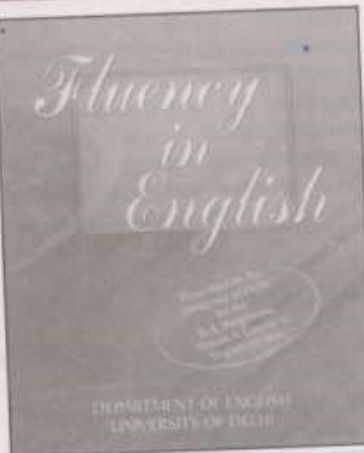
Chief Editor :
Promodini Varma, Editors :
Mukti Sanyal, Tulika Prasad

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strategies and the art of telling stories. Later chapters also discuss points of view, arguments reviews and the capacity to read between the lines. All these approaches are

mounted on a carefully selected collection of texts which show a marked concern with contemporary issues of class, caste, gender, education, social values and relationships. Each chapter begins with a Warm-up set of questions and is followed by extensive exercises on reading comprehension, vocabulary, speaking discussions and writing.

The warm – up exercise preceding a chapter is indeed a good way of preparing the student to read the chapter that follows. It helps in generating a discussion or a debate in the classroom about the issue concerned. For instance, the warm – up question in unit 4 titled Girls By Mrinal Pande (pg.21) –

'Considering how well girls are doing in every field in life, do you think that girls are still discriminated against in our society or is it only a myth?'

- not only generates a heated argument in the classroom about the discrimination or lack thereof but also serves as a good 'before' and 'after' sort of a poser after the chapter has been completed in the classroom. How many students change their erstwhile opinion regarding gender inequality is not only an indication of how well they have understood the issue at hand but also of how maturely and sincerely they want to address the issue. The purpose of combining a social awareness with the students' learning of the language is thus very admirably met.

If, however, one is met with questions like:

'Do you think telling stories is work and that it should be paid for?

Do you think people who don't tell stories are better than those who do? What can you tell about the character /nature of both groups of people?'

Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie (pg.12) - the warm-up exercise does not serve its purpose and the ensuing

discussion becomes unwieldy and unfocussed. At the same time, Questions like-

'What is the right thing to do when we have fundamental disagreements with our parents?' To Mother by S. Usha (pg87)

-one feels, would better serve their purpose if they were to form a part of the discussion exercise after the text rather than precede it .

The extensive reading comprehension exercises following each chapter work quite admirably as teaching rather than testing exercises. The vocabulary sections too, are extensive and enriching. With the help of a variety of exercises like matching meanings with words and fill in the blanks, the monotony of rote learning of meanings is sought to be broken. The language learning process is further enlivened by introducing several topics for discussion and debate, excursions followed by project work etc. Most of the questions in the writing section are also quite pertinent. However, at times they tend to turn quite verbose. In this testing exercise as different from the earlier teaching ones, some questions tend to come thick and fast without a pause for the student to fully comprehend them before moving on the next one, as in -

'Can you think of a film/serial/ novel which has 'sorcery/love interest/princesses/wicked uncles/ fat aunts/mustachioed gangsters in yellow check pants/fantastic locations/cowards/ heroes/ fights and half a dozen catchy hummable tunes'? Or as many from the list above as possible? Do you think that Rushdie's formula for a successful story is a good one? Write a short story (300-500 words) using as many elements from the list above as you can. You can relate a story you have read or a film you have seen. (pg20)

The new B.A.Programme syllabus lays considerable stress on enhancing the speaking and listening skills of the students in

order to improve pronunciation by focusing on intonation and word stress as well as a variety of accents. However the book addresses 'listening' only once when it exhorts students to carefully listen to television chat shows and interviews. 'Speaking', similarly, finds very little mention, except perhaps, for two instances where the topics for discussion are specifically listed under 'Speaking'. These issues, one hopes, would be adequately addressed in the subsequent volume of the current text.

As mentioned at the outset, the book comprises of a rich and varied collection of texts pertaining to contemporary issues of relevance to the youth in particular and to the society in general. Be it gender inequality or caste or class struggle, the book weaves a fine web around these concerns and the format of the chapters is designed to evoke responses and generate debate rather than a passive acceptance of a 'given' line of thought. There is a lot in this book for a good student to think about and learn from. One feels, however, that this 'fantastic package' threatens to become a 'formidable package' for the average B.A.Programme student, whose language skills can at best be described as only slightly better than rudimentary. One must not forget that this is not the only book which B.A.Programme students have to study in one year. A sizable part of the prescribed grammar text also has to be completed. Added to that the book can be done justice to only if sufficient amount of time is spent in the class for a build up for the chapter and a following discussion later. Thus, one feels, perhaps a leniency in emphasis on either the content of the chapters or the content of the following language exercises should be considered for the volume to follow.

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Daniel G. Riordan and Steven E. Pauley's Technical Report Writing Today

by Dr. A.L. Khanna Reader in English, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi

The present book is an Indian adaptation of Technical Report Writing Today originally published by Houghton Mifflin Co. U S A. The book is divided into 4 sections and 18 chapters and has two very useful Appendixes. The first section deals with Technical Writing Basics and has four chapters. Beginning with the definition of technical writing and the role of the audience/readers in shaping it, the section unfolds in detail the process involved in producing a technical document and comments on the difficulties involved in physical completion of the document. In the authors' opinion, "in longer documents it (physical completion) often takes more time than the drafting stage (p.58)." In chapter 4 the authors suggest some ways to produce a document that readers may find clear and easy to grasp. They are: i)place the sentences' main idea first , ii)use normal word order , iii)use active voice , iv)employ parallelism , v)write sentences of 12-25 words.

The authors advise the technical writers to avoid 'wordiness', 'redundant phrases', 'noun clusters' , 'sexist language' etc. to make their document effective.

The second section Technical Writing Techniques has seven chapters devoted to techniques such as researching, summarizing, designing pages, using visual aid,

defining describing, and sets of instruction. In the chapter on researching the authors dwell at length on the basic skills of researching. The chapter 'Summarising' defines summaries and abstracts and explains the various audiences that use them and talks about the skill that one requires in order to write them. In chapter on 'Designing Pages' the authors provide a lot of useful hints to make a page effective. The third section Technical Writing Application focuses on reports, web sites, proposals and user manuals. The last section Professional Communication deals with letter formats, types of business letters, writing the resume (including electronic resume), a letter of application, interviewing, writing follow up letters.

Each chapter is self contained, asking the students to follow a process of creation that emphasizes audience, analysis, and addressing problems related to creating the type of document under consideration. Each chapter contains exercises, assignments, models, planning sheets, and evaluation sheets designed to get students planning, analysing , developing and evaluating documents. Exercises provide a variety of strategies to help students to learn.The chapter on developing web-sites will prove to be very useful in today's context of the growing electronic, web-

Published by Biztantra (An imprint of Dreamtech PRESS), New Delhi (2004, Pages 598, Price Rs. 249/-)

based world of communication. It covers web-concepts, planning, drafting and testing web documents and gives examples of web-reports and web-instructions.

The book has two appendixes .The Appendix A "A brief Handbook for Technical Writers" provide easily accessible materials on grammar and mechanics of writing. Appendix B "documentary Sources" describes in brief 3 methods that are commonly used in documenting your sources. These 3 methods are: The American Psychological Association(APA) System, Modern Language Association(MLA)System and The American Chemical Society (ACS) System.

This book will help students in becoming effective communicators in the early 21st century. It would prove to be very useful for BSc 1st Students of Delhi University who as a result of recent syllabus revision are expected to study a paper on Technical Writing and Communication. The book would prove to be useful resource book both for the students and teachers engaged in teaching and learning this paper. The book would not only fulfill students' immediate needs but would be a useful possession in their professional lives later.

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