

From the Editors' Desk

FORTELL family is fast growing not only in Delhi but outside as well. It has one chapter in Kolkata and is likely to have another soon in Udaipur. Kolkata chapter has more than thirty members and has its own Newsletter which was launched in Oct 2005. It is busy organizing seminars and workshops. Recently, it organized a seminar on the **Teaching of English Language and Literature for Small Disadvantaged Children**.

We would wish our other members outside Delhi to increase the membership of FORTELL in their regions and set up FORTELL chapters there.

Fortell wishes to become a conduit for sharing the research work done by its members in the field of English Language and Literature. It invites them to send their contributions to the editors for their inclusion in the future issues of FORTELL Newsletter. The contributors should limit their articles within a word limit of 300 – 400 words and try to make their contributions as much jargon free as possible to make them comprehensible to the members.

In order to make the Newsletter interactive, we propose to include a new section titled '**Letters to the Editor**' in which the members could respond to the views expressed in the articles/book reviews and also make their suggestions for the improvement of the future issues of the Newsletter.

The Newsletter wishes to respond to the growing needs of school teachers who want the Newsletter to address some of the problems/issues relating to the teachability of the textbooks of English by the state level agencies like SCERT and NCERT.

FORTELL in its General Body Meeting held in April 2006 decided to increase its interaction with Delhi schools in a more meaningful way.

The Newsletter also wants to become a link among the practicing teachers of English at senior levels.

It would certainly like to report, for the benefit of teachers at large, some of the language activities and games that some teachers may have successfully carried out in their classes. Therefore, it now has a section on **Language Activities and Games**.

Besides this, FORTELL in its General Body Meeting held in April 2006 decided to increase its interaction with Delhi schools in a more meaningful way. It has decided to hold debates and creative writing competitions for school children. This decision will not only widen FORTELL's presence in schools, but would also make it sensitive to the needs of our teachers and students engaged in learning and teaching of English.

With this issue we wish to reach out to a much larger number with an expectation that more and more teachers get interested in our mission of increasing the knowledge of English teachers and jointly undertake projects that will deal with problems/issues relating to teaching in the classroom.

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FORTELL NEWSLETTER August Issue 2006

Members are requested to e-mail:

Articles on some aspects of Teaching and Evaluating English Language and Literature.

Book Reviews of the latest books on ELT and English Literature.

English Language Games and Activities for young Learners.

Poems/Quizzes

Letters to the Editor on the previous issue.

Latest by July 15, 2006 to

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CALL FOR PAPERS

FORTELL proposes to bring out a collection of papers on "The Narrative: Strategies for Teaching and Evaluation." The collection will include papers on novels, short stories, epic narratives etc. It will focus on different aspects of narratives and suggest strategies for teaching and evaluation that the teachers of undergraduate courses (both general and honours levels) might find useful in the classroom.

The papers may deal preferably with prescribed (and not-so-easy) texts. Contributions should be brief (not more than 750 words) and follow the MLA style sheet (VI edition). Each paper should also have its abstract (of not more than 50 words) on top. The deadline for submission is 31 August 2006. Authors are requested to send a brief write up (approximately 50 words) about themselves.

Contributions may be sent through email as attachment and a separate hard copy to either of the following:

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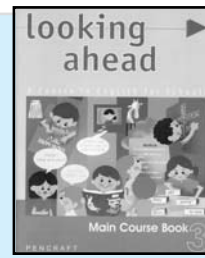
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CBSE English Core Question Paper:

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

J.K.GANGAL

Normally, evaluation in the teaching learning process comes at the end, but in practice, it is the other way round. It is the experience of one and all that the type of a question paper that the students receive for their board examination gives direction to the classroom teaching and teacher's approach in the transaction of the syllabus for the subject. The teacher, by and large, stresses mostly those areas of the syllabus that have appeared in the question papers for the subject in the previous years. Other areas, even when included in the syllabus, or considered important from the learner's point of view are either pushed through hurriedly or left uncovered.

Against this academic scenario in the country, the CBSE's quest for excellence in education is reduced to a mere slogan if its question papers are not flawless both in terms of the language and the content accuracy. It is possible only through the Board's constant efforts to improve the quality and standard of question papers for various subjects for classes X and XII. Naturally, people involved at various stages of production of a question paper – like the paper setter, the moderator, the printer and the proof reader – assume great significance in the board's venture for qualitative improvement of its question papers.

To begin with, it requires a thorough post-mortem of the question papers for various subjects for classes X and XII of the last 2-3 years. Since it is an in-house activity it has to be taken up in all seriousness without any prejudices. For this purpose an analysis of the question paper for Core English for Class XII for the year 2006 (Code 1/1/1) has been given below.

There are many words which most of the students may not be able to understand. As such they are forced either to copy these words and phrases from the given text without proper understanding, or they just write something, which clearly shows that they have not understood these words.

The general objective of evaluation in English Core, under Communicative English, is to test the students' abilities and competency in reading and writing skills after 12 years of English at the end of plus two. This is intended to be tested through questions based on lessons from the prescribed textbooks (Section C- LITERATURE) and through questions of general nature, involving use of reading and writing skills of the students (Section A - READING and Section B - ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS). So while reviewing this year's question paper for English Core, this objective has been kept in view.

SECTION A: READING

The following are the objectives of testing reading skills and competency of the students through questions under this section:

OBJECTIVES:

- to test whether the students can read, comprehend and interpret an unfamiliar passage through global, factual and inferential type of questions based on the given passage.
 - to test whether they have acquired the necessary skills to understand and interpret the meaning of the unknown words in the context.
 - to test their word power through different techniques and types of questions.
 - to test their reading speed through paragraphs of varying length.
 - to test their ability to read between the lines.
- Going by the above objectives, it is felt that the Reading Section of the question paper needs to be greatly improved for the following reasons:
- The two passages are too lengthy and time-consuming to be attempted satisfactorily within the time available. The students need at least an hour to read through them and to write answers to the given questions satisfactorily. This tells upon their performance in the Writing and Literature sections.
 - There are many words which most of the students may not be able to understand. As such they are forced either to copy these words and phrases

Articles

from the given text without proper understanding, or they just write something, which clearly shows that they have not understood these words.

Examples:

Q1 *course, nerve centre, back-office* (p1, para1)

Boom, propensity, asceticism, (pp1–2, paras 3 and 4)

Baby boomers (p2, para4)

BPO industries (p2, para6)

quagmire, entrepreneurship, ostensibly (p2, para 7)

Equity firms, augurs, smart capital (p2, Para 8)

Impede (p2, para 9); *statutes, regulatory morass* (para11)

proponents (p2, para12)

Q2 *Tinder, devastation*, (para1); *speculative* (para 3); *bedlam*,

tropopause (para 5), *dithering* (para 6)

- Both the passages under this section are uninteresting from the students' point of view.
- The passage meant for note-making and summarizing makes the students' task rather difficult due to lack of information about the topics.
- The following questions set to test the students' reading comprehension fail to test it as these questions are of general nature and can be answered even without reading the given passage by the students, for example:

A (iv) What hinders employment growth?

(vi) How can we ensure that India and its youth attain their full potential?

Question No a (iii) is not properly worded. The use of '**its opportunity**' is confusing- its opportunity for what?

(iii) The author feels that if certain problems are not arrested, India would lose its opportunity. Why would India lose this opportunity?

SUGGESTIONS:

- Passages selected for this section should be easy and interesting to read – interesting from the students' point of view.
- An average child should not take much time to read them and answer the questions based on the reading material.

- The questions asked should be such as to force the students to read the given passages to be able to answer them. In other words, they should be passage- specific.
- At least one of the questions should be such as can be answered only when a student has been able to read between the lines.
- To test the students' vocabulary and its extent, a variety of techniques should be used instead of the questions related to synonyms or antonyms of words only.
- The two passages under the Reading Section should not take more than 30-35 minutes for the students to respond.
- Distribution of type of questions for testing reading comprehension may be as follows:

Two global and factual type of questions- to test the students' global and factual understanding.

Three inferential type of questions- to test their ability to interpret the given information and draw inferences from it.

One question to test their ability to read between the lines.

GRADE: *

SECTION B: ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS

General Observations:

1. Questions seem to have been formed in a hurry.
2. Rubrics to all the questions are too lengthy forcing the examinees to spend a lot of their time in just reading them. At times, they may mislead them (e.g. Q.No.6).
3. Language of almost all the questions needs to be improved upon.

Specific Comments:

Q3 Use of **other** in 'other necessary details' not required.

Your school is organizing a fete to collect funds for charity. Only school students are eligible to put up stalls. As Head boy/Head girl of the Meera International School, draft a notice in not more than 50 words to be put up announcing sale of stalls giving all other necessary details.

Q4 This question should have been formed as follows:

To promote healthy eating habits amongst school children, Vaibhav Public School, Hastinapur recently organized a 'Nutritious Food and Snacks Competition' for their students and parents. As Archana/Anjum, the local student reporter for The Young India newspaper, write a report in 100-125 words on this event. Do not forget to give it a catchy heading.

Q4 Delete 'You attended this fair' - as it is a repetition.

'Write a detailed **account**' - replace the word '**account**' by the word '**report**' as it is a question on report writing only- not writing an article.

Recently you attended a career Fair organized by the Australian High Commission in which various Australian colleges and Universities participated and gave information about their undergraduate and graduate programmes. You attended this fair. Write a detailed account of the fair in 100-125 words. You are Reshma/Hamid.

Q5 The last line of the rubric be worded as follows:

—and send your application for the same.

(Receptionist): The words '**Young female candidates...**' debar the boys appearing at the examination from attempting this question. So the choice gets reduced for the boys under this question.

Receptionist: Young female candidate, fluent in English with good communication and proficiency in Computer/Net surfing with 2-3 yrs. experience.

Use of the expression '**cigarette smoking**' is wrong. It should have been '**smoking**' as smoking is harmful whether it is '**cigarette smoking**' or '**biri smoking**.'

Similarly, '**has been taking**' should be '**has taken**' - as use of Present Perfect tense without time reference is a violation of a grammatical rule.

In its bid to educate about the harmful effects of cigarette smoking, the Govt. of India has been taking serious steps to prevent it.....

Q6 The first part of the rubric may mislead the examinees. Some of them may write an article on 'Floods of Mumbai', instead.

GRADE: *

SECTION C: LITERATURE

OBSERVATIONS:

- Instead of Simple Present, Simple Past has been used in asking many questions, which make them dull and monotonous, e.g. Q.No.10, 11(ii).
- Q.No.1 (ii) **What to his mind is insulting?** – use of pronoun, '**his**' here in this question is confusing.

GRADE: **

OVERALL GRADING FOR THE PAPER: *

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Teaching of English at the Primary Level

Kusum Sharma

Language is perhaps man's most basic tool for communication. It would be difficult for men to live together, think or act without the sounds and symbols of language. It is impossible to imagine life without language - a life without gestures, conversation, writing, books etc.

Although animals have the physical capability and capacity to produce sounds, but only humans have the physical and mental endowment necessary to develop language use. Language is more than instinctive sounds given in response to environmental conditions. It is a system for interpreting and organizing experiences, ideas and thoughts as well as for communicating feelings.

Teachers, in the past, considered a language to be a static unchanging subject - as something taught and used only in the classroom. There was a concept of 'correct' language; one that was always the same and one that when learnt was suitable for all times and places. But today, most of the educators are aware of the following facts about language learning:

- Language is something which is alive, changing and evolving along with culture.
- Children come to school with reasonable knowledge of their first language and a considerable range of vocabulary.
- Limited exposure to a language certainly delimits language growth of a child.

Keeping these aspects of language learning in mind, as a teacher, one has to be very sensitive towards the second language learning phenomenon of children the at primary level.

Communicative skills of listening and speaking may be best acquired, if the children are exposed to language through active interaction with teachers, parents and peer group. As far as parents and peer group are concerned, one cannot possibly have so

much control over the learning environment, but conscious efforts of the teacher should be directed towards having the maximum interaction in the class in the target language. The role of teacher here is not to correct, but to facilitate. The maximum opportunity for uninterrupted self-expression should be provided to children to use the language.

The teacher has to come down to the level of students. The teacher has to make deliberate efforts to use language suitable to children's level. The interactive strategies again have to be chosen keeping in view the children's interest level. There has to be attitudinal change from correcting the mistake or pointing out the error to allow the child to make mistakes in order to acquire fluency.

As far as reading is concerned, at lower level reading may begin with picture comprehension, making a visual-word association or sometimes recognition of words. Gradually, the teacher is expected to provide a lot of reading texts to the students according to their interest level and age level. Every child has his own capacity to read, comprehend, retain and express; so the child need not be humiliated or labelled as a slow learner or incapable of learning if he happens to take a little extra time for reading.

Writing, being a little more advanced skill, may be introduced with a little more patience and perseverance. A lot of pre-writing activities need to be introduced before actual writing task. Allow the child to take the plunge after he/she is well - equipped with the other three language skills i.e. listening, speaking and reading. He/she will acquire writing as a natural by-product.

Teaching English at the primary level, especially in MCD schools, is a very challenging task. The teacher has to move from the teacher - centered to a learner centered classroom - creating opportunities for learning, making learners involved in the learning process and building on the learners' interest and resources.



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Geminates and Geminates in Indian English

Pramod Pandey

A phonological feature that characterizes varieties of Indian English is the predominance of geminate consonants (or 'double consonants', in ordinary language) in them. The geminate consonants that occur on the surface can be traced to two main sources, one, the lexical representation of the word, and the other, a process of consonant gemination on account of mother-tongue transfer.

Examples of underlying geminates are given in (1) below.

- (1) **mummy inn**ovate **happy**

As is apparent, the underlying geminates relate to the spelling of the words. Examples of surface geminates due to a process of gemination are given in (2) below:

- (2) **between** [j̥j̥] **metric** [j̥j̥] **secure** [kk].

GEMINATES IN NATIVE ENGLISH

Geminates in Native English (NE) varieties are highly restricted. They occur in compound words and in complex words with a restricted class of affixes, such as the prefix *un-* (but not *in-*), and the suffixes *-less*, *-dom*, and *-ness*. Examples of both are given in (4) and (5).

- (4) **room-mate** [mm] **lab boy** [bb] **hat trick** [tt]
kitchen knife [nn]

- (5) **unnatural** **soulless** **keenness**

In simple words, NE does not have geminate consonants at all. Complex words, too, apart from those with the structures noted in (4) and (5), do not have geminates. Thus the *in-* prefix (with allomorphs that have assimilated to the following consonants, such as *il-*, *ir-* etc., all of which are semantically identical with *in-*) does not have geminate consonants. Examples of words that do not have geminate consonants in the spoken form are given in (6) and (7) below.

- (6) **summer** **simmer** **inner** **manner** **occur**
immense **butter** **chatter** **utter** **dinner** **suffer**
haggard

- (7) **sadder** **runner** **fitter** **filler** **seller** **chopper** **illegal**
irregular **immobile**.

The fact that the forms in (4) and (5) have geminates, but those in (6) and (7) don't, has been accounted for in English phonology by positing a rule of Degemination (see Chomsky and Halle 1968) that degeminates consonants. The rule may be stated informally as follows.

- (8) $C_1 C_1 \rightarrow C_1 / [\dots _ \dots]$

Note that the examples in (4) and (5) have come to be explained as exceptions to rule (8). According to the later theoretical explanation¹, the complex and compound words that are exceptions to rule (8) are formed at a stage later than when the rule applies. At that stage rule (8) is not available for application, and thus cannot degeminate the geminate consonants.

GEMINATES IN INDIAN ENGLISH

As noted in the Introduction, Indian English has geminate consonants in places where NE does not. A group of such words has the spelling containing double consonants. These are given in (9) and (10) below.

- (9) **rubber inn**ovate **inn**ate **hurray!** **summit**
succour **lucky puppy** **Anna pillow**

- (10) **slipper** **curricular** **silly** **fully** **illegal** **irregular**
immobile **immaterial**.

What the examples in (9) and (10) show is that the rule of Degemination has not applied to these words. Indian learners of English aspiring to acquire features of NE may be given practice for the non-geminate pronunciations of these words.

A special feature of some varieties of Indian English lies in the pronunciation of geminate consonants, even when they are not represented by the spelling, as e.g., in the ones in (2) above, and some others in (11) below.

- (11) **betray** [tt], **arbitrary** [tt], **reduce** [dd], **reply** [pp], **April** [pp], **request** [kk], etc.

The forms in (2) and (11) attest the application of the rule of Geminates, as opposed to Degemination. In Hindi and some other Indian languages medial consonants are geminated when followed by approximant sounds /l r w j/. An informal statement of the rule is given below:

- (12) $C_1 \rightarrow C_1 C_1 / [\dots _ l/r/w/j \dots]$

The Geminates rule (12) is an instance of mother-tongue transfer. As is obvious, rule (12) is the opposite of rule (8) in effect. Quite clearly, (12) is a case of negative transfer in Indian English and requires to be suppressed in the speech of the learners who aim at acquiring the pronunciation features of NE.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The above discussion on geminates and gemination in Indian English is relevant for the following issues.

- The teaching of pronunciation features of Native English for second language learners of English.
- An investigation into the nature of second language varieties- their emergence and organization as a natural system.

The features of geminates and gemination in Indian English point to more than one source of second language features. These are, in the main, mother-tongue transfer features, historically transmitted features, and creatively constructed features. Rule (8) is obviously an instance of the mother-tongue transfer feature. The words that have undergone Degemination are instances of historically transmitted features, such as those in (6) and (7). Conversely, the examples in (9) and (10) show that at the time when English was introduced in India, perhaps these and other such forms had not undergone Degemination. Alternatively, or in addition, the forms exemplify creative construction by the learners. In this case, the spelling is used as the basis for pronouncing geminate forms.

In conclusion, we find phenomena such as geminates and gemination of both applied and theoretical interest in the study of second language varieties.

FOOTNOTES

1. This account of the exceptions to the Demination rule is based on the theory of level-ordered morphology (e.g., Lieber 1978), which assumes word-formation to take place at two levels, not all together.

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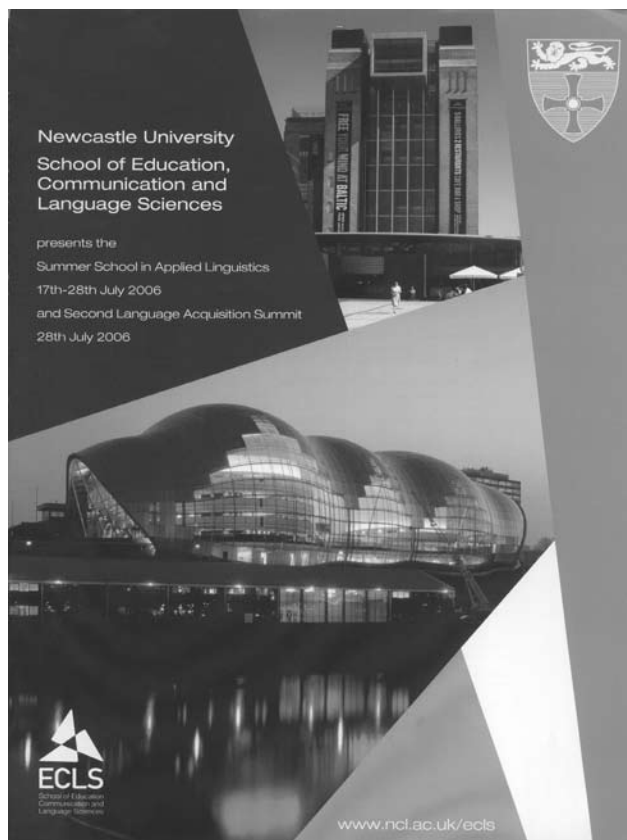
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Summer School Provisional Timetable

Week 1

	Mon 17th	Tues 18th	Wed 19th	Thurs 20th	Fri 21st
9.30-10.30	Opening meeting	Background to Second Language Acquisition with Professor Vivien Cook			
Coffee					
11-12.30	Dialogic teaching in the EFL classroom	The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom	Classroom multilingualism	Thinking skills and ELT	Communicative language teaching and task-based learning
Lunch					
2-3.30	Dialogic teaching in the EFL classroom	The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom	Classroom multilingualism	Thinking skills and ELT	Communicative language teaching and task-based learning

Week 2

	Mon 22nd	Tues 23rd	Wed 24th	Thurs 25th	Summit 28th
9.30-10.30	Computers in language teaching	Computers in language teaching	Multi-competence	Multi-competence	SLA Summit
Coffee					
11-12.30	Discourse Analysis Approach to the Teaching of L2 Writing	Pragmatics and language teaching	Culture and EFL	Culture and EFL	SLA Summit
Lunch					
2-3.30	Discourse Analysis Approach to the Teaching of L2 Writing	Pragmatics and language teaching	Culture and EFL	Culture and EFL	SLA Summit

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We would like to thank Graeme Rescock for the use of his photographic material.

Breaking Silences/ Walls: Surmounting Cultural Barriers in NNS Reflective Teacher Education *

Chhanda Roy

The Context

The issues raised in this forum relate to the implementation of Reflective Teacher Education in the Yemeni ELT context.¹ Explorations of tutor-student dialogic exchanges in this situation reveal gaps and mismatches in intentions and interpretations of tutors and student-teachers, gaps which NNS (Non-native Speaker) teachers may be more sensitive to. Probably caused by culture-determined differences in teacher and learner perceptions, these gaps and mismatches not only obstruct communication channels and block professional growth, they are also indicators of the issues that need to be addressed in implementing a reflective model of teacher education.

In the Faculty of Education, Hodeidah University (Hodeidah, Yemen), the context for this paper, student-teachers “experience” teaching through two semesters of practice teaching. During each semester, 10- 15 tutees are attached to a tutor. Semester I comprises peer teaching sessions in the Faculty of Education premises. During this semester attempts are made to give student-teachers a “feel” of real teaching through closely monitored sessions of lesson planning and practising teaching. The aim of these sessions is to enable students to put into practice the knowledge of methods/techniques/skills acquired in the Methods and Curriculum courses. The practice teaching programme is very traditional and follows a “demonstration — student teaching — peer and tutor observation (of the “kicks and kisses” type) crammed into a fixed five-hour time-slot every Monday. The turns and timings for teaching and observing are listed in the teaching practice package given to the students on day- 1. The package also includes “model” lesson-plans and some “dos and don’ts” The materials used for practice

teaching are the books prescribed for study in Yemeni schools. Detailed guidelines for teaching are given in the Teachers Books accompanying them. A similar pattern is followed in Semester II with the difference that the practice teaching is done in local government schools and the student-teachers assume the role of substitute teachers. Student-teaching is again closely monitored by a group tutor and the texts/ language items to be taught are determined by the school teachers they substitute.

A Break with Tradition

During the current semester, a small attempt was made to break with tradition and loosen some of the fetters by adopting informal modes of tutoring to foster a deeper understanding of teaching-learning than has so far been possible. Underlying this exercise was the firm belief that

Teacher growth is less a question of polishing existing teaching skills or of keeping up with the latest teaching developments and more a function of a teacher’s changing as a person – of seeing himself or herself, the school, the curriculum and the students differently.

[Sergiovanni quoted in Bamber 1987:125]

The Try-out Group

The try-out group comprised 11 girls, the tutor, and one assistant tutor (a student of M.Ed). To make the break with tradition possible, a few preliminary matters had to be addressed. Two problems anticipated were

- the students’ obsession with grades and the insecurity involved in going off the known track [Will we get an “excellent” ?]
- Their discomfort with and lack of confidence in using English.

The first became less problematic when they were promised a minimum “good” [“no maqbool ! We promise you”]. The following log-book entry of one of the group shows the general feeling of relief:

You have fitted [satisfied ?] me. I think that because of your encouragement and kindness to go ahead, I must be careful about the way that I will use in my teaching, not my marks.

As for the second, they were given the option, if you think that you do not have the English words/ expressions for something you want to say, no problem, you can use Arabic or code-switch from English to Arabic and back wherever necessary.

Ss: But you don't know Arabic, it is not your language.

T: So what? One of you can translate it for me, right?

Ss: *Right.*

Were they convinced? Did they say "right" because they believed the tutor, or were they merely submitting to the "tutor will"?

Their action spoke: only one student wrote her comments in Arabic, the others stuck to English [with sometimes atrocious spellings/ and grammar]. Later, the lone student who had initially recorded her feelings in Arabic, switched over to English in her subsequent comments logged.

The Plan of Action

The plan formulated for a trial run is schematised below:

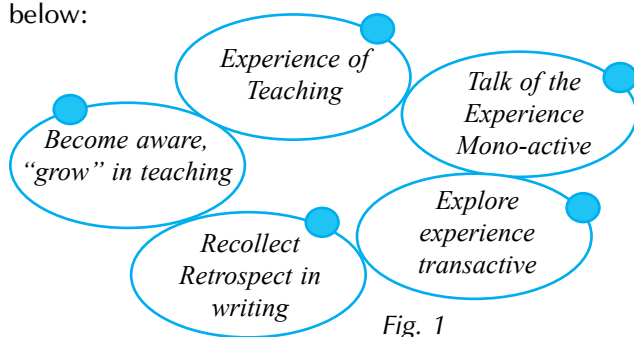


Fig. 1

- 1) Circles 1- 4 represent action [though the "players" (participants) differ, as do the nature of their roles and statuses. For instance, the active agent could be the trainee or the tutor, depending on who assumes the "teacher" role.
- 2) The time and space for the actions in Circles 1 – 3 are contained in one session (with breaks for prayers and tea).
- 3) Within this period, six individuals (could be anybody – tutees, tutor, assistant – tutor) will teach the group for 10 minutes using any "ways" they liked [there is no "best" way].
- 4) Each individual will then "reflect" on his/her own teaching and talk about its "what" and "why" [talking about teaching – mono-active].
- 5) The group will talk interactively about the teaching they "see", experience as learners, and hear about [transactive talking about teaching].
- 6) There is no fixed time slot or place for action in circle 4. The action here is off-line retrospective recollections. Participants may record their personal feelings about the whole experience in their free time and may show their notebooks to one another and/ or to the tutor when they want to.

- 7) Circle- 4 represents the goal and purpose of the whole exercise- an ideal not to be lost sight of.

This plan is further characterized by a number of "freedoms" - the freedom to choose the date/ time and turn of teaching [the day continued to be Monday]; the freedom to choose the lesson, topic, item to be taught or skills/ sub-skills to focus on; the freedom to plan teaching without being tied down by the directions in the teacher's book.

As the sessions progressed, problems, unanticipated, came to light. For instance, attempts to tease out verbal reactions that could contradict a view expressed by the tutors were met with walls of silences [Islam accords a place of honour to teachers, how can they be challenged even if they may be wrong?]. Other posers were:

- Can an I_2 succeed in breaking cultural barriers where questioning authority/ those in authority is taboo?
- Is reflection possible where learners and teachers are non-native speakers with different mother tongues/ cultures?
- Can FL learners "think" in English, to what extent should they?
- Can the language that is being learnt, the skills that are being got, be used to reflect upon pedagogic issues without some further training in using this language for reflection?

These posers are elaborated in subsequent sections. Let us first take a fresh look at the notion of "reflection" in the context of Teacher Education, and the means of effecting "reflection" suggested in the literature.

"Reflection" leading on to Reflective Teacher Education

Reflective Teacher Education is projected as a non-(ego) threatening and collaborative way of effecting professional expertise. In 1904, Dewey observed that preparing teachers to be critically reflective about their practice may be more important in the long term than focusing on mastery of the techniques and skills that form the mainstay of educational practice. A critically reflective approach is one in which inquiry and reflection are seen as central to the process of teacher development. The skills *needed* are self-inquiry and critical thinking.

What does "reflection" involve in the dominant tradition of ELT teacher education? Schön, Fanselow, Wallace, Richards and other modern masters look on reflection or "critical reflection" as an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered,

and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose (verbalization – offline). It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for planning and corrective action. As Bartlett [1990] suggests,

Becoming critical means that as teachers we have to transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve our instructional techniques. This effectively means we have to move away from the “how to” questions, which have a limited utilitarian value to the “What” and “why” [of how] questions, which regard instructional and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as a part of broader educational purposes.

Traditionally, the “means” available for enabling learners to reflect critically on their classroom actions include the following:

1. Experiencing teaching and talking about it;
2. Observation - observation of others’ teaching and self-observation to gain “experiential knowledge” (observation of demonstrations by tutor and/or peer group, use of video-protocol, self-evaluation sheets...);
3. Reflecting on teaching-learning (teacher journals, written activities on classroom experiences, portfolios, diaries); (can recorded retrospections be considered reflections?)
4. Investigating teaching-learning (analyzing classroom processes, establishing databases);
5. Focusing on critical events in teaching (role-play, case studies)
6. Action research (projects addressed to practical problems in the teacher’s own context).

[Source: Wallace, 1991; Richards, 1998; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999.]

It has been stressed that reflective practice can be a beneficial process in teacher professional development. Some inherent flaws in the theory and loopholes in practice have also been mentioned. Issue has been taken against the “checklist” or “reflection on demand” mentality and a failure to encourage and enable students to challenge teaching practices.

Critical Reflection in context: conceptual flaws and loopholes in practice

It is generally believed that how teachers/ student-teachers accept expressed opinions/ observations/ suggestions of “others” regarding teaching, and how they look back on their own teaching, have an effect on

their classroom actions. But one must remember that despite the emphasis on building up non-judgmental and collaborative explorations, a certain amount of threat is inevitable. As Fanselow (1984: 2) remarked:

While supervisors that describe rather than judge may be a refreshing change from supervisors that judge, a supervisor is still a supervisor.

It has also been pointed out that many aspects of teaching are not observable and also that what we can observe is dependent on our point of view. Sense datum differs from person to person. Thus, as Richards (1998: 142) citing Fanselow (1977) observes:

when different people discuss the same lesson (e.g., a teacher, a supervisor, and a student teacher), they often give contradictory accounts of the same event.

Further, when exposed to the ideas of classroom dynamics, some teachers/ student teachers may feel threatened. No amount of sugar-coating can mask the insecurity of exposing one-self to the others’ view. The threat may increase when the individual is a novice in teaching and has inadequate understanding and knowledge of English. In fact, thinking-rethinking and verbalizing reflections may well be beyond the capacity of learners whose socio-educational backgrounds may act as barriers to reflection . This brings us to the question of context. Reflective practitioners have often tended to “vaseline” the context of reflection and focus on reflection as an isolative practice. This has led to the hypostatization of knowledge – the trainee- reflector’s thinking against a zero/ neutral/ sterile background. There seems to be a tacit assumption that the training environment is a “constant”. However, in a reflective situation, “trainee-identity” and “trainee- will” are not constant; neither are they isolative. Trainee environment is never sterile or neutral, it comprises a culturally inherited legacy of “rules” and personal theory-laden goals.

An inherited legacy of “rules” and personal-theory laden goals

The student-teachers at Hodeidah University begin their experience of practice teaching with pre-conceived notions about teaching and rules of classroom actions and procedures. These notions derive in part from two semesters of courses in Methods and Curriculum (often half-baked ideas: e.g., discussion of teaching means pointing out the teacher’s “mistakes”). This, in spite of the fact that they learn and write the sentence: “There is no single best method” in their examination answer papers.

Fixed ways of acting and behaving may also derive from the culture of schooling they seem to have been brought up in. In many Preparatory and Secondary schools, teachers begin their lessons in a fixed way. The sequence of activities includes the following (in the order shown):

- Customary Greeting “Good Morning, students” sometimes followed by the Arabic greeting of “Salaamalekum...”;
 - Day and date in the top left hand corner ;
 - Title of the lesson ;
 - A vertical line in the centre- dividing the bb.

There is no questioning of this tradition, and there are no answers to “why ?” Incidentally, in the off-line dialogic exchanges recorded in the 13 weeks of Practice teaching this semester – the student teachers categorically pointed out that there was nothing sacred about these practices. Yet, all the 11 members of the group stuck to these fixed ways of beginning their lessons throughout the course of their teaching.

Combined with this “blind” conformity to tradition, is a deeply ingrained faith in “Allah” and a resignation to “fate”. A particular student teacher, realizing the “mistake” she had made, wrote in her log-book:

“Everything was good...the students understood me and were very active... but.....unfortunately The simple thing made me fail ² ...so I feel sad up to now...As anyone has mistakes, I have, and I will try to be good in another lesson. Also I learn another thing, that is: “you want something and you prepare for that but Allah does what He wants, not what you want.” So I hope that my another lesson will be better than this lesson”.

This resignation to a higher “Will” combines with a learning culture that expects learners/student-teachers to “get” and teachers/ teacher-supervisor to “give”. Student-teachers feel secure with a tutor who will be their role model – a tutor who will tell them about their “mistakes”. This is something that stands in contrast with and conflict with the “culture” underlying critical reflection. One may take issue with the idea of the teacher as a role-model who encourages students to put theories they’ve learnt into practice. But insecurities set in when learners are asked to become active agents in the learning-by-reflecting process. This is implicit in the following student’s comment ³ [spelling/ syntax: unaltered] :

1. *“At the beginning, I felt weary [worried ?] that I don’t know how I can do so because it was the*

first chance for me to teach. All my friends said to me: oh! Teacher X ⁴ who will be your tutor ? Allah be with you. I ask them why you say that ? they told me she treated you differently in her teaching practice.”

2. *At the beginning, I was worried and frightened. I didn’t know the way Dr. X will use in practice teaching. The pattern for the other groups is known.*

This brings us again to the question of supervisor – the significant “other” in the trainees’ environment, and to the inter-individual aspect of the “self-other” problematics.

The Self and the “Other”

Reflections / explorations do not occur in a vacuum. This is recognized in current tradition [Gebhard and Oprandy:1999: 5,6; Edge, 1992:4; Fanselow, 1997:166]. The “other” is projected as a mirror, a source, a ‘perceptual’ filter, or an enabler of alternatives. But the self/ other concept is problematic. We need the other to define ourselves (Donne – no man is an island, etc.) But with the continued presence of the other in us we evolve a new identity as a continual; we have to reject the other to preserve ourselves. Again, in many social transactions, we plan/act on the premises/ expectations of others. But we are never sure that our own premises have been/ are being taken into consideration by the other(s). The degree of confidence we feel that ours have been/are taken into account decides the depth/level of our relationship with the other/others. Further, the ‘self’s’ processing approach and method changes as the self’s perception of external conditions (the other-world) keeps changing; as the self changes, it attempts to bring about changes in the other/others, changes which the self desires. This in essence is a metonymy for the self/ other problematics.

There is an underlying assumption in this tradition that a “reflector” can reflect, like a mirror, reconstructively and faithfully on his “cognitive experience”. For instance, Fanselow (1987: 476) affirms: “Any lens reveals.” Again, there are seeds of a problem here. Do observation and self-reflection automatically lead to informed practice ? What about the “blindness” involved in observing self and others. It is not only in fairy tales that a mirror says, “You are the fairest of them all”.

Tutor-trainee collaborative exploration is the crucial element in a reflection-based model. Unless there is a basic trust, true communication cannot occur. We often encounter the world with a mask,

appropriate to the purpose, agent/audience and context, to minimize social frictions, to lubricate social interactions, or to even hide our 'intentions', fears, 'anxieties' and 'weaknesses'. We doff the mask when in the company of others only if we are confident of being understood, accepted for what we are or when we are sure the others have seen through the mask. In other words, 'intentions' manifest themselves faithfully only when 'intersubjectivity' has been ensured.

Would the student participants in the trial run be able to doff their masks in the company of an "alien", non-Yemeni tutor who did not share their language, religion and culture – an individual who they know can never be one of them? This was an initial insecurity for their tutor. After all, the most frequently asked question for new teachers [foreigners] at Hodeidah University is: "Are you a Muslim?" A "no" is treated with tolerance, but the unsaid words are: "you are not one of us".

This statement: "you are not one of us" did occur in the course of the dialogic exchanges, but in a different sense: awe and deep respect for the tutor and basic lack of confidence in the tutee.

I wanted to be like the doctors in my college. But at the same time I feel I cannot be as you, because you have efficiency to change your techniques and ways to teach very good and make the ss (students) understand you clearly.

I can't organize my thoughts like you.

Shades of learner insecurity and dependence on the other as a role model (implicit in these remarks) lessened in the ensuing weeks, but they did not disappear despite positive feelings like:

On returning home, I thought a lot. I saw it was a good idea for us to develop by ourselves.

I feel like a real teacher, because I planed [planned] my lesson myself.

What value – this enterprise?

Two weeks remain for the endeavour sketched in this paper to come to an end. "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?"

A small beginning had been made to bring in an air of freedom that is crucial to professional growth. The barriers are still there. They cannot be wished away. But efforts can be made to create rational, non-coercive discourse among student teachers and teachers supervisors. This may become possible only when the former are convinced that their premises will not only be something admitted *prima facie* but also something on which the others will act—when the

trainees are free and equal. Without such a rational, non-coercive discourse, can reflection be possible in any real teacher-education context?

Under the pragmatic presuppositions of an inclusive and non-coercive rational discourse among free and equal participants, everyone is required to take the perspective of everyone else, and thus project himself into the understandings of self and world of all others; from this interlocking of perspectives there emerges an extended...

[Habermas 1995:117; emphases added]

Notes:

1. In Universities in Yemen, learners and most of their English teachers are non-native speakers of English, not bound by a common mother tongue or culture. The learners are mostly Yemenis, the teachers, mostly Indian expatriates.
2. The student teacher had planned an activity in which numbers were to be pinned on students. The students playing the game would have to match the numbers to identify their partner. The first to find their partners would be the winners. Unfortunately, she had forgotten to bring pins and tried sticking the cards with scotch tape. The tape did not hold and the numbers kept falling off. This resulted in confusion and the teaching time allotted to her got over without her being able to get the students started on the activity.
3. This was in response to the task: "Describe how you felt when you were told that the practice teaching programme for your group would be different from that in the other groups."
4. Teacher X has a certain "reputation". She had taught them in the previous semester and the students saw that learnt-by-heart ready-made answers fetched them poor grades. Tasks/ exercises had to be done in one's own words – which was problematic.

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For references, contact the author.



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A PLEA FOR EARLY ACCESS TO MULTILINGUALISM

Barun Kumar Mishra
Interviews

Professor R. K. Agnihotri

Barun: What we gather from the policy decision of the state and its various agencies regarding language teaching is that a greater emphasis is given to a simultaneous teaching of English language and the mother tongue. First, I would be interested to know whether the approach taken to teach is bridging the social gap or widening it further. Second, what do you mean by mother tongue education when there is a big difference between the regional language and the mother tongue, for example, Bundelkand region has two languages, Bundeli and Hindi together?

Prof. Agnihotri: I think we need to understand three important things first before we get into all this. One is the nature of language, the second is what we know about human mind where languages are concerned, and what the relationship between language and society is. These are three broad domains to be understood as the context to answer your question.

So, the first is the concept of 'a' language, and that itself is not a valid or a helpful concept. So we need to think about human language capacity, which should be defined as multilinguality. Whether a human being speaks

one language or two languages or whether she or he speaks five or six languages, is not the point; the point is even if you think you are a monolingual, you actually are not a monolingual. You fine tune your linguistic behaviour all the time, and that capacity to fine tune linguistic behaviour is called multilinguality. The second thing that we need to understand is the human mind with its innate capacity i.e. language faculty which enables people particularly young children till the age of about fourteen to acquire many languages at the same time. They have greater flexibility, they acquire languages at a greater ease, particularly the oral skills, pronunciation, communicative proficiency. The faculty always remains there, but not as flexible as at the younger age. Young children of three or four years of age can speak three or four languages without any difficulty. Fortunately, there is democracy there and also it has nothing to do with how rich or poor you are. Children would be speaking Bhojpuri at home, Hindi in some other context, English in some other. That capacity to acquire several languages is always there. So it is an important dimension to appreciate for all those who are interested in the education of the underprivileged sections of society. For the people who are seriously interested in bridging the gulf

between the rich and the poor, I think, it is imperative to understand that every child irrespective of his or her background has the capacity to acquire several languages. So if your child starts speaking three languages you don't take your child to a hospital. Human mind has that capacity, that is why I define it as multilinguality. There is always a range there and you keep moving around that range, depending on who you are talking to, where you are talking and about what you are talking.

Barun: So, is the knowledge a part of the child's consciousness?

Prof. Agnihotri: That is a difficult question. We do not know to what extent this knowledge is conscious, this may be deeply subconscious but the empirical demonstration is there all the time. Because a four year old child knows exactly whom to address as *aap*, whom as *tum* and whom as *tuu*. She or he doesn't make a mistake there. Nor does she make a mistake in the use of grammar because the grammar of '*aap*' is very different from the grammar of '*tum*'. She does not consciously know this; nor can she tell you about the rules. For that matter, nor does any adult know about the grammatical rules. What grammar books tell you is very limited, finite, and actually trivial, as compared to what we really know in the sub-consciousness, not in the conscious. This serious business of '*aap*'-'*tum*'-'*tu*' brings me to the third point.

Once this point about the language faculty is well taken then the ability to use language creatively in the social context is acquired. There is a strong relationship between language and

context. Not only grammatically correct language, but every time contextually appropriate language is used. Every grammar has a universal core which is related to the language faculty, but every language also has its specificities. Every language variety is a phenomenon in itself because politeness strategies and cultural associations are different and so on. And that is acquired in a social set-up. It is not innate, that is why society is so important. Now given all this, what we notice is that the gulf between the underprivileged, and the small section of the elite and the powerful, is consistently widening. When we refer back to our commitments in the constitution the objective there is to narrow down the gulf and work for the empowerment of the poor people.

Barun: You mean the foundational objectives of the welfare state?

Prof. Agnihotri: Yes, all these things were conceptualised - free education, free shelter, free health, water - all of this you know was seen as the responsibility of the state there. It was expected that every body will have easy access to all of them. And I think we did make a good beginning. There was a time when the free schools were quite good, even better than the ones that were privately managed (public schools). The honourable thing to do till the sixties was to go to a government school. Though it reached only the lower and middle classes, the system of government health care and sanitation etc appeared to be on the right track and it seemed reasonable to dream that we would be able to fulfill the promises made in the constitution for all. All of us have studied in government schools. But since then the situation has become worse.

There may be many reasons for that - social, political, economic. But one of the major things has been the English language; depriving the underprivileged and keeping them away from the English language which provides you access to power, social mobility, employment, jobs of all kinds. This has been done in a variety of ways. First, all elite children would start English from K.G. and all underprivileged children would start from class VI. No more English teachers were appointed. Many states, in their enthusiasm for Hindi, declared every work will be in Hindi. You could actually do your schooling without English. It was very good for people to pass without English, but when they came into society, into colleges, in the universities, they felt handicapped. Many people studied almost exclusively in Hindi and other regional languages. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, it has helped several regional languages to become richer. But this does not justify keeping the underprivileged away from English, given that the way we constructed our society, English provided the main access to jobs and social mobility.

At the end of the road, several highly educated and intelligent people found they could not get good jobs. So it is against this background that I think of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF). Both the position papers on the teaching of Indian languages and the position papers on the teaching of English, very strongly admit that if, and that is the big 'IF' with capital letters and bold, that if one can make suitable arrangements for teaching - learning materials, for teacher training, and for schools and teachers - then every child must have access to English as early as possible. And this

is not going to harm; what harms is that you introduce English in Class I but provide no infrastructure, no teachers, no text book, no materials. That creates a situation which is absolutely undesirable. Recently the Supreme Court and high courts have ordered that every school will have to take 25 per cent students from underprivileged sections. In some schools 25 per cent children were taken, and studies done on them show that those children did better than, or certainly as well as, any other child. So there is nothing wrong with the children. The state has withdrawn its hands from the welfare state, so it will have to introduce English and it will have to provide resources that are necessary to introduce English. Teacher training is an important part of it - library books, teaching learning material, all this should be provided. And it is eminently doable. All our college and university teachers are products of government schools and colleges, then why not now? What has gone wrong? There has been an increase in population, in the number of teachers, there is no shortage of basic facilities, we grow enough food, build houses, build fancy metros, spend endlessly on defence - then why not provide poor people with education and health care and work? Why can't we have a common school? I think that is the most rational question to ask, why is there not the same kind of school in every street? Why should a five year old child travel 40 kilometers in a bus to go to school? Why should there be a school that is so different from an ordinary school? So I think a common school is the first battle to be fought. And given these things, there should be no problem in that.

Barun: You see English language as a major asset, and as

Interview

far as social health of our country is concerned you feel that English and a simultaneous teaching of a mother tongue would be the most feasible way?

Prof. Agnihotri: I would say most desirable. If you switch the other way round, it is now well-established by a series of studies that there is a positive correlation between multilingualism and scholastic achievement. That means that the higher the degree of proficiency in different languages, the higher is the achievement in different subjects. The purpose of our education should not be to introduce English only but to enhance high levels of proficiency in the mother tongue and the languages of the region. If we use our resources carefully then we can build high levels of proficiency in three or four languages by the time the child passes plus-two. While doing your elementary English if you are doing your high levels in your regional languages, then, as studies show, those high level skills of regional languages - like writing an abstract essay, or logical thinking, or logical argumentation - are transferable from one language to the other and help the learner to develop the other languages. So, automatically, English language proficiency will go up and will go up with multilinguality not with monolinguality. That is the emphasis of National Curriculum Framework 2005.

Barun: As you mentioned, there was a political will to stop introduction of English, probably at all levels. On the other hand we see the significance of English in present day Indian social life, and at the same time we notice the academic debate over the Indian-ness of English even though it is called alien by a section of people(?). What would you say to

that?

Prof. Agnihotri: There is no question that English was brought to India by the British during colonial times. But you see all languages come from somewhere. The same is the case with Hindi and other Indian languages. So I do not think that it is a very strong argument. More so because now English is no longer a foreign language for India. We have to consider English not only as a second language but in fact, as one of the languages of India. It has become so much a part of the ambience, certainly the urban ambience, everywhere as part of mass media, judiciary, corporate world, academics - it is there and not likely to go. And my question is, why should we let it go? Even for the concept of multilinguality we must ensure that English should not flourish at the cost of our regional languages. It is conceivable and desirable that English stays along with the other languages and they enrich one another. English does not close its doors; if you look at the Oxford English Dictionary, every year they add an annexure.

It is very difficult to eliminate the concept of 'a' language from the minds of people. People keep quarrelling over the words, whether it belongs to that particular language used by its user, or not. This fight is actually on. These stereotypes travel from one generation to the next generation. It is simply a question of time and of the level of development that language has achieved. Sometimes it is difficult to find a Hindi word in Hindi, or an English one in English; words travel, they do not need passports like humans. Public interaction enriches languages; they borrow words from each other, assimilate them and make them their own. We need to have a fluid approach

to language.

Barun: Is the over-emphasis on English, if there is any, causing any kind of linguistic imbalance? There are constitutional provisions to safeguard mother-tongue medium instruction at elementary level and English is seen by people as replacing regional languages from their position. So, what would you say here?

Prof. Agnihotri: The National Curriculum Framework 2005, which is now the guiding light for the future, has accepted and very strongly recommended most of the things discussed so far by us. Throughout the documents, as far as the languages are concerned, there is very strong emphasis on the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. In fact, we have gone to the extent of saying that the medium of instruction must be the mother tongue. We have laid a lot of emphasis on the mother tongue, trying to capitalise on multilingualism in the class room as a resource. Not as an obstacle but as a psychological teaching strategy, and also as a goal suggesting that it is something that should be sustained. It is possible to plan pedagogy particularly in a primary school where a child comes with two or three languages. For example, a Saura tribe child may know three languages, Saura, Oriya and some Hindi. This is the individual case. As a community, one particular class knows many languages. So the teacher has to see that linguistic behaviour as a resource, and to bring and build them into their curriculum, syllabi and their day-to-day teaching. There is another important aspect to it, which is very fundamental and which I have been trying to argue for for a long time. That, if you insult or humiliate the languages of the child in the classroom then his

or her educational career comes to a stop that day; he would stop coming to the school. It hurts so bad if somebody insults your mother tongue. So it should also be a necessary part of teacher training that teachers are made aware that all languages, irrespective of their area, are equally rich grammatically. That kind of awareness has to be there among the teachers. A kind of language data should be elicited, teachers should become learners and also realise that they do not have to deposit knowledge in empty vessels. Children themselves are very creative, therefore teachers should play the role of a facilitator. There is a whole social dynamic within the classroom. So unless a teacher is not sensitive to these things, he may not be able to enrich that class. That kind of training is absolutely necessary. And I am not talking about something utopian, it is very practical. One can pick a poem from, let's say, Chattisgarh or Saura language, and ask some child who knows the language to translate it for the class. Since the teacher himself doesn't know the language, he should sit at the back of the class. He is not the hero-teacher there, he is a student; the poem is recited, its meaning is understood; then split the class into different groups and ask students to translate it into their mother-tongues. There is a lot of language activity and language learning there.

Barun: Considering the role of socio-economic status and motivational factors, how could higher levels of proficiency be achieved for a child born and brought up in a village? What should be the policy envisaged by the government or the NCERT to enhance the proficiency level? A mere change of syllabi has not done anything considerable so far!

Prof. Agnihotri: Yes, I agree with you. Simply a change of syllabus, or changes in text books and materials, will not deliver the goods. What we need to do is to conceptualize a total system as a comprehensive system. First of all, sufficient budget should be provided (which governments are refusing to give. Even the promised budget has never come). Every thing should be taken as a comprehensive unit, where one should start with aims of education, their philosophical underpinnings, the curriculum, the syllabi, the textbook, teacher-training, school management, interaction with the community etc. Teacher-training should be a life time process. If teachers are not constantly enriched, how can they enrich the students? If you want to enrich teachers, cluster resource centres and block resource centres should be activated. Schools should have a building with toilets, particularly for girls. We have seen girls drop out from schools in absence of such facilities. There should be a bigger central reference library at the block level. College and university teachers should constantly interact with the school teachers at the block level, so that there is a dialogue. There are probably seven thousand teachers in Delhi University but there are not even twenty teachers who interact with schools. Since one is going to teach the same students and taking forward the same syllabus, he or she should better be aware of what is going on there, so that they can contribute better. It should be obligatory for every college/ university teacher to visit a school once or twice a week and spend at least two hours there. When I say the totality has to be examined, things of that kind should be taken into account. Once again it is very much possible.

Barun: Every language has a syntax, morphology and standard to be followed by the user. In the condition of limited resources and infrastructure, what kind of competence, regarding linguistic model and form, can be expected from the learner when instructors might not be so proficient, or if I am not incorrect, semi-proficient?

Prof. Agnihotri: Yes, I have already answered the latter part that the teacher enrichment programme should be our first priority. It has arisen because of the missing conceptual machinery that is needed for a discipline. Therefore the teachers could not generate interest among the students. It is not that students are inherently incompetent. The second thing that you have asked - regarding that I would say of course different languages have different structures, phonotactic rules, different morphological systems, but the real depth of those systems is neither known to the teacher nor the teacher trainers, nor the parents. There is no question of teaching that; we cannot; what is taught in the name of grammar in schools is patently wrong. For example, 'an' is used before vowel letters, 'a' is used before consonants - this is wrong. You have to explain to the child why 'a' is used before a consonantal sound because there is a lot of difference between a consonantal letter and a consonantal sound. If you ask any teacher of English what is the difference between a consonantal sound and a vocalic sound it will be hard for them to explain. English plural is not made by adding an 's' or 'es'. Languages are not acquired by teaching language rules and grammar. Languages, on the other hand, are acquired by putting children in a kind of environment which is

Interview

interesting, challenging, and where you have rich comprehensible input. They have the language faculty to abstract the rules.

Barun: Vidya Bhawan is funding FORTELL this time and you are a consultant there, so would you please tell us about its objectives behind funding us?

Prof. Agnihotri: Vidya Bhawan has several institutions, schools and colleges. It is committed to the cause of education. In fact, it was the first institution to open a completely radical school in Rajasthan, one of the most conservative areas. In the 1930s it opened a school where boys and girls of the rich and the poor could study together. As you said in the beginning, English is percolating down to the school level; for them it was very attractive. They would find significant information in language-literature debate, therefore they may like to have hundreds of copies to circulate among their teachers and then have an Udaipur chapter as well. That is the basic agenda behind such an act.



Barun K Misra, is Lecturer in English at Rajdhani College, university of Delhi, New Delhi.

Contributions Invited!!!

Contributions are invited from the FORTELL community for a monograph on Issues in Evaluation of English Language and Literature which we are planning to bring out by December 2006. We are concerned with evaluation at all levels ranging from secondary to tertiary to postgraduate.

The areas of focus are:

- Match/mismatch between evaluation and curriculum objectives
- Assessment of existing practices in language and literature testing
- Designing innovative learner friendly tests (at different levels)
- Marking answer scripts: problems of standardisation
- Evaluation and wash-back effect on pedagogy
- Evaluation in distance education
- Classroom evaluation: an ongoing process for teacher-learner feedback

We are already in possession of a selection of papers which were presented at the National Seminar on Evaluation held at SPM College for Women, Delhi in March 2001. We would welcome some more papers dealing with theoretical/practical aspects of evaluation. The papers should follow the MLA style sheet format and should be sent as email attachments along with a hard copy latest by 31st July 2006. They should carry an abstract of about 100 words and a brief bio-note of 50 words. The papers should be sent to the following:

Madhu Gurtu

281 Nagine Lake Apts, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi 110087
madhu_gurtu@hotmail.com

Attention!!!

For those FORTELL members who want to become individual members of IATEFL at a nominal subscription!!

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FORTELL will need to agree with IATEFL a local subscription rate for a certain (maximum) number of memberships. Once this is settled our members pay this subscription to us and we send their details to IATEFL for their membership to begin. Later we transfer the total amount of these subscriptions to IATEFL.

Membership under WMS lasts for a year from when members' details are received by IATEFL and it can be renewed for a further year at the same subscription. After this we need to bid again for more WMS support.

We apply by submitting a bid to the advisory committee with estimates of how many of our members will take up IATEFL membership and at what price.

IATEFL contacts all Associates in **December** of each year, inviting them to submit WMS bids. However, once we have agreed a local subscription it holds good for two years so in practice we only need to bid every two years.

The interested members should indicate their willingness with their names and addresses to the following:

Dr A. L. Khanna,

a_l_khanna@yahoo.co.in

Hornby Seminar at Chennai

- A REPORT

Tara Chadha

A six-day Hornby ELT Seminar on 'Training the Trainers' was organized by the Chennai unit of British Council from 20th to 25th March 2006 in Chennai. Twenty seven participants from all over the country attended the same. They represented diverse organizations – publishing houses, educational institutions and training centers.

Two of the participants were from Delhi. Ms Farzana Qadar represented Ratna Sagar while Pearson Education India (now – Dorling Kindersley) sponsored me.

The seminar-cum-workshop was conducted by Dr. Paul David, an eminent author, educationist and teacher trainer of International fame from U. K.

The British Council officials attended the inaugural session. Ms Eunice Crook introduced Dr. Paul and explained in brief the history and the objectives of the Hornby seminars held by the Council from time to time. Thereafter, in the ice-breaking session the participants introduced themselves to each other. Soon the inhibitions and fears were dispelled and an air of informality and friendship pervaded the place.

The fear of being glued to the chairs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. was soon gone. With no hi-tech apparatus, no power point, not even an OHP, with the sheer body language and movements, Paul was able to hold the interest together



the twenty seven participants with diverse backgrounds and age groups.

The salient features of the seminar were the following:

- trainers should not resort to lecturing.
- pair work and group work is conducive to real learning, recognising group dynamics.
- slavish adherence to a method (such as audio lingualism, silent way) to be discouraged.
- all learning to be experiential.
- grammar can be successfully taught through grammar games.
- **no recorded material be introduced into the classroom, the source of all listening activities should be students and teachers themselves; teaching should be done using only the resource that teachers and students bring to the class, i.e. themselves and whatever happens in the classroom.**

In a nutshell Paul established the fact that teachers should be able to develop a variety of techniques and activities suited to the interests and abilities of the participants, which will encourage interactive participation and unlock the creativity inherent in everyone.



*Tara Chadha teaches English at Vivekananda Institute, IP University, Delhi.
tarataral@rediffmail.com
comhadha*

Workshops on Evaluation

- A REPORT

Madhu Gurtu

Two workshops on evaluation were organized in Delhi in December 2005 in collaboration with FORTELL : the first one at SCERT for primary and secondary levels and the second one at Bharti College for the tertiary level. The key resource persons for both the workshops were Prof Antony John Kunnan, Chair, Division of Applied Advanced Study in Education at Calstate University, Los Angeles and Prof Rama Matthew, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi. The key address was delivered at both the workshops by Prof Antony Kunnan.

The broad aims of the workshop were to disseminate information and generate discussion on different aspects of evaluation, focusing specifically on the tools of evaluation and on evaluating how these tools were being used in practice. The workshops took care to involve all the key players in the evaluation process, namely, teachers, papersetters, administrators in the proceedings of the workshops.

A special word of thanks is due to Dr Promodini Verma, Principal, Bharti College for funding the workshops and to Dr Mukti Sanyal for planning out the details of the workshops.



*Madhu Gurtu is a Reader in English at SPM College, University of Delhi.
madhu_gurtu@hotmail.com*

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

JUNE 2006

3-4. (Asia and Oceania) Shanghai Jiaotong University, "Canadian Immersion Education and Bilingual Education in China," Shanghai, P.R. China.

E-mail: yiming@online.sh.cn

8-10. (North America) Purdue University, Symposium on Second Language Writing, "Practicing Theory in Second Language Writing," West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. Contact Tony Silva, Purdue University, Department of English, 500 Oval Drive, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2038, USA, Tel. 765-494-3769, Fax 765-494-3780,

E-mail: tony@purdue.edu

Web site: <http://symposium.jslw.org/2006/>

8-9. (Asia and Oceania) The University of Hong Kong, "Language Issues in English-Medium Universities Across Asia," University of Hong Kong. E-mail: scarletws@hku.hk

Web site: <http://www.hku.hk/clear/conference.html>

16-18. (Europe and Eurasia) Hellenic American Union, The Second Language Testing and Evaluation Forum, "Teaching and Testing: Opportunities for Learning," Athens, Greece. Contact Anne Nebel

E-mail: anebel@hol.gr

Web site: <http://testingforum.hau.gr/index.htm>.

22-24. (Asia and Oceania) FEELTA 2006 Conference, "Best Practice in ELT," Birobidjan State Pedagogical Institute, Birobidjan, Jewish Autonomous Region, Russia. Contact Prof. Larisa Belichenko, Birobidjan State Pedagogical Institute, Foreign Language Department, Pushkina St., 7, Birobidjan, JAR, 679016, Russia, Fax 7-4262-24-15-83,

E-mail: ryanyama@hcc5.bai.ne.jp.

Web site: <http://www.dvgu.ru/rus/partner/education/feelta/Practice.htm>.

23-24. (Asia and Oceania) The Korea Association of Teachers of English, "Beyond the Horizon: Extending the Paradigm of TEFL," Hanyang University, Seoul, Korea. Contact Byung-Kyoo Ahn, Conference Chair/Professor, Dept. of English Education, College of Education, Chonnam National University, 300 Yongbong-dong, Buk-gu, Gwangju 500-757, Tel. 82-62-530-2438

E-mail: KATE2006@jnu.ac.kr.

Web site: <http://www.kate.or.kr/main/conference/2006/>

29-30. (Central and South America) MATE, "Meeting the Challenges of Teachers of English as a Global Language," Port-Au-Prince, Haiti.

E-mail: italien_jeanfrantzy@yahoo.com.

JULY 2006

13-14. (Central and South America) Paraguay TESOL, "Facing Diversity in a Globalized World," Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano, Asuncion, Central, Paraguay. Contact Mirta Ucedo, Tel. 595-21-503-012/014

E-mail: paratesol@yahoo.com.

Web site: <http://www.paratesol.org>.

31-August 2. (Central and South America) Peru TESOL, "Sharing Teaching and Learning Experiences in a Global World," Iquitos, Loreto, Peru.

E-mail: perutesoler_1216@yahoo.com.

AUGUST 2006

18-20. (Asia and Oceania) Asia TEFL International Conference "Spreading Our Wings: Meeting TEFL Challenges," Fukuoka, Japan. Contact Rob Dickey, Gyeongju University, South Korea.

E-mail: AsiaTEFL@2-mail.com.

Web site: <http://www.asiatefl.org>.

SEPTEMBER 2006

7-9. (Europe and Eurasia) BAAL / IRAAL Annual Conference, "From Applied Linguistics to Linguistics Applied: Issues, Practices, Trends," University College, Cork, Ireland.

E-mail: mconrick@french.ucc.ie.

8-10. (Europe and Eurasia) Association of Teachers of English of the Czech Republic, "Ways to Teaching and Learning," University of Hradec Kralove. Contact Pavla Machova, Tel. 420-493-331-526

E-mail: pavla.machova@uhk.cz.

Web site: <http://www.atecr.cz>.

15-17. (Central and South America) Panama TESOL, "Innovations in English Language Teaching," Panama City, Panama. Contact Carlos Prescott, Tel 507-221-5595

E-mail: carlosprescott@yahoo.com

Web site: <http://geocities.com/tesolpanama>.

29-October 2. (Asia and Oceania) Community Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages, "Origins and Connections: Linking Theory, Research and Practice," Napier, New Zealand.

E-mail: clesol@paardekoooper.co.nz

Web site: <http://www.clesol.org.nz/home.html>.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

SPEAKING

1. Telling a Story

Material: 6-7 diverse objects (e.g. a candle, a pen, red chilly powder, a CD, cotton, shoe laces, spoon) and a box.

Preparation: Before class, fill the box with 6-7 random objects. In order to make the activity interesting, the objects should be diverse and unrelated to each other.

Procedure:

- Divide the class into 4-5 small groups.
 - Call one student from each group to take out only one object from the box and place that on a table.
 - Then instruct each group to form a story by using their imagination and creativity.
 - Ask each group to tell their stories one by one.
- ### 2. EXCUSES! EXCUSES!

This speaking activity doesn't need any material or preparation and involves students working in pairs to make up excuses.

Procedure:

- Put the students into pairs. In each group, one of the students will think of a situation and the other student will give an excuse for not responding positively to the situation.
- Tell the students to have variations in their excuses to avoid the repetition of the excuses.
- A few examples of the situations and excuses.

Situation Questions & Excuse Answers

Q. Why didn't you join us for the picnic?

A. My stomach was aching.

Q. Are you coming to Ooty to spend your holidays with me?

A. No, I'm going to our native village to meet my grandparents.

VOCABULARY

1. WORD GRID

The students are able to remember the words and what they mean, they still have problems when they actually try to use the words in sentence. This activity helps the students to activate the vocabulary they may have acquired in their regular classes.

Preparation: Prepare a list of words your students have learnt recently. Draw a large grid on the black board. The size will depend on the number of students you have. Fill the grid with the meanings of the words you've listed.

Procedure:

- The teacher will read out the words one by one from the list and then the students will be asked to find out the meaning of the word from the grid.

This can be done vice versa. You can read out the meanings and ask the students to find out the related word from the grid.

- Put the students into pairs and get each pair to choose any two of the words from the grid.

Tell them to write a single sentence that uses both the words.

In the end, either make the

students read the sentences out or make them write the sentences on the black board.

SOUNDS, SPELLINGS AND PRONUNCIATION

Preparation: Make a list of some words that have silent letters in them.

Procedure: Dictate the words to the students, check them and then tell the students to underline the silent letters in the words. e.g.

Christmas

Knee

Listen

Honest

World

Jaya Arora is an Asstt. Teacher in Sarvodaya Co-education Sec. School, East Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi

jayaarora@rediffmail.com

FORTELL invites from its members activities and games for teaching of English language skills to young learners by August 31, 2006 for their inclusion in its publication **A Handbook of Language Activities and Games for young learners.**

The contributions should specify for each games/activity the level for which it is designed, language skill it aims at, materials and time required for its use. The contributions can be emailed at the following address:

a_l_khanna@yahoo.

CREATIVE WRITING IN ENGLISH

POEMS

TWO WIVES

N.P. Singh

I told my mom
"I would have two wives."
My mom was tickled
And burst into a laughter.
She asked me-Sharp
"Son? Why two wives?"
I replied – cool, composed
"One would be
with me all the time
All the time.
The other would be
With you. She would
Serve you – massage
Your sore feet
And be with you
All the time.
All the time."

My silver-haired mom
Looked, astounded-incredulous
At her seven year old son
Who was awfully keen
To have two wives.
He was not willing
To share his wife
With him mom.
His logic was indeed
Perfect, wasn't it?

*N P Singh, Formerly Reader in English,
Rajdhani College, University of Delhi.*

JOURNEY OF LIFE

Himadri Roy

The sweet and sour oranges,
The sliding forest ranges,
The terrible bus ride,
Through the twisting blind
end,
Spring here is dried lifeless,
Leafless branches everywhere,
But the sky has its clarity,
This town is still dormant, no
motion, no life!
May be journey of life has
something more to say,
More to give, more to accept,
more to see...
Handful of kids,
Trying to run with the bus'
speed,
Memories become alive,
Can feel myself doing like
them,
Can see amidst them that
smile,
This is the heart of the town,
Everywhere these children
portray life!
May be journey of life has
something more to say,
More to give, more to accept,
more to see...
A smile, a reminiscent smile,
Comes to my face,
Trying to find a semblance
with their smiles,
Can see my childhood on
their run,
How jubilantly I ran those
days,
But now the cycle of life has
changed,
For I can never run now!
The blast is so clear in my
eyes,
The horrifying sound, the
sudden pain,

Lost all my consciousness, my
senses of survival,
When the eyes open, my
well-wishers by my side,
Shedding more tears than the
pain in my heart,
Can feel the missing part of
my body,
Didn't scream with trauma,
don't know why?
But felt I ought to portray
courage of struggle,
For I can't see so many
people crying for one,
Felt the pathos, agony,
thinking about all those,
Who are never encircled by
well-wishers!

May be journey of life has
something more to say,
More to give, more to accept,
more to see,
More to comprehend, more to
realize, more to tolerate ...

*Himadri Roy is Lecturer in English
at Rajdhani College, University of
Delhi.*

himadri14@gmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENT

**FORTELL is organising an
Inter School Debate
Competition**

at Universal Public School,
Preet Vihar, Delhi - 110092 on
October 11, 2006.

The topic of the debate
is **CBSE's proposal to
make Mathematics as an
Optional Subject in Class X
Board Examination would
adversely affect the board's
quest for excellence in
education.**

For details, visit www.fortell.org

Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching

Madhu Gurtu

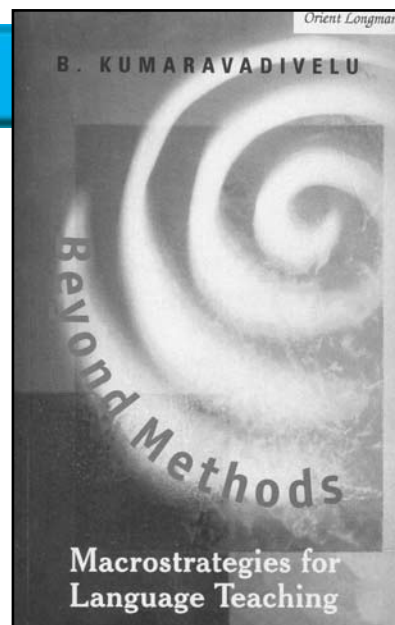
Beyond Methods : Macrostrategies for Language Teaching by B. Kumaravadivelu, as the title of the book suggests, is about language teaching in a post-method era- an invitation to the classroom teacher to become a 'strategic thinker' as well as a 'strategic practitioner', demolishing the artificial boundaries that have so far existed between the theoretician and the classroom practitioner. The book presents a systematic, coherent framework to enable teachers to develop a personal theory of teaching, suited to their specific context. The framework presents macrostrategies, incorporating the insights from various disciplines including psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology, second language acquisition, and critical pedagogy.

The book consists of 13 chapters, of which the first two outline the conceptual and philosophical basis underpinning the rest of the book. The last chapter presents a classroom observational scheme for the beginning as well as the experienced teacher, enabling them to map out a programme to self-evaluate how far their theoretical beliefs inform their practice and how the classroom situation impacts their theory. The ten chapters in between

follow the same format with three broad sections: macrostrategy, microstrategies, and exploratory projects. These are self-contained units and can be used separately.

The ten macrostrategies bring together a mine of wealth – a mine of new ideas, a mine of old ideas shaped anew through a critical eye, a mine of ideas which aim to transform the classroom teacher from a teacher of language skills to someone who fosters the individual learner's critical awareness of how language is used – and abused – as a vehicle of power and control. The macrostrategies range from 'maximizing learning opportunities' to 'promoting learner autonomy' to 'activating intuitive heuristics' to 'ensuring social relevance' among others. The macrostrategies are further divided into microstrategies and numerous illustrations are provided from actual classroom recordings to clarify and elucidate the concepts. The discussion following the classroom transcripts helps concretise the understanding of how mismatches occur between the teacher perceptions and actual practice. The reflective tasks and the exploratory projects given in each chapter are like guidelines helping, provoking, and challenging the classroom teacher to rethink, to reanalyse, to experiment.

Beyond Methods is a work



First published 2003 by Yale University Press, First published in India by Orient Longman Private Limited, 2006

of scholarship, imbued with personal insights into and respect for classroom practices. Though grappling with the actual needs of the teaching situation, the book refuses to offer readymade solutions to the intricate problems of classroom teaching. Instead, it provides tools to the teacher to self-observe, to self-reflect and to self-analyse their classroom practice, developing their own theory of teaching practice. It must be said, however, that the reader needs some sophistication and some grounding in the current language education literature to benefit fully from the book.

Well, who is this book for? Certainly, for practising and future teachers, for researchers, and teacher educators, for educational planners – and for everyone who is interested in language, pedagogy, and the awareness that language brings.

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English at the Workplace

Jayadeep Krishnan

English at the Workplace is the new textbook that has been introduced for the English B course in the first year of the B.A. Programme for students of Delhi University. This book is designed, according to its blurb, “to enhance the proficiency of those students who have not yet gained the required competence in using English confidently.”

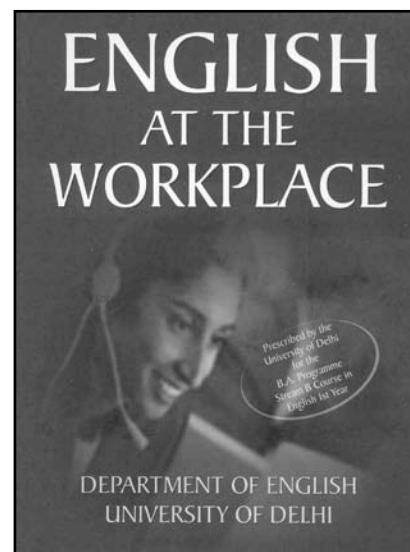
The chapters and sections of the book have been organized according to the usage patterns of the language – as a medium of understanding, and as a mode of oral/ written communication. The very first exercise in the book is supposed to enable the student to recognize and evaluate his/ her own level of comfort with the language. The exercise, and indeed almost every other exercise in the text, is based on the student’s familiarity with his own language. The student’s knowledge of the operation of language in a general sense is then utilised in order to help her/him recognise the variations in usage from one language to another – in this case from the mother tongue to English.

The design of the chapters and exercises in the book is, in its own way, very good. Each chapter is divided into sections titled “Reading”, “Vocabulary”, “Writing” and “Pronunciation”. This division is a good way of ensuring that the students’ capabilities in every aspect of language usage are exercised during the course of every single chapter. Using the

language in these various aspects renders the language much more accessible and allows the student to experience how the language operates in real-life situations. In this aspect, the text is extremely useful in the classroom situation.

However, as far as certain sections of the text are concerned, what the book does not completely take into account is the comparative lack of linguistic proficiency in English of the students of this course. On an average, their level of familiarity with the language would make it exceedingly difficult for them to understand some of the terms which are used. The text seems to underplay these factors, and launches into an analysis and explanation of the cultural usage of language, taking the student into the area of linguistics.

For the average student of this course in Delhi University the basic grasp of the language is so weak that even the previous course-book had proved difficult for the students. With this book, the level of difficulty has increased slightly – the students are more likely to end up concentrating more on learning different aspects of linguistic phenomena, like code-mixing and code-switching, rather than on learning the usage of the language itself. Now, this is not to say that these aspects of the language are not important; they are, but the question to be asked is whether this particular knowledge is of specific relevance, or much help to students in learning the



Chief Editor : Murti Sanyal

Editors : Sudesh Sawhney,

Shormistha Panja, Promodini Varma

Published by MACMILLAN INDIA LTD. New Delhi 2005.

[Pages 82, Price – Rs.75]

language.

It is not only the linguistics bias which may prove to be difficult for the students. Some of the examples which are used to illustrate/ demonstrate the usage of English are fraught with complications. Take, for instance, the final example in the book which is intended to gauge the student’s understanding of the language. Three cartoon strips in English have been provided, and the student is expected to write about these comic strips following the pointers provided. This task requires quite a lot from the average student of English-B in the B.A. Programme. They are required to comprehend the situation depicted, and provide commentary on these (and this is specifically meant to be a written exercise), not only in terms of the characters and the storyline, but also in terms of the humour in these strips! Given that some humour is generic and can be readily comprehended regardless of cultural background, surely it is too

much to expect the average B.A. Programme student to comprehend the humour in cartoon strips which are culturally alien to them. The cultural knowledge governing the situation in a cartoon strip like The Born Loser, where the humour is generated by the difference between “intermission” of a movie and the very American “half-time” of a “ball game”, is not necessarily, or even readily, accessible to the students. True, the context can be explained to the students, so that the meaning becomes clear – but how is the student supposed to comprehend the ‘funny-ness’ of the strip?

In this particular case, it is not that understanding humour in a different language might prove to be difficult – it is just that the ‘humour’ of the situation may be lost when framed within a culturally

alien context (as far as the majority of students are concerned). Perhaps it might have been much more relevant to have used English-language cartoons like those by R. K. Lakshman – providing humour as well as accessibility, combined with an insight into the workings of English within a familiar situation.

In light of these observations, it might be useful to reassess the text’s utility – it seems to be more useful as a guide for the teachers of this course. Most chapters seem to be designed to enable the teacher to assess the students’ grasp of the language, and so help in devising classroom techniques which will enable the student to understand the working of the language.

The text, then, is not meant to be a stand-alone guide to the language. However, it does

very well in formulating certain guidelines on how the language should be taught. It might, therefore, be more relevant to make the text secondary, as far as the matter of the weightage given to its contents in the written university examinations is concerned. The book should rather function primarily as a workbook in the classroom, and be used for discussion in the course of conducting the seminar/ project-work which is required by the University for Internal Assessments. With this kind of an emphasis on the process of teaching and learning, rather than on the actual contents of the text, the students and teachers would find this text much more useful.

Jayadeep Krishnan is Lecturer in English, Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi.

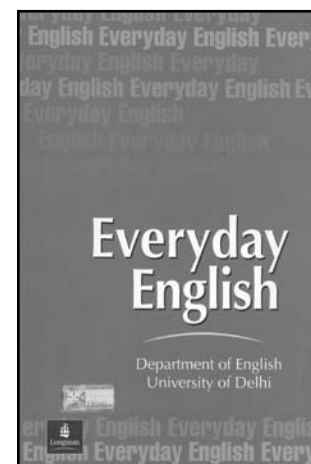
Everyday English (English Textbook for Stream C)

Saloni Sharma

The Department of English introduced several new papers this year in Streams A, B, and C as part of the B.A. Programme. While the prescribed textbooks for Stream A were available from the later part of the first semester, those for Streams B and C took much longer getting organized and becoming accessible to teachers as well as students. It was only in December, after a workshop held by the Department, that the texts and the revised syllabi

for both courses were finally made available. *Everyday English* is the prescribed text for Stream C, for the first year students.

Edited by Madhu Gurtu and Kusum Virmani of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee College, the text sets out to deal with basic communication and language learning skills. The selection is rather eclectic in terms of themes and genres but the editors have taken care to collate only such pieces as are linguistically simple



Editors: Madhu Gurtu & Kusum Virmani

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LONGMAN, 2005.**

[Pages 115, Price – Rs.55]

and therefore easy to comprehend for those students who have studied English only up to class 8.

The degree of complexity in terms of language as well as the issues being dealt with increases with subsequent chapters. The first chapter, ‘Flowers’, uses the simplest language as well as images

Book Reviews

and is placed firmly within the Indian context so that there are no unfamiliar images or words for its target readership. As the chapters progress, the language acquires a slightly more challenging aspect as can be seen in the chapter entitled 'A Sense of Humour' which tries discussing more abstract ideas and therefore uses a more complex vocabulary. Chapters like 'Penny Post', 'The Diary of Anne Frank', 'Through the Looking Glass' and 'The Bag' introduce images from typically European settings and therefore might seem unfamiliar to the average C Stream student but the language ought not to present any problems. In fact, the use of a different cultural context only adds to the richness of the selection and therefore enables the students to get a more informed perspective on 'English' literature.

The 'Pre-Reading Activity' at the onset of every chapter has been kept conversational and can lead to some stimulating discussions. The only problem seems to be that sometimes the questions are too simplistic to generate interest among undergraduate students. Some such examples are:

What flowers do you find in summer, winter and spring? Can you describe

their colour? (chapter 1)
and

Do you ever have dreams? When do you generally dream-during day time

or at night? (chapter 10)

The exercises at the end of every chapter have been constructed keeping in mind the development of reading, writing as well as speaking skills. The emphasis is on

a practical approach and on getting the students actively involved in the issues being discussed. The exercises make use of charts and tables, thereby using visual tools to make the learning process easier.

The themes of the chosen pieces are varied. Some chapters, like 'Chains of Slavery', deal with issues of social relevance while some others like 'Kiran Bedi's Acceptance Speech' and 'What I Wanted to Be' belong to the genre of inspirational writing. Certain others are meant to be educational while some are simply entertaining. The need to allow students to 'enjoy' literature has also been taken care of in the various pieces appended to the chapters, which include poems as also make-believe situations geared towards imaginatively engaging the students in grammatical and literary exercises.

In keeping with the practical approach that marks the book in its entirety, the editors have taken care to include a particularly useful section, one on Dictionary usage, which appears in chapter 8. It defines a dictionary entry and also sets out how to use a dictionary, for meanings as well as pronunciation (pg 38-42). All this information is given through exercises so as to give the students some real-time practice in using a dictionary.

The real value of the text lies in its being not only student-friendly but also teacher-friendly. The learning tools it uses are simple and yet creative and conducive to classroom teaching. Unlike a lot of other ambitious projects, this text sets out with the aim of working on communication skills and efficiently manages the same. Hopefully, access to *Everyday English* from

the beginning of the next academic session will make teaching and learning Stream C English an easier and more enjoyable task.

Saloni Sharma is currently lecturer in English, Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi.

Comments of Prof. Alan Durant, Professor of English studies, Middlesex University London, U.K.

Fluency in English by Varma, Sanyal & Prasad, Macmillan, New Delhi, 2005

This is an ambitious textbook which builds on established classroom traditions in India but also introduces a range of new approaches. The book retains the idea of core extracts, but adds useful warm-up activities as well as writing, speaking and debating tasks by way of follow-up. The texts are well chosen to appeal to today's young learners, and the commentary is insightful and fresh in approach. A useful textbook.

My only doubt is about the title. The book is much broader - and in a way more interesting - than the title 'fluency', at least as usually understood, suggests.

Cultural Diversity, Linguistic Plurality and Literary Traditions in India by Kumar, Chauhan & Prakash, Macmillan, New Delhi, 2005

A genuinely thought-provoking and challenging book for undergraduates, which brings together a selection of influential writing about literary production and understanding in the specific Indian context. Interesting links are developed between the language situation in India, both now and in the past, and different aims and forms of cultural expression. Introductory comments on the extracts, along with notes provided, are succinct and helpful without being obtrusive.

English at the Workplace by Sanyal, Sawhney & Varma, Macmillan, New Delhi, 2005

A practical and businesslike course organised around units that consistently show an emphasis on language in contemporary use. Students working with this book are well supported in terms of language skills without being patronised in terms of content. An additional, welcome feature is the book's informative but non-prescriptive attention to *how* language works, even as practical work concentrates on developing proficiency.

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