Editorial

Should the use of learners' mother tongue be banned in learning a second language?

One of the major issues confronting the practitioners and researchers of teaching English as a second language is whether it is desirable to allow the learners of English to use their mother tongue in learning English or any other second language. This issue is gaining significance particularly because English has been introduced recently in class 1 in a majority of Indian states and union territories of India and a very large number of English learners are first generation learners, many of their teachers themselves are not proficient users of English and the schools where they study have blackboard alone as the infrastructure facility available for the teaching of English. It is a fact that English is learnt, whatever may be its nature and degree, only in the English class and there is hardly any English in the school and outside environment .It is felt that in the absence of any comprehensible input of the target language the learners may feel frustrated in their aspiration to join the main stream one day and may take recourse to using his/her mother tongue as a support to survive or make sense of whatever is going on in the English class. If the custodians of ELT feel that the learner has erred in using his mother tongue, we would like to know how far they are justified in holding such a position in the given circumstances. Even in those situations which are not as alarming as the one mentioned

> …..occasional use of learners' mother tongue will not only make the learners have respect for their own language and confidence in themselves but it will also lead to faster understanding of the target language, fewer dropouts and repetitions and to improved learning outcomes.

here, the issue being debated among many pedagogues is whether learners should at all be allowed to use their mother tongue in the English class. Some ELT practitioners and researchers feel that there is no harm as long as the mother tongue is used as a transitional learning strategy. They believe that occasional use of learners' mother tongue will not only make the learners have respect for their own language and confidence in themselves but it will also lead to faster understanding of the target language, fewer dropouts and repetitions and to improved learning outcomes. But there are others who argue that the use of the mother tongue should be discouraged and stigmatized because its use delays the process of learning a second language. We are very much concerned with this issue and would like our members to reflect on this and write to us their well-argued positions in the form of articles and Letters to the Editor.

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Latest by Nov. 15, 2006 along with their passport size photograph and a 10-15 word write-up about themselves to A L Khanna, Secretary, FORTELL

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Creating Learning Communities: A Project

Shefali Ray

English Language Teaching as a Second Language in India encounters various problems, some of them being high dependence on L1, poor communication skills, poor concept of grammar and word order, inadequate vocabulary, poor skills of reading comprehension and writing. These problems, which begin with the primary classes, are not remedied in the secondary level. Both the primary and secondary teachers struggle to help their learners overcome these problems but they struggle in isolation from each other.

Creating Learning Communities, School Mentoring Programme was a pilot project to see if rapport could be built between the primary teachers and their colleagues and encourage them to hold regular discussions and sharing to understand each other's situation. They were encouraged to collaborate in order to overcome the problems that the students in their schools face while learning English. Five schools of different districts of Delhi and nearby areas were selected for this study, which was conducted over three to four months.

The objectives of this pilot study were to:

- develop in the school a professional culture based on collaboration;
- facilitate the percolation of new ideas to the primary teachers in a cascading effect;
- create independent teams of teachers as peer mentors and equip them to solve issues through cooperation and inquiry;
- create a feeling of confidence and mutual trust within the English faculty of the school;
- enable teachers to visualize the interdependence of good teaching and continuous teacher development;

- infuse creativity and effectiveness in the learning of English at the primary level; and

- record the successes and problems of such a sustained mentoring programme.

Since the teachers at both levels were experienced, they were paired as peer-mentors in a Cooperative and Collaborative Model (Jerry Gebhard) and in supporting mode (Angi Malderez). Nine such pairs of peer-mentors participated in the project. Each school identified its own problems and worked upon them with the active collaboration of the investigator who mentored and guided the senior teachers during her fortnightly visits to the school. The senior teachers in turn met their partners on occasions ranging from twice a week to everyday and worked collaboratively on activities that helped their learners to exercise a particular skill. The primary teachers tried out the activities sometimes by themselves and sometimes in tandem with their partners as a team, met and discussed after the lesson. This was reported to the investigator, and modified methods or further activities were discussed.

The range of language skills that were addressed was wide ranging from speaking skills to better concept of grammar and writing. The aim was to infuse interest and effectiveness in the teaching of English at the primary level and as per reports from the different peer-mentors the students developed both interest and confidence in using English.

But the major gain was the success in creating a learning and collaborating atmosphere in school by bringing together English teachers of different levels who earlier never proceeded beyond a nodding acquaintance. It led to a better understanding and mutual respect as they found many positive qualities in each other. A greater enthusiasm was noticed amongst the teachers as was evident in the mid-term workshop organized for the participants of the five schools to share their experiences with one another.
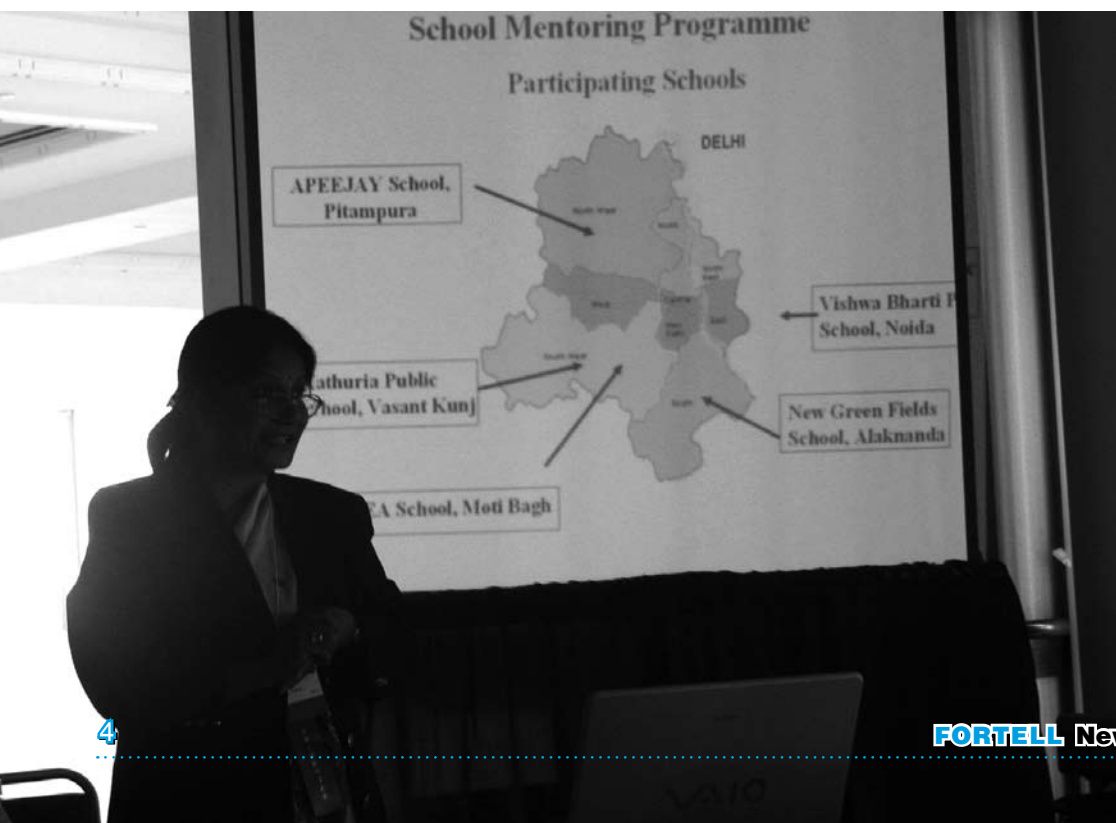
The highlight of their respective presentations was a deeper understanding and empathy for each other's situation and a deeper insight into English language teaching.

Another significant gain was the development of awareness that teachers constantly need opportunities for professional growth and that keeping abreast with the best practices is one of the effective ways of infusing innovation and interest in one's teaching.

Conclusion

The results and findings of this pilot study are encouraging. Discussions during the mid-term workshop indicated that the teachers were convinced about the efficacy of the basic concept of the project. It also worked better as the teachers did not have to leave school and go to a training site to get this new knowledge and skills. The periodic visits by the investigator helped to monitor and take feedback on the success of the relationship and the activities suggested. It was, however, felt that if the project starts from the new session the effects would be better and the gains more perceptible at the end of the session. Talking to the school head revealed that it had created a climate of collaboration and cooperation and the senior teachers now had a better understanding of the situation in the primary classes. They are eager to assist their peers as they know that infusing interest amongst them and their learners would mean a long-term gain for them when these learners reach senior classes.

School Mentoring Programme

Participating Schools

DELHI

APEEJAY School, Pitampura

Vishwa Bharti School, Noida

athuria Public hool, Vasant Kunj

New Green Fields School, Alaknanda

A School, Moti Bagh

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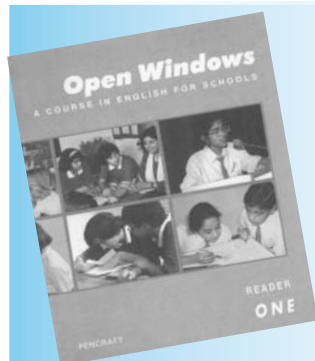
4. Principals of the participating schools in New Delhi and NOIDA.

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Achievement Testing to Proficiency Testing: Myth or Reality?

Rama Mathew

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on a study which aimed at assessing students' reading and writing abilities in the context of new unseen materials (that is, without set texts). It did this with an intention of moving away from achievement to proficiency testing for two grade levels (Class 5 and 8) based on the Delhi State curriculum and prescribed textbooks. The paper will also discuss briefly the implications of this study for teaching, testing, teacher training and curriculum.

Context of the Study

As we know, English language exams in India are typically achievement type tests where reading and writing tasks are based on the prescribed texts and the focus of interest is knowledge and understanding of set reading texts and written responses to these set texts. As a result, students' test scores mainly reflect their ability to memorize and present stock responses to both reading and writing tasks. This situation has led to the problem that after six to eight years of instruction in English (depending on the school system), students are unable to demonstrate reading and writing abilities that are appropriate for their level.

Language Used in Teaching and Testing

Extensive classroom observations revealed that teachers normally do not use English to teach English: they read out parts of a text that is to be taught from the prescribed Reader and explain it in Hindi. It is also read aloud by students whose pronunciation is perceived to be acceptable. Not all students have their text-books with them when this activity takes place. Comprehension through silent reading is almost never on the teacher's agenda, as the focus is on making the meaning of the text clear in as simple a language as possible, i.e. mostly in Hindi. All possible means are employed to get the text across to the students: explanation in simple language, examples, easier words, comparisons, and the like. The students also expect their teachers to do this; good teaching is defined in terms of how well the teacher can explain the meaning of the text in such a way that it becomes accessible to them. As regards writing, the teacher gives ready made letters, short compositions etc. that the students copy and memorise for exam purposes. In effect, English is taught as a content subject and not as a tool that they could learn to use in different situations in different ways.

Tests mirror this teaching or vice versa, i.e. they test knowledge of the taught texts, including rehearsed pieces of writing. It is only in class IX that there is an unseen text for comprehension carrying 10 marks out of 100. In class IX, the training for attempting unseen texts (in exams) largely involves asking the students not to read the passage first which only wastes their time but to go to the questions straight and match the key words with those in the text, bracket those portions of the texts and copy out the whole part. The questions under the passage are also such that they follow a linear sequence and seldom focus on higher levels of comprehension. The marking scheme provides for the students to write 1-2 sentences which may not necessarily be accurate but contain the required answer. Writing tasks do not demand students' ability to address a given audience in a given context for a specific purpose. They are tasks which are taught and do not require any thinking or reordering of information to suit a given context.

THE STUDY

Social Context

Based on the understanding of what happens in class and of what the text books expect of the students, tasks in reading and writing were

constructed. These tasks exemplified a set of Can-do Statements following from the work of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (see ALTE 2006 for details of the framework). The tasks were administered in classes V and VIII in 6 Government schools. All the tasks were not administered in all the schools and not at both grade levels. The sample size for each task varied from 60 to 220 students across the schools. The main purpose was to gauge through actual try-out what level of complexity they could handle and which type of task interested them most. It was found that although they were all Government schools that catered to a particular section of student population, there was a wide variety in their English proficiency as well as general cognitive levels. For example, in a given class of VIII, they had 2-6 years of English instruction prior to class VIII.

Tasks

In all, 12 tasks were administered depending on which group was ready for which task at a given point of time.

Task administration: -general comments

When the sheets were handed to them, there was a kind of expectation that the teacher would explain what was to be done. This kind of testing was totally unfamiliar to them where they were required to read by themselves and figure out what needed to be done. Therefore, there was anticipation that they would be told what they had to write. However, when they encountered such tasks on successive days, they seemed relaxed; in fact, they were excited about the tasks.

Since they were encouraged to ask for clarifications/questions that would help them to understand the mechanics of answering, they tried to find out what they needed to do:

i.   Aap bata dijiye kya karna hai (You tell us what to do)

ii.   Aap smjha dijiye (You explain)

iii.   Brackets laga den? (Shall we bracket the answers?)

It became apparent when we talked to the regular teachers, that the only 'technique' that they were taught while answering questions in their prescribed text books was to bracket the portion which supposedly had the answer and copy the whole portion. Usually the teacher 'helped' students by telling them which part had to be bracketed. This dependence on the teacher to explain was considerably reduced as they got used to taking more similar tasks. They were also told to leave the space blank if they didn't know the answer, another practice unknown to them. They copied very cleverly from not just neighbours but from others as well! This habit had to be curbed. When they realised that it was a fun exercise and they were not going to be scolded or penalised for not doing well, they seemed to relax and actually looked forward to doing more such tasks.

Another new thing they did was to choose the task they wanted to do - since on a day we gave three or more tasks to see which ones might work, they were curious to know what else there was, and were eager to know which one was more interesting. They were actually reading for meaning! Most students wanted to do one task after another; and they didn't want us to leave their class because they said that these tasks were very interesting and that they learnt a lot through them. A very significant progress perceived from day one to even day four, was that they understood all our instructions in English, and started talking to us in English. During their break, they wanted to know how they could read on their own; and when we demonstrated some strategies of silent reading like reading chunks and not single words, guessing meanings from the context, etc, they actually managed to get quite a bit of meaning of the same text that was all Greek to them.

RESULTS

In the following section the results of the two tasks will be presented*.

Task 1 Kalpana Chawla (N=110)

a. Description

This is a passage of 214 words describing Kalpana Chawla, who lost her life when she went on a space mission. It gives details in a chronological order and does not have too many inter-sentential connections. The task also asks

the test takers to put the 'events' in her life in the right order. There are two other questions that ask for detail like when and how she died and what they find inspiring about her life. The first does not demand much writing whereas the second question is to be answered in 2 sentences.

b. Results

Most of the students found the ordering task easy: 75% got 5 correct and 13% got 4 correct and the remaining students got correct answers between 2 and 3. The question "When did Kalpana die?" had about 60% correct answers. The others copied the sentence "But tragedy struck…February 1, 2003", which is what they were used to. Note that they were able to identify the sentence in which the answer was available. There were several answers (about 15%) that had nothing to do with the correct answer; such responses showed that they did not know the meaning of the word die:

Kalpana Chawla was born in the district of Haryana.

She went to the USA for studying further.

land". Some others merely copied the sentence where the answer was located. More than 80% left it blank.

The last question again got only a couple of answers that suggested that the students had a semblance of comprehension:

Kalpana Chawla is a good girl she is death she is engineering in Punjab college.

Kalpana Chawla was a great woman. She was very confident.

More than half of them copied the last sentence in which the word inspire occurred:

"Kalpana's life is the story of a girl from a middle class family from a small town – she will continue to inspire all of us who wish to reach the stars".

The rest (nearly 50%) left it blank. The scores on this task are presented in Table 1:

c. Comment

It seemed that they were more comfortable with this text than with others that were tried out: this is something they are used to even in

Table 1

Task	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score 6	Score 7
1	0	6	7	14	83	0	0

	Score 0	Score 1		Score 2	No answer
2	17	27		66	——
3	16	——		6	88
4	53	——		2	55

The details of the tasks administered and their results are available with the author: mathewrama@gmail.com

Note: Score 0 indicates that they copy the sentence in which the key word occurs.

Kalpana started her research work ….

(These are sentences from the passage.)

To the question "How did she die?" about 5 of them gave answers such as the following:

"Exploded on February, 1, 2003"; "Exploded"; "This was just a few minutes before it was to

their text books. In fact, this was taken from their text book prescribed for Class 5 which they had not studied. The following points seem to get confirmed: They can handle reasonably well a scanning type activity, i.e. looking for information in the text required in the question; they can pick out a sentence and copy it if the key words occur

in the question as well as in the text. Even here, they write more words than is necessary because they have been trained to do so.

Task 2 Donkeys (N=200)

a. Description

This writing task consisted of a series of six pictures, given in the wrong order, depicting a story of two donkeys. The students were required to arrange the pictures in the right sequence. They had to then provide a befitting caption for each picture. This resulted in six sentences. They were given oral instructions explaining what they had to do. Since most students could not write the captions in English, they were asked to do it in Hindi.

This task aimed at checking the (cognitive) understanding/awareness of the students, gauging their writing skill, measuring the level of continuity achieved in the story, determining the extent of communication of meaning, drawing similarities or differences between the English and Hindi versions of the story. It also aimed at

the correct order. The proficiency in language, however, differs from English to the Hindi version. The students could not write in English, even though they knew the story. There was lack of continuity and meaning was not conveyed at many places. The sentence structure was faulty and grammatical mistakes were many. In the Hindi version, most of them were grammatically correct and continuity and meaning was well maintained. The scripts were marked on a three-point scale based on the following criteria:

- Organization/Sequence
- Language/ Accuracy
- Communication of meaning

The distribution of scores on this task is presented in the Table 2:

Hence, the results suggest that the problem lies not with the cognitive understanding or unfamiliarity with the format, but with language-proficiency. The vocabulary, grammar and sentence-structure required for this writing task were clearly absent.

Table 2

Question	Correct			Incorrect			No answer		
1. Ordering	162			38			——		
2. Captions	Organization			Language			Meaning		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
English	17	60	80	80	63	20	40	65	61
Hindi	16	17	120	0	14	160	0	14	160

Note: Not all have attempted the question on Captions.
        1 denotes poor, 2: average and 3: good.

estimating whether any difficulty faced during the performance of the task was due to problems with language, or unfamiliar structure of the task or a lack of cognitive understanding.

b. Results

The scores on the first task varied from one student with zero to 16 students with all correct answers. Most of the students have nearly got the order of the story right; where the order given to the pictures is wrong, the captions were put in

WHAT CAN STUDENTS ACTUALLY DO?

Based on the findings of the study, we can state the Can-do statements in terms of what the students were actually able to do. They are as follows:

- They can pick out the sentence which has the same key words as the question (low-level scanning). Sometimes, this gives rise to wrong answers. This is because they process part of a sentence and not the whole of it.

- They relate questions in the text/task to themselves; they are not able to apply a set of given criteria or parameters available in the text in order to answer the question.

- The idea of reading and understanding instructions is alien to them. This coupled with the unfamiliarity with test format does not allow for proficiency assessment. Talking in simple English/Hindi in a reassuring manner does however indicate that the task is not totally inaccessible to them. They can answer in Hindi, in single words, broken sentences, orally in English, which clearly shows that they can handle the task.

- They can attempt tasks that require them to take a position. Although they cannot demonstrate this through writing, they can talk about it in English in an interactive mode with a lot of support/ scaffolding from the teacher; they can write with reasonable competence in Hindi.

- They can employ some scanning strategies when given adequate support through explanations and examples.

CONCLUSION

The points being made here are the following:

1. Proficiency testing (as opposed to achievement testing which focuses on testing memory) is possible even with new formats, with some amount of orientation.

2. At least to start with, their (non) performance in English would need to be carefully examined to see what stage of development they are at. It is also to be reckoned that their mother tongue teaching also suffers from 'memory-based' testing and there is very little opportunity to explore language for different purposes in the classroom. The result therefore is a group of 14-15 year-olds with 5-6 years of English in this study who do not show proficiency of even those who have had 2 years of English. Tasks in this study show how impoverished their level of thinking, argumentation, expressing an opinion is.

3. As the study clearly demonstrates, outside tests like the ones tried out in this study would indeed be the way to bring about a change in the existing system. The demarcation between teaching and testing would need to be blurred if not removed completely, especially in the Indian context where exams play a damaging and intimidating role.

4. The study reveals to quite an extent that while the Can-do statements that the tasks exemplified were not within the reach of the students, the tasks could in fact capture some of the on-the-way abilities or enabling abilities. For example, the statement 'I can write appropriate captions to a story-in-pictures so that it reads coherently' was not achievable by students; however, it clearly showed that they not only understood the story but also could do the captions only in Hindi but not in English. This means that they came up with appropriate 'speech acts' in their own mother tongue and would, with adequate exposure to English and support, be able to do it in English. This was also true to quite an extent of another task where they had to write about their mother: even when they were given an option to write in Hindi, their keenness and struggle to write it in English indicated that the "affective schemata" (Bachman and Palmer 1996) was in operation. Further, the tasks administered in the latter half clearly demonstrated that they had got a hang of the tasks and it was imminent that they were on their way to tackle them. Thus, the Can-do statements underlying the tasks can actually be seen to be made up of several 'sub-Can-do' statements. A study of a longer duration would be needed to throw light on the developmental sequence of such abilities. This is also an illustration of an interactionist methodology within the framework of dynamic assessment as a tutor cooperates with learners to co-construct Zone of Proximal Developments during one-on-one reading and writing sessions (see Poehner, 2005).

5. The other spin-off of this exercise is that it will have a strong washback on the curriculum and language pedagogy since such tasks have a cognitive challenge which promotes students' thinking; and also the kind of theme that it is based on has an 'educational value' which apparently is not part of their curriculum. Moreover, the tasks are fun to do while they learn different kinds of things that are of value.

This paper suggests very strongly that there is an urgent need for orienting teachers to how they can engage with students in interactional strategies with adequate scaffolding and how they can, through this kind of dynamic assessment, enable learning to happen. This would concretise the notion of assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning.

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* *The details of the tasks administered and their results are available with the author: mathewrama@gmail.com*

Increasingly, there is a homogenization, a dumbing down, and that prevents the child from developing his/her critical sensibility.

Barun Mishra interviews Dr. Rimli Bhattacharya

Barun: First we would like to know about the nature of texts and themes appropriate for children's literature. As you possibly know, the current debate in the academic circles keeps constantly interrogating its feasibility and viability.

Rimli: In order to discuss the theme we could first ask who defines what 'children literature' is. We might begin by saying that whatever children read, or whatever stories that children listen to or are exposed to, through performance, oral narration, visual illustration or films or music or anything—that becomes a constituent element of children's literature at a particular moment. I'm not going into the whole history of the construction of childhood in different cultures.... Secondly, about the themes—the assumption is that there is a body of people or institutions, organizations, who actually determine what is 'ok' for children and therefore influence what theme will get into the circuit. But of course, it doesn't always work like that. Traditionally too, this has been a matter of debate. Say, when the Brothers Grimm went to collect folk tales, what happened is that in the second volume, the revised edition, they had to delete/edit a lot of what had already been put in the first. So it seems that there was a contradiction between what they thought as an 'authentic' collection of folk tales and what was considered 'suitable' for children literature.

Barun: So it's a very old debate?

Rimli: Yes, now here come very many questions. If you take up the question of violence, then what kind of violence can you have for children? Should you have adult themes, for example? Now we have all sorts of new categories in terms of age and degree of violence! Like, there should be an 'in-between' age or target group. But there is also the other side: we are living in a much harsher world which is not as protected, so you cannot continue with old models. So there is an ethical dimension, which may or may not get translated into the production of moral tracts. And increasingly, there is a third dimension, not much discussed in India—which is the whole question of what the market decides is suitable for children. It is the market that decides that this or that particular brand of biscuits is going to be made the child's favourite. There is a very conscious decision taken and it is implemented. Because the forces of the market are so strong and pervasive and global, they have a tremendous reach in deciding what is that category called 'children' and why or how product x is suitable for children. So you cannot look at the feasibility and viability of themes in literature for children in isolation. You have to see it in a larger context, that's why I give the examples of soft drinks, biscuits or pizza. One aspect of contemporary globalisation is that it turns everything—poetry or pizza—into a product, before it has had time to be produced, as it were.

Barun: Well, then where do you place the media? How is it affecting children, first at the level of their social life in family and secondly at school?

Rimli: These are actually very large questions. I would confine myself to a couple of statements. Tying up your earlier question with this one, clearly there is a link between the way media works and what children will finally end up reading; i.e. those children who will learn to read or have the time and money to read thereafter! Advertising is not only telling us how we should live, but also I think it is more insidiously presenting itself as life, mediating it through specific sets of images. So it is not just the prescriptive pressure of how one should live, but also a matter of how it works on the child's

sensibility. All literature—and particularly children's literature—and of course, when I say literature it could include painting, a range of visual and performative arts—all of it actually in the case of children, should nurture something that is growing. What is happening in fact is that all those spaces are being already blocked off, not only by one or the other message, but also by the mode in which the message is presented. So any sensitivity to language and differences in speech and sounds, the nuances of irony and humour—everything is increasingly getting wiped out. There is a homogenization happening. And people who are nativist might argue that this is happening only in case of English; therefore let the children read Hindi, Bangla or any other 'Indian' language. My argument would be that in many cases the so-called authentic 'native' languages are doing the same thing, much more unconsciously, and therefore much more insidiously. So the danger of media cannot be put in a general way—that everything is wrong there. I think children need to be exposed to all kinds of media, including television, but the content and mode or the way the programmes are built, whether it is advertising or a supposedly non-advertising category like 'The News', should create a space for the children to learn. But increasingly, there is a homogenization, a dumbing down, and that prevents the child from developing his/her critical sensibility.

Barun: Could you tell me about the inconsistencies in existing selections of textbooks, both in themes or work done on those pieces of literature?

Rimli: Here, I can give you two different kinds of examples. One is when you create a textbook you have to look for a variety. Then there are plenty of 'given'

objectives, like introducing the child to her/his heritage and the past, creating links between the past and the present, and so on. Perhaps the government too puts forward its own agenda of creating an ideal citizen! So my first response is to say that **the textbook is a kind of impossible wish list. Everything that we ourselves are not and shall never be, we want the children to be.** We want the choice of the lessons in the book, the literary pieces and the themes, everything, to reflect that ideal. We really should not proceed with this completely unrealistic map as it were, but look at clusters of issues and then choose texts that address these issues. In some cases, we don't really need to look for an issue, but may wish to select a poem or story because it may provide us with a space to imagine in a very powerful way, or because it uses language in a superb way, or because it bristles with interesting questions. Of course, there has to be a degree of political awareness and responsibility towards the text. But I am saying you cannot merely choose a text because you have identified XYZ slots in advance and then you try to fill in the blanks.

Suppose, for example, textbook writers have to represent 'the tribal'. In one instance, a piece by Verrier Elwin on 'The Gonds' was chosen. There was an attempt here to fit the slot for the 'other', the non-mainstream Indian, etcetera. In this case, Elwin's piece itself is not bad, but the representation may not be appropriate for several reasons. One, because it is very dated. Second, the choice does not take into account the question of mediation, or how the writing of history has moved on. And finally, the exercises which follow the text enable only one kind of reading. Therefore, it is not only how you choose your 'literary piece', but how you frame it and contextualise

it, and finally what the child is expected to do with it that matters. Therein lies the real framework. For example, you can choose a wonderful poem by Tagore—which is in fact what they did in one of the West Bengal Primers. That poem (a choda) has so many local variations that it could be debated whether the poem is actually Tagore's or not! Anyway, Tagore gives it a certain version. However, when I visited schools I saw that kids were made to learn it by heart, quite mechanically, without any scope of enjoying the rhyme or the sounds or the words. Some children were enjoying the rhyme, the images, and generally having fun with it, but that was despite the textbook and the teacher!

I'm giving you yet another example from Assam, of Bodo which is now officially a recognized state language, and there are new Bodo textbooks. One person I met had the job of writing the Bodo textbooks. What he did was to put in all of his poems into the textbook and, frankly, they were quite bad—they were not really poems. But, quite apart from these 'non-poems' as it were, I heard from various other people many wonderful poems in Bodo, but they never found their way into the textbook, possibly because they were not considered 'literary' enough, whereas this gentleman was considered a published poet.

Therefore, your question is absolutely critical, and in response to it I can only tell you what should not be done; firstly, not to create a list and then seek to simply to find representative texts, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Somehow when you slot things you make them dead pieces. Secondly, one should not take a wonderful text and destroy it by 'textbooking' it. Because classroom transaction is a very different thing altogether;

one has to be extremely attentive towards how to emphasize the text in the classroom, how it can come alive for and through the child. An equal amount of thought and planning and teacher training and everything else has to go into that process. And third (and the final!) never fix the text and 'exercises' with finality. You have to constantly keep shifting things around, so in order to have ten texts you should have thirty alternative texts to play or work with.

Barun: Do You mean that one should have a framework to develop a textbook as a finished product?

Rimli: No, never as a 'finished' product! I see the texts in a textbook in a provisional form, with which the process of learning and teaching begins.

Barun: What according to you should be the appropriate amount of fantasy and realism?

Rimli: Between what is called realism and fantasy, we see an in-between space, which is fluid and shifting. It is important of course, to make sure that the child is able to grapple with all those different stages of what is actually around him/her at any given point of time, and what makes life worth living or struggling for. And at the same time, also choose something that should enable the child to imagine something other than what exists as her everyday world. To me both these capacities are equally important. Besides there are fantastic moments in the everyday world....

Barun: Another thing that is quite connected with this theme of fantasy and realism is 'value education'. There is an academic debate to check or redefine place of fantasy in school textbooks so that there is a fair amount of balance between fantasy and 'value educaton'. Well, it can be checked there, but could it be checked at the level of family where stereotypes of fantasy and fairy tales prevail as it were, and will this also not result in some kind of conflict or contradiction?

Rimli: Can I complicate your question further? See, what is properly called 'value education' often ends up being didactic. It has a different face altogether. We assume that we—as teachers, writers, syllabus-makers—know what is 'value education', while you 'poor child' do not know anything; so let us tell you how life should be lived—that's the approach!

Certainly, at one level children know less then we do. In some ways he or she is not in a position to scrutinize what we offer them. But, simply because he/she may be more uninhibited and less educated, children are actually in a position to be acutely aware of the gaps between what we preach and what we practise. It is most evident in the actual praxis of education, but is also present in the home. Children learn very fast how to negotiate this gap—that what one learns and what one does—are two different things. Whether in school or at home this is what the child actually learns by his experience. Doing away with stereotypes at the representational level is useful, only upto a point.

Another aspect of value education is the exposure to 'reality'. In the west, for example, drug overdose, death by AIDS, pornography, child prostitution, divorce etc are seen as the problems of the real world that children will have to negotiate. It is believed that literature, particularly the one considered appropriate or necessary for teenagers, should address all these issues. All artists at all times have done this to a greater or lesser extent; but what I find new, is a conscious programmatic approach. It is not didacticism of the traditional kind. Nevertheless, it has a kind of value, or components of 'value education' in it, which may not be always be the best thing for children's literature.

About fairytales and stereotypes: West Bengal had recently banned ghost stories and witches (as encouraging superstition) but fairy tales were allowed (as presumably being 'good' imagination). (I dont know if the ban is in place.) It is simply not a question of what to delete, erase or ban, but rather a question of how much do you respect the child? In what ways is a text of children's literature going to be mediated? Perhaps we do not pay enough attention to the fact that, whether it is written literature or visual or whatever, it does not happen in a vacuum—it always comes with a context. That is what I think is perhaps the most important thing there for 'value education'. Children finally absorb what they experience as being a 'value' (or of value?).

Barun: Tell me something about a "Eurocentric" text and is there, if there is any, attempt to check it or Indianise a text?

Rimli: A huge question! It leads me to the example of Bengali literature. It is said about Bangla literature that it is probably the 'richest' in terms of children literature. I derive this opinion from others; they show a whole range of list of authors and books about children literature to make this point. However, it can also be seen differently. In one of the Yearly Reviews (2004) brought out by the Dept of English we published the translation of an article by Sibaji Bandyopadhyay. He examines a whole corpus of adventure fiction in Bengali which comes out from early 20th century onwards. But

it is totally Eurocentric in some of the basic subject positions; for example, the whole understanding and representation of 'Africa'. So, if you say 'Bangla literature', then could I automatically say there a literature written in Bengali by Bengali writers addressing or concerned with a Bengali audience and therefore, automatically, it is not Eurocentric? Clearly not.

Secondly, coming closer to the present, and based on my work with different publishers and groups producing literature for children, we find a very conscious attempt at producing bilingual texts, maybe in English or in any other Indian language, or have translations from these languages into English. It seems to me that while it is difficult to always identify Eurocentrism, what may be harder to do is to actually produce the 'other'. Bringing out the folk tales in traditional paper (hand made) is wonderful, but is it necessarily more 'authentic'/ devoid of Eurocentrism? It's an open question. On the other hand, there are places within India where your next-door neighbour might appear very much more alien or exotic to you than things 'English' / 'Europe'/ American or whatever. I think there are attempts to negotiate this complexity in India and some signs are heartening, but it is not always done in a very conscious way. Another easy option seems to be to settle for something that seems obviously Indian (such as 'retelling' of the Ramayana) without even problematising the process. To a great extent we depend on actual interaction between what was earlier called 'vernacular' languages and English. And here too, it is more important to think in terms of how to negotiate the current configuration of market forces.

'Indianising' will inevitably mean changing with the times, but in response to events around our everyday life our political trajectories, things spoken and unspoken, thought of or not, memories, strands from the past and our desires for the future which is not closed...all this in the context of new forms of globalisation.

Rimli Bhattacharya is Reader in English, University of Delhi.

Barun Mishra is Lecturer in English at Rajdhani College, University of Delhi.

ELT Workshop on Developing Worksheets

A six day 'ELT workshop on Worksheet Development 'was organized by Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre,Udaipur from May 1 to May 6, 2006 at Vidya Bhawan, IASE, UGC Hall in Udaipur for school teachers to produce worksheets for teaching English to students of Upper primary classes under the guidance of Dr.A.L.Khanna, an ELT consultant from the University of Delhi. Thirty five teachers both from government and private schools participated in the workshop.

After a warm up session on the first day the participants were divided into groups and given a newspaper extract dealing with 'Should Maths be made optional after class VIII?' and were asked to prepare worksheets dealing with the following areas:1.Reading, 2.Vocabulary, 3.Grammar, 4.Writing. Since the participants were from diverse backgrounds and levels they were asked to prepare worksheets compatible with the level they were dealing with in their classes.

On the second day a new strategy of introducing English in the initial stages of primary classes was discussed. It was felt that in situations where input of English was minimal it would not be a bad idea to introduce teaching of English through bilingual stories in which English lexicon was gradually increased to make the learners feel comfortable and not feel alienated from their mother tongues. The participants produced several interesting bilingual stories that they felt would be of great interest to their students.

The third day was devoted to language games and activities. The participants practised some games and produced and suggested several interesting language games.

On the fourth day the participants produced several worksheets for teaching articles, prepositions, tenses, phrasal verbs and question tags.

On the fifth and sixth day, the workshop concentrated on the writing skills. The resource person explained the process vs. product approach to writing and emphsized the need for incorporating the process approach in the writing tasks/worksheets they produced. The participants were also made familiar with various stages of the process approach e.g. brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and preparing the final draft (the product).

The participants found the workshop very rewarding.

Report by Ms. Seema, Vidya Bhawan Resource Centre, Udaipur.

Summer School on 'Text and Context: British and Irish Literature from 1990 to the Present'

A six-week long summer school was organised by the Scottish Universities' International Summer School at the university of Edinburgh from 10th July to 18th August, 2006. The programme entitled Text and Context: British and Irish Literature from 1900 to the Present was divided into two self-contained modules: Modernism (10th July - 28th July) and Postmodernism (31st July - 18th August). As a Charles Wallace India trust scholar I received partial funding to attend the second module.

The course comprised 20 hours of lectures and 24 hours of seminar. Amidst the illimitable profusion of cynical and ahistorical perspectives in the academia, Text and Context: British and Irish Literature from 1900 to the Present provides a crucial platform to engage with literature as a significant cultural practice which is not only deeply embedded in and determined by the socio-historical milieu of the moment of its production but is also continuously reconstructed and redefined by the moments of its reception. The Post-modernism module, for which I was granted the scholarship, examined the contemporary British literature from multiple theoretical positions. It sought to foreground the historico-cultural diversity of Britain, particularly of Scotland and Ireland, through a close scrutiny of a number of representative texts of the post-1950s period. The lectures were delivered by some of the most distinguished academicians hailing from various disciplines thus making the lectures more comprehensive. The seminars provided the opportunity for a rigorous analysis of the prescribed texts. The expertise and meticulous preparation of the tutors made each seminar an exercise in scholarship. Every tutorial group had students from different nations with specific histories and socio-cultural backgrounds. This heterogeneity greatly facilitated the pluralistic orientation of the programme.

The cultural programme was also an important part of the Summer school. There were book readings and talks organised by the school. Particularly worth mentioning are the Ceilidh and undoubtedly, the Fringe festival. The carefully preserved history along with the rich cultural heritage of Scotland makes Edinburgh a uniquely splendid city.

Both academically and culturally, it has proved to be a most rewarding experience. It was particularly special for me because the scholarship enabled me to undertake an otherwise terribly expensive course at a foreign university. And, I must say that this maiden adventure (for it was my first visit abroad!) has opened up hitherto unimaginable vistas for me.

Manpreet Kaur is lecturer in English SPM College, University of Delhi.

A Seminar on Teaching English to Socially advantaged Learners

A Seminar on Teaching English to Socially Disadvantaged Learners was organised by Fortell, Calcutta on February 17, 2006.

It was inaugurated by the Programme Co-ordinator Dr.Shampa Chatterjee and Ms.Nilanjana Nandi, Teacher at International School, Kolkata.

Two Teacher members Ms.Sonali Chakraborty and Ms. Manasi Palchowdhury dealt with a comprehensive methodology for teaching Disadvantaged Learners. This was followed by an illuminating talk by Ms.Mala Goswami of Sabera Foundation – a noted Institution taking care of socially disadvantaged children and their education.

Participants present were teachers from Schools of repute in Kolkata, members of NGO's and Dr.Debanjan Chakraborty - Head, Communications in English Language and Literature, BCL Kolkata.

The seminar ended with an inspiring decision of taking up a pilot project based on the thrust of the seminar theme.

Dr. Shampa Chatterjee
Programme Co-ordinator, Fortell, Kolkata

CREATIVE WRITING IN ENGLISH

POEMS

THE TREE

It's grown so fast, oh fast,
Obstructing my campus view,
Depriving me of the sun,
Its warmth, its coziness, its
comfort.
I wished I had not wished
For it to grow so tall
Only a few months back
When it was hot and sultry.
It was then I had considered the
sun
A blighted, abominable freak in
nature
Out to torture me with all its
might
And made me curse it—against my
wont.
It was then that I had wished
The tree to grow so fast, oh fast.
I want to cut it to half its size
In winter
To get the dear sun in all its
splendour
And I want it fully grown to its
majestic height
In summer
To save me from the torturer's
might.
Why do you smile? Why
intrigued?
Am I not but a Man?

....

P.S. Nindra, formerly Reader in English,
School of Correspondance, University
of Delhi.

WHEN I BREAK OUT

Gone are the days
When birds would sing,
Gone are the days
When the bell would ring,

Here I sit in the dull room
Full of scorn and gloom
Watching my life
On the gray walls.
Gone are the days.

Gone are those
Who pestered me
And choked my life,
Those who ruled my stars
And turned my moments into
wars.
But one day I'll certainly hold
The reins of Time
And reverse its course
And put it in line.

But one day I'll
Drink the scent of flowers
And the rich bowers.
When I break out
And wander about.
Sure I will
I will one day.

One day I will
Put the leaves of every moment
Again on the tree of being.
And will dance
with wind and rain.
And sing with them
once again.

One day I will
Lock all the dark days
In Pandora's box
And put them away.
To start anew
To breathe anew
To fill my lap with happiness.
When I break out,
Sure I'll break out.
I will one day.

....

Dr. (Mrs.) Jagjeet Ahluwalia
43 Mountbatten Dr.,
Old Bridge,
New Jersey 08857

CHILD LABOURERS

Salman,Shabana and hundreds
like them

are not heroes of the glamour
world.

With their thin,nimble hands,they
break stones

365 days of the year, in scorching
heat

or chilling cold.

They don't know what school is

The light of civilized world doesn't
glitter

in their eyes.

Innocent childhood gets crushed
under heavy stones

Their days begin before sunrise.

The National highways are
constructed

We boast of development and
progress

The tender hands break hard
stones

to bring food for their jobless
parents.

Steaming hot rice at the end of the
day

with a pinch of salt, bought with
their

daily wages

They lick their fingers as well as
the plates

As the carriers of civilization speed
along

the highways.

....

Soma Dutta
146 Akanksha Kunj
Risali,Bhilai
Chhattisgarh-490006

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

1. PICTURE IDENTIFICATION

Level : Nursery, Class I and II

Grammar : Vocabulary Building Exercise

Time : 2 minutes or 1 minute per card depending on the class level.

Material : 26 20" 20" cards each with at least 6-7 illustrations beginning with a particular alphabet. Care should be taken that the pictures drawn should be situational.

A stop watch.

Objective : To identify things beginning with a particular letter. To help develop the child's cognitive skills – observation, memory, recollection etc.

In class :

(i) Take as many cards as possible depending on the time limit.

(ii) Divide the class into two teams – A & B.

(iii) Arrange the cards upside down on the teacher's table.

(iv) Make a score chart on the black board.

Instructions :

(i) A card will be shown to the first team. They are required to identify objects in the cards beginning with the alphabet circled on the right hand side.

(ii) Each card will have at least 6-7 objects beginning with the alphabet mentioned.

(iii) The team has to identify minimum 5 objects. If it does so it gets a score of 5. If it is able to identify more, then for each answer it gets a bonus score of 1.

(iv) Each card is to be displayed for 2 minutes or as per the level of the children. Set the stop watch accordingly.

(v) If the team is not able to answer minimum objects, it gets a O score and the chance passes on to the team 'B'. If the team 'B' names all the objects, it gets a bonus of 2 scores and then gets its chance.

(vi) Teams should answer only when it is their turn.

2. PROVERBAL CHESS

Level : Class VIII & above

Grammar: Proverbs & Spellings

Time : 20-25 minutes

Material : Chess board, dice, coloured buttons, a box with chits.

Game Preparation

(i) Prepare a chess board or take an old chess board.

(ii) In the white squares make pictures as shown in the sample chess board attached at the end of the game.

(iii) Prepare a box with chits (approx. 35 chits) inside. Each chit to have a word (difficulty level as per the class level) written on it and folded.

In Class

(i) Make the children sit in groups of 3-4. Maximum 4 players can play on each board.

(ii) Give each team a dice and coloured buttons depending on the number of players.

Instructions

(i) Keep the buttons at the starting point.

(ii) Ask all the players to throw the dice one by one clockwise.

(iii) The score on the dice indicates the number of blocks to be moved by the player.

(iv) If the player's button lands on the white square, he has to say a proverb in reference to the picture drawn which is a clue picture. For example, if the player's score is '5', he moves five blocks reaching the block with a cake drawn on it. He has to say a proverb/ saying having the name 'cake' in it. For example, he says 'You cannot have your cake and eat it.
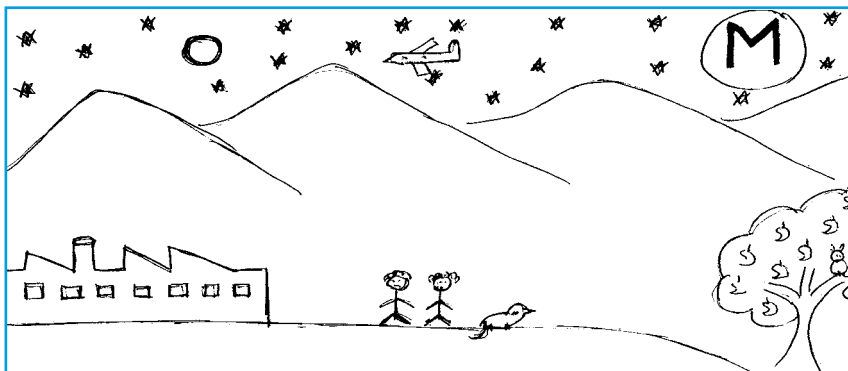
A Sample Card: The card shows pictures of objects beginning with 'M'

Moon	mill	mangoes	mouse
Mountain	men	monkey	mig

Note : (i) Place as many objects as possible with the given letter to make the game more interesting and complex. (ii) The cards should have enough clarity so that the players can see it clearly.

(Note : The time limit to answer is 15 seconds or as per the class level.)

(v) If he fails to answer correctly, he goes 6 steps backward.

(vi) If he lands on the black square, he gets a punishment. From the 'chit box' the scorer picks out a chit and reads the word. The player has to spell the word within 15 seconds correctly and only then gets a chance to play again. If the word is spelt incorrectly, he misses his turn and the chance passes to the next player.

(vii) The game goes on till the players reach the finishing point. Whoever finishes first is the winner followed by second, third and fourth.

Note : Proverbs/Sayings must be taken up in the class before playing. The players need to be well acquainted with it.

The clue pictures might stand for the following Proverbs/Sayings.

You can't tell a book by its cover.

Boys will be boys.

You cannot have your cake and eat it.

When the cat's away, the mice will play.

Charity begins at home.

A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.
Birds of a feather flock together.

A golden key can open any door.

A golden cage won't feed the bird.

The grass is greener on the other side of the fence.

An apple of one's eye. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

Money is the root of all trouble.

Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.

Born with a silver spoon.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

There is no royal road to learning.
All roads lead to Rome.

The pen is mightier than the sword.

Fire is a good servant but a bad master.
There is no smoke without fire.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

Every dog has his day.

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

Fine feathers make fine birds.
Birds of a feather flock together.

What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over.

East or West, home is the best.

An early bird catches the worm.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

All that glitters is not gold.

Have something at your fingertips.

Spare the rod and spoil the child.

Make hay while the sun shines.

Blood is thicker than water.

It's no use crying over spilt milk.
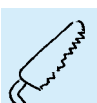
A bad workman quarrels with his tools.

3. CREATIVE ALPHABETS

Level-Primary

Grammar–Vocabulary

Time–10 Min.

Objective–Help increase vocabulary in the most creative way.

Material–1 card each of 10"X 10"for each group with a grid of 5 columns and 5 rows of 2X2".
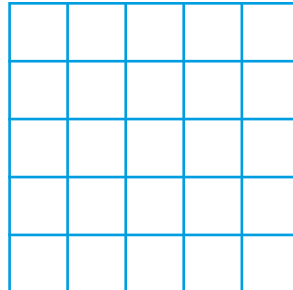
Class

(i) Divide the class into groups of threes or fours.

(ii) Give each group a grid card with 5 alphabets written in each block on the extreme left hand column.

A				
V				
B				
J				
X				

Instructions

(i) In front of each alphabet there are four blank squares.

(ii) Use each alphabet to create pictures in the four blocks provided against it and name them .

(iii) Time limit to complete a card is 10 minutes.

(iv) A demo is given on the black board. You have to create pictures accordingly.

Black Board Demo

O	alphabet
	ball
	sun
	earth
	telephone

NOTE : See, the alphabet 'O' is present in all the creations.

Whoever makes the maximum pictures correctly and names them within the stipulated time is the winner.

Cards can be exchanged for the others to see and learn.

4. SEQUENCING

Level-Middle Section (V-VIII)

Grammar– Verb forms–Present, Past & Past Participles

Time – 10 Min.

Material – Blackboard, Chalks-white and coloured

A	F	J	Q	E
M	B	G	K	W
N	S	C	H	R
U	O	T	D	L
Z	V	P	X	I

Class

(i) Divide the class into two groups.

(ii) Draw the grid given above on the board.

(iii) The alphabets can be arranged in any order . Only letter 'Y' is

not to be added Thus having a total number of 25 alphabets . Alphabets should not be repeated.

(iv) Each team gets a sign, e.g. 'A'___ and 'B' ___ or any suitable one

Instructions

(i) Toss head or tail with a 1 Re coin .

(ii) The winner team gets the first chance .

(iii) The students have to make a consecutive sequence of four- sideways, upwards, downwards or diagonally. Any incorrect answer will break the sequence and the next team gets a chance.

(iv) The teams should work hard to make their sequence and at the same time not let the other team complete it , hence break the sequence. Eg:- If team 'A' chooses the alphabet 'F' then they can make a sequence like this :-

A	F	J	Q	E
M	B	G	K	W
N	S	C	H	R
U	O	T	D	L
Z	V	P	X	I

Across – FJQE or Diagonally – FGHL or Downwards – FBSO

(v) If team 'A' says Fly – Flew – Flown   the scorer puts the sign of team 'A'   __ in the box where 'F' is written and the team moves to the next box – across, downwards or diagonally. If team 'A' is able to answer all the four letters it completes one sequence and the other team gets a chance

Time limit to complete a sequence is 1/2 minute.

If team 'A' fails to answer correctly within the stipulated time, the sequence is broken and team 'B' gets a chance.

Note : Team 'B' should make sure that they break the sequence of the first team 'A' so that it is unable to complete its sequence in its next chance.

(vi) Whichever team succeeds in completing the maximum sequences is the winner.

Note:- The game can be played using Proper Nouns, Common Nouns ,words, etc. instead of verb forms.

A bigger grid can be made by repeating the alphabets so as to increase the complexity of the game and can be used for a higher level.

5. BE QUICK

Level: Class IV and above
Grammar: Naming words
Time : No limit
Material: None

This game can be played anywhere in pairs. The partners should sit /stand facing each other.

Instructions:

The wordings and the actions are given below.The bold underlined words can be filled by PLACES, PERSONS, THINGS, BIRDS, HISTORICAL PLACES, CITIES, COUNTRIES, SEAS, RIVERS etc. instead of only ANIMALS.

As it is played by two only, the winner of the toss begins the game. He/she is the starter and has to give a brief introduction before the partner joins in answering. The claps and the pauses are essential to maintain rhythm.

It goes like this:
Starter
Hey   Hey   Hey
Clap   Clap   Clap
On the
way   way   way
Shirks hand sideways four times
Mr.   Ease
Pause with count 1 2-
Clap   Clap
Clap with your partner
Will   You   Please

Pause- same as above
 Clap   Clap
Name   Some
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Animals
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Such   As
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Dog
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Be   Quick
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Partner   Ox
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Partner   Be   Quick
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Starter   Cat
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Starter   Be   Quick
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Partner   Monkey
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap
Partner   Be   Quick
Pause- same as above
Clap   Clap

And the game goes on till any one fails to deliver the answer or repeats the answer. Whoever fails is the loser and the winner starts the game again, maybe taking a different category- eg. capitals or cities.

Objective:- Players learn a lot of names related to a particular category.

With the names of rivers, mountains, capitals, cities, countries etc. they learn a bit of geography as well.

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# Indian Literature:
An Introduction

Divya Bajpai Jha

The Department of English, Delhi University has recently revised its BA Programme course. In the new restructured programme, a new foundation course entitled '**Language, Literature and Culture**' has been introduced. The book reviewed here comprises the Literature portion of this course. The purpose of this book, as stated in the preface itself, is "to make the students aware of the wide range of Indian literature in its broadest outlines and of the main phases of its development across time and space, and to do this through an engagement with specific texts rather than through a 'survey' or 'history' of Indian literature." As the students have an option of choosing either English or Hindi as the medium of instruction and examination for this course, the book is bi-lingual, having both the English as well as Hindi version of the text chosen.

The book has twenty-six chapters comprising excerpts, poems, short stories and plays. These chapters cover a breathtaking range, right from Valmiki's *The Ramayana* to Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. The book is a fair representation of many important periods, movements and languages. The Classical period is represented by Valmiki, Veda Vyasa, Shudraka and Ilanko Adikal, the Bhakti and Sufi movements find representation in Namdev, Kabir, Meera and Khusro. On the language front,

Sanskrit, Hindi and its dialects, Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese and English get representation. The languages of the southern part of the country are given due recognition with selections from Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. Selections from Dalit Literature, Feminist Writings and Folk Literature give a further dimension to the already rich collection.

There is a fourteen-page introduction to the text (twelve pages in the Hindi Translation), which very succinctly traces the entire trajectory of Indian Literature across time, space and languages. It is divided into sub-sections, right from 'Ancient Indian Literature: 2000B.C. to 1000 A.D.', to 'Medieval Indian Literature: 1000A.D. to 1800 A.D.' to ' Indian Literature under Colonial Rule: 1800 to 1947' to 'Contemporary Indian Literature: 1947 onwards'. In spite of its clarity and precision, the introduction is emblematic of the problems and shortcomings of the book itself. Bowing to the requirements of brevity, certain terms like *buranjis* and *virasaiva* movements etc. perhaps not familiar to the average B.A. programme student find a mere mention with no explanation whatsoever. It teeters under the dual pressure of the requirements to covey a mammoth body of knowledge in as brief a survey as possible on the one hand and the desire to cover, or at least mention
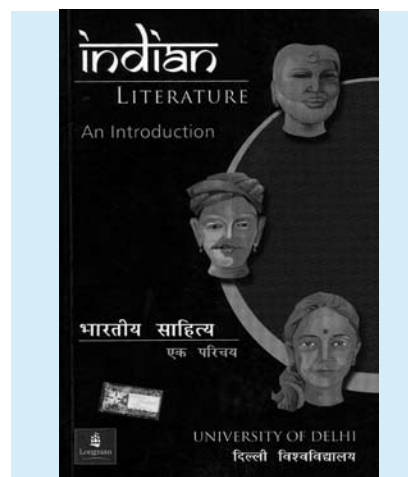
those areas too, like the writings of Lal Dyad and Habba Khatoon in Kashmir, which otherwise do not find a representation in the text.

In its endeavor to be as representative as possible, the book somewhere loses sight of the fact that it is meant as a text book, that too as one of the three components of a Foundation Course for a B.A. Programme. If it had at least been written in a text book format with a review and practice exercise at the end of each chapter, that would have gone a long way in helping not only the students but also the teachers faced with the daunting task of covering such a vast area in the prescribed and all too brief a lecture format. The introduction to each unit, though useful in itself, requires and generates a lot of explanation and discussion in the classroom scenario, further contributing to the slow progress.

Languages like Marathi, Gujarati, North-Indian Languages like Dogri, Kashmiri etc. and the

entire Northeast, with the exception of a lone representation from Assam are conspicuous by their absence in the book. Considering the fact that these regions have traditionally felt neglected by the Indian Heartland, this omission in a textbook aiming to provide a panoramic view to the

Indian Literature is, perhaps, very unfortunate. The book, therefore, could perhaps be more useful as a 'Foundation' book, if it had either been the lone component of this course, thereby giving the lecturer an opportunity to do justice to its range and content, or at least

if it had been less ambitious in the choice and selection of the components.

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The Story of English in India
by N. Krishnaswamy & Lalitha Krishanswamy

Anju S. Gupta

With English being established as an International language, there is a resurgence of interest in this area. We have another book on this topic 'The Story of English in India' by N. Krishnaswamy and Lalith Krishnaswamy (Foundation Books). But the question that comes to our mind is how different is this story from other stories of a similar kind? What are the new insights that one would gain after going through this book?

The book is organized into five sections. The first section gives a socio-historical profile of India, from practically pre-historic times, supposedly to suggest why the Indian soil was so fertile for the advent and establishment of the English language.While the style is indeed racy and very readable, one wonders whether we needed to go as far back as the Aryans entry into India to make this point.

The latter part of the first section and the whole of the second section describe in great detail the grand design of the British for the introduction of English language. Evidently, it began with a desire to

'civilize the natives' but economics soon went hand in hand with and in fact overtook this motive. As Lord Macaulay said in the House of Commons, to trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages. Educating the natives was only a strategy and the ulterior aim was to create a feeling of awe and respect for the Europeans among Indians, as this was essential both to the commercial interests of the British Empire in India and England, and to the spread of Christianity in India and the world.

This was of course aided and abetted by Indians such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy who apparently misunderstood the British motives and demanded the spread of western education and the English language. What is "new" in this section are the quotations from the primary sources that would be extremely useful for a researcher.

A similar detail of the dissemination of English is given in the 3rd section. In fact what is striking is the similarity to the present situation in India.
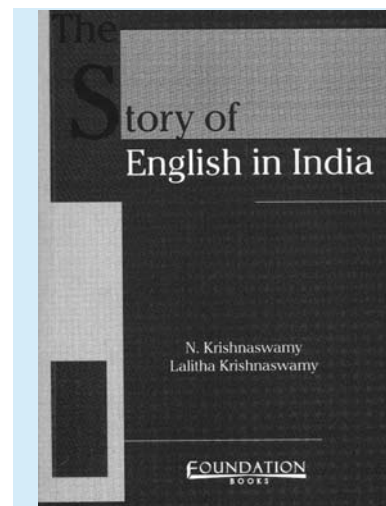
Published by FOUNDATION
New Delhi.
[Pages 150, Price – Rs.226]

Vernacular education is introduced but fails under the tide of English particularly in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. While there were occasional attacks on Western education, they were not sustained and no effort was made to halt the dissemination of English in India. Hand –in-hand was the fear amongst the British that the Western education might itself prove to be their undoing. These fears proved to be true; not only did the western values of liberty, fraternity and equality gain root, but the English language also became a lingua franca and united a widely scattered English educated class

This section of the book brings out the complexity of the situation—on the one hand, English and English education became a unifying factor; on the other hand, they had a destructive

effect on the traditional Indian values and occupation. Yet again, the authors quote from the primary sources, even quoting from a letter to the editor in The Statesman. This section is indeed well researched— and while it may not offer any new insight, yet it does make clear the paradoxes and dilemmas faced by both the Indians and the British.

The next section discusses the role of English in India after the departure of the white rulers. The authors bring out the complexity in which the whole language issue got embroiled after Independence. In the early days, for many Indians the hatred for the British got mixed up with their dislike for the English language—which symbolized for them slavery and degradation. On the other hand, the Indian bureaucracy were unwilling to give up the power and status given to them by their use of the English language. Moreover the forces that had united at the time of the freedom struggle started struggling to establish their own linguistic identities. In fact, while the authors nicely detail out the salient points of the large number of committees and commissions the picture that emerges is rather chaotic.

A few English-educated Indians had vested interests in continuing the existing superficial system though it was (and is) totally irrelevant to our socio-cultural and economic needs and contexts; they use education in power games and as a tool to retain their hegemony and perpetuate the power structures.

The authors' views become a bit bizarre when they lament the emergence of a code-mixed variety of a mother tongue and English.

In addition, such users have made the code-mixed variety a fashionable register, mixing an Indian language with English. In a way, the 'imitative use' and 'code-mixing' are producing a language-less generation that shows a desire to be successful in life. This mimic generation, one can say, is neither here nor there; they do not have any Indian language as a mother tongue, and they claim that English is their mother tongue.

The final section 'The Globalization phase suggests that after a stormy relationship with English, India is at last at peace with English and there is harmony between English and the Indian languages.

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Annotated Bibliography

We are beginning this column to give an account of books that can be useful aids in the classroom. We have selected **Five-minute Activities** for this purpose for this issue.

Five-minute Activities contains a wealth of ideas for about 130 language activities which a classroom teacher may use in various ways in the classroom – to begin a lesson, to supplement a teaching exercise, to revise or reinforce an item already practiced, and so on. Some of the ideas are innovative; some may have been tried earlier. However, coming in one collection they provide the classroom teacher with a ready toolkit, also inspiring them to come up with fresh ideas for new activities on their own.

Most of the activities suggested are practical in nature, not dependent on extraneous equipment. The only materials used are blackboard, chalk, pencils and notebooks or sheets of paper. The activities cover a range of language items, mostly focusing on vocabulary, which is natural since vocabulary is central to all language skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking. The aim in all the cases is to engage the learners in a meaningful language task- in other words, to help them use the language for a real need and discover how they can play around with language.

The activities are all meant to make the classroom a place where learning English becomes a relaxed space for learner involvement

CAMBRIDGE LOW PRICE EDITIONS

Five-minute activities

A resource book for language teachers

Penny Ur
Andrew Wright

Cambridge handbooks for language teachers
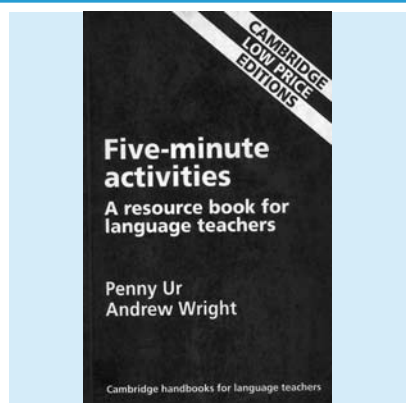
and enjoyment. Meant for classes spanning a range of abilities and levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary) these activities can be modified or adapted to suit different situations. As these do not require much preparation, they can be a valuable resource for the classroom teacher who is always looking for new ways of enriching the learning experience of her students.

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