

What Ails Evaluation of Students' Skills in English?

One of the major problems that educators, parents, and administrators face today is the abysmal disparity between what students score in their formal exams and the language skills they demonstrate in using English as a second, third or fourth language. This has led many of them to question the existing system of evaluation and they have expressed a strong desire to look for a set of alternative tools that would attempt to reveal/record students' progress/proficiency in the second language being learnt. This concern is reflected in the changes being suggested in the forms of assessment at the school, college and university level. A few years back one of the premier universities of India introduced internal evaluation as an additional measure to have a more realistic accounting of students' actual competence. However, we have not kept track of the rate of success that university has achieved to make the system bridge the gap and provide a more realistic profile of students' ability to use the language for communicative, academic and creative use.

A similar concern has been expressed by the NCERT in its document NCF 2005. It has suggested that at the elementary level assessment of students should be more informal and round the year and it should record their proficiency levels. As the students progress to higher classes the informal content can be gradually reduced. The issue that confronts everyone engaged in the teaching and evaluating students is how accurately one records the progress students make. Even after a series of debates and discussions, the results though rechristened are not significantly different from their predecessors. The solutions suggested to

What we need to do is to reconceptualize language itself. We need to view it holistically in a non-linear way rather than in terms of discrete skills that are developmentally organized in a linear way.

capture the proficiency levels of students vary from using simple tests and scales to profile sheets and maintaining students' portfolio. What one needs to examine is whether the alternatives suggested are feasible and cost effective and whether they are sensitive to the teachers' preparedness and the time they have at their disposal and also whether they would help to reflect nearly the true levels of students' proficiency in English.

All of us know that even the best of models offered in educational reform fail because the conditions necessary for their success are either ignored or devalued. We as a body of teachers across the board need to give a serious thought to this lacunae in our evaluation system to save our students, parents and administrators from unnecessary embarrassments from the public at large and prospective employers in particular. What we need to do is to reconceptualize language itself. We need to view it holistically in a non-linear way rather than in terms of discrete skills that are developmentally organized in a linear way. We need to focus on whether children have succeeded in developing language to think. We also need to underline the fact that facets of multilingual proficiency will inevitably be different from those of monolingual situations.

Editorial Committee

A. L. Khanna
Madhu Gurtu

a_l_khanna@yahoo.co.in
madhu_gurtu@hotmail.com

Barun Misra, Himadri Roy, J K Gangal, Jaya Arora,
Kamal Bhasin, N K Jain, Soma Bhattacharjya,
S K Arora, S S Sharma, Vijay Sharma

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Notes for Contributors

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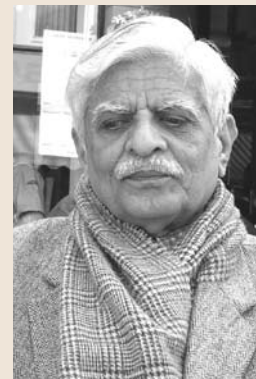
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The deadline for May 2007 issue is April 1, 2007.

IN MEMORY OF PROF. VINOD SENA

Prof. Vinod Sena did his B.A. (English Honours) and M.A. at St. Stephens (1952-57). He married Indu Manchanda in January, 1965. Prof. Sena obtained his first Ph.D. in 1967 from Delhi University on "The Poet as Playwright: T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Career" and subsequently got a second doctorate from Cambridge University on "The Poet as Critic: W.B. Yeats on Poetry, Drama and Tradition" (1970), which was published as a book (Delhi and London, Macmillan, 1980/1981, pp 236). He taught at St. Stephens College



(Aug.10, 1935-Dec. 10, 2006)

(1961-69); was Reader at DU from July 1970, and Professor of English from January 1983 to August 2000. He also edited several books, among them, **The Fire & the Rose: New Essays on T.S.Eliot** (with Rajiva Verma) and Shri Purohit Swami's **The Autobiography of an Indian Monk** (with Introduction by W.B.Yeats). In 1995, along with Indu Sena, Prof. Sena founded the Yashoda Charitable Trust which focused on promoting adoption of homeless children in India and on services for differently-abled students. Prof. Sena set up *Shruti Information Centre* in 1999 to serve the information and reading needs of blind professionals and students in higher education. The Centre's website (www.shruti.org.in) went on-line in 2003 with extensive information on reading materials for the print-handicapped and a wide range of subjects relevant to the vision-impaired. Prof. Sena persuaded the Rotary to help start the *Audio Book Resource Centre* (ABRC) at the University of Delhi, proposed to the President of India the setting up of a Multimedia National Library Service for the print-handicapped (1997), persuaded the DU Vice Chancellor to set up a *Committee for Persons with Special Needs*, and functioned as its Chairperson until April 2006. In 2003, he testified in favour of the exemption of reading materials for the blind from the requirement of prior copyright permission under the Copyright Act. In 2006, as *Member of the Working Group on Empowering the Disabled*, Prof. Sena's proposal for setting up an *Indian National Library Service for the Print-Handicapped* (INLSP) was accepted for inclusion in the recommendations to the Planning Commission for the Eleventh Five Year Plan. His awards include the NCPEDP- Shell Hellen Keller Award (December 2006) in recognition of his work towards creating equal opportunities for the disabled in India, the UGC National Fellowship, Senior Fullbright Hayes Fellowship, Andrew Mellon Post Doctoral Fellowship and the Commonwealth Fellowship.

May the light of hope Prof. Sena kindled for the aspirants for knowledge be never extinguished.

Teaching Short Story

S. C. Sood

Introduction

My aim in this short article is to suggest a plan for teaching short story with particular reference to *The Luncheon* by Somerset Maugham. I have chosen this short story for two reasons: one, it is included in the new textbook brought out by NCERT in 2006 for class XI and two, the textbook does not seem to give any suggestions to teachers or students on how to read this and other short stories. The matter printed before and after the text of the prescribed stories in this collection is of a rather traditional type and can be of little help in achieving the stated aims of the textbook. This article is therefore aimed at teachers, particularly those with little specialized training in teaching English language and literature, struggling to use short narratives or short stories at Senior Secondary/undergraduate level with the dual purpose of giving English language proficiency and helping students to read and appreciate short narratives on their own. It can equally be useful for students as a self-access resource for this given purpose.

This brief article on teaching narrative is based on experience of practical problems of using short narrative in the classroom. Students, especially those studying in vernacular medium, have not acquired reading skills required to comprehend English texts particularly those written by native writers requiring specific linguistic and cultural knowledge and hence they do not even attempt to read the original text of the story. These and even English medium students therefore heavily depend on the summary of the text (sometime in the vernacular) given in bazaar notes along with answers to questions contained in the textbook and also to other possible questions based on model question papers, circulated by the examining body. Teachers, too, in the absence of any specialized training or teacher's handbook, tend to adopt one of the traditional modes of teaching - such as 'read and paraphrase the text' - in their attempt to help students understand the content of the story followed by asking students to answer the questions given at the end of the text of the story which, by and large, are of testing type and not teaching type questions and answers to which are already available in bazaar notes.

An Approach to Narrative

In such a scenario, this article aims to suggest an approach to teaching short narratives and it is based on certain assumptions. These assumptions are: (1) There is no just one ready-made method of teaching short narratives and what matters is the resourcefulness of the teacher though we can certainly devise an approach to such texts. (2) A short story does not have meaning but has potential for meaning. (3) The purpose of reading a text is to 'make' sense of what one reads and not to 'get' the meaning as there is no such thing as 'the meaning' of creative work. In any case we can question: which meaning? What the author thinks he wants to say? What the language or medium conveys? What the reader makes of it? Our assumption is that it is the reader who gives meaning to the printed linguistic symbols. (4) Making sense of a printed text depends upon the background knowledge of the reader - which can include inter alia knowledge of the medium in which it is expressed, knowledge of the context in which it is placed, author's life, views, ideology and so on. (5) Making sense is then a process and the reader is an active participant in this process of making meaning and not a passive receptacle to be filled with meanings or interpretations made by others.

Once we accept these assumptions then the job of the teacher becomes apparent to us. The task is to equip the reader with this 'process' of making meaning and not to give any 'product' or interpretation(s) given by others. In a second/foreign language-learning situation, giving language proficiency would also be an important aim of teaching short narratives. The teacher ought to achieve this task not by 'telling' but by creating an environment conducive to learning of this process and achieving language proficiency. This envisages a complex role for the teacher as manager, guide, and participant in this process of learning. To achieve this dual purpose the teacher must take students through the process of making meaning; s/he must not resort to 'telling' or lecturing but to engage and guide students in group-interaction through carefully devised tasks and activities, such as engaging in group discussion, debates, reading and writing reports, comments, short articles, reviews, taking and making notes, summarizing, writing assignments, and making class presentations to explore the given text for meaning.

Given below is a plan for taking students through the process of making sense of *The Luncheon*. As

practicing teachers know there cannot be just one plan for all. A plan for taking students through the process of learning has to keep a number of things in mind such as the nature of students, their proficiency level in language, medium of instruction, urban/rural background, and so on. The lesson plan given below is for vernacular medium secondary/sophomore level students. The exercises are only suggestive and not exhaustive and the teachers can work out their own teaching plans keeping their learners in mind.

For Vernacular medium Secondary

N.B.: First work alone and then work in your group to answer the following:-

I. Brain Storming/Pre-reading tasks

1. A typical western meal has a structure and sequence. Given below is a menu of a western meal in a jumbled form. Arrange the courses in their proper order as one expects in a typical western meal.
- Soup, salad, fish, fruit, ice cream, tea, coffee, wine, beer, chicken, mutton, water, pudding, bread, rice
Is there any such structure and sequence in a typical meal in your community/society/country? Describe the different courses and the sequence in which these are taken/served.
2. Do different items in a particular course cost the same? For example, if there are different types of non-vegetarian dishes in a course, will all these be priced the same? If not, why not? Give reasons for your answer.
(You may catch hold of a menu of a typical hotel/restaurant and go through it to answer questions 1 & 2).
3. Courses can be omitted for reasons of appetite or economy. If you were dining out, which of the courses given under question 1 above could you omit without appearing to be odd or rude?
4. Do people in your community invite others to lunch or dinner in a restaurant? Who do they invite, when, why? What things do they keep in mind while deciding where to dine or lunch?
5. When eating out in a restaurant, there are conventions about ordering and paying for the meal. Customs differ from country to country and community to community. What are the conventions in your community/country?

6. Is it common in your country/community for a woman to entertain a guest (either man or woman) to a meal in a restaurant? Do the customs differ in such cases?
7. Have you ever been embarrassed when dining out with someone in a restaurant? Describe what happened and what you did to get out of the situation.

II. Reading – Surveying to Predict

1. You are going to read a short story. It is entitled *The Luncheon* written by Somerset Maugham. Can you predict what the writer will tell in this story?
2. Now read the opening paragraph of the story. (Read silently. Do not stop reading even if you come across a difficult word or expression. Keep reading, guessing the meaning of these words/expressions from the context).

I caught sight of her at the play and in answer to her beckoning I went over during the interval and sat down beside her. It was long since I had last seen her and if someone had not mentioned her name I hardly think I would have recognized her. She addressed me brightly.

"Well, it's many years since we first met. How time does fly! We're none of us getting any younger. Do you remember the first time I saw you? You asked me to luncheon."

Did I remember?

- a. What questions do arise in your mind when you read this opening paragraph? For example, one of the questions can be: Who is 'I'? Now write down as many questions as you can think of. Discuss your questions with others and see if you can add any more questions to your list.

III. Guided Reading for Details

1. Read the opening paragraph once again and answer the following questions. (Read in the same manner as suggested above).
 - a. What is the physical setting? A house? A restaurant? A theatre? A shopping centre? How do you know? Pick out words and phrases that help you decide the physical setting.
 - b. "Did I remember?"

Do these words give you any clue how the story will proceed? Discuss with others before reading further.

2. Start reading the next paragraph. Do you get answer to the question posed, "Did I remember?" What is the answer? Where does this answer begin and where does it end in the text?

Now answer the following questions:

- a. What is the physical setting of the incident narrated? (Where does the action take place?)
 - b. Who are the characters involved?
 - c. What is the relationship between the characters? (How are they related to each other?)
 - d. What brings the characters together?
3. Read the first paragraph of the incident narrated to answer the following :-
 - a. Which character are we told about in this paragraph? Do we know his/her name?
 - b. Which particular aspect of this character is focused upon? Underline words/phrases used in the text.
 - c. What is the problem he is confronted with? How does he intend to solve this problem?
 4. Read the next paragraph and answer the following:-
 - a. Who is the character described here? How is s/he referred to?
 - b. Which characteristics of this character are focused upon in this paragraph? (Pick out words and phrases that describe this character).
 - c. What impressions do these words/phrases convey about this character?
 5. Read the next paragraph.
 - a. What were the narrator's expectations about the restaurant and also about the guest? Was he disappointed in both? Underline words and phrases from the text to justify your answer.
 - b. Read the rest of the incident and complete the following:-

What the guest says

What the guest orders/asks for

How the host reacts

Reasons for the reaction

6. Read the ending of the story:

But I have had my revenge at last. I do not believe that I am a vindictive man, but when the immortal gods take a hand in the matter it is pardonable to observe the result with complacency. To-day she weighs twenty-one stone.

What had the guest done to deserve this reaction from the host? Do you agree with him? Give reasons for your answer.

IV.

1. By now have you got answers to all the questions you took down under point II.2a given above? What are these answers? Discuss your answers with others in your group.
2. Which of the following statements do you think sums up the main aim of the writer:- The main aim of the narrator in this story is to (tick the answer)
 - a. tell us about his love for the theatre
 - b. describe how hospitable he was although he was not so well off
 - c. narrate how he was embarrassed once in a restaurant
 - d. advise the reader not to seek revenge but leave things to God.
- V. If you were in the situation of this narrator, how would you have responded to the letter from the woman to give her lunch in this expensive restaurant? Discuss with others and draft a reply. In your reply -
 - a. thank the woman for her letter
 - b. express your inability to meet and entertain her
 - c. give reason for your inability.
- VI. The teacher may want to arrange a role-play of the incident that occurred 20 years ago.



S.C. Sood, M.A. (Delhi & London), P.G.D.T.E. (CIEFL), Ph.D. (JNU) retired as Reader in English from Dyal Singh College (Evening), University of Delhi. He has interest in and published widely in all aspects of English language and literature.

CORRIGENDUM

The editors regret the errors in the following contributions that appeared in FORTELL Newsletter, Issue No. 9, August 2006:

1. The article, **Achievement Testing to Proficiency Testing: Myth or Reality** should be read as co-authored by Rama Mathew (Delhi University) and Antony John Kunnan (State University, Los Angeles, C.A.)
2. The title of the report by Dr. Shampa Chatterjee should be read as **A Seminar on Teaching English to Socially Disadvantaged Learners**.

English Teachers' Proficiency in English

Anju Sahgal Gupta

Introduction

Learning and teaching how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning. In fact, even for those who speak English as a first language, the ability to write effectively requires extensive and specialized instruction. Also, within the field of second and foreign language teaching, the teaching of writing has come to assume a much more central position than it occupied twenty or thirty years ago. One of the main reasons is that command of good writing skills is increasingly seen as vital to equip learners for success in the 21st century. The ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital network is crucially dependent on good writing skills. Writing has been identified as one of the essential process skills in a world that is more than ever driven by text and numerical data. (Hyland K. 2003)

Teachers need to investigate their students' writing problems and explore their own practices in the teaching of writing. But before they do so, they need to be confident of their own writing ability.

There is a general feeling amongst the educationists and the public at large that standards in English

are falling and falling drastically. Teacher trainers who conduct teacher training programmes for English Teachers are often appalled at the general proficiency levels of English teachers.

Teacher training programmes run by CIEFL and IGNOU through the distance mode have addressed this issue by adding some components of phonology and phonetics and grammar and usage in their training packages. IGNOU also has a component of morphology. But these are broad based courses aimed generally at all teachers, treading carefully to keep the interest alive of the proficient teacher, while trying to raise proficiency levels of less proficient teachers. But the number of teachers trained through these courses is not large enough and moreover the courses are not adequately focused for the specific needs of less proficient teachers of English.

There have been very few studies that have researched teachers' proficiency in English in the Indian context. To conduct such a study one would need an enormous amount of data, both spoken and written, from a cross section of teachers in both govt. and private schools. I decided to undertake such a task as a pilot by looking at the written scripts of English teachers.

Method

Sample

Our sample comprised 20 post-graduate teachers of the best government schools who were part of a training programme. They were from various parts of the country. However, a much larger study is required to investigate the proficiency of the teachers in any meaningful way. This study is merely indicative of certain trends.

Tools and Procedure

The data was elicited by giving the teachers a writing task which consisted of a critique of the training programme they had participated in. The teachers were asked to write an essay of about 150 words responding to the following questions:

- What did you like about the programme?
- What did you not like?
- Can you give some suggestions for its improvement?

Evaluation Criterion

An 8-band scale was used to evaluate the scripts of the teachers. A trained teacher who had training and expertise in the area evaluated the scripts. The parameters on which the participants were evaluated were:

- Content completion
- Managing Discourse
- Vocabulary
- Grammar

A detailed description of three bands of the scale is as below:

Band	Content Completion	Managing Discourse	Vocabulary	Grammar
8	Excellence clearly in evidence through completion of task. All points of task are covered and extended adequately. Satisfactory introduction and conclusion	Sequences ideas clearly and logically. Manages cohesion in an unobtrusive manner. Skillfully manages paragraphing.	Uses a wide range of vocabulary effortlessly to convey the required meaning. Uncommon lexical items used which show awareness of style. A few rare non-systematic errors may occur.	Uses a wide range of structures accurately.

Band	Content Completion	Managing Discourse	Vocabulary	Grammar
5	Addresses the requirements of the task, although an adequate introduction not given. Some points need to be extended. Irrelevant details mentioned.	Lack of overall progression in task--although ideas presented with some sort of organization. Cohesive devices may be inaccurate. Paragraph inadequate or missing.	Vocabulary limited---but adequate for the task. Makes errors in word choice and spelling which may cause difficulty for the reader	Range of structures is limited---attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences. Punctuation mistakes attract attention.
2	Limited ideas presented--ideas repetitive & irrelevant.	Has very little control of organizational features.	Essentially no control of words or spellings.	Shows no control of sentence forms.

Analysis

The highest score possible was 32. The mean score of the teachers was 22. While this appears a fairly depressing score, a closer analysis reveals that the situation is not irredeemable. However, it needs to be addressed in a determined and meaningful fashion.

Content Completion

The lowest scores were for content completion: 5.2. The participant teachers were asked to write about

- the positive points of the workshop
- the negative points of the workshop and
- give suggestions its improvement.

Most of participants merely concentrated on the positive points and completely ignored the other two parts of their task i.e. negative points and suggestions. In the Indian situation, this should have been expected, as it is bad manners to talk negatively about their "teachers". Cultural norms play an important role in learner behaviour in classroom interaction (Tsui, 1995) and the same is true for teachers when they take on the role of "learners." This can be demonstrated by the manner in which they wrote about the resource persons.

- The learned resource person--.*

- with the fragrance of their experience-----*

- The valuable words of advise gilded with his own experience---*

Managing Discourse

The mean score for discourse management which involved both cohesion and coherence was 5.5. Most of the participants began with some kind of overview or introduction of the task on hand, albeit very briefly.

According to me the PCP programme for 27th and 28th was really fruitful, meaningful and thought provoking.

*Last two days of PCP were taken by learned resource persons -----
-----They delivered lectures on several aspects of language teaching.*

While there was an overall progression in the write up, but ideas often did not flow coherently. The example given below is quite a typical case:

Two day's programme included almost all the areas in teaching of English. Each and every participant took part in discussion so there was active participation. Every participant was given an opportunity to express. Hand outs were given. They are very useful. It refreshed ie. sharpened the blunt saw. Latest concepts like learning oriented and ICT teaching of English became

clear.

Another significant feature was the lack of linkers in most of the scripts. Therefore, cohesion within and between sentences was mechanical.

It was an enriching and lively experience. I personally felt that I need a change in myself. It was mainly a personality development. The understanding of "Ego states" helped me to understand self ego and the ego of students. That would surely lead me to interact better with my students, colligues and superiors. A teacher should be an inspiring one. The method that was used had different varieties, such as pair work, group work, question answer, suggestions. The pair work and group work was very lively. All the participants were involved. We were enlightened by the different methods of teaching. The use of multi-media was good. The topic on learner-centred was good. All the students must be involved and they should be able to find out for themselves. It also helped me to learn transactional approach to teaching. Adequate handouts were given.

As can also be seen from the example given above, the paragraphing is inadequate with several ideas being touched upon in one paragraph. There is no evidence of a single idea and its development. And this was one of the better scripts. Evidently

the teachers themselves need to be aware of managing paragraphs appropriately before they can teach them to their students.

However, many of the participants felt the necessity to conclude their work appropriately with the following expressions:

To conclude----

To sum up---

Thus the last two days---

Finally, I'm really thankful---

Grammar

The mean score for grammar was 5.5. As can be seen from the examples cited, the range of structures was limited. While there was an attempt to write complex sentences, these tended to be less accurate than the simple sentences. There were frequent grammatical errors which often distorted the meaning intended. I have merely given a sample of a few teachers' writing.

Complex Sentences

A striking feature of the scripts was that while most simple sentences were correctly used, the teachers found it difficult to process complex structures. As the examples below show, the errors generally consisted of leaving out some parts of the sentence. It appears that while writing long complex sentences, the teachers concentrated on the content words and left out some of the accompanying function words.

1. *Methods, they used, really inspiring-----* (both relative pronoun and auxiliary verb missing).
2. *It provided us the basic objectives behind the workshop as well as the subject teaching i.e. English language* (instead of as well as the subject to be taught)
3. *The workshop conducted to develop the language skills were of course very fruitful to the trainees as teacher.* ('as teacher' is a dangler and a

relative clause is missing 'who are classroom teachers')

4. *Had it been provided more time and more technology would have been used to show us the real class room situation.* (lack of control of the conditional among other errors)
5. *The five day programme would be more enriching with ensured time for a particular topic like in the last two days.* (again, the sentence would have improved if the 'if-conditional' had been used ---The five day programme would have been more enriching if adequate time had been given to each topic)

Prepositions

The use of prepositions seems to be another crucial area to which attention needs to be paid. The writing scripts clearly showed that the form and functions of English prepositions were not clearly understood. Almost all the scripts had at least one error in the use of prepositions. The tendencies noticed were:

i. Omission of a preposition

1. *PCP for PGCPD started on 17.07.06 and continued up 21.7.06.*
2. *X-----also shared his vast experience time to time to boost the morale of the participants.*

ii. Wrong use of preposition

1. *I personally feel I need a change in myself.* (instead of I personally need to change myself)
2. *Is it possible to complete the given curriculum in time on the given ideal guidelines.*

(on time; according to the given guidelines)

3. *I am really thankful for my organization to have given me a change* (to my organization)

Articles

Almost all the teachers seemed to have problems with the use of articles. The most frequent patterns of errors were omission and addition of articles where not required, and wrong use of article (indefinite article used in place of definite and vice versa)

Agnihotri et al. (1984) have shown that there is a strong tendency to omit articles among Indian undergraduate students. This tendency is corroborated in Sahgal and Agnihotri (1986). The reason behind this can be seen in the teachers' own tendency.

Omission of articles

1. *Last two days of PCP were taken by learned resource persons----*
2. *Group presented their lesson plans.*
3. *Two day's programme included almost all the areas in teaching of English.*

Wrong use of article

-----it can be used a resource material for a language class (the language class is more appropriate in this context)

Addition of article

The all aspects would be covered in the given time frame ---- (the initial 'The' is superfluous)

Adding an unnecessary pronoun "one"

This error frequently occurs in the spoken English of many Indians

1. *The text material is good one*
2. *The teacher should be an inspiring one*
3. *All Resource Persons were very experienced and learned one*
4. *PCP was very interesting, inspiring and fruitful one.*

Omission of reflexive pronoun

Every participant was given an opportunity to express.

Wrong use of Possessive ('s)

1. *Dr. X laid emphasis upon learner's-----*

2. *Two day's programme included--*

Deviations relating to collocations

Collocations represent a major area of difficulty for non-native speakers of English. This is because collocation does not lend itself very readily to rule-making or generalization and has to be learned to a large extent on an item-by-item basis. There were some deviations in collocations:

1. *These sessions helped me to gain input into certain areas of psychology.*
2. *-----made the participants abreast with content in a lucid manner*
3. *Learned Resource person - -----threw her view on the communicative approach of teaching English.*
4. *In these two days a comprehensive discussion was made on content, methodology and pedagogical skills-----*

Vocabulary

This was an aspect that the participants performed the best with a mean score of 5.7. One of the interesting features was the abundant use of adjectives in a single sentence although some of them were incorrectly used:

1. *According to me the PCP programme -----was really fruitful, meaningful and thought provoking.*
2. *Really, it was useful, effective, fruitful, thought-provoking, enthusiastic and philosophical.*
3. *Workshop was Scholastic, informative, lively, interactive and productive.*

Some of the less proficient participants tended to over use the word 'good'.

1. *The use of mult-media was good*
2. *The topic on learner -centered was good*

Inadequate command of vocabulary also led to frequent errors.

Some of the errors are given below

1. *The session taken by X was quite brainstorming.*
2. *X handled the class is a very lively and humanistic approach.*
3. *Every participant was made to be exposed.*
4. *They cleared the doubts of all the participants in a very healthy and light atmosphere.*
5. *I would like to suggest that time of the PCP should be at least 10 days, if possible.*
6. *----- so that actual teaching-learning take place to produce colourful result.*
7. *It is a sharpening programme for me.*
8. *To conclude, the whole programme, in a nutshell was very purposeful, beneficial and encourageous to me-----*
9. *I have been enriched by the ways of teaching that they have conducted in the programme.*

Conclusion

These errors of postgraduate teachers teaching English in the higher classes suggest that the situation of English Teaching is very grave and massive efforts need to be made to raise their proficiency levels. One of the ways to address it is by using the distance mode.

References

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

Call for Papers

Call for PapersConsequent to holding a National Seminar on 16 December 2006 on "The Narrative: Strategies for Teaching and Evaluation", FORTELL (Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature) proposes to bring out a collection of papers on the subject. The volume will include papers on teaching of the prose narratives, such as the novel, short story, epic etc. and will focus on different aspects of narrative writings and suggest strategies for teaching and evaluating them, so that the teachers of undergraduate (both general and honours levels) and the postgraduate courses find them useful in the classroom. Please note that the emphasis of the paper(s) be on pedagogy rather than on theoretical formulations. Your paper(s) may discuss some innovative techniques, teaching methodologies used or suggested by you, or some interesting experiences etc. for a particular (kind of) text, which may also be applicable to some other similar text(s).

The papers may deal preferably with the prescribed (and not-so-easy) texts. Contributions should be brief (in about 1000-1500 words) and follow the MLA style sheet (VI edition). Each paper should also have its abstract (in no more than 80 words) on top. The deadline for submission has now been extended to 31st January 2007. Authors are requested to send a brief write up (approximately 50 words) about themselves.

One person may like to contribute more than one article, focussing on different aspect(s) of pedagogy.

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

Vijay K Sharma, 492 Mandakini Enclave, New Delhi-110019
98105 98658 (M); 011-2627 4656(R)
sharmavk3@yahoo.com

Teaching English

Sneh Lata Gupta

I have been a teacher of English for the last 15 years in a variety of govt. and public schools. I teach English (core) an NCERT/ CBSE course in English language and literature.

As I reflect on my experience as a teacher I find a vast difference in the way an average student from today's NCERT/CBSE system perceives the 'English period' in school and how we perceived our 'English period' in school.

My own schooling was in a Jesuit school in a steel town in Bihar under the ICSE system through the 70's. 'English periods' in school were looked forward to for the opportunity they provided for the imagination to run wild, for the freedom to express one's thoughts and opinions, for the creative engagement with language. We weren't as much taught as we read or rather devoured poetry, short stories, plays and novels - to be challenged, torn apart, absorbed, mulled over and finally recreated in a myriad forms.

'Language periods' were looked forward to for the opportunity they provided for writing long rambling essays on anything one felt like at the moment with no word limit hanging like a sword over one's head. Language was not a 'subject' to be studied and no literary work was considered to be "too difficult" or dense or culturally unsuitable to be read in class. So poems such as Keats Ode to a Nightingale, the complete unabridged Oliver Twist and the complete unabridged Julius Caesar were all taught as early as in Grade 8 to 12 and 13 year olds. The point is not that these authors or the classics are not taught today. The point is that literature is not taught and appreciated today in any meaningful or relevant context.

Today's student balks at the thought of writing a 200-word article at grade 12 level. Shakespeare is for the old fogeys and Dickens is considered too difficult in its original form and content. The meaning of literature is restricted to the teaching of a few randomly and whimsically chosen short texts such as dated essays from the 18th and 19th century, a few expository pieces and a few short stories and poems. How most of these pieces resonate with the lives, dreams and emotions of the students studying them is not a question that seems to be of any great concern to curriculum planners or textbook writers.

A recent look at an entire textual cycle in a classroom also revealed how the attempt is mainly to get students to be able to decode the text, 'understand' it or comprehend it to the extent that they can successfully answer the bite sized questions that are asked of them. An analysis of the exercises in the books also reveals

the focus of much of language teaching. They are designed to test mostly comprehension of the text. There may be a rare exercise which tries to get the student to question the text, sift fact from fiction or opinion, solve a problem, relate the text to everyday life in a meaningful way or just respond imaginatively and emotionally to the text.

Is it any wonder then that to most students studying English in schools today it has come to mean little more than speaking it with the 'right' accent, being fluent and confident enough in the language to participate in group discussions and face interviews in the job market? It is increasingly rare to find students who care to learn the language as a creative means of expression, as a means of understanding life in a meaningful way and who see the politics of how language may be used to manipulate and dominate.

Snehata Gupta is a teacher of English at Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Surajmal Vihar, a Government Senior Secondary school for the gifted in Delhi. She has been actively involved in teacher education and curriculum and materials development for the past decade.

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 April 2007. 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 February 28, 2007. 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

Teaching English Grammar to Primary and Upper Primary classes - An Approach for joyful learning

J. K.GANGAL

Grammar means the rules by which words are combined into meaningful sentences. In other words, grammar helps an individual to know how a language works. This knowledge will, however, prove to be meaningless if the learner knows only the rules of the language and not their application. Usage, therefore, acquires more significance than just a handful of grammatical rules in the teaching and learning of English Grammar. Of course, a sentence needs to be grammatically accurate and contextually appropriate for effective communication. Look at the following sentence, for example:

Last year he married his daughter.

The sentence, as you see, is grammatically correct, being based on SVO sentence pattern of English language, but if you re-examine this sentence closely you will discover how absurd this sentence is. It means that he married his own daughter, which never happens, and the writer never meant to say it. To convey the idea appropriately he should have said: He married his daughter off. This is just one example to say that the knowledge of grammatical rules does not always help to produce a sentence which is both grammatically accurate and appropriate in meaning simply by following the rules of grammar blindly. English language cannot be learnt by learning the rules of grammar, without due consideration for appropriacy of meaning. The

learner will never be able to have the right feel of English as a living language just with the help of age-old rules of grammar, which are more of exceptions than rule now. This is possible only through teaching and learning the current usage. Through this learners also come to know the difference between the grammars of Spoken English and Written English. In fact, a teacher teaching English is expected to teach both spoken and written English, distinguishing clearly the difference between the two

Grammar teaching is very important to develop and strengthen the structure of English language in the child's mind. This being the objective of teaching English Grammar at the primary and upper primary levels, it has to be done in such a way that it is liked and enjoyed by both the teacher and the taught. At present, many teachers take it as a ritual, and the students find it monotonous and unhelpful. The strategy suggested for teaching of grammar here might not be called an original work of the writer in the strict sense, yet it is a well tried classroom practice and deserves to be considered by the teachers of English language at both the primary and upper primary levels.

Words in a traditional approach to grammar teaching are classified according to their forms as different parts of speech. The latest approach in this connection, however, is to go by their function that they perform in a sentence,

and not by their fixed forms.

While teaching various parts of speech, the stress should be on helping the students to know their functions in a sentence. So they are expected to understand that a word at one place may act as a noun, at another place as a verb or an adjective depending on the function it performs in a sentence. Study the following sentences, for example,

1. Cricket is a passion in India these days. (Noun – subject to the verb)
2. Boys play cricket in winter. (Noun – object to the verb)
3. My friend has been selected for the cricket team of his school. (adjective)
4. We play chess on Sundays. (verb)
5. He played the main role in the school play. (played (verb), play (noun)
6. She worked hard for the annual examination (hard = Adverb)
1. It was a hard decision to send my younger brother to a boarding school (hard= Adjective)

Grammar teaching at the primary and upper primary levels should be treated as teaching of sentence patterns- simple, compound and complex for communicative purposes- and has to be contextualised only. In order to teach these sentence patterns remember to use 3 Ps.- Presentation, Practice and Production.

Presentation:

While presenting a sentence pattern or a grammatical item first present it through sentences in a context. To make the context meaningful to the child, use at least two connected sentences together, followed by their use in a meaningful life-like situation. This will help the students to understand how that language item is to be used in a life-like situation, motivating them further to use it for purposes beyond the classroom experience.

Having understood the use of the grammatical item concerned first through individual sentences in a context, then in a well-contrived situation, and finally through a life-like situation, the students should be motivated to apply the acquired knowledge in writing out a paragraph. This is the Production stage of grammar teaching, at which the learner makes the creative use of the language. Once the students can do it correctly and confidently, the teacher has reasons to believe that they have acquired the necessary competency in using that grammatical knowledge both in their speech and writing. The following module will further illustrate the various steps involved in the teaching of English Grammar for joyful learning.

A MODULE FOR TEACHING DETERMINERS

(Imagine, you intend teaching determiners to the students of class V. Now see through this module how we go about it, using the above-suggested technique.)

Step 1:

CONTEXTUALISED TEACHING

Read the following paragraph:

Last evening we decided to

dine at Wimpys. The Wimpys are a chain of hotels, famous for fast foods. As soon as we managed to occupy a table, a bearer approached us, with a menu card to enable us to order our choice dishes. We decided to order some Chinese food. When the food was served we felt extremely annoyed to notice that there was an insect in the soup. I picked up the soup bowl and straight went to the counter to have a word with the Manager. The manager felt ashamed and apologised for the inconvenience caused.

Step 2: The students will then be asked to note down carefully the underlined bold words for purpose of discussion with their teacher and class.

Step 3 :Having discussed the underlined bold words in the given situations with the students, they then may be asked to write a paragraph on a different theme, using the given paragraph as a model. This is the production stage of grammar teaching, as you have learnt.

To start with, it may be an individual activity, then a pair activity, and then the group activity, or the activity at the whole class level.

The paragraphs thus produced by each student are read out in pairs and the mistakes, if any, got corrected, with the help of their partners.

The modified paragraphs may then be read out at the level of the whole class group. A panel of judges appointed from amongst the students by rotation should also decide the best three paragraphs. These paragraphs can also be displayed on the class display board to enable the rest of the

student to read them.

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Grammar does not precede language teaching.

Grammar is taught in an integrated way and not just through isolated sentences.

Grammar is best learnt through activities which help students to work out the rules of language for themselves, and then use them in natural contexts.

STAGES OF GRAMMAR TEACHING:

1. Lead in by the teacher through copious examples in meaningful contexts- first through sentences and then through a well-contrived life-like situation.
2. Elicitation by the students(first repeating the sentences presented by the teacher and then forming their own sentences by the students.)
3. Explanation by the teacher if the child fails to respond correctly or commits mistakes.
4. Accurate Reproduction by the students. This stage can be left out if the students reproduce the target grammatical items correctly.
5. Immediate Creativity: Constructing connected sentences in the form of a paragraph, without the teacher's help.

To conclude, the grammar teaching can be great fun at the hands of a creative teacher using the above-suggested technique, coupled with the activity and participatory approach to English teaching.

J.K. Gangal, Specialist in TESL, is presently employed as Director CCHRD, New Delhi. He retired as an Education officer (Training) from Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, New Delhi.

The Question of Medium of Instruction in a Multilingual Context

Madhulika Jha

The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to the people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe.

"The choice of language" suggests one's 'robe of identity'. The language of 'instruction' is important because it is the route to achieve the overarching goal of education, the goal to create potential thinking citizens. It is thus a matter of alarming concern to the nation builders, the linguists and the teachers in the opening decade of this century. Their concern has headed towards a debate if English or the mother tongue of the nation be used as the means of instruction at the educational institutes.

Behind the entire debate lies the fear that English might completely displace the native language like it happened in Australia with the Aborigines' native language. Behind this debate is the concern to protect and preserve the indigenous languages on the one hand and promote an international exchange on the other. There are opposed advocates of language who argue their point on the basis of practical, political, ethical, aesthetical and social agenda.

Those in favor of the mother tongue as the instructive language hit upon the ethical issue that a child's natural medium of thoughts and expression is his/her mother tongue and so every child owes the right to learn through it or be instructed through it. A language other than the native for

communication and instruction causes a blockage in the mind and a dread of the new learner. Ngugi relates one of the most humiliating experiences at school of being caught speaking a local language:

The culprit was given corporal punishment – three or five strokes of cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with the inscription such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY.

In an attempt to internalize English, the students and the teachers become anchors without shores and trees with withered roots. Neither such anchors nor such trees hold any life then. The mother tongue is the language one immediately grows up with, it is the language of imagination and communication too; in turn it becomes the constructive language of the society which justifies its usage as the imaginative, communicative, constructive and instructive language.

Some critics argue in favor of the mother tongue in a bid to emancipate the once colonized nations from the linguistic imperialism of the English. At this juncture it becomes important to know in a nutshell the history of English.

English made its inroad in India with the charter act of 1813 which thrust upon England the responsibility towards native education owing to its civilizing mission. The 43rd section of the charter act stated that "a sum of not less than one lac [sic.] of rupees shall be annually applied

to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India". The deliberate ambiguity in the clause regarding which literature was to be promoted was seized by T B Macaulay (then president of the council on Education) twenty years later to argue that the phrase clearly meant English Literature. Macaulay justified English on the ground that "a single shelf of European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". He declared that the native languages are neither moral nor scientific and thus useless. Thus passed the English Education Act in 1835 with which the then official languages – Persian and Arabic, got replaced by English and the spoken languages – Hindustani and Urdu- and the classical languages – Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit- got pushed to a backseat. British texts which saved the natives from the immorality of the east with their Christian morals were incorporated in the Indian curriculum. Such texts when read by the natives naturalized the contracted values of the English, created the polarity of the orient and the occident and created the ideological climate for the growth of the British Empire. Thus, the English language in India today stands on a hegemonic web and is potent in neocolonialism and the critics, thus, argue the disuse of English as the means of instruction. In India, Nehru and Gandhi were critical and negative towards English in 1920's and 30's. Nehru also shared the view "that the future of English, 'a kind of foster language', would be limited in a free India: unless they cast it off, Indians would 'remain slaves to British thought'."

To turn the side of the coin, in the present age English language has traversed beyond its imperial goal to a more useful purpose of connecting the world and

facilitating the nations thus. It is not only nationally but internationally also agreed upon language for trade and communication. Should not the educational institutes then provide the base to the pupils to get global? Sridhar rightly opines:

The more roles a language can open up for a speaker, the higher its position. Students and professionals in Karnataka feel that English equips them for the largest number of socially valued roles; next comes the mother tongue.

Even those who have an anti-English stance agree upon the indispensability of English and the imperishability of English Empire that Macaulay predicted.

Even Ngugi for that matter used English only to tell the world his resistance to the English and English. It is like working from within the language not against the language but against any hegemonic control of the east by the west.

The English today is not likely to deplete the regional/mother languages for we all are bilinguals owing to our birth language and the language of our education.

Regarding sentiments attached with the mother tongue, the English we use today for instruction is the 'nativized' English – English that blends in it the native sentiment. History cannot deny that the language has undergone change and is in the process of change ever since. English that Europeans, Americans, Australians, Russians etc. use today is different from what Chaucer wrote in. Language cannot be a sacrosanct department with no room for change and there is evidence enough in history to claim this. Also, a language's vitality lies in its adaptability and acceptability and not in its purity preserved to the extent of rigidity.

Keeping in mind the practical considerations while definitely respecting the ethics involved

in the arguments for the mother tongue, it is better to have English as the language of instruction to make this world one unified place to live in.

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Madhulika Jha is Director AIBEC Amity University, Noida (U.P.)



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INTERVIEW

'We Need to Rethink Language Teaching and Evaluation System.'

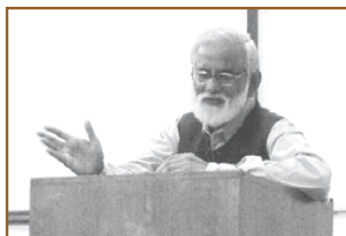
Barun Mishra interviews Prof. Rajiva Verma, University of Delhi.

Barun: Since you are the chairman of the committee to oversee the newly introduced courses of B.A. programme, I will be interested here to know first about its plan or scheme, particularly keeping in mind the variety of students that we see in the university and colleges?

Prof. Rajiva Verma: Well, that's a big question. You have rightly said that those students who join the B.A. course come with widely different levels of academic achievement, and it is always a challenge to design a course for such a range of students. I think the range is particularly remarkable in the case of a subject like English, which is only taught through the medium of English. In other subjects, where Hindi is an optional medium of instruction, even those students who haven't come from expensive English medium schools get a chance to catch up with the supposedly brighter students from the elite English medium schools because they are able to study through Hindi. It might surprise you to know that the majority of students in the B.A. course opt for Hindi rather than English as the language of instruction and examination. In view of the varying degrees of proficiency in English among the students joining the B.A. Programme, the English Department has decided to

continue with the three levels of English in the restructured course, though in my own opinion, two streams, a higher and a lower, would have been enough.

But to get back to the question that you have asked about the objective and the general scheme of the restructured B.A. course, the course is designed to lessen the gap between the honors programme and the B.A programme and to make the latter exciting and innovative enough to attract the bright students who in the past always went for the honours course. With this aim in mind, the curriculum has been divided into four types of courses: the usual discipline courses like political science, history, English, philosophy; the compulsory languages courses in English and Hindi; foundation courses and application courses. The student has to take at least one of the four foundation courses on offer and one application course out of the 24 that have been offered so far. The foundation courses may be described as awareness raising courses whose purpose is to make the students aware of their social, economic and political and cultural situation. One of foundation courses, Social Inquiry, has a slightly different objective, since it seeks to make the student aware of some of the



basic theoretical assumptions and methodological principles of the various disciplines. The application courses seek to introduce the students to subjects which are practical in nature and which they can pursue further either in the field of work or in further studies. A large number of innovative and exciting courses have been introduced, several of them inter-disciplinary in nature, such as Translation and Interpreting, Creative Writing, Theatre and performance, Film Studies, Mathematics for the Social Sciences, Indian Music and Indian Art, Banking and Insurance, Tourism, Entrepreneurship and Small Business, and Mass Communication. The discipline courses in traditional subjects like political science and history have also been revised and updated. We hope that some bright students would find these new courses attractive enough to prefer the B.A. course to the Honours course.

Barun: Now the second question is that there are a few courses, which are related with language and literature, like creative writing, translation and interpretation etc. What is the nature of relationship there particularly about the language- literature gap? Or how does it correspond to the continuum of language and literature?

Prof. Rajiva Verma: Yes, there are a number of such courses that have been introduced. The arrangement is that the language departments in the colleges, that is, the departments of Hindi and English, will manage them, because it was thought that these departments would be the most interested in and most equipped to tackle these courses. But the courses are not all restricted to the language departments. Take the example of

the course on film studies: even though the language departments will make arrangements for teaching it, we assume and we hope that teachers from other department will also take part in the teaching of this course. The course in translation and interpreting, from Hindi to English and English to Hindi, obviously has to be taught by people from the departments of Hindi and English, or at least by people who are bilingual. Ideally the teachers of Hindi and English should get together and teach this course jointly. The course on creative writing I suppose would have to be language specific, though there could be common lectures, jointly organized by the departments of Hindi and English and other languages for the common theoretical component of this course. What would be feasible is up to each college to decide. Again the course on theatre could be taught by people from various departments and not only by the departments of Hindi and English.

To come now to your question about language and literature: in some cases we are not concerned so much about the language part at all. For example in the course on theatre, clearly the student will not be studying syntax and grammar. They may happen to improve their language because when you take part in dramatic activities you pick up the language without consciously trying to learn it. Theatre, as you know, has been used as a pedagogic device from very early times, but that is not the thing that this course has in mind, though it may be one of the incidental benefits of this course. In the course on creative writing the focus is equally on literature and the language. There is a section on figure of speech, rhetoric and other linguistic devices, which will help the students to improve their language skills. Here again,

though, the focus is not so much on improving skills for day-to-day purposes but rather to enable the student to use the language creatively in imaginative works. I believe in some colleges this course is being taught even to students not very efficient in the language concerned. I don't know how such students would manage this course. The initial response I guess would be that teaching creative writing to people whose language is weak is like teaching *bharatnatyam* to someone who has barely learnt to walk, but it is possible that teaching people to dance may make them able to walk as well. As Alexander Pope put it, "they walk best who have learnt to dance." So I think it may turn out to be an interesting experiment. May be even students who are weak in English will benefit from a course in which they are encouraged to use the language creatively.

As for the other language related course, namely translation and interpreting, this is intended to be a practical course in translation. Though there is a theoretical component in it, the focus is on the practical part. As teachers, we are rather theoretically oriented and it's difficult to get ourselves away from the theory part. But we have been trying to emphasize the point that this is a practical course whose purpose is to teach the students to translate, orally as well as in writing. So there are exercises such as listening to the passage and giving an oral translation of it, or listening to a discussion in one language and giving a summary of it in the other language. Clearly such exercises will benefit the students linguistically. Besides, to be a good translator you have to be good in both the languages, so this course will involve some study of the grammar and other aspects of the languages concerned. Generally

what we find is that students who are good in one language are weak in the other, but I hope that in the process of doing translation both ways, that is from Hindi to English and from English to Hindi, they will improve their language skills in both languages. The course also has a component dealing with the translation of creative writing, so the study and practice of the creative or literary use of language is not excluded.

We also have a foundation course on language, literature and culture. The purpose of this course is not to teach a language but to give the students an awareness of what language does in society and some knowledge about all the languages of India and their interrelationship. Another, and the major part of the course, involves a broad survey of the literature in these languages, from the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata* to the present time. This is an awareness-raising and knowledge-based course, not a skill-oriented one. Therefore the medium is not important here and the students can study this course either in Hindi or English. Still, for the literature component of the course we have brought out a bilingual anthology of Indian literature where the same piece is in Hindi and in English translation: whether it is a Telugu short story or a Sanskrit play, they are available in this book in Hindi and English translation. A student has to study these works only in one language, either English or Hindi. He is not required to study both translations. But we hope that students will be curious enough to compare the two versions of each piece and in the process become linguistically aware and improve their language skills. These are the language related courses in the new B.A. programme apart from the discipline course in English (which used to be called Elective English and which

is mainly a literature course) and the compulsory language courses in English, which are available in three streams depending on the level of the students' linguistic proficiency.

Barun: You mean English A, English B, and English C.

Prof. Rajiva Verma: Yes. These courses are intended to focus on language at various levels, and the ratio between language and literature varies depending on the student's linguistic proficiency. Clearly some students need the basic skills in language, while others, who already have these skills need to study the language in its creative use in literature. So there is a range of courses that we have to have according to the needs and aptitudes of the students.

Barun: Don't you see that a course like creative writing or writing for the media blurs the traditional distinction between the teaching of language and teaching of literature?

Prof. Rajiva Verma: Yes writing for the media is a part of the creative writing course. In addition, we have a course on mass media and communication, but that is a different type of course. I won't be too disturbed by what you describe as the blurring of the traditional distinction between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. Why should that be a problem? They can always go together. I think this is a distinction which people have brought in quite unnecessarily. Obviously if a student is not good in language you don't start teaching him Shakespeare. At the same time, even at the most elementary level, literature is unavoidable in the teaching of language. The nursery rhymes that children learn in the kindergarten are for me as much an example of "literature" as a Shakespeare sonnet in the English

book prescribed for a higher class. Should we exclude nursery rhymes and other poems from the language books of children on the ground that they are literature, not language? The real problem with language teaching in college is not whether the focus should be on language or literature but rather what kind of literary works to include. Clearly for undergraduates, a nursery rhyme is inadequate in terms of experiential and intellectual content, but a poem by Milton or Wordsworth may also be unsuitable because of their level of linguistic complexity. So one has to look for more suitable examples of literary works, works whose language is within their linguistic range but which can also extend that range a bit.

This issue can be looked at from a slightly different angle. I remember when I was in school we used to have exercises in which we were required to fill in the blanks in phrases or sentences like: "As dead as a —" and we were expected to come up with the "correct" answer – "door nail" or "dodo". That was a very wrong kind of exercise, a test of memory, whereas the effort should be to encourage the students to use the language creatively. For this it is important to expose them to literature and to literary uses of language.

We must remember that language is a medium of communication between human beings not robots. Language does not work like a mathematical equation. In the seventeenth century in England, the Royal Society put forth the ideal of a language in which "so many things were delivered in so many words." That was a profoundly wrong way of looking at the nature and function of language. Language never works like that. Even in the most routine uses of language in our daily lives there are creative redundancies, a plenitude, that this

purely referential, mathematical view of language cannot explain. This is yet another way of saying that literature and language cannot be separated, and to teach language without literature would be to teach a phantom language, not a real one.

As a corollary to the points just made, I would like to suggest that just as the B.A. English courses can't be all language but must include literature, so also the B.A. Honours course in English should not be all literature but must include the study of language. It's a pity that there is no language component in the B.A. Honours course, though such a course has now been introduced in the master's course. I had made this suggestion when the B.A. Honours syllabus was being revised, but most people, it seems, did not find language teaching as exciting and glamorous as teaching such things as popular culture and 'theory', especially post colonialism and feminism. In my opinion this is a serious lacuna in the Honours course.

Barun: The next question is that to design, develop and run a new curriculum requires a whole lot of infrastructure and involves so many things like syllabus making, textbook preparation, teacher training and so on which have to be done in view of the fact that these courses are very new for the students and teachers of the university. So what is primarily conceived for teacher training if there is any?

Prof. Rajiva Verma: A teacher training program is already there in the university. There is a unit of the university, the CPDHE, which conducts teacher training programmes in the form of refresher courses throughout the year. In addition to these courses we have been organizing workshops for teachers. These

two or three-day workshops, where teachers teaching a course get together to discuss issues of pedagogy and evaluation related to the course, have been very useful. They also share notes on the material available on the subject and identify and compile reading material for the course. A good deal of material has been put together in this manner for each new course and circulated among the teachers teaching it.

It is true that there is a dearth of textbooks specifically designed for these new courses. Textbooks usually come slightly later, after the course has been taught for a year or two. Here I would like to make a distinction between the unavailability of reading material and the unavailability of textbooks. A lot of matter is actually available for the teachers, though it is scattered in journals and books, but we do need to prepare course material for the students which is not too difficult for them. At the same time we should be wary of this kind of demand for textbooks degenerating into the demand for guidebooks. The University has tried to address this problem and has started a scheme to get teachers to prepare materials for the new courses in the form of lessons for the various topics in a course and to put up this material on the University's website for free access across the globe. A good deal of material for the new courses has already been put up on the website and more is under preparation. There is also a scheme under which the University publishes textbooks for the new courses. One such textbook was published last year for the foundation course on 'Language Literature and Culture' and five textbooks are in the press.

Barun: Ok, now in addition to what I have asked do you think there is any additional information

you would like to give?

Prof.Rajiva Verma: Well, I would say that to us as teachers of English, the high failure rate in English in the University examinations should be a matter of great concern. I am speaking here of the BA program, where the failure rate in English has always been and continues to be the highest, much higher than the failure rate in the other subjects. Very often students fail even in their second or third attempt. Often, they fail to get a degree because they fail in English. All teachers of English in this University should address this problem. Also, we have to examine whether any improvement occurs in a student's competence in English over the three years of his stay in a college and, if so, by how much. Perhaps at the C level there is a slight improvement. On the other hand, there are students who don't need any instruction in English at all, students for whom even the A Stream is redundant.

I think there is a good deal of resentment among students as well as among teachers from other departments concerning what is perceived to be an imposition of English. While the B.A. course was being redesigned or restructured, people expressed unhappiness over the fact that 50% of the BA course was taken up by compulsory language courses(3 compulsory papers in English and 3 in Hindi). Some people asked why English and Hindi should be compulsory when history and political science are not. They further questioned the need to make two languages compulsory. Any way ultimately a compromise was reached; people showed a sensitivity to the problems of the English and Hindi departments and agreed to retaining two compulsory papers each in Hindi and English. This places a great burden on us to

justify the compulsory teaching of English and Hindi.

Barun: Students are not also very serious about the college teaching.

Prof.Rajiva Verma: Is that so? And if it is, why is it so? Maybe, they think that there is a mismatch between their requirements and the syllabus. I think to some extent that is true, though the restructured syllabus has tried to address this problem. Probably the real problem is the system of evaluation and the adjustment of the pedagogy to the demands of the examination system. It may also be the case that we need many more classes than are allotted in order to teach language. For effective language teaching you need more time and therefore more classes. Students need to be given assignments to do practically everyday and these assignments have to be marked and discussed. Often the students might need to resubmit these assignments after corrections, and these corrections have also to be checked. There is indeed no shortcut to language teaching. Given the constraints of workload and teaching positions, I do not know how we can tackle these problems. Perhaps FORTELL can play an effective role here.

Barun: Yes we are trying hard to work for the just cause of English

Prof.Rajiva Verma: Students have become aware and demanding. They want exciting and useful courses. I think we need to carry out a survey to assess the linguistic competence of the students and the level of enhancement of this competence over the three years of undergraduate education. We also need to examine whether the improvement, if any, is due to the instruction given to them in the classroom or to other factors such as interaction with English speaking peers and with the

outside world, to which the college student is obviously exposed more than the schoolboy or girl. We also need to find the causes of the high failure rate in spite of the fact that both the previous syllabus for the B.A. Pass course as well as the present syllabus were designed by teachers actually teaching English to undergraduates and that many of these teachers are experts in English language Teaching.

Barun: Don't you see the role of background which in most cases is non-English?

Prof. Rajiva Verma: That is why we have A, B or C streams. In any case, if they came from English speaking homes or English medium schools, most of the students wouldn't need these courses. It is not very logical, is it, to say that the real problem we face while teaching English is that the students do not know English?

Barun: There is policy decision by the N.C.E.R.T and N.C.F. 2005 regarding the issue of language teaching, which makes mandatory provision for teaching of English from first standard and for all.

Prof. Rajiva Verma: I am totally in agreement with that and would

link it to the larger issue about our national language policy. At one time, before Independence, a consensus seemed to have emerged that independent India should have one common language for official and other purposes and that that language should be Hindi. Most of the great national figures of pre-Independence India, including Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Chakravarti Rajgopalachari seemed to have agreed on this. Subsequently, fears and suspicions arose in some Non-Hindi areas about the hegemony of the Hindi-speaking people. Resentment grew and the issue soon became a highly emotional one and some people burnt themselves in public in protest against the imposition of Hindi. Rightly therefore, the government shelved the issue. Interestingly enough, Hindi has since spread more widely. In the absence of any threat of imposition, people seem to accept it naturally.

At the same time, I think there is a need for a common language which all people in the country can speak, read and write. It is vital for the unity and progress of the country.

Since Hindi is not acceptable to all regions, I think we should decide to have English as this common language, though I propose this with some sadness since it would have been good if we had all agreed on a common language of Indian origin. As far as policy is concerned I think we should now adopt a policy of bilingualism –we should teach a regional language along with English right from the beginning. I am concerned with the big professional and economic divide between the English speaking and the non-English speaking population. One of the ways of bridging this gap is through knowledge of the English language. Far more than reservation and quotas, the knowledge of English would empower the culturally, socially and economically weaker sections. So we should decide finally and firmly that English would be the common official and link language and go all out to spread the teaching of English right from the kindergarten stage.



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

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REPORTS

ELT Workshop in Hazira



Vidya Bhawan Resource Centre, Udaipur organized a five day ELT workshop in Hazira (near Surat) from September 11-15, 2006 for the government and private school teachers of the area as part of its larger effort to improve learning levels of about 2000 children studying English in 14 govt. schools of the area where teaching of English starts from class-3.

The long-term objective of the workshop was to enhance teachers' proficiency in English because a large number of teachers teaching English face lots of difficulties in transacting the English textbooks in their classes. It was felt that improvement in the teachers' proficiency levels will not only give them confidence but would help them utilize their resources optimally and make Vidya Bhawan Resource Centre's intervention in the teaching of English more fruitful. Dr A.L.Khanna from the University of Delhi was the resource person for the workshop.

36 teachers and resource persons participated in the workshop. The workshop focused on the following issues:

- » method of teaching English as a second language.
- » planning and designing of four

types of classroom activities - listening, speaking, reading and writing.

- » building understanding on some key concepts.

In his introductory note Dr.Khanna remarked that since English had attained the status of a global language, proficiency in English had become a prerequisite for vertical, and even horizontal, mobility in India. He further pointed out that without the knowledge of English one would not be able to have access to the vast and infinite resource of information now available through internet.

He also observed that researches in the second language acquisition across the world had shown that knowledge of the first language of the learners facilitated rather than hindered learning of a second language. According to Dr.Khanna, knowledge of the first language could form a bridge for learning the second language more confidently, especially during the formative stages. He cited examples of many countries where people learnt second and third languages as a routine without ever experiencing any difficulty.



During the workshop Dr. Khanna emphasized that there was no single method of teaching English in all situations. He articulated this view on many occasions in different forms. It was quite a task for him to convince the teachers that a single method did not exist in reality.



Dr. Khanna and the teachers together worked in groups and prepared a list of activities and games that the teachers could try out in their classes for teaching English. The teachers demonstrated some of these activities in front of their peers and responded to the suggestions for their implementation in their respective classes.

The follow up workshop was held again in Hazira with the same set of teachers from December 18-22, 2006. The teachers reported their experiences of doing these activities in their classes. They looked very happy and also pointed out the areas/skills where they required more help. One of the major sources of their worry was to finish their course books. Therefore, this time most of the activities they prepared tried to keep the books and syllabus in mind. In the first four days the participants were provided academic inputs in the form of teaching and hand outs. However, they spent a major part of their time working in groups and making presentations of some of the activities. On the last day, the participants expressed their wish that another workshop should be held in June, 2007 when they had less of school burden. They wanted the next workshop to focus exclusively on developing their own speaking skills in English.



*Report by Mr. Prasoon Kumar,
Vidya Bhawan Resource Centre,
Udaipur*

National Seminar on “The Narrative: Strategies for Teaching and Evaluation”

A day long National Seminar on the above mentioned subject was organized jointly by FORTELL and Ram Lal Anand College (University of Delhi) at RLA College, New Delhi on 16 December 2006 with Dr. Vijay K Sharma (FORTELL) and Dr. G. R. Taneja (RLAC) as its Conveners.

Dr. D. K. Pabby, Principal, RLA College welcomed the participants and wished the seminar success. Dr. N. K. Jain, President, FORTELL could not make it to the seminar due to some unforeseen developments; Dr. N. P. Singh, the senior most member of FORTELL, was kind enough to fill in for Dr. Jain and welcomed the participants on behalf of FORTELL. Dr. Amrit Khanna, Secretary, FORTELL talked about the role and activities of the organization and emphasized the importance of meaningful exchange of views amongst the teachers of English, which is one of the objectives of FORTELL.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Vijay K Sharma lamented the neglect of pedagogy both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, especially in bigger Universities, such as Delhi University. He observed that usually “lecturing” was mistaken for “teaching”. Also, he spoke of the teacher’s unwillingness to discuss her/his “teaching” with fellow teachers. Instead, s/he tends to glorify her/his “academic lecturing prowess”, which keeps her/him away from any “awareness” in the matter. The seminar chose to concentrate on the so called mundane issues like pedagogic literacy and other “professional” concerns of “teaching.”

The seminar addressed several issues relating to teaching and evaluation of the narrative at the undergraduate and the postgraduate levels, focusing on a variety of prose narratives, such as the novel, short story, epic, etc. The speakers felt encouraged to present their views, experiences, experiments, methodologies, successes and failures in an informal, staff room like situation. The seminar also chose to encourage the young teachers and the presenters were an appropriate mix and match of the senior and the junior teachers. In all, thirteen presentations were scheduled.

In the morning session, Ms. Priyanka Tripathi of ITS Engineering. College, Ghaziabad, UP Technical University, spoke of the “reproduction” technique in teaching short story to the technical students; Dr. Shahla Ghauri of AMU, Aligarh talked about interpreting the story while directing the students’ responses. Ms Vibha Sharma, also from AMU, Aligarh, shared her problems in teaching Raja Rao’s Kanthapura and sought suggestions from the group to help her tackle the problems. Ms. Deepshikha Mahanta of Daulat Ram College (University of Delhi) brought out a number of challenges in teaching Marquez’s Chronicle of a Death Foretold and discussed pedagogical possibilities of exploration and extension. Dr. Roopali Sircar Gaur of Sri Venkateswara College (University of Delhi) spoke of her travails of teaching an African-American text such as The Colour Purple to a class of students in up

market Delhi, and her need to shift gear suddenly from the eurocentric male milieu to the unfamiliar one of Alice Walker. Raashid Nehal of AMU, Aligarh discussed the “self-reformulation” feedback strategy in teaching short story to the ESL undergraduate students.

In the afternoon session, Dr. S. C. Sood (rtd. From Dayal Singh College- E, University of Delhi) emphasized the need to train the learners to arrive at their own interpretations and demonstrated how this could be done. Dr. Bharat Gupt from College of Vocational Studies (University of Delhi) chose to discuss the text called Fluency in English prescribed in DU undergraduate classes and stressed that the learner’s mind needs to be aroused to convey the essence of the narrative. Mr. Devender Singh of RLAE College (University of Delhi) shared his experiences of teaching Hardy’s The Mayor of Casterbridge to the undergraduate classes. Dr. Vijay K Sharma of RLAE College (University of Delhi) talked about the technique of teaching Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels to the students of English Hons, Third Year, DU by making them do presentations in the class and generate a meaningful discussion. This, he hoped, would prepare them better for various jobs they were likely to take up in future as well as in life as such. Each paper was followed by a separate detailed discussion. It was felt that a series of such seminars on the narrative, and also on other genres, be organized by FORTELL at various colleges in Delhi and also in other Universities. Everyone felt that this should, in fact, be an ongoing process.



Vijay K Sharma teaches at Ram Lal Anand Evening College (University of Delhi).

sharmavk3@yahoo.com

A Day of Revelations



The members of FORTELL, Kolkata Chapter met on Sep. 2, the teachers and young students of Adi Balliungge Vidyalaya and interacted with them. This event was a follow up of the seminar that we had organised at the British Council on teaching English to the 'disadvantaged learners'. The teachers of Adi Balliungge Vidyalaya informed us that they mainly dealt with the students who were first generation learners and were not very good at English. Mr. Chandan Banerjee, a teacher at the institution felt that the speaking and writing skills of these learners needed improvement right from their elementary stage. We were also told that the school started English from standard V and followed the syllabus of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Since Students started learning English late, they were at a disadvantage. The teachers expressed a need for making a parallel syllabus that was compatible with the abilities and needs of these learners. They also felt that the text materials should

also be appropriately used.

Later, some members of FORTELL Kolkata Chapter, Ms. Shampa Chatterjee, Ms. Nandani Mukherjee, Ms. Manashi Pal Chowdhury, Ms. Sonali Chakraborty and Ms. Jagyaseni Das, met the students of class VII and found them as good as their counterparts in the best of Kolkata schools, and in certain respects even better than them. The lesson taken was elementary lesson on animals. The students were very responsive and came out with ideas and phrases which were above the average level. Generally all the four skills, i.e. writing, reading, speaking and listening were tested. The children were asked to come up with synonyms of words from the text, write spellings, construct sentences



and compare and contrast their answers. They were also asked to write out the descriptions of different animals.

FORTELL Kolkata Chapter feels concerned about these disadvantaged students and is coming up with an alternative

syllabus and techniques of teaching which lay emphasis on an intuitive mind and a caring heart. Through our meager means we are trying to empathize ourselves with socially disadvantaged learners by being interactive with them both at the social and academic levels. Our endeavour to reach out to such students has encouraged us to diagnose the cognitive, linguistic and pedagogical problems that these learners may be facing and also explore some of the ways to solve them.

Susmita Bhattacharya, Newsletter Editor, FORTELL Kolkata

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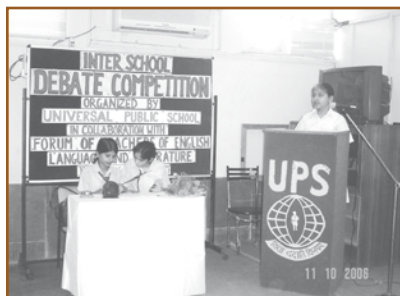
FORTELL invites from its members activities and games for teaching of English language skills to young learners by April 1, 2007 for their inclusion in its publication A Handbook of Language Activities and Games for young learners.

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.co.in



Inter School Debate in English



FORTELL organized an Inter School Debate in English on October. 11, 2006 at Universal Public School, Preet Vihar, Delhi on the topic " CBSE's proposal to make mathematics an optional subject in class X Board Examination would adversely affect the Board's quest for excellence in education." The following schools participated in the event:

- Bharti Public School, East Delhi.
- Arwachin Bharti Bhawan Sr. Sec. School, Vivek Vihar, Delhi.
- Ryan International School, Mayur Vihar Phase III, Delhi.
- Universal Public School, Preet Vihar Delhi.
- Starex International School, Vasundra Enclave, Delhi.
- Guru Harkrishan Public School Har Enclave, Delhi.
- Lovely Public School, Priyadarshani Vihar, Delhi.
- National Victor Public School, IP Ext. Delhi.
- Mayur Public School, IP Ext, Delhi.
- Hilwood's Academy, Preet Vihar, Delhi.
- A.S.N. Sr. Sec. School, Mayur Vihar, Delhi.

The Jury comprised Dr. A.L. Khanna, Secretary (FORTELL), Dr. R.P. Singh and Mr. Yash Pal Kwatra. The following participants were awarded the prizes:

1st Prize

Eesha Kundori

(Ryan International School, Mayur Vihar, Phase III, Delhi)

2nd Prize

Vani Rishi

(Universal Public School, Preet Vihar, Delhi)

3rd Prize

Prannav Nagi

(Ryan International School, Mayur Vihar Phase III, Delhi)

Arunima Gupta

(Starex International Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi)

Ryan International School, Mayur Vihar Phase III also won the best participating team award, besides winning 1st and 3rd prizes. All the prizes, including a prize for the school hosting the team, were sponsored by Pearson, New Delhi. FORTELL proposes to have similar events in future too in collaboration with various school authorities throughout Delhi.



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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

Creative Writing in English

SEEING EVERYTHING

In the horizon far away,
The sun filling the sky –
With crimson, violet, purple, azure,—
As if going into its dark bed,
Letting the stars and the moon wake,
This is something you all can see,
But I can feel it deep inside me...

The breeze blows as soft as it can,
The pleasant drizzle speak—
The grass beneath enjoys a bath,
The trees dance in the music of the breeze,
Afar the meadow lets the water meander,
This is something you all can see,
But I can feel it deep inside me...

Touching your face with the delicate palm,
Feeling the softness of your skin,
Your exhaling warm air,
Falls on my palm with affection,
Your fluffy hairs move gently in the air,
This is something you all can see,
But I can feel it deep inside me...

The hard, irregular rocks on the side,
Was speaking about the nature's care,
But underneath the heels, the artificial pathway,
Utters what harsh human beings dare,
Try to conquer every bit of nature,
This is something you all can see,
But I can feel it deep inside me...

The sun shining brightly in the day,
Or the moon galloping faster in the sky,
The whole visible world, O dear,
Only through you will be close to me,
All the works of nature I can only feel,
Cause now my eyes will never be able to see...

Saw every joy once with clarity,
Also felt them deep inside me,
Every pain that utter with agony,

Suffered them, and sensed in me,
Now with darkness everywhere,
Only sense feelings that are innate,
But no qualms, no grudges, no grievances either,
Because I know you are there with me, within me...



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

himadri14@gmail.com

THE BULLDOZER

With a menacing gait and deafening roar,
It trundles down the city lanes and roads,
Sending shockwaves and chilly shivers
Through the crowd, enveloped in gloom and despair,

The old, the young and the very young
All in a daze, with incomprehension
Writ large on their ashen faces
Seething with impotent rage.

Power cuts, dry taps, polluted air
Chaos on roads, insecurity, lawlessness
All this they bore with patience for too long,
Hoping against hope for better days to dawn.

Alas! As reward for their patient suffering what
do they get?

A man-made disaster after natural calamities!
Bribery, bribery, bribery all the way
Bribery to 'build' and bribery to 'save'.

Soon the multitude explodes in an equally deafening roar
"Send this monster back to where it belongs-
Let it raze first the fountainhead of all Corruption
All Evil, all Misgovernance and countless indiscretions
The so-called august Parliament House".

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

Language Activities at School

Pronunciation Practice

Practising the different ways of pronouncing combinations of the letters 'wh':

Ice-age Dispute

Once a sabre-toothed tiger
With whiskers stiff,
Had with the woolly mammoth
A big whole tiff.
"Whoever do you think you are
To claim the cave as wholly yours?
I know of all your wheeling and dealing
With that polar bear with sores."
The mammoth wheeled around
And whacked the tiger
With his wholesome trunk
And said, "Sabre-tooth
You with arrogance are drunk."
Learn to be humble
And beg for a place
In the cave that's
The only saving grace.
Or, on the slopes so cold and white
You'll have to spend a whole long night.

© Shefali Ray, 2006

Practising the silent 'g', the silent 'k' and the allophone of /l/ in the final position in words like stumble and fumble:

The Gnome and the Gnat

A happy gnome was made sore
By a pesky gnat
who bit him so.
Annoyed by the gnat
His teeth he gnashed.
Taking a knife
From his knapsack
His arms he thrashed.

'Where is the gnawing gnat?'
'Where is the annoying gnat?'
He shouted, he cried
And every corner he pried.
He fumbled and mumbled
as he stumbled,
'Get me the stinging annoying gnat.'
'And let me knock him out flat.'

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Mrs. Shefali Ray is an ELT consultant and has been associated with the British Council (ELTeCS), CBSE, NCERT, IGNOU and National Institute for Open Schooling and SCERT, New Delhi.

Language Game

- Level : Secondary Classes
Time : 40 to 45 minutes
Grammar Item : Connectors
Objective : a) To know the different types of connectors.
b) To know their usage.
Material : 4 small cards, 4 sheets, 4 sketch pens, scotch tape & a pair of scissors.

In Class :

Divide the class into 4 groups of more or less of equal numbers

Give each group a card in which a set of connectors of the same type is written (e.g)

- (1) and, as well as, moreover
- (2) but, yet, still
- (3) in spite of, although, though
- (4) because, as, so

Ask the groups to use the given words in sentences of their own, discuss the meaning and write them on the sheets using the sketch pen.

Then the sheets are put up on the wall indicating their group number at different places.

Meanwhile the teacher may divide the blackboard into four columns and write the Heading as per the meanings implied by the

connectors. (e.g)

- (1) adding
- (2) contrasting
- (3) concession
- (4) reasoning

These Headings can be mixed up also.

Now group I reads the sheet of II and II of I. Similarly group III reads the sheet of IV and IV of III.

Again the groups discuss the meanings of the newly read sentences. Now the groups have one set of words (Connectors) in the card and have read two sets of sentences.

Now the teacher instructs the group that within 30 seconds the groups should discuss and one

student from Group-I should choose the correct column given on the board and write the set of words given in their card.

If they fail to do so Group-II gets the chance.

The same is repeated with Group-III and Group-IV.

The correct Group gets a clap.

Finally the teacher can sum it up that the set of words in the card are called CONNECTORS which are used for expressing different meanings while joining two or more sentences. In the same pattern connectors of purpose, condition and so on can also be dealt with.

Rama Ramji, Vidya Bhawan Public School, Udaipur

International Events

January 2007

26-28. ThaiTESOL, "Beyond Boundaries: Teaching English for Global Communication in Asia," The Imperial Queen's Park, Bangkok, Thailand. Contact Maneepen Apibalsri, E-mail maneepen12@gmail.com. Web site <http://www.thaitesol.org>.

27. Abu Dhabi University /IATEFL Teacher Development and ELT Management Special Interest Groups, "Managing Change in ELT," Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Web site <http://www.adu-iatefl.org>.

February 2007

9-10. English Language Teachers' Association of India, "English for Today and Tomorrow," Chennai, India, E-mail eltai_india@yahoo.co.in. Web site <http://www.eltai.org>.

March 2007

15-17. Ming Chuan University, 9th International Conference and Workshop on TEFL and Applied Linguistics, "Integrating English and Applied Linguistics into an Interdisciplinary Area," Taiwan, ROC. Contact Muse Lin, Conference Assistant, The Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan U., 5 Te-Ming Rd., Ta-Tung Village, Kuei-Shan, Taoyuan County, R.O.C. Tel. 011886-3-3507001 ext.3211-3. Fax 011886-3-3593870. E-mail amiao629@yahoo.com.tw. Web site <http://www.mcu.edu.tw/departments/app-Lang/english/frame/index2.html>.

15-17. TESOL Arabia, "Celebrating Best Practice in English Language Teaching," Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

21-24. TESOL, "TESOL 2007: Tides of Change," Washington State Convention & Trade Center, Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail conventions@tesol.org. Web site <http://www.tesol.org>.

April 2007

13-14. Qatar TESOL, "Challenges and Solutions in ELT," College of the North Atlantic, Doha, Qatar. E-mail jhoelker@gmail.com. Web site <http://www.qatartesol.org>.

May 2007

24-26. Sabanci University School of Language, "Tuning in: Learners of Language, Language of Learners" Sabanci University Campus, Istanbul, Turkey. Tel. 90-216-4839139 Fax 90-483-9140. E-mail tuningin@sabanciuniv.edu. Web site <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/sl/languageconf2007>.

30-June 1. Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore, "The English Language Teaching and Learning Landscape: Continuity, Innovation and Diversity," Hilton Hotel, Singapore. E-mail symposiumsec@nus.edu.sg. Web site <http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/symposium>.

September 2007

5-8. EUROCALL, "Mastering Multimedia: Teaching Through Technology," Coleraine, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom. Web site <http://www.eurocall-languages.org>.

Book Review

Fluency in English

by Saloni Sharma

This new text for the second year of the B.A. Programme comes as a welcome continuation to the learning process that had started last year with the publication of **Fluency in English**. It sets out its objective as the teaching of language skills through reading, listening, speaking and writing. Edited by primarily the same crew, Promodini Varma and Mukti Sanyal, the text focuses on not only providing an anthology but also directly addressing the readers and getting them involved in the creative process.

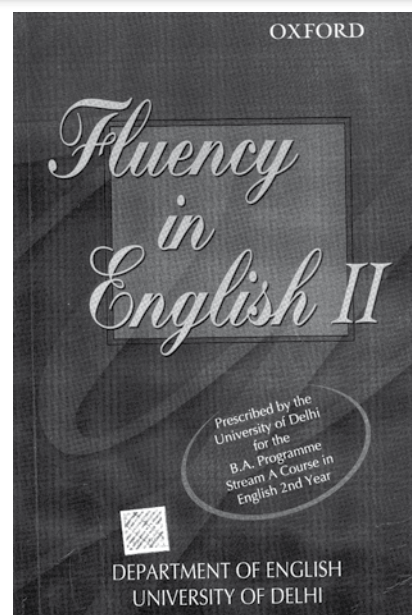
The editors have taken full cognizance of the fact that fluency in a language cannot be achieved in the absence of a direct negotiation with all aspects of the language. In keeping with this, warm-up exercises have been introduced at the beginning of every chapter in order to get the students to think about the issues relevant to the chapter and articulate the same. This helps in introducing concepts that students can discuss amongst themselves and also in keeping them interested by getting their views before launching into a lesson. Therefore, a chapter titled "Learning Can Be Fun" begins with posing questions which are certain to draw a response from students:

1. Did you enjoy going to school? Name the three things about school that you liked and three things that you disliked.
2. List some of the very useful things that you learnt at school.

3. Make a list of some of the things that were taught to you, but which you feel will be of no use to you.

Questions like these are obviously not looking for a "right" or a "wrong" answer and are geared only towards drawing out the student and getting him/her to share his/her perspective with the rest of the class and putting his/her speaking skills into practice in the process.

Special attention has been paid to the development of writing skills with four units dedicated to various kinds of writing exercises. The text introduces the concept of "free writing", that is, the individual writing for him/herself, unhampered by the fear of criticism or even the burden of strictly following rules of grammar or spelling. It then provides a series of guidelines to assist in the process of writing. It thus takes the student from the stage of "free writing" to one of "writing companionably", where the students write for friends and take their writing to trusted companions within a group. The third stage attempts to refine what has been written and tries to motivate the students to treat writing as an enjoyable process. Finally, the text turns to the practical consideration of answering examination questions and instead of asking questions based on the unit, sets the students the interactive task of analyzing and discussing question papers. The focus therefore remains on encouraging originality and creativity instead of testing



Editors:

Promodini Varma & Mukti Sanyal

Published by:

Oxford University Press, Delhi

Year of Publication: 2006

Price: Rs.55.00

Pages: 105

regurgitation capacities.

The text also attempts to familiarize the students with various forms of writing- translations, satire, interviews, essays, fantasy, feature articles, poetry, short stories and drama. Each of these tries to engage the student in a process of understanding followed by expression through either writing or speaking. The unit dealing with translation, for instance, asks the students to translate the poem in the unit into any Indian language they are comfortable with. In this way, it gets them to grapple with the practical aspect of the translation process and would therefore help in understanding and overcoming the problems involved in negotiating between two languages. Similarly, the unit

on feature articles, which covers the story of a woman belonging to a low income group, proposes a debate on the idea that parents evade their responsibilities towards their daughters by concentrating on getting them married instead of educating them.

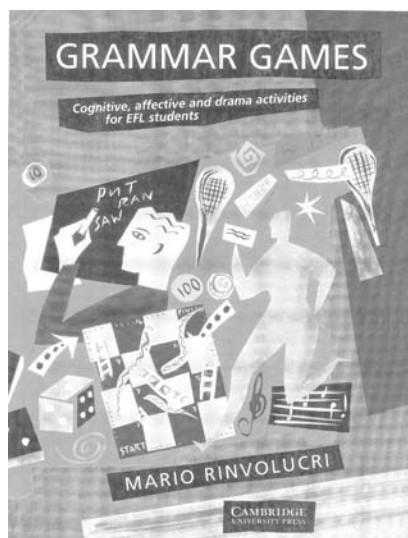
The emphasis on social issues which was obvious in the textbook for the first year course is evident in this volume too. All the units concentrate on contemporary situations and writing styles. Fantasy, which has emerged as an important aspect of contemporary literature, finds a presence in the text through the story “Maniben alias Bibijaan”. The play which has been included in the selection was shortlisted for a New Writing Award in the year 2006 and gives a somewhat surrealistic treatment to the plight of “modern” India. The extract from Irawati Karve’s “Yuganta” has been used to make the students aware of the correlation between literature and culture. In this manner, while language remains the focus of study, a certain attention is also paid to sensitizing the students to the world they inhabit.

Some units like “Our Muddled Generation” and “The Leader of Men” do take a somewhat traditionalist approach towards a sociological understanding and towards narrative but on the whole its practicality of approach and its emphasis on debates, discussions and writing exercises make the text an effective tool for acquiring as well as refining language skills.



Saloni Sharma is currently Lecturer in English at Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi

Annotated Bibliography



GRAMMAR GAMES

By Mario Rinvoluceri

Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom

First Published 1984

Twenty-first Printing 2000

Grammar Games is a rich resource for classroom teachers as Mario Rinvoluceri presents grammar points in the context of a game, thus making learners think about grammar in a fun way. Students work cognitively on grammar, making conscious decisions about what is acceptable and what is not. The focus is on what they are saying form is only a way of creating meaning. As grammar is any way central to learning a language, serious work on grammar can be done in a lighter vein, making learning an enjoyable activity.

An innovative idea introduced here is grammar-feelings-sharing sessions in which students can talk about the items/structures which they like or dislike in the language. Thus students' involvement in the learning process is developed and they also see how their feelings change as they move through different stages of learning. In this way grammar does not remain extraneous to the learning process.



MORE GRAMMAR GAMES

By Mario Rinvoluceri and Paul Davies

Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom

First Published 1995

English Printing 2002

Each game in the book focuses on one or more points of English grammar, a specification is given for each game, describing the level, the materials and time required, and the grammar points practiced. The teachers can use the games as they are and can develop many of their own games according to the needs of their students.

More Grammar Games by Mario Rinvoluceri and Paul Davies is yet another rich resource in the hands of the teachers – and teacher trainers – in the language teaching context, taking further the approach to teaching grammar presented in Grammar Games.

The insights derived from various approaches to EFL/ESL learning inform the activities which are formatted as games in the book. Through the activities the learners are guided to

- reflect on their learning
- work out the patterns of usage

- activate their passive knowledge of words
- rework and reformulate their internal grammar of the target language
- grow in language awareness.

The activities illustrate that learning to mean is what grammar is all about and that there is nothing dry or intimidating about grammar.

The book is divided in nine sections, with a range of activities suitable for different levels and for a variety of learning styles. The book map provided in the beginning presents the user with a quick tour through the games, the

specific grammar items focused on, the level and the time needed. There are over 80 different games with easy-to-follow instructions needing little preparation on the part of teachers, containing many photocopiable worksheets, cards, games and answer sheets.

The book works at a more advanced level than Grammar Games. The assumptions made here are that the learners are familiar with basic grammatical forms and categories, different tense forms, active and passive voice, phrasal verbs, etc. Hence, the games create meaningful contexts for the learners to use their knowledge of the internalized grammar. Teachers can

select an activity from a particular section to reinforce or practice a certain concept or construction. The activities can be adapted and modified by the teachers of English to suit various learner levels and to handle different areas of grammar.

Both Grammar Games and More Grammar Games are a valuable resource for the language classrooms, capable of transforming the nature of grammar teaching from a dreary exercise to an enriching experience.



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



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Profile



Prof. R. W. Desai

The heartthrob of his erstwhile students, the role model of his colleagues and friends, an epitome of modesty, a wonderful human being, Prof. Rupin W. Desai is one of the best-known Shakespeare scholars in the country – nay, the academic world at large. His name is synonymous with Hamlet studies, the only journal devoted to a single literary text. He edited and published Hamlet Studies from its inception in 1979, up to its termination in 2003 with the publication of the Silver Jubilee volume.

Rupin Desai joined the prestigious Hindu College of Delhi University in 1950 as a young student. He remembers with nostalgia Prof. S. S. Chawla as the “greatest influence” on him during his formative years in college. He earned his Masters in English Literature in 1956.

Thereafter he took up a non-academic assignment with Lever Brothers as a Marketing Manager, but the attraction of the Muses was too great to keep him there for long. He soon gave up the high profile lucrative job to return to his Alma Mater. Popular as he was with his students, during his short stint in Hindu, he accomplished a great deed by producing half a dozen plays including “As You Like It”, “Macbeth” and “Julius Caesar”, till then a monopoly of St. Stephens College.

In 1964, Rupin Desai left for the U.S. as a Fulbright Scholar. He completed his Ph.D. on ‘Shakespeare’s influence on Yeats’ from Northwestern University in 1968 and took up a teaching assignment there. His “Yeats’s Shakespeare” was published by the same University in 1971. But his country’s call was again too strong to keep him away for too long.

He returned to India in 1970 and joined Delhi University as Reader. Subsequently, he was promoted as a Professor.

It was during Prof. Desai’s tenure as Head of the English Department in the late seventies that a fresh air of openness was noticeably felt. It was at his initiative that the English Department at Delhi University adopted the policy of participation of the teachers of affiliated colleges in syllabi revision and material production. Prof. Desai was always responsive to suggestions from all quarters. He, in turn, won the confidence and support of the entire college teachers’ fraternity. Another feather in Prof. Desai’s cap – it was during his stewardship that the process of introducing ELT was initiated which has finally found its place in the Syllabus.

In a conversation with the writer, Prof. Desai emphasized his role as a ‘critic’ being more significant than that of an ‘academician’ or an ‘author’. During his long innings he has contributed scores of articles in National and International journals like, “CIEFL Journal”, “The Bulletin of the New York Public Library”, “Thoreau Study Bulletin”, “Journal of American Culture”, “The Baker Street Journal” and “The Shakespeare Newsletter”.

Prof. Desai’s publications include “Sir John Falstaff, Knight”, “Johnson on Shakespeare”, “‘Mislike me not for my complexion’: Whose ‘Mislike’? Portia’s? Shakespeare’s? Or that of His Age?” and “Romeo and the Politics of Gender in Romeo & Juliet”. His most recent book-length publication is “Shakespearean Latencies”.

He has authored a novel of ideas in the epistolary form, “Frailty, Thy Name is W O M a n”, and a collection of short stories, “Of War and War’s Alarms and Twenty-one Other Stories”. He has also penned a few poems.

Most of his publications have been highly acclaimed in the English-speaking world and academic fraternity. His “Johnson on Shakespeare” was prescribed for a course at the Department of English at the University of Reading, U.K. When asked about his best work, he promptly replied, “Yeats’s Shakespeare”, as it is a piece of original research going into unexplored areas uncovering hitherto undetected influence of Shakespeare. He added that “being editor of ‘Hamlet Studies’ for twenty five years, bringing out a volume every year had also been a rewarding experience”. It is significant to mention that the publication of a volume every year was uninterrupted even after the sad demise (in 2001) of his beloved wife Evelyn who had been ‘so important to the life of the journal over the years.’ To quote John W. Mahon, the editor of The Shakespeare Newsletter (published from New York), “The scholarly world owes Rupin Desai thanks for twenty five years of labor as well as congratulations on a well done job.”

Prof. Desai retired from Delhi University in 1999. A much sought after mentor, he remains actively engaged in the academic and literary activities. He has been on the Advisory Board of FORTELL and continues to be its supporting spirit. He spends considerable time with untiring zeal in writing for various journals, sitting in his cosy Patel Nagar, New Delhi house surrounded by his favourite volumes. An air of warmth and friendliness permeates the place.

Though a man of few words, Prof. Desai’s inspiring personality speaks volumes of his high stature.



Tara Chaddha, formerly Reader in English S.P.M. College, University of Delhi

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