



FORUM FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



An associate of
International Association of
Teachers of English
as a Foreign Language, U.K.

www.fortell.org

Issue No. 11, May 2007

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Editorial

Students' Errors: A Pedagogue's Dilemma

Research in second language learning/teaching has taken a big leap from the audio lingual/ grammar translation method of second language teaching. Students' errors in the second/foreign language once perceived as pathologies to be eradicated have begun to be seen by second language researchers as necessary stages/ strategies in language learning. But pedagogues' major worry is that they are accountable to the authorities and parents who look upon teachers' competence in relation to the degree to which their students are able to achieve proficiency in English. Even if teachers swear by the

The investment that most parents make in teaching English to their children aims at equipping them with the abilities to handle abstract thought that constitutes the basis of all academic knowledge.

new developments in second language learning, they have no alternative except to finally prepare their students to achieve the desired competence in the language. These enlightened teachers no doubt are better than those who have no such knowledge about the nature, causes and stages of errors students are likely to make in learning a second language and, therefore, are less ruthless and more imaginative in treating the errors. For instance, they may completely ignore the local errors involving punctuation marks, capital letters and even spellings at the initial stages of second language learning because they are confident that these errors are transitory in nature and would disappear as students learn more and more. They have also noticed that students struggle with the target language and they on their own produce correct forms without any intervention on the part of

their teachers. According to them, some of the errors generally labelled as 'global errors' are responsible for breakdown in communication and, therefore, they devise all kinds of activities to help children overcome these errors and acquire fluency in the use of the language.

Should teachers be bothered about the errors their students make? Although interpersonal skill allows all sorts of deviations/ errors, acquisition of these skills alone cannot be considered as the only long-term goal of teaching a second language. The investment that most parents make in teaching English to their children aims at equipping them with the abilities to handle abstract thought that constitutes the basis of all academic knowledge. If these are the expectations of the parents from the teachers, one can understand why teachers look worried about their students' errors and, therefore, are always asking in seminars or workshops how they should look upon the errors students make. The developmental perspective on errors is in conflict with the pressures of correctness and accuracy that the employers of the multinational companies are making as the basis for placement.

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ARTICLES

INTERVIEW

REPORTS

LANGUAGE
ACTIVITIESCREATIVE
WRITING

MEMBERS

MEMBERSHIP
FORM

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Articles | 03 |
| o Teaching Business Correspondence | |
| o Teacher Resource Centres in Schools | |
| o Working With Words: An Approach | |
| o Teaching Spoken English: A Bilingual Approach | |
| Interview | 15 |
| o Barun Kumar Mishra interviews Professor P.K.S. Pandey | |
| Reports | 18 |
| o Five Day ELT Workshop in Udaipur | |
| o Creative Writing: A Workshop | |
| o Orientation Workshop for Text Book Development | |
| o Five-day Intensive Course on Teaching English Language and Literature | |
| Creative Writing | 22 |
| Language Activities | 24 |
| Who's Who in FORTELL | 27 |

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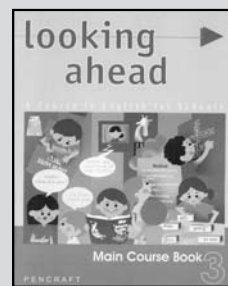
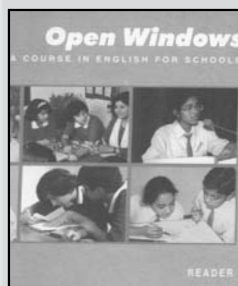
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The contributions should specify for each games/activity the level for which it is designed, language skill it aims at, materials and time required for its use. The contributions must reach us by September 1, 2007. They can be e-mailed at the following address:

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Teaching Business Correspondence

S.C. Sood

Introduction

Learning to write is a difficult task even for the natives. Even when a native speaker knows his/her L1 and has learnt to write the language, accomplishing different kinds of writing tasks as, for example, business letters, needs special training for, as it is rightly said, writing is not so much a language problem as a writing problem. It is therefore not quite correct to say that those who know English need no instructions in English.

While learning to do writing tasks is difficult, it happens to be an important and much demanded skill in our country where learners have to do a number of tasks in writing, using English both across the curriculum and also in their professional and personal lives. But, unfortunately, it is the most neglected skill in our institutions. Writing skill is hardly taught and wherever some effort is made, as teaching letter writing, for example, it is grossly inadequate for learning the skill. In the absence of good guidance either from books available in the market or from their teachers, students are left to fend for themselves and the problem of learning writing skills becomes much more acute particularly when they have to write in English, a foreign language for most of them.

Existing Practice of Teaching Letter Writing

Let us see how letter writing is taught in our classes where business communication is a prescribed course. These courses, like all academic courses, discuss

theoretical issues before practical part begins. The students show excellent knowledge of the theoretical content. Ask them the essentials of business communication, and they will reel off a long list of, among others, what they call "the C's" of business communication: complete, correct, concise, clear, and so on. They will also tell you in great detail the complex process of communication involving addresser, addressee, and topic and how these affect the process of communication. The aim of this theoretical part, no doubt, is that theory should inform practice, but this knowledge remains only theoretical and is not translated into practice in their writing tasks. I have noticed even teachers teaching this course not practicing what they teach. Soon after emphasizing that 'office note/office memo' is the proper means of internal communication within an organization, they sit down to write a formal letter to the principal for permission to invite a guest speaker for a lecture! Textbooks popular with these learners, too, are not of much help. These books devote lot many pages to the layout of a business communication/letter taking great pains to tell different ways of writing the date, and explaining terms such as salutation, subject line, indenting, full-, half- and modified-block styles, complimentary close, quality of paper, and a host of other things but there is nothing much about how to write the message excepting vague instructions about 'discourse organization' — introduction, body, and conclusion.

We do not mean to say that layout should not be described. What we mean to say is that the message is more important than the layout and students need practice in successfully achieving this goal of conveying the message.

Once these things have been explained, various types of letters written in business settings are given as models for students to read and follow. Modification of these models through substitution is encouraged to deal with the topics in the examination if they are slightly different and students often do so without application of mind. Teaching through this follow-the-model 'product approach' has its shortcomings and quite often leads to hilarious and awkward productions. At best we would term this sort of teaching 'training' and not 'education' (Widdowson, 1983). 'Education' in writing business letters would involve understanding business content or business procedures and processes, e.g. the business process of buying and selling and so on.

Essentials of Business Letter

The so-called "Cs" are inadequate for teaching writing for various reasons. These criteria are abstract and cannot be easily conveyed; they are subjective and relative; and are qualitative and not quantitative and hence cannot be easily measured. What we need to specify are objective criteria that can be conveyed to teachers for teaching writing, to students to observe in their tasks, and to examiners for evaluating writing tasks.

Experienced teachers cite four main areas for teaching, testing and evaluating writing tasks. These are: (1) task coverage, (2) task organization, (3) lexical resource and (4) grammar and structure. Each of these consists of sub-structure elements as shown below:-

1. Task Coverage: Also called Task Attempt, Task Completion or Task Fulfillment. It consists of three sub-elements: (a) Format, (b) Task Completion, and (c) Tone and Style.
 - a) Format: Format does not mean just the layout as many teachers seem to think. More importantly, it means the text type and all that goes into the making and presenting of this text type, task expected, ideas and their relevance, tone and manner of communication, choice of lexis and register used, and the manner in which ideas are communicated. Format depends on the text type you are expected to write, that is whether it is a letter, office memo, notice, report (short or long), proposal and so on, as each text type has its own distinct format, use of register, etc.
 - b) Task Completion: Have you completed fully and appropriately the task given to you or expected of you including adequate and relevant ideas? Is the purpose of writing clear? Have you covered all the key points your task requires you to cover?
 - c) Tone and Style: Is the tone of your letter appropriate for the task involved? Are you aware of the formal and the informal styles of writing and have

you taken care to use the appropriate style of writing? Will your style of writing, particularly while conveying a bad news, cause much offence to the reader? Remember, for communication to take place, it ought to be not only 'accessible' but also 'acceptable' to the reader(s).

In other words, task coverage requires the learners to make the purpose of writing clear, to use the appropriate text type and tone as required by the addresser and the addressee relationship in business settings so as to make the communication both 'accessible' and 'acceptable'. Relevant and adequate ideas would require knowledge of business procedures e.g. the procedure required to open company's account with a bank will require knowledge of the type of account to be opened, documents needed to be signed, completed and sent; authorized signatory, and other documents and enclosures to be sent to the bank for meeting statutory/legal requirements.

2. Task Organisation: Also called Coherence and Cohesion or Discourse Organisation. It consists of four sub-elements:
 - a) Logical development of ideas
 - b) Inter-linking of sentences
 - c) Paragraphing
 - d) Referencing

Is there logical development of ideas in your writing? Have you used appropriate cohesive devices to indicate a logical relationship between ideas and linked sentences from the first to the next in the paragraph? Have you used paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately?

Is your backward and forward referencing accurate and appropriate?

Discourse organization requires the learners to achieve logical development of ideas in the light of the business settings e.g. how to convey good news / bad news; to keep reader's perspective in mind to achieve 'acceptability' of the communication by the reader for securing effectiveness in business settings; and to use the right layout and style of the given text type: e.g. letter, memorandum, report, notice, minutes of meeting and so on.

3. Lexical resource: It consists of two sub-elements:
 - a) vocabulary
 - b) spellings

Are your words and expressions accurate and appropriate to the business setting of the task? Do you give evidence of awareness of word formation, style and collocation in your selection and use of words and expressions? Are your spellings accurate? Will the density of errors in word formation and spellings impede communication?
4. a) Grammar and Structure: It consists of two sub-elements
 - i) grammar and structure
 - ii) punctuation

Is there a wide range and variety in your sentence structures? Are your sentences grammatically correct? Will the density of grammatical errors make communication difficult? What is the nature of these errors: are they systematic, a-systematic, or slips?

 - b) Do you use important punctuation marks to

make your meaning clear?

Experience shows that many people who are proficient in language fail to produce a satisfactory writing task - business correspondence or a piece of composition as these need special training and practice in all the above areas.

Approaches to Teaching Writing

If we look at the different methods of teaching composition writing, we find that there have evolved four different ways of teaching writing: (1) Controlled and Guided Composition Writing; (2) The Current Traditional Rhetoric Practice; (3) The Process Approach; and (4) English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In the history of teaching writing, these methods have evolved more or less in this order. If we go into the basic principles of these methods, we find that the first, second and fourth share the same basic principles and give importance to the product of writing. Hence they represent what has come to be known as 'Product Approach'. The method at serial number 3 is termed 'Process Approach' as it gives importance to the process of writing. In other words, we can say that there are two approaches to teaching writing:

- 1) The Product Approach, and
- 2) The Process Approach.

Business letters need knowledge of business processes/content and these cannot be taught by just giving 'model' letters without analysis or discussion. Learners must understand these processes through role-plays and activities and draft their own letters. It is also necessary that students react to each other's drafts and make suggestions for improvement and for this purpose the process

approach is most suitable for adult learners. This approach can give them a feel of the content and the order in which this content can be organized in their communication.

While scholars may quarrel about the merits and demerits of these two approaches, teachers cannot afford to do so and must make use of all these methods for teaching writing skills to their learners depending upon their level and needs beginning with 'controlled and guided' and moving on to 'free writing' tasks with extensive training and practice. Moreover, teaching ought to be done not only using different approaches and methods but also by using a variety of activities and tasks and topics/instructions need to be made as clear as possible, as shown in the example below. Existing practice of teaching unfortunately lacks in all these.

Suggestions for Teaching Business Letter Writing

The exercise given below, though comparatively controlled and guided, gives some freedom to the writer within the given framework. Moreover, the instructions are clear and the learners would know what the teacher expects from them.

Example: Your company has been dealing with a bank and your dealings are quite satisfactory. Of late, your business has expanded and you need an overdraft facility of Rs. 25 lacs from your bankers.

As the Manager of your company write a letter to the Manager of the Bank. In the letter:

- refer to your dealings with the bank
- describe the purpose of writing
- say what security the bank will get for giving this facility.

You must write at least 150 words. (Note: Under-length answers will

be penalized. Suggested time limit: 20 minutes).

What is expected is not just the layout of the letter without the body of the letter (message) as some students tend to produce when the examiner reserves 2 marks out of 10 just for the layout. Layout without the body (message) has little meaning and deserves no marks.

The problem is that in their adult life, there will be no teacher to 'control and guide' the students, and hence, they have to be trained to move towards free writing for which they must understand the business processes involved in such writing tasks. It is here that the theoretical knowledge of the relationship between the 'addresser' and the 'addressee' in business settings becomes important. For example, what all things must we mention or at least keep in mind while sending a Quotation in response to an enquiry from a buyer (some of the items may be optional in some situations)?

- Price: Prices quoted are sometimes subject to a time limit e.g. open for acceptance for 30 days; may change without notice; escalation clause may be added, that is, if there is an increase in prices of raw material, labour cost etc. there may be an increase in the prices and so on.
- Discount: Statement about discount for immediate payment on delivery or for large orders etc. can also be made under this heading.
- Delivery: Immediate delivery ex-stock that is from stock; within a time limit, say 15 days etc. from the receipt of firm order; may contain a force majeure clause i.e. barring unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

- Mode: Mode of delivery of goods can be by rail/road/sea/air/post parcel (V.P.P.)
- Other charges: Statements about other charges, if not made in the price list, are also made e.g. inclusive of taxes or not;
- Packing and Forwarding
- Transportation cost: Who will bear this cost? Will goods be delivered by the seller ex-godown/factory i.e. cost of transportation will be borne by the buyer; free delivery till rail head (f.o.r.); free delivery at sea port (f.o.b.); free delivery at buyers' place and so on.
- Insurance: Will insurance charges be extra or are prices inclusive of these charges?
- Dispute settlement: The company may add a clause saying that dispute settlement may be subject to the jurisdiction of courts in their area of business.
- Payment Terms: Part advance payment and balance on delivery of goods; payment immediately on delivery of goods; 30 days' credit with bank guarantee, etc. (The invoice and dispatch receipts are endorsed in the name of the buyers and sent through specified bank for realization of payments).

Which of these items should be introduced at a particular level of learning has to be decided by teachers/syllabus designers.

Learners' Problems

It is also essential for teachers to observe the kind of typical lapses our students make in composing business letters for remedial teaching. We often find our students writing 'Respected Sir' and 'Your's/Yours obediently' as salutations while writing a letter to a Bank Manager. They also find it difficult to phrase the 'Subject' of

the letter. It is not uncommon to find students using 'I' instead of 'We' while writing a letter to a bank for overdraft facility as the Manager of the firm. Experiences of teachers in this regard can help us prepare a collection of such lapses of our learners – an area that no foreign book can cover.

Some other problems that our learners face relate to the following important areas:–

1. Task Coverage: Learners need adequate and relevant ideas to write on a topic and there are many stages between 'adequate ideas' and 'no ideas'. There are many reasons why learners may not be able to fully satisfy all the requirements of the task. They may not have adequate and relevant ideas to write; they may misunderstand the topic completely or partially; may attempt the task partially; may focus more on some parts than on others leading to lopsided development of the topic.

Format and tone and style have to be taught – the latter is particularly problematic for Indian learners where little distinction is taught between formal and informal varieties of English.

2. Task Organisation: Again, there is a cline between 'no organizational features' and 'full control of organizational features'. There can be problems with both coherence and cohesion. There may be no logical development of ideas; or it may not be clear. Some learners may have limited number of linking devices and these are used repeatedly; linking devices between sentences may be missing, or over-used or wrongly used. Paragraphing is sometimes missing, or

inadequate or there may be no logic in paragraphing.

3. Vocabulary: Some learners have basic simple vocabulary and this may be used repeatedly; may use words and expressions inappropriately, collocation may be wrong; may show lack of word formation control; may sometimes use high-sounding words and expressions but often inappropriately; may confuse homonyms and homophones; and often L1 may cause errors.
4. Grammar and Structure: Learners with low-level proficiency tend to use simple short sentences; lack of wide range and variety may be missing; density of errors and lack or wrong punctuation may distort meaning.

We need not talk here much about spellings and sentence structures. In fact, these are two areas on which too much labour and red-ink is spent by our teachers. Accuracy of language, spellings and structures is important but Task Coverage and Task Organisation are more important and need to be taught and practiced.

A carefully devised Role Play Activity between pairs/groups (as buyers and sellers) can help students understand the complicated business process and the business terminology stated above. Writing, after all, is a covertly interactive process

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Teacher Resource Centres in Schools

What will the scenario be like for teacher development five years from now?

This question largely touches upon the whole human resource area. If teachers are seen as professionals dealing mainly in the growth of human resources, naturally, they themselves have developmental needs which have to be met.

These needs are often fuelled by the availability of interactive organisations like teacher's associations, in-services training, a lot of resource material available over the internet and so on. Unfortunately, so many lack access skills to all these largely because of the pressure of their own teaching loads, unsympathetic principals who fail to give them leave to attend teacher's workshops, inadequate computer literacy and difficulties of one kind or the other. The good news is that many have got wind of these facilities already, particularly, older hands and there is already a great demand for further professional growth.

It is quite likely that soon each school will have its own teachers' resource centre to meet the specific professional needs of teachers there. Currently, in a metropolis like Delhi, there are only four teacher's resource centres catering to more than 5000 schools. There is a crying need for more. At one leading centre where the present writer served as the director, teachers were full of questions: how to avoid stagnation in their profession, how to tackle large classes, how to get more resource material for remedial teaching, how to help the slow learner, special education and so on. There were also problems of curriculum load, syllabus re-fashioning and materials development particularly

making this relevant for local consumption. More and more senior teachers are discovering the need to develop fresh, more appropriate materials. For instance, EFL materials often need to be re-designed or re-thought out to cater to the need for national identity. This is more so in post-colonial scenarios like India where English is already a 'universal skill'

While teachers still struggle with large number of students and the stresses posed by heterogeneity, there are new pressures posed by the work-place. To take one example, the proliferation of ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) calls for better oral skills and voice and accent training in business process outsourcing jobs like call centres. Unfortunately, current teaching practices in virtually all schools do not evaluate oral skills, creating a real deficiency in our students. The spate of service industries like telemarketing, the hotel and tourism industries, require competent professionals with good speech skills. In fact, all occupations require communications skills for clientele of various kinds. However, schools do not have adequate personnel to teach such skills.

Fresh blood needs to be pumped into in-service training. In teacher resource centres senior teachers can take it in turns to pass on their skills to junior staff or the director of the resource centre can be rotationary. Only the innovative teachers should be appointed so that there is no heart burning about this. The post will then carry special prestige and teachers will automatically hone their skills for the coveted appointment. The institution is bound to benefit by this resurgence of interest.

Many teachers, in fact, are discovering their research springs from classroom activities themselves. This gives ideas for planning lessons better and improvising teaching methodologies. One innovative teacher turned a literature lesson into a panel discussion of select speakers. Students read brief papers of specific features of the lesson like theme, characters, story-line, and gave illustrative examples from the text. It not only gave listeners insight into the lesson but a fresh approach to delving into texts. After this there was smooth tackling of comprehension questions at the end of the lesson. Another primary teacher turned throwaway material like empty matchboxes into finger puppets and used these to dramatize texts. Children then wrote simple scripts of dialogue which they were able to act out.

The resource centres of each school could create their own archives of innovative teaching practices like these and teachers looking for new ideas could have a body of materials to take recourse to. Teachers from the computer department could spare some time each week to help ELT staff gain computer literacy skills. Those who need practice at improving their computer skills could be allowed to use the machines with special time-tables chalked out by the director of the resource centre.

So more innovation, more access skills, more resource materials are going to be the flag bearers of teacher development by 2011. The British Council, IATEFL and other organisations can offer a valuable interface for establishing teacher resource centres in our schools.



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Working With Words –An Approach

J.K. GANGAL

1.1 Those who have seen life in its entirety know it well that effective communication is the secret of success in every walk of life. Those who speak effectively carry the world with them. Those who can speak well carry the world with them, for effective communication is the magic mantra to conquer this seemingly difficult world.

1.2 Now the question arises: what makes an effective communication? Well, there could be many answers to this question. But, one thing which is common to all these answers is the effective word power.

1.3 The students' vocabulary, however, is the biggest weakness in the teaching-learning of English language, both at the plus two and the under-graduate levels. As per a rough estimation, the vocabulary of our students is strictly limited, ranging between 800–1200 words, which can hardly help them to communicate properly. The students have no idea how these words can be used as different parts of speech or figuratively. The phrases and idioms which help an individual to communicate effectively and concisely have become a thing of the past.

1.4 Now the question arises: who is to be blamed for this dismal situation - students

or teachers, or both? I think, both have to share this discredit equally. The teachers, of course, have to give a lead. The following lines will help the teachers to know what and how of working with words means, and how the students can be helped out to enrich their vocabulary and make it a real power to them.

2.1 What Teaching Words Involves

Teaching words does not mean just giving word-meaning as is very often done in most of our classrooms. In fact, it is a much more comprehensive activity to be pursued vigorously and creatively, both by the teacher and the taught in a systematic way. Teachers working with words for their students are expected to establish and strengthen their students' friendship with all essential words in terms of their meaning, literal as well as extended, their pronunciation, their appropriate use in different life situations, their cultural connotations, the phrases and idioms related to these words, and above all, their roots and prefixes and suffixes (Greek and Latin), from where those words have emerged (the etymology), and all such things that a teacher might think necessary for their students to know about these words e.g. using

'they' and 'their' in place of he/she, or his/her while referring to a person or a group of persons which is not gender specific.

3. PROBLEMS INVOLVED

3.1 Plurality of word meaning:

As words in English have more than one meaning to convey depending on the context in which they are used, the students find it difficult to learn these words correctly and use them appropriately in their communication.

3.2 Same word acting as different parts of speech:

Mostly words in English can be used as different parts of speech depending on the function they perform, which causes the problem of meaning for the learner, e.g.

- a) You need a good **conduct** certificate from your school to seek admission in another school. (Noun)
- b) Your selection depends on how you **conduct** yourself at the time of your interview. (Verb)

Some of the schools and colleges are even now using 'Form' and not 'Function' as a means to study the grammar of English words, which has made the teaching of words as a futile exercise from the point of view of usage.

3.3 Extended meaning of words:

Words not only have different meanings (denot-

ational use where a word only describes a thing rather than the feelings or ideas it suggests), but they can also be stretched in meaning to fit different contexts (extended use of words). This extended use of words, which is mainly meant for advanced learners of English language (students at the +2 and under-graduate levels), creates a great problem for those who are not very proficient in the language.

3.4 **Synonyms and Antonyms**

Any good dictionary will tell you that English language operates through the correct use of synonyms and antonyms of words, which really poses a big problem to those whose mother tongue is other than English.

3.5 **Collocations**

In English there is a convention which tells us which word goes with which word in use. In other words, it tells the users of English language which words can be paired. e.g. we say: 'fast asleep' but we can't say 'fast awake.' Combining or pairing these words correctly, which we call collocation is something wherein the non-native speakers of English often go wrong and which they find highly challenging.

3.6 **Phrasal verbs and Idioms**

A verb combined with an adverb or a preposition, or sometimes both, to give a new meaning is called a phrasal verb e.g. **deal in, go in for, see to**. As a phrase has nothing to

do with the independent meanings of the individual words combined to form a verbal phrase, students find it extremely difficult to learn it and use it in their communication correctly.

Similarly, an English idiom which is a group of words meaning of which is different from the meanings of individual words forming the idiom (e.g. 'Let the cat out of the bag' is an idiom which means *to tell a secret by mistake*) is equally stressful for students to learn and make a part of their linguistic ability. Further, an idiom being typical of a particular group, period or place, its teaching and learning by the non-native speakers is a further challenge, and needs special strategies to master.

3.7 **Cultural flavour**

Some words in English have cultural allusions, and as such to understand them you must be familiar with them, e.g. **a boy friend or a girl friend** does not mean just a friend of the opposite sex, but someone who you are courting with a view to marrying.

3.8 **Homographs and Homophones**

A homograph is a word that is spelled the same way as another word but pronounced the same way, or differently e.g. bow (a device used to shoot arrows) or (bow meaning bending). Naturally, a homograph is yet another difficult area for a non-native speaker to learn.

Similarly, a homophone (a word which is pronounced

the same way as another word but has a different meaning, or different spelling, or both, e.g. so, sew), is equally challenging.

3.9 **Greek and Latin root words**

We all know that a large number of English words originate from Greek and Latin root words, which makes the teaching and learning of English words a really difficult task. For example, words such as egoism, egotism, ego-mania though come from the same root 'ego' have different meanings to convey.

3.10 **Archaism**

Archaism is a word or expression which is not generally used any more e.g. words like **thou, thee, yonder, whither**. When such words occur in writing, a learner finds them difficult to understand.

4. **STRATEGIES**

4.1 In view of the above multiplicity of problems involved in the teaching-learning of words, it is just not possible to use only one particular strategy to get the desired results in the area of developing word power. In fact, a zealous teacher would always like to use more than one strategy for good dividends, while working with words. The following are some of the strategies which have been found highly productive. You may also try some of them as per your need:

4.1.1 **Contextualized teaching**

As words have always more than one meaning the teaching has got to be contextualized. For

that purpose, the context provided in the lesson concerned may not be just sufficient. The teacher will have to use different situations picked up from real life to enable the students know and learn different meanings of the words concerned. This will further reinforce the idea in the students' minds that words convey meaning only in a context and not out of context.

4.1.2 Participatory-Interactive Approach

Under this approach both the teacher and the students work together as a team, in which besides the teacher each participating student has a definite role to play. The results of their working together, however, are equally shared by one and all involved in the working team. The division of work ranges from the preparation of the word list to finding out their meanings, (both literal and extended), their usage in different life situations, synonyms and antonyms, root words from where those have originated, their cultural allusions, important phrases and idioms connected with them, and above all, how those words are pronounced.

4.1.2 (a) In order to translate their planning into action the participating students are divided into small groups, called the learning webs. They work in their respective groups till the completion of their work. They, however, share their findings with the rest of the study groups in the whole class session, in which

the reporter of each study group presents the findings of their group for the benefit of other group members. A word of caution! Before starting their work each working group should make a detailed action plan in the allotted area. Each member of the group should also be clearly briefed about his or her role in the entire learning operation.

4.1.3 Etymological Approach

Etymology, as you know, means the study of the origin of a word. As most of English words have their roots in Greek or Latin words, it is imperative to study these root words to know their present meanings. The study of these root words will enable the students to easily guess the correct meanings of a large number of unfamiliar words without having resorted to the dictionary.

4.1.4 The etymological approach will also help you to know how to use the same word as a different part of speech which will go a long way to enrich your vocabulary for effective use of the English language.

5. Programmed teaching

As a person easily forgets newly acquired knowledge within 15-20 minutes of its acquiring, it is imperative to keep revising it at staggered intervals - from half an hour to one month's time. The programmed learning which involves frequent repetitions and learning reinforcement opportunities has been found extremely useful to reinforce the newly acquired words.

6. Using word-games

The teacher can use any number of language games to reinforce the newly taught words. There are plenty of books available on the subject in the market.

7. One word for a group of words/Phrase

In order to teach how to communicate precisely and briefly, 'one word for a group of words' type exercise has been found extremely useful. For example: Find out one word for: something happening after the death of an individual (= posthumously)

Example:

Her book on Linguistics was published posthumously.

8. Reading fast

The skill to read fast (at least 400-500 words per minute) is the key to success in life. In this competitive world there is so much to read and know about to be able to compete with others successfully. The reading speed has got to be developed systematically, without making any compromise with reading comprehension. This will require a constant use of a stopwatch or any other time marking technique to compare the reading performance, in terms of speed and comprehension, every time with the earlier one. Always remember that good readers, with the speed of 600-700 words per minute, are always much ahead of their competitors in every walk of life.

7. TEACHING MODULE

Working with words will need an activity-based

teaching module for good educational dividends. The activities have to be planned under three major heads—Before the Session, During the Session and After the Session.

7. BEFORE THE SESSION

7.1 In fact, this may be called the period of preparation for actual teaching of words. Naturally, if this preparation is thorough and multi-dimensional in approach, students will find working with words a pleasurable activity in the entire process of learning English language through words. This phase entails the following main activities, conceived, planned and executed jointly by the teacher and the student representatives.

7.1.1 Lesson-wise selection of words to be taught

Instead of being confined to the list of new words which are usually given in the beginning of the lesson, the list of the new words to be taught should be based on the actual need and standard of the class.

7.1(a) It would be a good idea if at least four students—two bright and two average—are co-opted by the teacher to work with him or her to prepare this desired list of words to be taught.

7.1(b) While preparing the list, all such considerations as talked of in Para 2 and its sub-paragraphs above must be kept in view. This will help the teacher to address all those problems involved in working with words from the students' point of view.

7.1(c) Besides, considerations like synonyms, antonyms,

literal and extended meanings of words, their pair-words (collocations), the functional approach to teaching of parts of speech, homonyms, and above all their correct pronunciation are equally important while working out a multi-dimensional approach to teaching of words.

7.1.2 In a joint session of students the work connected with various aspects of working with words may be distributed as per their choice. The teacher must ensure that the work is given as per the individual's choice only to keep them motivated all through the learning process.

7.2 Another important task on the part of the teacher is to prepare a complete action plan and brief the students how to go about it while working in groups.

7.3 The teacher under this scheme is required to monitor the progress of each group and to troubleshoot the problems as and when they arise.

7.4 The following approach may be judiciously used to get the desired results:

7.4.1 Instead of using the teacher-dominated approach, the teacher had better use the Participatory-Interactive Approach – the approach which involves one and all in the learning process. Under this scheme, each student is both the teacher and the taught. The teacher is also like a co-learner. Of course, he or she is the leader of all the learning groups.

7.4.2 The decision regarding various approaches and

strategies to be used during the teaching session is also to be made at the planning stage for effective results.

7.4.3 Since language games play an important part in reinforcing the language items, including words, it would be a useful exercise to decide on the list of the games to be used.

7.4.4 As evaluation is an integral part of teaching, the group under the leadership of their teacher must clearly decide on the evaluation techniques to be used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching-learning programme.

8. DURING THE SESSION

8.1 During the session students work in their respective groups – each group working in the area of their choice using the technique as decided at the planning stage. The teacher moves around to make sure that every student is busy doing the entrusted work in the group. In case of any problem the teacher is also expected to troubleshoot it.

8.2 Once each group finishes the entrusted work, then form the whole class group and sit in the traditional manner, with the teacher in the focus. The respective group leaders come on to the dais and share with the rest of the group members the findings of their group. In case of any serious omission the teacher is there to supplement and complement it.

8.3 Thereafter, each student asks the entire class one or two questions which he or she could not understand

properly, while learning in the group. Since these are open ended questions, any student can answer them. In case of any discrepancy or an unsatisfactory answer the teacher is there to address those questions.

8.4 Then comes the stage of further reinforcement of the words, which can be easily done by organizing various word games. For developing skill in using a word as different parts of speech, learning synonyms and antonyms of words, spelling, and for learning the correct use of prefixes and suffixes, word games have been found extremely helpful.

9. AFTER THE SESSION

9.1 The after-session activities are equally important to make these words and

phrases the part of the students' permanent memory. The following activities are worth considering:

9.2 The students note down in their note-book, captioned 'My Dictionary' only those words that they have thoroughly learned in terms of their literal and extended meanings, etymology, synonyms and antonyms, their usage in different life situations, including their use as different parts of speech. They are also expected to know the correct pronunciation and spelling of these words.

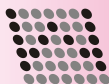
9.3 Frequent revision of the words entered into 'My Dictionary' is very important for at least first three months of their first acquaintance to make them

a part of your memory and active use as and when needed.

To sum up, working with words can be as interesting, or as monotonous as any other language activity, depending on the quality and vision of the teacher, and to what extent you make this activity learner-friendly by using Participatory Interactive Approach, clubbed with other appropriate strategies referred to above. You may also use your own innovative approach to make the working with words a pleasurable activity for both the teacher and the taught, rather than an eye-wash.



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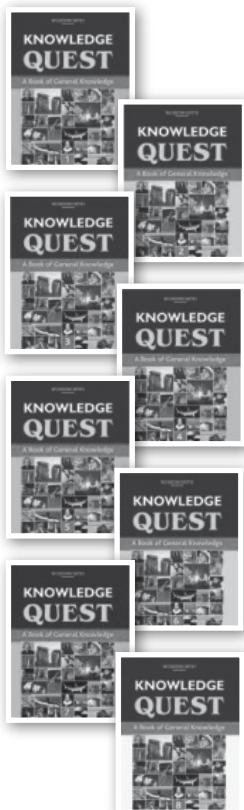
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Teaching Spoken English: A Bilingual Approach

C. Meenakshi Sundaram and B. S. Prameela Priadersini

Introduction:

English Language teaching plays a vital role in the engineering curriculum today. Engineering graduates aspire for jobs throughout the world and for that, competence in English especially spoken English is very essential.

The situation where in I teach English, the students come from rural areas, they have very little foundation in English. They don't have support from their families as far as English is concerned because most of them are first generation college students. In order to reach them i.e., make them realize the need of English in their career and learn it, I had to try new methods. In the ELT arena methods are plenty and I had a choice to make. This became necessary because of the constraints placed on us by the English curriculum designed by the university to which we are affiliated.

I shall briefly outline the kind of English course work prescribed for the First Year Under Graduate students of engineering in our university.

Syllabus:

The syllabus has 5 units viz.

1. Reading, 2. Listening, 3. Writing, 4. Speaking, 5. Focus on Language

Sixty hours are allocated to complete the syllabus.

Course work:

The lecturer plans out the work load according to the time table. She/he goes to the class and completes the portions in the stipulated time.

Examination:

Tests and model examinations are given to the students. They are given revision in order to score marks. Much importance is given only to writing; the other three skills are neglected because they are not listed in the examination. Reading comprehension is tested through a single question.

Results:

Since all are interested only in the results obtained, the language becomes examination-oriented. The students are prepared for it and trained for it. Of course, the results obtained are excellent but they are not able to use English though they come out successfully in the University examination.

Lack of Language Fluency:

Success in English examinations does not ensure fluent and independent use of English. They are not confident in speaking in English or writing something on their own. So they are unable to shine well in the interviews and get a good job. So I took a step to make them speak in English without fear and for that I started with their Mother Tongue and slowly came to the second language. I felt that the bilingual approach would give a good result. This paper deals with the tasks and results obtained through the bilingual approach.

Background of Students:

The students whom I taught were from the rural background. They did not have sound knowledge of English nor were they the children of educated parents, so they depended more on their teachers for their communicative

competence and English proficiency.

Process of Learning:

Palmer says "There are three processes in learning a language – receiving the knowledge or materials, fixing it in the memory by repetition and using it in actual practice until it becomes a personal skill."

Bilingual Approach:

My approach was to make the students learn the language first through the method of bilingualism so that the other two processes would follow automatically without much stress or strain. As there was an urgent need to improve their spoken English, more attention was given to spoken English.

Preliminary Steps:

The students were given some warm-up exercises to improve and gain confidence in speaking. Some topics with which they were familiar were given. They first did not open their mouths. Later, they were asked to say something about the topic in their mother tongue. The sentences which were said in their mother tongue were translated in English and the students were asked to repeat them. When they repeated in English, they gained some confidence. This was practised for 4 to 5 periods. The learners gained the knowledge of expressing things familiar to them in English where the teacher corrected their mistakes in content and grammar. In some situations there had to be a model demonstration also.

Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching:

In the next level students were

introduced to the oral approach and situational language teaching. Here they were given printed English dialogues, which were very easy to read. They read and understood them in their mother tongue. Later they were asked to enact them. During the activity the mistakes were corrected. At the end of it the learners were asked questions on the dialogue and made to answer them. As most of the dialogues were actual situations which occur in day-to-day life like meeting a bank officer to open an account, enquiring about railway ticket etc., they were able to answer in English. The learner is expected to apply the language thus learned in the classroom to situations outside the classroom. Primary importance was given to the spoken language. This went on for 4 to 5 periods at the end of which the students were able to speak with confidence and clarity. Pronunciation and fluency also improved to some extent. But still the mother tongue played a vital role.

Since their thinking was in their mother tongue and later they translated it into English. "A radical transformation is called for, a new orientation of procedure is demanded, and a thorough house cleaning of methods, materials and tests is unavoidable. (Brooks, 1964)."

Once they gained confidence in thinking in their mother tongue and expressing it in English by translating it, communicative language teaching approach was used.

Communicative Language Teaching:

In this process "humanistic techniques engage the whole process, including the emotions and feelings as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioral skills. Another language teaching tradition with which CLT is linked

is a set of practices used in certain kinds of bilingual education programs referred to by Mackey 1972 as 'Language Alternation'. In language alternation a message is presented in the native language and then again in the second language. The students know the meaning and flow of a Second Language message from their recall of the parallel meaning and flow of the mother tongue message. They begin to piece together a new language out of these message sets.

This was the method which was followed to make the learners achieve the competence in spoken English.

Many might question the use of mother tongue to teach a second language after so many years of learning it. But in my situation the earliest teaching had not been a success. And the students had to master the language use in a short time.

Group Discussion:

The learners were given the topics to discuss in groups of 5 or 6. They first discussed in the mother tongue and then used the Second Language and brought out their ideas.

Their practice continued for 5 to 6 periods in which the students were also asked to give a short report of the previous day's discussion.

During discussion everyone was made to listen to what others said so that they could gain something out of it for "CCI learners are encouraged to attend to the "overhear" they experience between other learners and their knowledge. The result of the "overhear" is that every member of the group can understand what any given learner is trying to communicate" (La Forge, 1983).

Result:

This method proved very fruitful since almost 95% of the students

gained confidence in speaking well without fear.

The results of the bilingual method are:

1. They gained confidence
2. They lost the fear of English as a foreign language.
3. They gained self expression
4. They improved their fluency
5. Creativity was improved

Conclusion:

The teacher's role was that of facilitating the use of English in a holistic manner and not of a decision maker.

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INTERVIEW

‘In Future the Dependence on English will be Marginal’

Barun Kumar Mishra interviews Professor P.K.S. Pandey, JNU, New Delhi

Barun: The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has recently recommended teaching of English as a compulsory subject along with regional languages/mother tongue from class I across the country. What do you think of this recommendation looking at the gigantic task it involves?

Prof. Pandey: Well, in my personal opinion, we are in a tricky situation. It is very difficult to be certain about whether this is going to be the best thing that we can have for the Indian education system. My hesitation here is on two grounds. First, it is that when we propose a revision in a certain system the existing system is dispassionately examined and ways and means are suggested to reduce the weaknesses and work on the strength. There should have been a full scale evaluation of the methods and materials used for English medium teaching in the rural and semi-urban India so far. That should have been used as the basis for suggesting improvement in the existing system in order to achieve the end result. Without such an exercise, the proposal for introducing English at Level I along with the home language of the child seems to lack in empirical strength.



Second, there is an apparent clash here between the needs and requirements of remote regions where languages that are treated as minority and endangered are spoken. We have hundreds of them. As far as I know, there is a move to have education in primary schools imparted through these home languages in several states

of India, especially in the north-east. As we know, these languages are the main window on the cultural heritage of their communities, and their preservation is as important as the preservation of bio-diversity of the globe. So, on the one hand, we need to see that these endangered

languages are preserved and thereby the linguistic diversity of the south Asian region is preserved, by providing opportunities for the communities to use them at their will. And, on the other hand, we have English being put up as the instrument of the creation of a knowledge society, which presumably will be a part of the global knowledge society. What the knowledge commission has to minimally do is to consider how the two aims are going to be reconciled.

Thinking aside from any deductive principle NKC may have used as the basis for their proposal, one can imagine a time, not

in too distant a future, when we are successful with the on-going research on machine translation which will allow us to translate automatically from one language to another, at least in the relatively objective domains of language use, such as science and technology. Then the whole argument for the dependence on English will appear nugatory.

As of now, the best way in which the recommendations of NKC can be taken is to provide facilities countrywide for introducing English at Level I if the community feels the need for it, but not impose it as a compulsory subject in school at that level.

Barun: The National Knowledge Commission believes that the introduction of English from class 1 would transform India into a knowledge society; and in just 12 years, it would provide students leaving school leavers with far more equal access to higher education and 3-5 years thereafter, much more opportunities for employment. Don't you think it is a Utopian dream and that it would be at the cost of the growth of Indian languages?

Prof. Pandey: It is not just a Utopian dream; it appears to me to be a narrow dream, considering the fact that the society progresses on many fronts and employment is one of them. English medium education in the country from the start will certainly lead to a labour force that is part of the global

labour force. It has however to be seen that the capital of cultural tradition and diversity is not only sustained but also allowed to grow according to the will of our communities.

For employment, high-level competence in one global language is not the only thing needed. Consider technical education—engineering, medicine, and other such fields – which require competence and skills in those various professions much more than communicative competence in English. The kind of linguistic competence required for a child's education need not occupy the entire period of her education. A concentrated effort at using the best teaching and learning materials and techniques can achieve the desired result. So our concern should be for the quality of English education imparted in the schools rather than for the length of the period of education. And, you are right. Protracted education through English may well be at the cost of the Indian languages.

Barun: According to NKC's statement as reported in the Times of India dated Jan 12, 2007 only nine of the 28 states and three union territories in India have introduced English as a compulsory subject from class I'. Do you think it is desirable and possible to introduce English from class I when we have neither the trained teachers, nor appropriate teaching material, nor a sound pedagogy for the millions of children in rural and semi urban areas of India who would be affected by this decision?

Prof. Pandey: It certainly is more important to focus on the resources that are already available at this stage for teaching English in India than on extending the period of learning it. We need to improve

the resources by providing better teaching materials, by improving on the teachers training programmes, by providing all the infrastructural facility in the classroom. The classroom scene has changed vastly from earlier times, I believe, in the availability of facilities for language teaching. With the concerted effort to extending them to semi-urban and rural India, the standard of language learning certainly can be achieved faster and the hurdles and difficulties in learning English in these areas can be overcome.

Barun: Could you suggest the kind of pedagogy that would work the best in the circumstances mentioned earlier?

Prof. Pandey: The kind of pedagogy that can be seen as working best in the circumstances seems to be the one that takes into account the abilities of our learners to make generalizations on their own with given adequate data, on the one hand, and enables the language learner to use the language in as many situations as possible. It is important to establish the acquisition of language by the learner by giving him the opportunity to use it in different circumstances and situations. Language works both ways, as a cognitive agent as well as a communicative instrument.

If English has to be introduced at Level I then the first couple of years should focus on exposure to the language. The learner may be given perception-based tasks to perform. Production based tasks must begin at a later level, say, Level III, at which stage both types of tasks may be organized in the classroom. Such coordination between linguistic skills will be fairly close to the course of home language acquisition.

Barun: What method/strategy would you suggest for creating

opportunities for language learning outside the classroom in rural and semi urban areas? Would you attach any premium to any method that encounters teaching of English with the support of the mother tongue of the learner in the initial years of teaching?

Prof. Pandey: Outside the classroom, I suppose it is not within the control of the pedagogue. It is the community that largely controls the social domain and one cannot bring out programmes to change the society in order to meet the needs of second language learning. The language teacher however can try to isolate social situations in which a specific language can be used for faster learning. This has to be left entirely to the pedagogue and the learner group.

As for the part of the question concerning the premium to any teaching method that involves the use of the mother tongue of the learner in the initial years of teaching, I should say both Yes and No. Yes, if the language teacher is fully aware of when and how to make this transition smoothly. But if he is not, then it may be a hurdle in the efficient learning of the target language. Having known the difficulties that the learner faces in using the target language without acquiring it, certainly the teacher should take into account the difficulties to support and help the learner so that he feels encouraged to use the target language, irrespective of the mistakes he makes in its use.

The teacher has to provide instructions in the target language, but there should never be any breach of communication between the teacher and the learner. So in order to save a situation where there is going to be a breach in communication you allow the use

of the mother tongue; to that extent alone, not beyond it.

Barun: How far is the idea of teaching English to the people in the remotest parts of India possible through bilingual radio and TV channels?

Prof. Pandey: It is possible,

but to a limited extent. These programmes lack in interactive participation by learners. Learners get whatever is given to them. So such programmes have limited use. There are, however, resources in addition to TV and radio. With internet connections interactive

classrooms can be expected to have wider and deeper reach among communities. And better results can then be expected.



Barun Mishra teaches English at Rajdhani College, University of Delhi.

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REPORTS

Five-Day ELT Workshop in Udaipur

Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur that runs 9 activity centres in Hazira (Surat) to improve the quality of Education in Hazira Schools organised a five-Day ELT Workshop in Udaipur from February 26 to March 2, 2007 in collaboration with Hazira LNG and port companies and KVSVS (a local NGO) for the instructors at the activity centres which meet special needs of children of the villages in and around Hazira.

The activity centre instructors are mostly housewives and work there part time.

The objective of the workshop was to orient instructors in teaching children English by using a variety of activities and also to brush



up their present knowledge of grammar in fundamental concepts like nouns, pronouns, verbs etc.

In the beginning of the workshop, Prof. Khanna tested instructors' present English reading and writing skills. In the subsequent sessions, he discussed some key grammatical concepts like nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions etc with the instructors. Prof. Khanna explained the centrality of action and naming words in a sentence, the understanding of which could help in organizing different activities for children.

Many activities in the workshop focused on helping instructors to confidently articulate in English. During five days some instructors did try to interact in English.

Instructors lack confidence in dealing with English as they have lost contact with it for quite some time now.

Instructors generally showed keen interest in the workshop towards learning the language. They actively participated in the activities. An overwhelming response was seen in the speaking activities that focused around helping instructors develop articulation skills. The purpose of the story telling sessions was to help instructors learn English themselves as well use it for teaching children.

Prof. Khanna encouraged instructors to take help from pictures for developing interesting contexts for teaching English to children in the activity centers. Prof. Khanna gave different ideas on how to use quiz and origami for teaching English at the activity center. He ended the workshop by asking instructors to take help from rhymes as rhyming plays an important role in teaching of English sounds to children.



Asim Mandal

*Coordinator Vidya Bhawan
Resource Centre, Hazira.*



Creative Writing: A Workshop

A one day workshop on Creative Writing Pedagogy was organised at Zakir Hussain College, University of Delhi on February 17, 2007. The workshop was conducted by Valerie Miner, award-winning author and Professor at Stanford University, USA.

Professor Miner began the workshop with readings from her own work. She read two micro or flash fictions and one short story. Her readings mesmerised

the audience and the discussion focused on the importance of orality in literature.

In the next session Prof. Miner spoke about forms of fiction, especially the difference between writing a short story and a novel. From there she went on to discuss the nitty-gritty of pedagogy. The teachers shared their experiences and concerns: differences between poetry and prose writing, between North American literature and

literature from other countries, bilingualism – all were taken up and discussed. An important point raised was about the gap between linguistic capability and ideas. Professor Miner expressed the view that creative writing can be effectively taught to students whose linguistic capability needs development. In fact, the teaching of creative writing may actually help development of language skills. Most teachers who are

already teaching the course agreed with this view.

The workshop ended with a presentation on the aforementioned book 'Creative Writing: A Manual for Beginners.' As Prof. Miner put it, "It is in the fitness of things that we conclude with what is happening here – in India, in Delhi."

The Principal of Zakir Hussain College, Dr. Aslam Parvaiz, emphasised the importance of creative writing course not only because it enhances job opportunities for the students but also because it fosters original thinking.



Saloni Sharma teaches English at Zakir Hussain College (M), University of Delhi.

Business English

A workshop on 'Business English' was organized jointly by the Department of English, SPM College and FORTELL on April 2nd, 2007 in SPM College. The workshop was conducted by Diane Harley (English Language fellow from Indiana University, USA). About 25 teachers from different colleges and schools participated in the workshop. Diane emphasized the importance of engaging students in short activities on business topics e.g. applying for jobs, writing resumes, writing memos and reports, making presentations. The ABC of good writing according to Diane is accuracy (A), brevity (B), and Clarity (C). She also emphasized the importance of keeping the audience and purpose in mind while writing.

Dr. Kusum Virmani teaches English at SPM College, University of Delhi.

Orientation Workshop for Text Book Development



The VBERC organized a workshop for development of English Language text books (for classes I–VIII) at Udaipur from March 26 to April 1, 2007. The aim of the workshop was to provide a framework for innovative text books that would initially be used in about hundred (government & private) schools all over Rajasthan. The resource persons Prof. R.K. Agnihotri and Dr. A.L. Khanna conducted the workshop and focused on the following issues:

- (i) orientation of the participants
- (ii) selection of appropriate course materials based on insights from linguistics and principles and practices of pedagogy
- (iii) drawing up of syllabus for all the classes. A total of twenty-three participants comprising teachers, linguists, resource persons and ELT practitioners from Delhi, Vidya Bhawan School and Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (Jaipur, Udaipur and Hazira) had brain storming sessions

for designing the text books and selecting course materials meant for children from semi-urban and rural areas who have very little exposure to English at home or outside and are thus first generation learners of the same.

On the opening day of the workshop, a few resource persons from VBERC, Udaipur made a presentation that drew attention to the socio-economic status and educational requirements of the target group. Given that the children are from semi-urban and rural belts with scanty exposure to English, a few guidelines were drawn during the workshop:

- i) role of the mother tongue would be underscored and could be used as a useful resource for the teaching of English.
- ii) fluency would not be compromised on account of accuracy.
- iii) the text books would focus on generating ideas and deal



with relevant issues rather than preach high morality and advocate character building.

- iv) the text books would contain material that the students can identify with and relate to and there would be no compromise on the aesthetic quality of the same.
- v) ample scope would be provided by the books to use and develop the creative potential of the children and exploit their natural language learning potential.

The week-long workshop saw extensive debate and discussion while drawing parameters and selecting sample course materials for the main course book, work books and teacher's books. The ELT project also envisages audio cassettes and video CDs, supplementary materials and a teacher training module for successful launch and subsequent use of the text books in the schools.

Some of the cardinal linguistic and pedagogic issues and questions that emerged during the discussions were: should English teaching start with the alphabet as it facilitates recognition or should there be contextual understanding of phonemic sounds and their corresponding phonetic variations; to what degree should variability be tolerated and is there a 'correct' way of writing; what are the

processes of learning and to what extent does the innate capacity of the child help to acquire a second language?

An important principle adopted during the workshop was the theme-based content for the text books where texts from different genres would be juxtaposed under one theme and explored for their inter- and intra-textuality. The participants identified relevant themes for each class and the workshop ended on a successful note with each member jointly developing one unit on one theme for each class.



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Bhawan Resource Centre,
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Five-Day Intensive Course on Teaching English Language and Literature

Context for the Course

The English Department of Bharati College has made a constant and ongoing endeavour to design curriculum, develop teaching materials and organize seminars to enhance teaching skills of the teachers. It was with this purpose in mind that Ms Diane Harley conducted an intensive workshop for teachers of English Literature in Bharati College from March 6 to 10, 2007. She is at present (from December 2006 to June 2007) attached to Bharati College as an English Language Fellow under the ELF Programme funded by the

US State Department Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs.

Participants

Faculty members of the English Department of Bharati College as well as other English teachers

of Delhi University attended the course. It was felt that the course would be useful for prospective teachers too and hence outgoing English Honours students also participated in it.



Focus of the Course

The workshop focused on the methodology of teaching English to students learning English as a second language – the L2 learners. As teachers of English language and literature, we are often worried about the existing level and background knowledge of a multilingual, heterogeneous class and are not sure of the linguistic or pedagogic scaffolding required to take the students to the next level. Ms Harley very effectively demonstrated the integrated and linked approach to teach listening, speaking, reading and writing to L2 students.

Course Content

Listening in the classroom, Harley stressed, should be as much like real life as possible – spontaneous, informal, disorganized, with gaps and fillers. Providing a 'listening purpose' is often useful as the learners have in advance some idea about the text they are going to hear.

Next, taking a group of L2 learners as her demonstration class, Harley showed the importance of a 'focused reading' for overall comprehension of a given text. The students have to be then taught to look for the 'topic sentence' in the given passage or text. Once the focus is established, it is easy for the students to arrive at the meaning by the process of inference, elimination, comparison and evaluation.

Oral fluency activities have to be devised by involving students in debatable subjects or topics that generate arguments. Discussion of visuals, comparison charts and role-play can make communication more interactive and productive.



The last day of the workshop focused on formulating activities for students that would encourage writing skills. Students have to be taught to maintain a balance between content and form - the expression of ideas and the formal aspect of language.

Next in the agenda was learning to evaluate. We were introduced to the holistic Scoring Rubric Method developed by ESL teachers of Virginia, USA. The Rubric Method assigns certain points for clarity of meaning, coherence of ideas, logical organization, sentence structure, vocabulary and grammar.

Significance of the Course

The seminar made a significant and holistic contribution in changing the teachers' perspective of the methodology of teaching to L2 learners. It provided vital step-by-step guidance on how to prepare a text, what to pre-teach, the activities required to assess comprehension, and finally how to evaluate.

Extensive training materials and handouts provided to the teachers made us aware of the practical problems both students and teachers face, and also more importantly, how to prepare such teaching materials for the students.

The focus and encouragement was more on innovation and to think beyond the stringent structure of the syllabus.

Learning Points

In brief, the teachers have to keep in mind the following points while enhancing the learning skills and competency of the students:

- Classroom teaching has to be interesting and interactive to ensure student participation:
 - Generate arguments
 - Ask students to compare and contrast
- Test listening comprehension by simulating real life scenes
- Provide a 'listening purpose'
- Teach students to look for the 'topic sentence'
- Test whether students can comprehend unfamiliar words and phrases by inference and contextualisation
- Encourage them to look beyond the apparent meaning
- Teach students to edit their own work
- Adopt Rubric Method of evaluation
- Evaluation should be formative

Forging Ahead

The keenness that the workshop generated among the teachers and the enthusiasm with which the students responded, made us more resolute to devise ways to keep up this interest. We have to consciously take up the initiative to adopt the methods in our classroom teaching. An intensive and sustained effort has to be made to make learning less pedagogical and more interactive and learner oriented.



Sutapa Datta teaches English at Bharti College, University of Delhi.

CREATIVE WRITING

I have been conditioned to believe that we Indians have always been belated romanticists, modernists, post-modernists and all the 'ists' that rolls in and out of the Western Literary Factory. The need to evaluate our literary tradition in terms and categories, defined and codified by the 'Other', is an obsessive, compulsive, colonial circumscription. As an 'art, craft, or industry', translation too is overshadowed by the omnipotent presence of English as the normative target language.

Nonetheless, the business of translating into English has provided a customized dashboard to share, view and appreciate our distinctive multicultural and multilingual identity.

Call it imagist, surrealist, post-modernist, anarchist or whatever you wish, the poetry of Nilmoni Phookan is compelling and labyrinthine. His interaction with European, Japanese or Chinese models of poetic construction is a self-conscious borrowing with which he has experimented and enriched the Assamese poetic tradition.

Do not ask me how I am*

do not ask me how i am
i haven't asked that of myself
down the Kalang flows
a headless girl
what was i yester-night...
king hermit peasant labourer
lover naxal poet
a tiger in search of water
after a hunt...
i have forgotten what i was.

do not ask me what I am
after all i'm not alone
even after that last meal
i couldn't bid farewell
nor could I take my leave...
since Auschwitz
i haven't laughed
haven't cried either.

for where would i go
i have forgotten from where i
came
the day lives on vomiting blood
the skulls and bones
go down the evening path
with a wry smile...
for in the shop's show case

a pair of dogs in coital frenzy...
at Bhootnath is a blind Kali
wearing a girdle of male genitals
around her waist

for everyone has the same fear
even the dead –
to say or to act
to open the window or the door
for waiting since then...
lies sham pretence deceit
youth cruel kind.

do not ask me how I am
for it is dark
now even it flickers
now even it shimmers
on the trail of
misfortune adversity distress
the banner of man's blood.

for in my pockets I carry
two forbidden hands
in my bosom
a bullet reddened in flight
for it is silence all around
the terrible clamour of peace.
Do not ask me how I am
Down the kalang floats
A headless girl

For forty-two hours
My corpse lies
In the foothpaths of guwahati
For even now I have my eyes
open
My death too is open-eyed
For in ditches and pools
River and lake
Forming swarms the fish ...
O you my ambling horseman!

* *The poem is in the form of a series of rambling thoughts and shifting impressions as the dead poet persona clings on to the remnants of his earthly consciousness... following his own logic of association before being charioted away to the other world. Following the original, the translation has been left largely unpunctuated, except when inevitable. Hope it captures the spoken-heard form of the poem.*

Kalang: A river that flows through the Nagaon district in Assam.

Bhootnath: Situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra, Bhootnath is a famous temple and cremation ground in Guwahati.



Samarjit Das is Web Content Manager. He has interest in Digital Convergence, Tradaptations; Content Aggregation; Online Branding & Promotion.

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Dr A. L. Khanna,
a_l_khanna@yahoo.co.in

TWOSOME ME

Ears longing for sonorous sounds of devotion

Heart waiting for free flow of emotion

Honied happiness, endeared bliss all around

On the sky of salubrious support and ecstasy I mount.

But herein lies the dried sea of human kindness

Disrooted defunct disordered manliness

Heart ached and revolted at others' delights

Toying with fragile unsoothing lights

Oh! The golden past of warmth and delight

But for myself 'I don't care' and 'why should I'

Green clean dwelling for me yet tons of filth I breed and pile

I preach humbleness yet I am a tiger more than a while

I prayed, Dear God! I'm in the dark, light my path

But my memory is impaired and heart indignant

Hence my claim "I did it and I am the creator of my fate

Master of my destiny and destined to be great."

Prema Malhotra teaches English at Dayal Singh College, University of Delhi.

Contributions Invited!!!

Contributions are invited from the FORTTELL community for a monograph on Issues in Evaluation of English Language and Literature which we are planning to bring out by December 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 e-mail attachments along with a hard copy latest by July 31, 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

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LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Freeze Frame-1

Here is an activity that will help you involve your learners in critical thinking and an active exchange of ideas. All in English, through a film in English or in any regional language!

Objectives:

- Develop learners' visual literacy
- Develop the skills of comprehension: inferential and evaluative
- Communication in English
- Use of the expression: We feel.../ We think.../ It is likely.../ Possibly/...might be.../...must be...
- Use of words for qualification (adjectives)
- Evoke visual, olfactory and tactile images

Requirements:

1. A room comfortable for learners to sit in (even the floor with a nice matting would be good.)
2. A television set/ or a large screen attached to a computer/VCD player
3. Any black and white movie (preferably one of the funny silent movies) in English or any talking movie in regional language suitable for viewing of learners of that age
4. Pencils and paper

Seating arrangement: In groups of five/six

What to do...

1. Announce that they will watch a movie. Provide its name.
2. Play the movie. Allow the learners to watch a bit so that they may grasp what is

happening or what the movie is about.

3. Pause the movie and freeze the frame. Ask a few questions about the plot, characters and the locale. Allow them to guess the plot as they wish to as long as it is logical.
4. Next ask them to guess the following in their groups (one concept at a time):
 - Mood of the characters: Reason why it must be so.
 - The colours that must have been around in the background or on the characters (including dress)
 - The texture for their clothes (differences if any)
 - The smells the scene might have. For instance, if the scene is near a baker's shop then the smells of freshly-baked bread, cakes and pastries.
 - Learners note their ideas on paper.
5. Allow them to report what they feel and think, and perhaps, link it to the story they had envisaged. Encourage them to use the expressions mentioned above. But do not insist on their usage alone.
6. Allow the other groups to give their viewpoints.
7. Record the words/expressions that emerge from the discussion and classify them as you wish to.
8. Alternately, you can help them focus through leading questions.
9. The movie can be replaced by a dramatic picture as well. You

may select an illustration from a lesson they have not read yet, from your coursebook.



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.

Expand and Contract

Level: Secondary Classes

Time: 30 to 35 minutes

Grammar: Phrases and Clauses

Material: Slips as per the strength of the class (game assumed for 20 students)

(If the group is larger than 20, the game can be played on 2 days)

Objective: a) to differentiate phrases and clauses.

b) to change phrases into clauses and clauses into phrases

In class:

- A box of slips is kept on the table. Ten slips will have phrases and the other ten will have clauses written on them by the teacher.
- Each child picks up a slip from the box.
- When everyone has a slip the teacher instructs them to read silently whatever is written on the slip.
- Then the teacher instructs the students to think and check if the group of words on their slip has a finite verb or a non-finite verb in it.
- Then the teacher asks them to get into 2 groups:

Group I will be those who have finite verb and a connector in it and Group II will be those whose slips have non-finite verb in them.

- The teacher can quickly check if they have been able to differentiate between the finite and non-finite verbs. Now the groups can be named
- Group I is called CLAUSES
Group II is called PHRASES
- Now the teacher uses the blackboard as a Scoreboard for Group I & II (marks or rules for the games can be decided by the teacher and the class beforehand).
- A student from Group I will read the group of words in her/his slip and a student from Group II will contract it into a phrase.
Similarly, the other Group II will read their words and Group I will expand it into a clause.
- If the selected student is not able to give the answer the group may send another student but for this the marks may be deducted.

Note:

The class should have practised Finites – Non-finites verbs; phrases and clauses thoroughly before playing this game. Then this game will prove to be a good reinforcement of the topic.

Housie

Level: Class V / VI

Time: 20 to 25 minutes.

Grammar: Nouns and Pronouns

Material: A page in their Notebook (Students have to make a grid of 20 squares)

Objective: To have a clear concept of usage of nouns and pronouns.

In Class: The students will be asked:

- to make a grid of 20 squares with enough space to write at

least 7 to 8 lettered words.

- Students will be asked to write words (nouns or pronouns) of their choice in each square. The teacher can give some examples.
- Now the teacher will read the clues. The students will listen to the clues and look for the answer in the grid. Then they will strike off the word/s which is the answer of the clue.
- When the clues are over all the words should have been struck off. If not, the child has to cross-check with the teacher.

Examples of clues the teacher can read to strike off the words are:

- names of cities.
- the plural form of 'I'
- names of your friends.
- pronouns which are used as third person.
- the pronoun used for second person.
- The answer of these blanks:
 - That car is yours, this car is
 - They are happy with own work.
 - That is a basket of mangoes. mangoes are sweet.
 - This is his book. Give it to
 - Trees are useful for us. They give many things.
- Names of things, objects and places or common nouns.

Note:

The teacher can also make the square with the words on the blackboard for the students to copy and then read out respective clues to strike off the given words.

Examples.

| | | | |
|------|-------|-------|--------|
| we | table | Delhi | knife |
| us | Priya | those | school |
| mine | him | he | Rahul |
| rose | Kota | bird | she |
| it | their | pen | you |

*Ms. Rama Ramji, Principal,
Vidya Bhawan Public School,
Udaipur*

Alphabet Recognition

Level: Nursery, L.K.G.

Material: Hard board, white sheets, marker pens, whistle, chalk or lime powder, shoe boxes

Time: ½ an hour

Players: The class

Objective: To help the child develop recognition of the alphabets

Preparation of Material:

Take 5, (12'x12') hard board cards and cover them with white sheets. With a black marker pen write capital letters in bold so that they are clearly visible to the students. This can be attached to a ribbon and hung at the back/front of the children.

Procedure: Initially, the game can begin with say only 5 alphabets (sequential or not, depending on the teacher's choice). For example, let us take the alphabets 'A, E, I, O, U, in a class of say 20-25 students. As it is an outdoor activity, look at the illustration carefully so as to help organize the game well.

STUDENTS TO BE MADE TO STAND IN 5 ROWS OF 4 COLUMNS

The students should be made to stand in order facing the alphabets as given in the illustration. Keep the alphabet chits folded up so that the child is unable to see the alphabets. Place these alphabet chits in boxes and place each box in front of each line at a distance

of say 1 metre from the starting line. Each box should contain the same number of chits.

When the whistle blows, the children in the first row should run and pick up one chit from the box kept right in front of them, unfold it and run to the alphabet that matches his, touch it and stand behind the alphabet. Only then the second student in the row can run and do the same till all the students have reached their respective alphabets. The row which finishes off first is the winner followed by II and III.

This can be attached to a ribbon and hung at the back/front of the children.

For the chits: Prepare 20-25 chits of say 4'x4' and write one alphabet on each chit. Repeat each alphabet depending on the number of students in a row.

Note:

1. Alphabet big (capital) and

small can also be introduced to see whether the child can relate the capital and the small alphabet together. This can make another game.

2. To further strengthen the child's association of the letter with the first letter of the word, a similar game can be played whereby chits should contain pictures of objects beginning with letters placed at the finishing point.

For eg. If alphabet 'A B E I O' are taken, each box can contain a picture of say an apple, a bat, an egg, an ice-cream and an orange.

If the first child, for example, picks up the picture of an (ice-cream) he'll run to the letter 'I' with which ice-cream begins.



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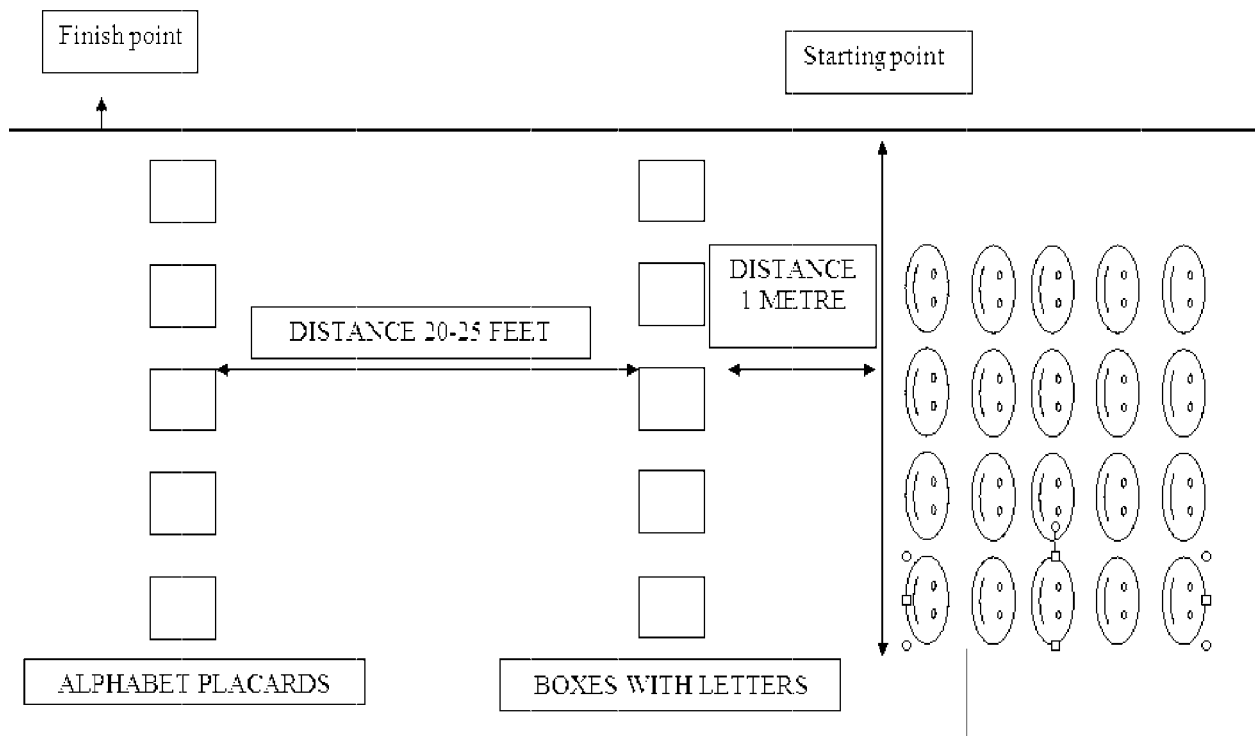
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