

From the Editor's desk

It has been a difficult task to bring out this issue. The previous sponsorship by Vidya Bhavan Society, Udaipur, was discontinued because of financial constraints on its part. As such we had nowhere to turn except to our valuable and esteemed members for help. Several mails were sent asking them to get sponsors/advertisers for the Newsletter. However resource mobilization was tardy and we had to appeal to members to donate generously towards funding it.

It is a normal practice of any body or association to draw up a list of activities for the year in its annual general meeting and constitute committees to carry them out. We did the same in the annual general meeting (AGM) of Fortell in May 2008. Taking priority was the matter of getting our association registered. Other activities included preparing for an annual conference, intervening in in-service teacher training programmes and doing classroom research. It was also resolved that Fortell would bring out an ELT journal and a monograph (if not more) apart from the quarterly Newsletter. All these programmes were ambitious and forward looking. However, the issue of funding even the Newsletter has become a moot point. One fourth of the year has passed and we are still unsure whether the Newsletter will see the light of day.

It is, indeed, unfortunate that our meetings are thinly attended and members do not show either enthusiasm or commitment towards carrying out the activities resolved upon in the AGM. We have to become more active and convince sponsors/advertisers that we mean business and we also enjoy a fair reputation in the ELT community. We should be able to show

them that we are engaged in beneficial work like participating in projects which work towards balancing the urban –rural divide in children's opportunities for learning English, towards sensitizing the ELT community to adopt better teaching strategies in the practical context of the learner and her/his environment (to name a few).

As mentioned earlier, we had to resort to donations by members in order to even think about bringing out this issue. This point is being raised here in order to draw attention to the exigent and dire need to increase and augment our resources so that Fortell may be in a position to fulfill its objectives. We cannot ask members to donate money time and again (though some members have generously proposed to do so) for this purpose, but we can certainly request them to step up the sponsorship drive with zeal and commitment. First of all, we have to make our organization more visible in the teaching community at least. This may be achieved by organizing seminars/workshops in schools and colleges where our members can make presentations based on their research and experiences in ELT teaching. This sort of frequent academic engagements will have the desired effect of making our forum better known and enjoying increased respectability and prestige. We want members to give these issues serious thought and then decide upon a course of proactive action.



Tasneem Shahnaaz

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Dear Dr Khanna:

Thank you for sending me a copy of
FORTELL January 2008 issue.

Please convey my thanks to Ms Madhu
Gurtu for the kind words in her profile of me
on page 29. I don't recall having met her, but in
a long career one often forgets!

(I ~~was~~ was happy about the second 'E' in
Fortell - English Language and Literature, but was
rather disappointed to see that there was absolutely
nothing about Literature in the whole issue. A
linking of language teaching with literature
can also be useful - for example, the teaching of
tenses and aspects can be made more substantial
by adducing narrative-descriptive passages from
a novel or a short story, or the teaching of intonation,
sentence accent, phrases or the like with the study of
a scene from a play or a short one-act play.)

It was nice to see your review of Professor
M.L. Tickoo's book. He's an old friend - what's his
postal address and phone number. Was Dr. R. K.
Agnihotri now retired? Please remember me to him
whenever you contact him next.

Back in August 1997 I delivered a series
of lectures on 'The Communicative Structure of an
English Sentence'. A revised script of these has been
published in CLEFL Bulletin N.5. 13: 1 June 2003.
It presents many aspects of English grammar from a
novel point of view in a manner of potential use to teach
Perhaps someone like Ms Madhu Gurtu or Professor
Prasad Pandey could pull out relatively short
self-contained pieces out of it and develop them into
articles publishable in the Fortell Newsletter or elsewhere

Cordially yours
Ashok Kelkar

ARTICLES

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

**Sandhyalal
RajniBhagat**

Language is universally acquired by humans. Most children learn to spell and read and require very little help to do so, but some children have to work harder and longer than others at learning a language.

Dyslexia is a disorder of language. There can be a number of different manifestations and this difficulty is usually noticed by teachers by the time children start formal reading and writing. Students with Dyslexia, often need explicit instruction in phonemic awareness because they have difficulties in associating sounds with letters and sequencing the sound in words. Sometimes they may also have difficulty in auditory discrimination or in hearing the small differences between them.

To be able to read efficiently, the printed symbols (Grapheme) are converted into their corresponding sounds i.e. Phonemes. In writing Phonemes are converted into Graphemes. For majority of children this may be an automatic process facilitated by the teachers but in case of an LD child, the teacher has to use a different approach.

A highly structured programme of phonological awareness is used at each step. The age of the child and level of his functioning or the degree of difficulty is considered. The strategy for helping the child with reading disorder should focus on simplifying the method by which the child can decode simple word into their sound forms. Reading speed and efficiency can be enhanced by word attack skills.

BASIC SIGHT VOCABULARY

20% of the words are Sight Words (words which should be read at sight without effort eg. on, of). Development of sight vocabulary is helpful to speed up the process of reading. Sight words can be taught using Flash Cards or as a Family of words.

PHONIC METHOD

This is used when there is a difficulty in sound letter association. The child is taught the sounds of letters and is then encouraged to blend sounds into words eg. d/o/g = dog.

With practice child learn to read difficult and more complex words. Phoneme Grapheme connections are taught in an organized way starting with corresponding sounds and proceeding to a family of words having the same sounds.

SYLLABICATION

Syllabication helps a child to improve word attack skills. The child learns to read words by breaking it into respective syllables eg. nap/kin, rab/bit.

For effective remediation every child has an assessment to ascertain the deficit area and the functioning level of the child. On the basis of this assessment an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) is made which describes the skill deficit area, the strength of the child, the outcome, curriculum and teaching methods to be used. Students receive instructions tailored according to the needs.

Multisensory techniques are usually used which is used for smaller children involving all the sensory modalities (visual, auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile) referred to as VAKT method. This involves the child seeing the letters, hearing their sounds, feeling the movement by tracing the letters with their eyes closed. It is known that inputs through multiple sensory modalities at the same time consolidate the learning.

LD children learn best from structured Multisensory Programmes of Learning Literacy Skills. The key to remediation lies in identification of skill deficits in each area of learning.



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Currents of Thought Influencing English Language Teaching: I-Linguistics

Pramod Pandey

1. If we consider the objectives of the syllabi for secondary and higher secondary level courses in English in India, such as of the CBSE, a question that arises in our minds is, what is required from the teacher to meet the objectives? One of the things required of the English language teacher is that s/he have a full understanding of the rationale of the topics of the syllabus. Besides, the teacher should have a skills and knowledge base that transcends the syllabus.

In order for the language teacher to meet with the requirements s/he should be familiar with the current critical thinking on the topics and the research findings in the cutting edge areas. These areas include, in my view, linguistics, education, cognitive science, and communication, in the main. Linguistics makes us aware of the aspects of linguistic knowledge that need to be addressed in learning a language. Education familiarizes us with the teaching and learning methods and technologies in use. Cognitive Science, a relatively new discipline, informs us about the relation between language and general cognitive abilities of learners and communities. Communication studies offer

useful ideas about effective strategies in dealing with different communicative situations in the learning environment.

In the present article, I wish to take up a crucial concept in linguistics that has a bearing on English language teaching and learning.

2. An important distinction that holds in linguistics and that is at the basis of linguistic theorizing today is the distinction between form and function in language (see e.g. Darnell et al. 1998, Newmeyer 1998).

The terms formal and functional are used in more than one sense in current literature in linguistics. Essentially, the term 'formal' refers to the formal structure of language, while the term 'functional' refers to the uses to which the form is put. Formal is also referred to as 'structural' and 'functional' as 'communicative', 'notional', etc. in the literature. Linguistic theories and grammars based on them are often found to adhere to the principled practices of these two approaches.

Structural linguistic theories and grammars based on them have undergone considerable change since the beginning

of linguistics, following the seminal work of de Saussure, American Structuralism (Bloomfield 1933, Hockett 1958), European Structuralism (e.g. Hjelmslev 1943) and Generative Linguistics (e.g. Chomsky 2001) being the two most important among these. Functional linguistic theories have also grown side by side with the structural theories, Prague School linguistics (e.g. Jakobson 1968, Firbas 1992) and Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1985) being the prominent ones among them.

The term 'structural', which is widely used in linguistics and language studies, denotes various senses dependent on the ways in which the term 'language' is understood. Thus, the notion of language is associated with the community in the American Structuralism approach and with the individual mind/brain in the generative linguistic approach. In the former, it is the structure on the surface, as reflected in spoken and written language, which is the subject matter of study. In the latter, it is the abstract level of knowledge that underlies the surface structure that is the focus of inquiry. Thus, it is necessary to clarify which sense of the

term 'structure' is meant when it is used.

Analogous to the use of the term 'structure', the term 'function' too is used in many senses. Thus, in sociolinguistics, it is meant in the sense of the use to which language is put in society, for example, as a marker of prestige, social class, regional identity, etc. On the other hand, in the approaches of the Prague School (e.g. Firbas 1992) and Discourse Analysis (e.g. Toolan 2002) , it is meant in the sense of the use for which language is needed, such as to apologize, to express gratitude or to narrate an event, etc.

A comparative understanding of the two approaches is of interest not only to linguistics but also to epistemology in general, as they represent two different conceptions of linguistic knowledge. They have analogues in other areas (see e.g. Gellner 1998), such as rationalism and empiricism in philosophy and cognitive psychology, capitalism and communism in economic thought, and individualism and socialism in social action. The basic premises and methods of the formalist and functionalist approaches in linguistics are often stated, largely assumed, although not always agreed upon. For a long time, on account of the principled distinction between them, the two approaches to linguistic analysis were assumed to be irreconcilable, with consequences on related disciplines such as

language teaching. However, it has increasingly come to be realized (see Haspelmath 2000, Pandey 2004) that the two approaches are complementary rather than contending in their goals of accounting for linguistic knowledge. While one, a formal account, aims at explicating the computational faculty underlying language, the other, a functional account, aims at investigating the adaptive faculty of linguistic knowledge.

What are the implications of this situation in linguistic theorizing to language teaching? Applied linguists and language teachers have to have the objective of helping the learner to acquire both the structures and the functions to which they have to be put. The two must be seen as integrated rather than separate. This can be illustrated with the help of an example. Let us take the Present Perfect form of verbs in English.

Form of the Pres. Perf.: 'have' +V+'en', e.g., 'have eaten', 'has arrived', 'had wanted', etc.

Functions of the Pres. Perf.:

1. "All uses of the Present Perfect Tense emphasize the connection between present and past; "a sort of mixture of present and past" (Thomson & Martinet) "past with present relevance" or "past involving the present" (Leech).

2. "The contexts in which the Pres. Perf. is used include
"1. STATE-UP-TO-THE-PRESENT The state extends over a period lasting up to the present moment. It may extend into the future. Normally used with an adverbial of duration.

2., 3., & 4: EVENT VERBS i.e. verbs used to refer to events. There are three main uses of the Present Perfect with event verbs, as follows:

- 2a. INDEFINITE PAST At least once before now. The indefinite meaning is commonly reinforced by EVER, NEVER, BEFORE (NOW), ALWAYS and other adverbials. The number of events is commonly unspecified. The time is unspecified.

- 2b. RECENT INDEFINITE PAST

At least once in a period leading up to the present. Associated with adverbs such as JUST, ALREADY, RECENTLY and YET.

3. HABIT IN A PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE PRESENT

Used with an adverbial of duration (+ an optional adverb of frequency) FOR FIVE YEARS / ALWAYS / EVERY MONTH / FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER / SINCE.

For more discussion on the topic, the reader is advised to visit the URL www.bntinternet.com/~ted.power/esl0704.html

It is easy to find examples for almost any aspect of language to be presentable in terms of its formal and functional traits. Grammars such as Leech et al. (1994) provide a fair combination of both formal and functional aspects of the grammatical knowledge of English, and are a good resource book for integrated formal and functional syllabi.

Against the backdrop of the distinction between formal and functional approaches to language study, it is easy to see the rationale behind distinct (i) types of syllabi (see e.g. Krahnke 1987, Nunan 1988) such as Structural Syllabus (e.g. Hornby, Siddhu), Notional Syllabus (Wilkins 1976, Jones 1979), and Communicative Syllabus (Munby 1978, Yalden 1987), Communicational Syllabus (Prabhu 1987) and (ii) methods of second/foreign language teaching (see e.g. , for a general survey). The swing that the second language teacher has been subjected to from the audio-lingual drill-based teaching, which made critical use of the language laboratory for learning languages to the Task-Based-Language-Teaching (TBLT, Ellis 2003) has to do with the swing from the formal to the communicative approach to linguistic descriptions, accompanied by shift from the behaviorist to the cognitive approaches to language learning. Such a swing is also noticeable in the shift from the Structural to the Communicative Syllabus.

In deciding about what the best method of teaching/learning a second/foreign language is, one must take cognizance of the fact that an integrated approach is what has been felt to be capable of yielding satisfactory results. After all, language is a biological endowment, thus a 'natural' faculty, but at the same time, it is also socially acquired within a community. For such an object as language, which is both a Natural and a Social kind, it is necessary that we adopt an approach that helps the learner acquire both aspects of the linguistic object, namely, the second/ foreign language. This is what must be kept in mind while considering the use of a syllabus or method of learning/ teaching a second/ foreign language.

3. I propose to take up for discussion in a series of articles in the future the main critical ideas in related disciplines that have influenced English language teaching in the recent years.

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Contextualized Language Instruction for Young Learners

Kirti Kapur

Leech, G. & J. Svartik (1994, 2nd ed.) *A Communicative Grammar of English*. Essex: Longman.

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Language is not only a means of communication but also a medium through which most of our knowledge is acquired. Language is central to all learning processes. We can say that all teaching is in a way language learning. It is a system that, to a great extent, structures the reality around us. Children are born with an innate language faculty (Chomsky, 1986) and this has two important pedagogical consequences. Firstly, children acquire new languages with ease when they are provided with adequate exposure. Secondly, the focus while teaching should be more on meaning than on grammar as grammar is inbuilt in the text. Teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation will not yield the desired results and learning will take place in a fragmented manner whereas we need to have a holistic perspective on language learning. We need to look at language as a whole. (NCF-2005)

It has now become increasingly clear that every possible effort should be made to teach a language through meaningful contexts. These meaningful contexts need to be input rich and drawn from the immediate environment of the learner hence following the pedagogical principal of moving from the known to the unknown, from local to global from simple to complex and concrete to abstract. We also need to appreciate the

fact that language education is not only confined to the language classroom. A science, social science or mathematics class is also a language class. One of the effective ways of contextualizing language instruction is to develop a content based curriculum that uses themes. Content based instruction is a method of teaching that integrates language instruction with the instruction in the content areas. (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004). Contextualized language instruction for young learners follows the principle of child centered pedagogy wherein their views, their voices, their experiences are given primacy and their active participation is encouraged.

To facilitate the same, themes are chosen according to the age, interest and cognitive development of the learners. At the initial stages themes such as self, family, house, pets, neighbourhood, sports, adventure and imagination, nation and the world such as neighboring countries are suitably incorporated in the course content. For example if the thematic unit is about 'self' then Social science, Science and Mathematics also have the same theme. The language classroom begins with an introduction of the self, talks about the learners' daily routine and then moves on to poems/stories related to the individuals wherein they

can identify themselves with the characters. This gives ample opportunity to the learners to speak and when they speak, a lot of language learning takes place. Similarly Science focuses on personal hygiene, keeping surroundings clean, food and dietary patterns etc. Students are made aware of their immediate environment such as plants, flowers, leaves, animals, water bodies, etc. In Social Science the concept of self and society, family, neighbourhood, human interactions etc. is included. In Mathematics recognition of different shapes and sizes around them such as pebbles, boxes, coins, pipes etc. and numbers – counting, matching, grouping etc. is incorporated. Learning about spatial relationships helps the learners develop and use words like top, bottom, on under, inside, above, near, far etc.

A thematic approach as illustrated above helps learners build their vocabulary because a common set of words are used in different contexts. Repeated usage helps them retain the words and they use them in their day to day life. The themes incorporated should follow a culture specific pedagogy by picking out meaningful examples and activities from the immediate environment of the learners so that they can connect their knowledge to the world outside and construct new knowledge. The aim is to facilitate active participation of the students so that language learning can take place in an effective manner. For example citing examples/instances from the Western cultural milieu, which is alien to my chosen student profile,

will not serve the purpose as the learners will not be able to identify with such examples and will therefore not respond as openly as desired. A simple example is that while talking about nature the much celebrated Daffodils in English literature will not strike a chord with my chosen student profile whereas talking about Neem, Tulsi and Mogra will.

Similarly, the arts (visual and performing) and crafts can also be infused in theme based units. Language, exploration of nature and an understanding of the self and others can be learnt and understood through various art forms as they allow children to participate. Teaching and learning, when participatory in nature, makes learning a joyful experience. Here, I would also like to emphasize that, emergent global concerns like 'sustainable environment' and 'peace and harmony' should also be infused in the content along with the other themes mentioned above. In India there is a ruling from the Supreme Court that environmental education should be infused in all subjects from Class 1 to 12. And a language class gives ample opportunities to sensitize the learners towards the environment and peaceful co-existence. It is important that such values are inculcated in a subtle manner rather than being didactic.

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The deadline for January 2009 issue is December 31, 2008.

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION:

Problems and the Solution

Pradip Sharan

Translation, as we know is transference of meaning from Target Language (TL) to Source Language (SL). Translation has a long history dating back to ancient Roman system. According to Dr. Johnson and A.H Smith 'Translation' is a process of change from one language to another retaining the sense of the text. J.C.Catford defines translation as the replacement of textual material of SL by equivalent material in target Language (TL). To sum up, one can define translation in the words of B.K Das, 'it is a process of analysis, interpretation and creation which leads to a replacement of one set of linguistic resources and values for another.' In other words, translation is decoding and recoding, deconstructing and restructuring of the text from SL to TL.

The theories of translation have changed in course of time. The major contributors to the theories of translation in the 20th century are Catford, Nida and Newmark. Catford, like Etienne Dolet, gave importance to meaning and spirit in translation.

In contrast to Catford's theory, Nida takes into consideration the contextual features in addition to textual and linguistic features. Nida's theory talks about two types of equivalences i.e. formal and dynamic.

Finally, Peter Newmark's unique contribution to the theory of translation is his detailed treatment of semantic versus communicative translation. Newmark's theory highlights the theory of meaning. His theory presents the three

levels of translation i.e. Referential, Textual, and Subjective.

Now, I would like to discuss the problems which a translator faces in literary translation. They are enumerated as follows:

- a) Difficulty to find the equivalent textual and literary material of the SL in the TL.
- b) The other problem lies in the 'the author- text- reader triangle.' The reader lends his own complexion to the text. Thus, there are two texts, one of the author's and the other of the reader's.
- c) The third problem arises out of metaphorical language used in literature. So, there are not one but several layers of meaning in the text.
- d) The structure of language also pose problem in translation, such as, English has SVO structure where as Indian languages have SOV structure.

The difficulty in translation is due to the fact that each word in a language is charged with memory, associations and literary allusions. The problem arises in translating certain culture- based words due to non availability of appropriate equivalents in a different culture. The language and culture are entwined and inseparable. This is because culture of a particular society is a byproduct of factors like geography, history, mythology, beliefs and ideas, superstitions, customs, mores etc, and language is a product of society and a reflection of its culture. It has taken a few millenium to reach

the present stage in tandem with civilization.

The thoughts and concepts have grown in peoples of different societies in course of centuries of their existence. Hence, the central problem for the translator is to establish equivalence between SL text and the TL text. It is rightly said that all translation involves either loss of meaning, addition of meaning or finally skewing of meaning. In literary translation, as in case of .poetry sounds, rhythm, words, images, symbols etc are all present together and act on one another. Context plays very important role in translation .Great poetry pass the mythic reserves of human experience and it also creates myths which provide 'Meta – language'. The translation of poetry is the most difficult task to do because it makes use of figures of speech, such as; similes, metaphors, irony, paradox etc. Moreover, rhyming, alliteration, versification etc. also pose great difficulty to the translator.

The other factors which pose problem in literary translation are the transposition of idioms, proverbs, and imageries from SL to TL. A literal translation of idioms, phrases and proverbs is always harmful. A good translator conveys the fine distinctions of meaning, feeling, tone etc of the original.

The other difficulties in literary translation is in finding the equivalent words for culture –based words or swear- words, jokes, slangs, colloquial expressions, homonyms etc. Certain food items typical of particular society are also difficult to translate.

Solutions to the problem of translation:

The solution to the problem of translation is that the translator should be linguistically in both the languages i.e. SL and TL. In other words, a translator should possess inwardness or feel and mastery over both the languages i.e. SL and TL. The translator should keep in mind the socio- cultural matrix while translation.

Hence, I would like to explain the terms like linguistic competence. Linguistic competence is also called grammatical competence and according to Chomsky 'it is the cognitive state that encompasses all those aspects of form and meaning and their relation, including underlying structures that enter into that relation. So, linguistic competence means the knowledge of language as a system and its structure. It is also important to understand the term competence. Competence means 'the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language'.

The term pragmatic competence means the ability to use such knowledge along with conceptual system to achieve certain ends or purposes. According to Dell Hymes, pragmatic competence means when to speak, what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner. It is the ability to use language along with the conceptual system to achieve certain ends or purposes.

The third aspect which needs explanation is 'Communicative competence'. It means the whole of linguistic competence along with socio-linguistic-pragmatic competence, i.e. the rules and conventions for using language items in contexts and other factors like attitudes, values, and motivations. Communicative competence involves the use of languages in particular social settings.

So, the communicative competence include

1. Linguistic knowledge like sentences, clauses, phrases etc.,
2. Paralinguistic rules like non-verbal elements e.g. body movement, gesture etc.
3. Cultural knowledge like social structure values and attitudes.

Cultural competence means the knowledge of social structure, values, customs and conventions, manners, and institutions.

Moreover, the term cultural competence could be further illustrated by the concept of 'Banjh' or sterile woman, used with its negative connotation in our Indian society. In the west, the word doesn't have much negative connotation.

Finally, to sum up, I would like to enlighten you with the universal nature of the languages used in this world and how this knowledge would help the translator in translation. Language, as we know, is an arbitrary symbolic system. It is a codified system. It has 'surface structure' and 'deep structure'. 'Surface structure' is the reflection of thoughts, concepts, ideas, feelings and meanings present in our mind.

All languages have syntactic units, semantic units and phonological units; all languages have words for objects, actions, feelings etc. All languages have devices to form various types of sentences and combining them. The significant differences between languages may be superficial. The underlying similarities are perhaps traceable and thus points to the uniformity of human linguistic nature. It is important to note that concept is a convenient capsule of thought that embraces thousands of distinct experiences. From the point of view of languages, thought may be defined as the highest latent

or potential content of speech. Language is the outward facet of thought on the highest level of symbolic expression. Language is a garment. The thought process may or may not have images in the mental process but it is always accompanied by the train of words. Thought can also be explained as 'sequence of words'.

According to Chomsky 'the deep structure of a language contain all the necessary syntactic, as well as, semantic information for a correct transformation into surface structure and interpretation.....'. The decoding of a language is the beginning of translation process. It is to be accepted that all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language. The deficiency in terminology may be qualified with amplified loan words or loan translations, neologisms, circumlocutions or semantic shift.

So, if the translator is able to decode the words of SL and its connotations and ramifications in relation to multidimensional perspectives of life in this world, then he would be able to encode that multidimensional conception in target language. Decoding means the understanding of a concept concealed in the surface structure in the mental plane and then recoding that understanding in a different symbolic system i.e. TL.

At the end I would like to suggest that to facilitate translation it is required to construct multilingual dictionaries of the type UW—NL (universal word— natural language) similar to the work done by UNESCO in generating a multilingual dictionary comprising six official languages of UN.

Please contact the author at pradipsharan@yahoo.com for references.



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REPORT

MASTER TRAINER PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS

Inder Mani Jain

Dayanand Anglo Vedic College Managing Committee (DAV CMC) is the largest non-governmental educational body in India with over 700 hundred institutions under its banner. Directorate of Project Planning & In-service (DPPI), training wing of DAVCMC organized a nation wide series of three Master Trainer Programmes in English for Secondary Teachers in the current academic year at DAV Public School, Itki Road, Hehal Ranchi, DAV Public School, Laksar Road, Jagjeet Pur, Haridwar and at DAV Public School, Jallandhar Cantt, Punjab, from 6th to 12th June, 23rd to 29th

June and 7th to 13th July, 2008 respectively. These programmes were attended by as many as 102 DAV Trained Graduate Teachers from 14 states - Bihar, MP, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Haryana, UP, Uttrakhand, Delhi, Punjab, J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, and Rajasthan.

The programme had dual objectives of equipping the participants with peer mentoring skills and content enrichment of language areas in teaching phonetics, poetry and drama, listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar.

The programmes were inaugurated by Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Director, Communicative English Cell, Vinoba Bhawe, University; Jharkhand at Ranchi, Professor Pramod Pandey, from Jawahar Lal Nehru University, at Haridwar and Mrs. P. P Sharma, Regional Director, Jallandhar zone at Jallandhar. "Today English is no more a window but a door to the world and is becoming a symbol of empowerment and employment," was the common message for the teachers from all the inaugural speakers. Mrs. Inder Mani Jain, Education Officer-DPPI and Programme Coordinator, introduced the Programme at all the three centers.

Professor Pramod Pandey, from JNU and Mr. Anil Sarwal, DAV College Chandigarh, addressed the participants on teaching phonetics. They reinforced their (audience) knowledge and skills of phonetic symbols in English, word stress connected speech through oral drills and by showing videos. Emphasis was laid on usage of dictionaries to improve pronunciation skills.

Prof. Pandey and Prof. Pushpinder Syal, from Punjab University, addressing the teaching of poetry and drama, reiterated that poetry was a piece of joy and should always be taught for the purpose of appreciation since there was no given meaning of any poetry text. And about drama it was considered to be a message that would leave a direct impact on the audience, therefore, it could be enacted, debated and role-played.





Mr. John Silver, Regional Senior English Language Fellow, American Center, Delhi, Prof. Anju Sehgal, IGNOU, Ms. Tulika Prasad, DU, Dr. Sadhna Parashar, Education Officer CBSE, conducted sessions on teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing. They stressed on the development of language competence of both the teachers and the students as well and engrossed the participants in communicative activities which were employable in class. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) was recommended with special emphasis on organizing activities pertaining to three stages - before, during and after the teaching of all the four languages skills. The sessions on contextual grammar and vocabulary were also conducted.

Sessions on monitoring in class and peer mentoring were conducted by Mrs. Inder Mani Jain. While interacting on the significance of monitoring in the class it was

realized that its purpose was to facilitate maximum learning among the learners and to also reinforce professionalism in the teachers. The knowledge, skills and positive attitudinal skills were imparted and imbibed through role-plays, group-discussions, observation and feedback.

USP of the Programme was to set-up ELT Teacher Resource Center, at every host school. It was created by the mentors on the last day. The mentors equipped the Center with

creative charts, list of websites and lots of English language teaching learning materials, which they downloaded from internet during the IT sessions. ELT Centers were inaugurated by the resource persons.

The valedictory sessions were attended by Principals of host schools at Ranchi and Hardwar and Mr. Rajan Gupta, IPS, ADGP Punjab Armed Police, at Jalandhar. Workshop reports were presented by the participants through IT mode. The role of participants in implementing peer mentoring programme to improve English fluency of both the teachers and learners was briefly spelt out by the programme coordinator. The certificates of participation were conferred upon the participants by the Chief Guests.



Inder Mani Jain, Education Officer with Directorate of Project Planning and In-service, DAV College Managing Committee, New Delhi.



Workshop Organized by Fortell

Tasneem Shahnaaz



shyness on the part of teachers. Then he outlined the different ways in which teachers could observe other teachers in course of their teaching. This was illustrated through practice case studies of different pedagogic practices wherein verbal and nonverbal communication is important. The smiling face of a teacher goes a long way in interacting with students and other colleagues as well.

The important points made during the course of the workshop were—

- 1) Why have observation and feedback?

The aim is to help the teacher who is being observed to improve her/his teaching.

- 2) The process of giving useful feedback consists of —

Pre observation interaction with the concerned teacher by

- Asking about her/his class and the level of proficiency of the students
- Asking about the objectives of the lessons

To celebrate Teacher's Day on 5th September 2008, the Regional English Language Office (RELO), New Delhi and Fortell organized a workshop on "Teacher to teacher observation and feedback" by John Silver (Senior English Language Fellow) at Delhi International School, Dwarka, New Delhi. The event began at 9:30 AM in the school premises. There were about 35 teachers from the school who participated in the workshop. Mr. Richard Boyum, Director of RELO was present while Dr. Mukti Sanyal and Dr. Tasneem Shahnaaz represented Fortell. The Principal of the school, Mrs. Tilaka Bernadette Benjamin, inaugurated the session with her opening remarks on the need for such a workshop. Dr. Sanyal then introduced Richard Boyum and John Silver while Dr. Shahnaaz spoke about Fortell, its objectives

and activities, membership, website and Newsletter.

John Silver began his workshop with some introductory icebreaker activities which helped to overcome any hesitation or





- Asking whether the teacher needs help with any particular part of the lesson
- What could be improved
- Set goals for improving within a specified time frame
- Post observation interaction --
- 3) The language used for feedback should indicate a positive, supportive and helpful in attitude.
- Commenting about what was good about the lesson

The workshop was very useful and interesting. Teachers participated in it enthusiastically by asking questions, giving responses and adding their own experiences in the classroom. The resistance against teacher observing another teacher and giving feedback was removed. In fact, the teachers and the Principal decided to initiate this project in the school in an experimental way and record its progress over the coming months. At the end of the academic session, they would document the achievements and setbacks of this project. This would definitely enable teachers to improve their teaching methodology and make both teaching and learning more fruitful and engaging for the teacher and the learners. The workshop ended with a vote of thanks by the Principal and was followed by a sumptuous lunch.



Richard Boyum, Director RELO - 5th Sept'08



Tasneem Shahnaaz teaches English Literature and Language at Sri Aurobindo College, Delhi University.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

IDIOMS, PLEASE

Falguni Chakravarty

Level: Middle

Time

30 minutes

Size of class

30 - 40

Objective

Language focus: Idioms

Preparation

1. Make two sets, one each of (i) idioms (ii) their meanings, on thick pieces of card paper.
2. This game will be played in groups, so make as many sets as you would require for each group in your class.

3. A few samples are given; however, you may have to add on to the list.

IN CLASS

1. Divide your class into groups.
2. Distribute a set each of the idioms and their meanings to each group.
3. Allot a time frame to complete the activity.
4. Children will match the idioms with their meanings in a stipulated time.
5. Alternately, for a little boisterous activity, you can

conduct it as a game outside the class.

- (i) Give a set of idioms to two /three groups and the set of meanings to the rest of the groups.
 - (ii) Children will search for the meanings from the different groups, by asking for it, or vice versa.(i.e. ask for the idioms)
6. The group which matches all the idioms correctly in the stipulated time, will be the winner.

Sample

S.No	Idioms	Meanings
1.	to strike when the iron is hot	to do something while the time is right
2.	to turn over a new leaf	change one's behaviour for the better
3.	sit on the fence	refuse to take sides in a dispute/quarrel
4.	to bury the hatchet	forget a past enmity and become friends again
5.	to get into hot water	to get into trouble
6.	to flog a dead horse	keep trying to do something when it is no longer possible
7.	to face the music	to face the consequences of a mistake committed by oneself
8.	as fit as a fiddle	healthy and fit
9.	to put the cart before the horse	to do things in the wrong order
10.	to be under a cloud	to be under suspicion of having done something wrong

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

ORDER, ORDER!

Level: Primary & Middle

Time

40 minutes

Size of class

30 - 40

Objective

Language focus: Position/order of adverbs in a sentence

Preparation

1. Write each of the words given in the example paper. You may have to add on a few more sentences, depending on the strength of your class.
2. Keep the words sentences on a separate piece of thick card in their sentence groups in separate envelopes or bind them together with a rubber band.
3. Make as many word groups in this manner.
4. Keep a set of at least five sentences for each team in the class.

IN CLASS

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. Give each group an envelope with a set of words (equivalent to make five sentences).
3. Allot a time of 30 seconds for each sentence to be created with the group of words. Therefore, a complete set of five sentences should not take more than 1minute and 50 secs.
4. Children will make sentences, with adverbs in the correct position / order.

5. The team which makes all five sentences in the correct order within the stipulated time will be the winner.

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

PRIMARY LEVEL:

1. I like my school very much.
2. We are going on a picnic tomorrow morning.
3. The football team lost badly yesterday.
4. My friend's father often travels to Pondicherry.
5. Sumant is always late.
6. They finished their home work quickly.
7. Grandfather sneezed three times in five minutes..
8. The teacher shouted loudly.
9. We must always respect our parents.
10. We often go to the cinema on Sundays.

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

MIDDLE LEVEL:

1. The flight probably took of late last night.
2. It rained continuously in Kolhapur for six hours.
3. My uncle visited us twice last month.
4. When I reached the school, the assembly had already started.
5. He drove unusually fast all the way to the hospital.
6. Mother never, ever loses her temper.

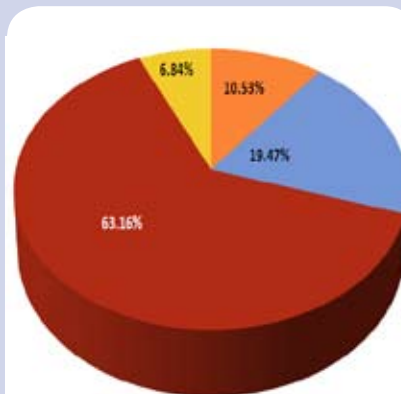
Falguni Chakravarty

7. We only just made it to the airport in time.
8. I never knew such a strange creature existed.
9. Only one case of dengue was reported last week.
10. She always wears a smile, even in adversity.



Falguni Chakravarty is a freelance ELT practitioner

Profile of FORTELL's Life Members



■ Elementary School Teachers

■ Secondary School Teachers

■ College/University Teachers

■ Others:
NGOs, Press, Publishers

LESSON PLAN

Sonia Makheeja

Title of the Unit

Key Environmental Concerns And Its Conservation

Title of the Lesson

Our Precious Inheritance 'Mother Earth'



Students Profile

11-13 years, class 6th and 7th. Proficiency level is very average, students are able to read and write short simple sentences.

Skills to Be Emphasized

Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing

Content

Vocabulary- opposite words
Reading - of material provided
Writing – personal letter

Time

70 minutes (two continuous periods)

Objectives

By the end of the lesson students will be able to understand the major issues for building a safe and healthy environment.

Learn the use of 'will' to the base verb to form the verb for future actions.

Understand and write personal letters.

Identify opposite words.

Materials

- (1) Role play activity
- (2) Photostat of the letter.

Source

English 2, A Textbook of English, YUVA module

Warm Up Activity

Wish the class. Refer to the lesson 'I Too Can Love and Respect Animals' and ask whether we humans are taking good care of other inhabitants and things on this Earth. Tell them that we are about to do a role play. Ask the students with whom you had earlier shared the script to do the role play.

Script for the Role Play

Sonu and Monu are walking home from their school. They are having ice cream. Sonu throws the ice cream wrapper and stick on the clean roadside, while Monu puts it inside his pocket. Sonu washes his hands with a roadside tap, leaving it open, Monu shuts the tap.

On reaching school Sonu pushes the gate open forcefully with a kick and leaves it swinging to and fro. On reaching classroom he starts playing and throwing chalk pieces lying. Sonu then takes out a sharp compass and starts scratching his name on a desk. He then purposefully spills the ink from his pen on the floor, takes out a stone from his pocket and breaks a window pane. Monu all along tries to stop Sonu.

On coming back home Sonu finds there is no water in the house and colony, as some miscreants have broken the pipeline. He tries to sleep but even that is not possible as his younger brother has broken the fan regulator and the fan is not working. The whole room is smelling of urine as his brother did use the bathroom but the room door to urinate. Sonu now regrets his previous actions and vows never to misbehave.

Now give time for a brief discussion and then discuss with the following question:

- (1) What do you think about Sonu's behaviour?
- (2) What 'incorrect things' were done by him?
- (3) Do we all, sometimes behave in similar manner?
- (4) Should we behave in same manner? If not, why?
- (5) What lesson do we learn from this?

The teacher should discuss that we all take so many things for granted – roads, water, air but we also have duties to maintain and preserve common and country's property – whether it is a school desk, bus, tree or tap. Bring in the positive role of Monu and encourage that we should behave in a mature and responsible way.

Presentation

Now here is a letter written by 'Mother Earth' to the children of the world. She has complete faith and hope that children will have the power to take care of her, save her and nurture her.

Distribute photocopied handouts of the following

The Infertile Lands

Barren Houses.

Arid Street No 6

22nd April, 2008.

My Dear Children of the World,

How are you? Today being 22nd April, let me remind you is Earth Day. I am writing to you for the first time. My good bright children, you know me well. Great poets and thinkers have written many songs in my praise.

Everybody in the world calls me Mother Earth with love and affection. Do you know why? This is because for hundreds of years, I have looked after people like a mother. Do you know how old I am? I am 4.6 billion (4,600,000,000) years old, older than your parents, grand parents and great grand parents.

Like a mother, I give you lots of things to eat like rice, wheat, vegetables and fruits. You also wear nice clothes made of cotton and silk and live in houses made of bricks, wood and iron. Do you know that all these things also come from me?

Long ago people used to care for me and worship me a like goddess. But now they cut down my tall trees and destroy my green forests. I feel hurt. The buses and cars pollute my air with smoke and fumes.

They don't respect me anymore. Your teacher will tell you how my mountains and forests help to make rain and keep life on Earth green and healthy. But now people are destroying my mountains and forests as well. Therefore, soon there will be no rain and no food. I am very sad about all this. That is why I am writing to you, children. I want that when you grow up you should be good citizens and look after me. Please plant more trees in you house, in your school and in your towns and villages.

Think today. After all you just have one Mother Earth.

Yours lovingly,

Mother Earth

To

The Children of the World

Future Road

Green City

The Earth

Glossary

Bright	intelligent
Affection	feeling of love,
warmth	
Worship	pay the respect one pays to God
Fumes	smoke (as emitted from buses, cars and factories)
Destroying	spoiling, cutting down

Practice

Building vocabulary

A Match the words in column A with their opposites in column B. The first one is done for you.

A	B
(1) old	(a) young
(2) sad	(b) bad
(3) good	(c) hate
(4) love	(d) happy
(5) great	(e) create
(6) destroy	(f) small

B Look at the following sentence:

Buses and cars pollute my air

The word buses and cars go together. In the same way there are many other such words, which go together

Think of such pairs of words from the letter you have just read.

Fruits and, paper and, men and

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

.....,

and, and

.....

Building Listening Skills

Say whether the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- (1) Mother Earth loves all living things
- (2) Mother Earth takes care of only a few of them
- (3) Mother Earth is older than our grandparents.
- (4) We depend on Mother Earth for almost all our needs.
- (5) Now very few people care for Mother Earth.
- (6) Mother Earth feels that children can help her.

Building Reading and Writing Comprehension Skills.

Complete the following sentences:

- (1) People call the Earth Mother because
.....
- (2) Cars and buses make the air dirty with
.....
- (3) Trees and mountains are useful to us because they
.....
- (4) Our houses are made up of
.....
- (5) When there is no rain, there is no
no

Building Writing Skill

List five things that you can do to help to keep Mother Earth safe and clean. Use the words given in your sentences.

For example you may write I will keep my house and school clean.

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

Now write a letter to your father (who is out of station) telling him not to worry, as you have understood the importance of your invaluable heritage.

(write your address here)

Dear.....

We were happy to know that you have reached Mumbai safely. We are fine here. Mummy is fine too. I want to tell you that This is what I plan to do totake care of my Mother Earth.

..... (sister/brother)
will

Please accept our.....

Yours lovingly

(name)

Evaluation and Follow Up –

Give a home assignment to evaluate. With this work children can move a step towards the next lesson.

So now you can imagine what will happen to this Earth of ours if we don't take care? Write a short paragraph describing the condition of the Earth if we don't take care now. Use the hints, and try using future tense.

You can start like this;

If we do not take care, our Earth
will become dry and barren.

- Like a desert
- no drinking water
- hot and dry
- No trees
- no flowing rivers
- no beautiful animals or birds
- no flowing rivers
- only rocks and sandy valleys



Sonia Makheeja is TGT (Eng) & co-author of Class 9 NCERT English textbook.. She is the recipient of the Radha Krishnan 2008 award

CREATIVE WRITING

Here I Am Lord

Sampa Chatterjee

Here I am Lord !
Devoid of the innocence of
childhood;
Barren heath where despair
dwells,
Confusion and experience unfair!

To You I yield, my oasis
In this burning injustice to men;
Still struggling to exist amidst
The gluttons who glare from the
Chair!

At your threshold I stand
Without the exuberant wisdom I
had
A Victim of Circumstance?"
Lonesome, yet still the intellect
outrage!

Here I am Lord !
I surrender to possess and retain
All that's true, all that's fair
I'll await the long eternal wait!



*Sampa Chatterjee
Reader, Kolkata ELTI
Co-ordinator, Fortell Kolkata*

Two haikus and a tanka to celebrate nature

tasneem shahnaaz

Rain drops on the skin of river
rippling frissons of excitement,
life swells, streams onwards.

Rapid waters, fast flowing
streams,

tumultuous journeys in
between,

Tales of the river begin ...

The indulgent waves
Wrinkle in soft laughter,
As denizens of the lake
dive in searching depths
in the Cyclops' blue eye.



*Tasneem Shahnaaz teaches
English Literature and
Language at Sri Aurobindo
College, Delhi University.*

The Power of Prayer

tasneem shahnaaz

Stand ,sit, bow, prostrate, on my mat I pray.
Fragmented pieces cohere suturing painful wounds,
healing the schisms and lacerations of living, loving, hating.
The vacuous void fills falteringly, is half-full, not half-empty.
Strength seeping in, life leaking in, I charge for tomorrow
with renewed vigor, to more breakings, despair,
To a compromised conscience beyond repair.

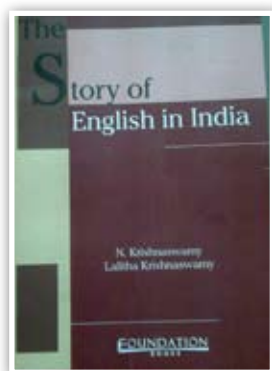
BOOK REVIEWS

The Story of English in India

Deepti Gupta

In *The Story of English in India*, Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy survey the complete panorama of the journey of English through the annals of India's history. The survey runs through all the foreign influences on Indian culture, begins with the Aryans who came to India around the second millennium B.C. and ends at the globalisation phase of contemporary Indian society.

According to the authors, "The book outlines the growth and development of English in India, with a view to redefining the aims and goals of teaching English in post-independence India". (p.v) It is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, titled 'The Exploration and Transportation Phase' traces the various foreign influences on India up to the year 1830. The beginning of English education in India is also painstakingly uncovered through the presentation of text from original documents of the British government. A strong point of this book is the timeline that follows each chapter and the list of references for every chapter. They certainly make the researcher's task easier.



By: N.Krishnaswamy and Lalitha Krishnaswamy

New Delhi, India: Foundation Books Pvt.Ltd., Cambridge House 2006.

Pp vii+227

'The Consolidation Phase: The Grand Design', the second chapter is divided into eight sections and traces the growth of English in Education up to the year 1892. It gives a very detailed account of the two extremely important documents of the period: Macaulay's Minute and Wood's Dispatch.

The third chapter, 'The Dissemination Phase' describes the process whereby English became a second language in India; chronologically, it covers the period from 1893 – 1947. Chapter four - 'The Identity Phase'- deals

with the emotional struggle that Indian society faced after the departure of the British. The chapter continues the documentation of the conflict between the emotional 'Angrezi Hatao' (Remove English) brigade and the rational 'English for development' Group. There is a useful account of ELT in India up to the year 1990.

The concluding chapter 'The Globalisation Phase' discusses the dynamics of globalisation in the context of English in India. The last two chapters also give a useful description of Indian English.

The Story is definitely a volume of interest for ESL pedagogues and handles a vast array of historical material quite efficiently. In fact, the presentation of excerpts from original documents and comments from contemporary writers is the strength of this volume. But, as an ELT watcher one wishes the book paid more attention to ELT itself. In places, there is an attempt to address the concerns of ELT but the vast canvas somehow defeats the intention. Especially in the last chapter one wishes the discussion were less wide-ranging and more focused on specific issues.



Deepti Gupta is Professor at Panjab University, Chandigarh, India (since 1985). Her passions include Action research and Asian teacher empowerment through creation and adaptation of ELT methodology.

Spoken English: A Foundation Course (Part 1&2)

A. L. Khanna

The Spoken English: A Foundation Course is a set of two books with one audio CD with each book. The books, in the words of the authors, have been specially designed for students who 'have had a regional language as the medium of instruction at school and who have had little or no exposure to spoken English.' The course proposes to help average Hindi speaking students at the intermediate and undergraduate levels and prepare them to be at par in the speaking skills with those who come through English medium schools.

The course has been designed by two highly experienced professors of English who have long years of experience in materials development in ELT and conducting workshops. It comprises 11 modules, Part 1 of which contains 6 modules including one module having four Appendices. Part 1 aims at introducing students to those basic language functions that are easy to acquire with very little effort and would also help students gain fluency in the spoken language. Students are given practice in greeting people, introducing themselves to others, talking about people and persons, answering telephone calls and taking town messages, calling for help in emergency, giving instructions and seeking clarifications, making requests and responding to them, asking for directions and giving directions, thanking

someone, inviting someone and accepting and refusing invitations, apologizing, talking about the weather, describing daily routines, and talking about possession and current events. Book 1 (in its four Appendices) besides giving students practice in the sounds of English consonants and vowels also helps them to distinguish between spellings and sounds of English, and relationship between them.

Part 2 contains five modules. It aims at helping students to gain accuracy in oral communication and therefore includes those functions of English that are challenging and involve relatively complex language structures. Students get practice in giving an opinion or an advice, making suggestions and complaints, expressing likes and dislikes, offering condolences, persuading and dissuading, expressing possibility, obligation and necessity, etc.

The course is based on sound understanding of principles of language learning. Since optimal language learning depends on an extensive exposure to a contextualized use of language, a lot of pair /group work activities that require students to repeat the samples of simulated dialogues have been designed for them to practice. It is hoped that if students practise the listening and speaking activities included in the book, they would be able to extend this knowledge to real life situations.



Kamlesh Sadanand & Susheela Punita.

Spoken English: A Foundation Course (Part 1&2).

New Delhi: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd, 2008, Price Rs. 275.

These books on Spoken English will fill a gap in the ELT books available in the market. Most of the existing books on Spoken English are either meant for young learners or are written for alien settings. There are very few books on the subject that have been written for those students who come from the rural and semi urban backgrounds who need these books the most. The activities in these books are self instructional and are quite learner friendly. The two audio CDs that accompany the books will not only help students improve their pronunciation of words but also sensitize them to the intonation patterns of English language. One must commend the quality of voices used in recording the dialogues.

These books will prove to be a great asset and resource even to the English teachers who is always in search of resources for teaching this skill which, though very important at the work place and in other important domains of daily life, remains neglected for want of teachers and facilities.



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Business English

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A few facts about me: who I am, where I write from and why is it that I review this publication? Every sensitive reviewer, I believe, asks these questions and it is only fair that the answers be shared with the reader.

A colleague, member of the same department, entrusted with much the same teaching responsibilities and a student of the same field as the authors, I write this piece to review and assess a textbook and through it a phenomenon of which I am myself a part. Therefore, this review is rooted in a framework hopelessly intermeshed with the one under scrutiny, a view from inside, so to say.

The book, I presume, is meant for primarily two kinds of readers: teachers and students of the B.Com. Programme. Functionally viewed, it exists in a space framed by the curriculum and classroom practice on the one hand and the students' study space on the other. It is being reviewed here for a journal that circulates among teachers of the English language. All this forces one to devise a reviewing framework that takes the curriculum, pedagogy and the students' learning curve into account. I believe the authors must have also felt these factors pressing, sometimes even hurting, while putting the book together.

This framework leads me to ask three basic questions:

1. How does this text relate to the subject matter and the syllabi it is prescribed for?

2. What communication abilities and skills will the student learn out of it?

3. What kind of pedagogic practices does the text participate in?

In the remaining part of the review let me attempt to answer, out of my understanding of this book, these questions and their corollaries.

Divided into six Units (25 chapters) the book glosses through a series of topics that correspond somewhat neatly to most of the entries in the B.Com Programme Paper XVI syllabus (except Unit 1). Much of this you would find in any book on Business Communication, though in a different form, but the book also presents "updated information on the cultural components of communication and how gender and culture define communication". Indeed the information is there, innovatively presented, but I wonder to what extent it is updated!

The reader is advised not to expect a theoretically unified exposition of the subject matter because this is a collaborative effort of five different minds. Each, perhaps, worked independently on one or more Unit/s, a fact that sneaks through changes in style, rhetoric, organization and some overlaps. Its strength lies in another direction - using a simple, lucid and innovative writing style to get across some basic points relating to the entries listed in the syllabus.

There appears to be a mismatch between the title of the paper



Deptt of English (Ed). Business English. New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008, pp 392,

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and its contents (barring Unit 1), a mismatch understandably reflected in the book as well. Is this book about Business English or Business Communication? The opening page of Chapter 1 dealing with Business English reads:

Business English is a communicative competence that needs to be understood in the context of the workplace and, for that purpose, it is important that we focus on the basics of Business Communication itself.

The book then takes off into the basics of Business Communication. That leaves me somewhat confused and dissatisfied.

To understand Business English one would of course want to study the English language as practiced at the business workplace. But why leap from Business English to Business Communication? As if the most fruitful way to study it was through the theory of Business Communication. This does appear to be a book on Business Communication masquerading as one on Business English.

A paper centered on Business English should study the rhetoric, syntax, grammar, style etc. specific to that use of language

and incorporate communication theory in its stride. But that would perhaps be an advanced course with different pedagogic and learning goals. Alternatively, basic versions of the course focused on the language could also be designed.

Within the framework of its implicit goals, however, the book seems to deliver well. In a pleasantly laid out note on the first page, the reader is introduced to a tree diagram that presents the organizational structure of a fictitious business organization - SWITCH2CFL- used for illustrative purposes throughout the text. There is something commendable in an impulse like this. An illustrative innovation, a feature that prevents somewhat repetitive variety and a useful text book centered communication strategy one could go on enumerating its advantages until the chinks begin to appear. Most of the time, the context on the parent page clarifies the interrelations and there is no real need for this indexical reference. Perhaps, that is the defining trait of all effective communication: within a given context it has to function without reference to an index.

The sections on gender and intercultural communication lucidly explain and exemplify points relating to culture and gender specific practices and values and even illustrate incidents relating to gender based and intercultural differences and clashes. Starting from basic concepts in the area like perception, stereotype and ethnocentrism the text weaves interesting and even humorous narratives about incidents centering on such interactions and clashes. Perhaps it would have helped if the text built-up further the highlights of “dominant” cultures and gender

issues along with specific dos and don’ts relating to them.

A word needs to be said about the narrative character of the explanation that runs throughout the book but specially in the gender and culture sections. It’s a form that should help students feel the points mentioned in the para heading at an experiential level. That should help the textbook reach the final goal of helping the students handle real life communication situations. Though it would leave teachers like us wondering about what we are supposed to do in the class – perhaps comment critically on the narrative? I have inadvertently moved into the realm of the second question.

There is enough substance in the book for a B.Com. Programme student to process. The real life examples through occasional case studies and narratives, exercises, assignments, activities etc. should help the student consolidate the lessons learnt. It also appears well-tuned to the subject matter with its stress on concepts and processes illustrated through diagrams, sketches, tables and occasional pictures. There is enough theoretical material to reproduce in the examination, and sufficient practical ideas, tips and guidelines to help students learn the form and practice the contents of various business communication tools.

That brings me to the pedagogical realm. A situation broadly analogous to what prevailed in the U.S. universities in the ’80s seems to be current today. As Prof. E.D. Hirsch Jr. summarized it then

“Keeping literature and composition separate is artificial. We must integrate – reintegrate - as departments of English. We

can’t have the literati, the literary mandarins, sitting aloof in one corner refusing to ever sully themselves with having to teach composition. Nor can we afford to have composition teachers, as members of a separate clique, concerned only with writing.”

Literature and composition (which I here take to mean language and communication courses) have in one sense always been integrated in the undergraduate classrooms of Delhi University. It is perhaps a commonplace of University experience that the English department at the college level teaches all other departments of the College a course relevant for them. Yet a schism has persisted in the minds of most of the teachers between language and literature. Trained in reading and teaching literature they have found the experience of teaching language and communication courses, no matter how carefully planned, different from teaching literature courses and sometimes unproblematically arranged them in an hierarchy.

I see this book as beginning to bridge this divide, level this hierarchy, in one sense. First by bringing in issues like culture and gender. By suggesting that teaching language practice in specific contexts cannot be divorced from theoretical aspects of language, literary theory and interdisciplinary fields, publications like these should help enrich the teaching and learning experiences for both sides of the classroom.

Graduating from an era of teaching language and communication based on stereotypical form and content, where books and teachers taught students not how to understand the basics of the form and the ability to frame content

but instead offered “templates” of content and form, this book should prove to be a richer experience. It would not be far-fetched to say that such stereotyping of the subject matter may have been responsible for a fair degree of disinterest that teaching language courses aroused among literature teachers.

The book would perhaps benefit by having a closely argued Preface explaining the relevance of integrating the theory and practice of language not only to the students but also the teachers and implement some of that integration further into its content.

I want to end with a small and somewhat disjointed anecdote.

A cardiologist wanted a new piece of equipment for a hospital but could not explain it to an electrical engineer. Apparently, the MD and the PhD were not - if you will pardon the pun - on the same wavelength. So, how did the cardiologist and the engineer solve the problem? They called in an English teacher. The electrical

engineer explained his problem to the English teacher as the doctor listened; then the doctor explained his needs as the engineer listened. When they had finished, and just as the English teacher started to arbitrate, both men of science stepped back and said, “Now we understand what each of us was trying to say.” The conclusion is obvious: if two scientists can explain their points to each other so that an English teacher can understand, then communication in direct, clear terms takes place.

Somewhat serious, somewhat humorous, I want to use this anecdote (picked up from the '80s) as an opportunity to explore the relationship between English as a language and the fields which use it for their own ends – business being one of them. They need language and us because they need to get across to each other; they struggle against problems of coding-decoding, form-content, style-context much as we do, though with a clearly utilitarian end in sight. We are for them, still, a touchstone of clarity, efficiency,

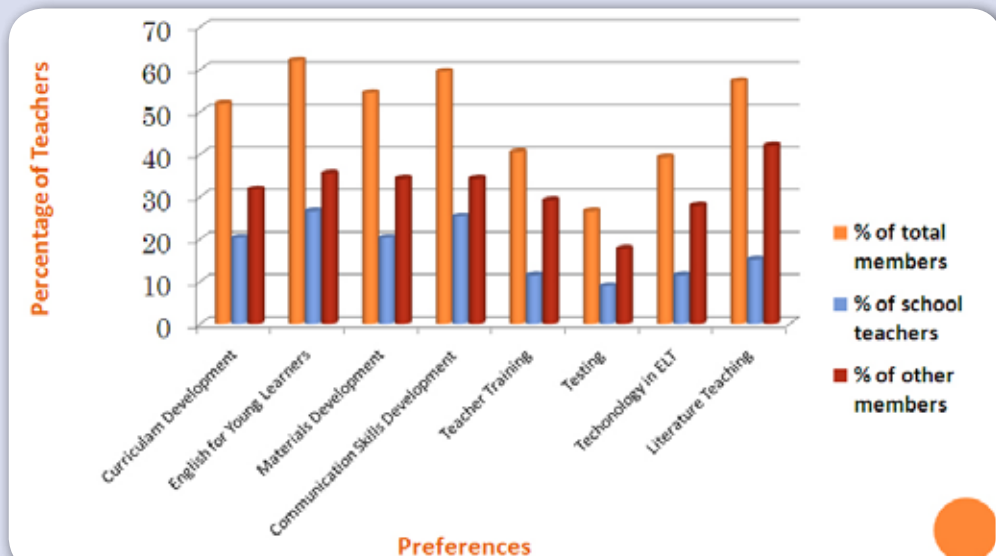
proficiency and a kind of middle ground that they can relate to as a part of their challenges and struggles and look upon us as facilitators.

This is a historically situated role that may not be available for very long to teachers of English literature. We may not be comfortable embracing these roles but given the world we live in can we afford to reject them? Syllabus necessities apart, can we as literature teachers ignore the appreciation and perhaps influencing of contemporary reality that would emerge out of a dialogue with the business world – and why do we refuse to conduct such dialogues through teaching courses like these? As our smiles fade, it is perhaps time for us to think what English teachers can do both to meet and, more importantly, to influence the direction of that demand.



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E-mail leskirkham@gmail.com.

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