

Penny Ur, a well known author and teacher trainer from Israel held a week-long workshop on materials development at the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILL), University of Delhi from February 15 to 20, 2010.

(see report - p 18)



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From the Editors

It is a matter of great pride that the FORTELL publication has over the years acquired the shape and features of a journal. It has grown beyond just a Newsletter that carries news and information of events. The FORTELL journal is the face of the organization to the outside world. All of us need to work with dedication and consistency so that it grows not just in volume but in strength and presence and makes a mark in academia.

While a large number of FORTELL life members are from Delhi we are happy that new individual and institutional members have joined from different parts of the country from places as varied as Visakhapatnam, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. We welcome them to the fold and hope that they will actively participate in organizing events at their end and contribute towards publication.

We appeal to all of you to contribute articles for the journal and also to try and procure advertisements and donations for continued publication. All of us realize the significance of the journal not just for us but for giving visibility to the organization. As an unaided educational body we express our voice through the journal and its important to raise funds without compromising on what we stand for and losing our autonomy.

As FORTELL completes two decades we need to remind ourselves of the unique platform that it provides for interaction between language and literature which are generally placed in separate compartments both in university departments and syllabi.

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However our experience in classroom shows how the two are inter-related and aid in teaching of the other.

FORTELL of course is the interface for the school and college teachers to exchange views. Such exchanges can help us in making useful interventions and in turn lead to better understanding of mechanics of one's system. CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) for example raises issues of continuous assessment around the academic year. Methodologies and mechanics

of evaluation and their success are of equal relevance to both schools and colleges. While the schools are grappling to comprehend CCE, college teachers have the internal assessment and its problematics to handle. The question is not just specifically of the particular evaluation system but also the larger one of evaluation methods and their feasibility and their 'success rate' in our given teaching environs.

The FORTELL team feels that we can make a difference in organizing workshops that will facilitate better understanding and implementation of CCE. This will be the first crucial year when this new system will be tested and our resource people can make useful intervention. All of us can play a role either by being resource people or by identifying schools for holding workshops.

The various headings in contents list like articles, book reviews, activities and interview further underline the importance of reading, research, training programmes for teachers. While we prepare ourselves to assess students throughout the year, we need to constantly update our knowledge base. New teaching methodologies and knowledge of recent research and publication in our areas are not just important for up gradation of our skills but are then also carried to the classroom. Such continuous and constant knowledge and skill enhancement make teaching and research mutually enriching.

We look forward to your views, suggestions and feedback not just regarding the articles published in the journal but also regarding the working of FORTELL at large.



Rachna Sethi



Shefali Ray

A legacy we have (almost) made our own!

English Language... in India

Prem Kumari Srivastava

Going through an interesting article on 'Emotion and Language Politics' by Dr. Kanavillil Rajagopalan, recently posted at, 'englishteachers_du@yahoo.com', an age-old tale from the 15th century famous Mughal Akbar-Birbal collection ricocheted in my mind. Dr Rajagopalan's paper provides rare insight into the language politics currently playing out in Brazil. Dig deeper and one finds traversing on a familiar turf in India too. He makes a forthright claim that select focus on the 'rational' has only helped isolate linguists and prevented them from having a say on important issues relating to language. One such feature of the ordinary person's view of language is that emotions play a vital role. Language loyalty, bilingualism, code switching etc can only be fully addressed alongside their emotional connotations. Well-entrenched in theory, his paper discusses (1) how linguistics has from its inception sought to downplay or ignore the importance of emotions also referred to as 'folk linguistics' and (2) how, largely in consequence of that inaugural decision, science is threatened with becoming a body of knowledge with very little impact on what happens in the real world. For the purposes of this short paper I will only consider Rajagopalan's first claim and make a few points about mother tongue and English in India.

The folk tale that I am referring to is called 'The Linguist.' It conjoins very well with some of the observations

made by Rajagopalan and both are of good import to anyone even remotely interested in the phenomena of bi and multilingualism, linguistics, language and politics and mother tongue! Somewhere, both act as trigger points for the short story of the English language in India that I am going to narrate in which English is a protagonist... by default! The Akbar-Birbal tale in brief goes like this:

Once a man, adept in several languages: a linguist, came to Akbar's court. With great pride he showcased his language prowess by speaking fluently in several languages and challenged Akbar and all his courtiers to identify his mother tongue. Akbar tried very hard to identify the challenger's mother tongue out of the so many fluent languages that he spoke; even sought help from his courtiers, but in vain. Finally, he asked the wisest of them all, Birbal the quickest one, who promised to get the answer by the next day. In the night, Birbal stealthily entered the guest's chamber and pinched him hard. The man swore angrily, looked around and grumbling went back to sleep. The next morning, Birbal announced the correct answer in the court. On being asked, he narrated the incident of the night and said that in moments of pain and pleasure, swearing and praying, man unconsciously uses his Mother Tongue! Mother tongue is the language of

emotions and the heart.

The fulcrum on which most debates on English in Southeast Asia rest, are the premises made by the World Englishes and the New Englishes project with its division of speakers/speech into Acrolect (standard), Basilect (deviant from standard) and Mesolect (informal - midway between the Acrolect and the Basilect). The idea is not to put certain facts on record but to offer some indicative positions about English in India. 1991 Census shows 178,598 mother tongue speakers in India. English is the associate official language with about 100 million speakers. There are about 350 million (David Crystal, 2004) English language speakers in India.

Yes, presence of English language and the resultant linguistic turbulence it causes needs to be problematised. Till recently, English was considered essentially a colonial linguistic remnant to be discarded with disdain. Launched to accommodate the new comers, World Englishes project creates a fantastical illusion where ownership of the language for us always remains in the virtual realm. Whether its Kachru's *Three Circle Model* of WEs, Mc Arthur's *Circle of WEs* or Modiano's *Centripetal Circles of Modern English*, all these models are exo-normative in nature i.e. they rely on an external body to provide norms for the standard English and these standards are governed by people who speak English as their native language or where English is the lingua-franca. Against this backdrop, no wonder, a euphoric conquest of English is felt in statements like, 'We, the excolonized have subjugated the language, beaten it on its head and made it ours!' (Sidhwa, 1996) and, 'English was undoubtedly Britain's

most valuable and abiding legacy to India, and educated Indians, a famously polyglot people, rapidly learned and delighted in it – both for itself, and as a means to various ends.' (Tharoor, 2002) But, classroom analysis shows, that from the ancient times, the simultaneous use of two or more languages within the same literary text (oral or written) is evidenced primarily because people in the Indian Subcontinent have been perhaps forever, bi/tri-lingual.

English language once called the 'aunty tongue' interestingly also happens to be 'the only shared – almost anointed – medium' (Kachru, 2005) across the most Anglophone region of the Globe, Asia and definitely also the culturally diverse, linguistically plural India. Often on Television, Radio Shows, variety of linguistic interactions and in the language of youth culture there are minimal clues indicating which the receiver language is and which the giver language is. The blending of two or more linguistic systems is accomplished with great elan. Without any neat quarantining, a metropolitan variety of language is born in which English is a major partner and initiator of convergence. Just as the Ganges traverses the length and breadth of India, so does one find a sprinkling of English all over India. Even, though the English spoken in London has reverberations only in a small circle of Delhi, the potpourri served on the Dilli English platter has a fair sprinkling of Bengali, Marathi, Hyderabad, Haryanavi and now Kashmiri (the Kashmiri migrants to Delhi have increased manifold in the last few years) along with the Punj (Punjabi) variety of English.

An English teacher is quite aware that there is not just one English, but

many Englishes in India. Distance needs to be bridged between the different readership constituencies that exist in India. There is regional variance of pronunciation, cultural specificities, class and caste biases. The intention at English language learning forums and discussion platforms is to look at English language skills essentially from an Indian learner's perspective in innovative ways. But a truth is spelt out by the following:

'Today, only 25 percent of India's technical graduates and about 10 to 15 percent of other graduates are employable at once.'

(Kiran Karnik, President, Nasscom in Business, November, 2007).

This means 75 percent of all those who graduate even from tech-schools cannot be employed. He attributed this to the lack of soft skills, including the lack of ability to communicate in English.

It is said that there are two faces of the English language in India: Englishization of native language and Nativization of English. This has immense impact on South Asian sociolinguistic contexts. Is English a legacy that we have (almost) made our own? Or are we still grappling with a question of 'ownership' because 'ownership confers legitimacy'. (Widdowson, 1994 and Norton, 1997). If learners of English cannot claim ownership of language, they might not consider themselves legitimate speakers of that language.

It is true globally that people are looking for stock, standardised English. This has to emerge from the varieties of English in use today. There is a fair amount of wisdom in this view that language is no longer

the preserve of the English, who are just one of many 'shareholders' in a 'global asset'. I wish to also draw your attention to this interesting piece on 'Hinglish' in The Telegraph. (Johnston, 2007) It says that immigrants to Britain should not be taught English, but cultural mixes, such as, Hinglish, Spanglish and Chinglish. The writer considers 'Imperial' English outdated, and believes that it needs to adapt to the global reach of the language.

Since the iconic 'Tryst with Destiny' speech of Nehru in English in the Constituent Assembly of independent India, India has found English indispensable for the running of its political system. However, this legacy of British rule, unlike 'parliament', was expected to be a short-term feature and to fade away as India set about consolidating its political and economic affairs. The plan has gone astray. In politics, as Marx predicated, the oppressors themselves provided the instruments by which the oppressed could liberate themselves. English, as such an instrument has now been partially engulfed by the resulting freedom of newness, of idioms and usage. (Srivastava, 2009) This newness can said to come from inflections of the mother tongue. Naik quotes W B Yeats who espoused that 'No man can think or write with music and vigour except in his mother tongue' (Naik, 2003) thus posting a sincere bid for the importance of mother tongue in linguistic competency mapping.

Real life, however, is not always simple. Some languages do not have the range of vocabulary and concepts to be useful beyond the early stages of schooling without additional codification and the invention of new words, which

can take years. In today's diverse world giving individuals, confidence also means giving them the ability to communicate outside their own language group, either in another national language or in an international language.

Thus far, English will stay in its many avatars. No further substantiation is required to establish the smudging of the critical distinction between its use as a second language and as the principal or preferred medium of education as well as business transaction. Also, every cultures' interpretations of another language is, in effect a new construction of it based on the formation of reading competencies in which emotions have a significant playing field.



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Discourse of a Divided Nation:

A Study of Train to Pakistan and its Cinematic Adaptation

Sanjib Kumar Baishya

The multiple meanings and images of a novel get transformed when it is adapted into cinema. While reading a novel the reader has to create a space in his mind through imagination, on the other hand cinema is a 'virtual space' where the characters, actions and dialogues become visible.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and its cinematic adaptation by Pamela Rooks address a national conflict in two different spaces.

Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie, in their introduction to the book *Cinema and Nation* observe:

... national cinema is more fruitfully understood in terms of notions of conflict. Films, it is claimed, do not simply represent or express the stable features of a national culture, but are themselves one of the loci of debates about a nation's governing principles, goals, heritage and history. (4)

In this connection, it may be surmised that films like *Train to Pakistan* are a reflection of the notion of a conflict and it does not express the stable features of Indian national culture. It, however, addresses a debate, based on a significant and traumatic event of Indian history. While defining Indian Nationalism through literature and films one has to pick the moments of glory and the moments of pain and suffering at the same time. In this context, the literary discourse of partition and its reflection in films can be seen as a reflection of nationalism

or a reaction to nationalism. In case of *Mano Majra*, it has witnessed a bright history of harmony and peace and a dark history of hatred and religious segregation. In this connection, *Mano Majra* and its people are a metaphor for a nation within a nation. *Mano Majra* is a microcosmic representation of what happened to the majority Indians who loved to live together, peacefully. The concepts of freedom and nation are quite alien to them. This may be underscored through the conversation in the gurudwara that takes place among a Muslim, the lambardar, and Iqbal:

... 'Why, don't you people want to be free? Do you want to remain slaves all your lives?'

After a long silence the lambardar answered: 'Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more land or more buffaloes?'

'No,' the Muslim said. 'Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis.' (*Train to Pakistan*: 48)

This conversation reveals a discourse that addresses the fundamental question of freedom. This is a serious critique of the freedom politically and territorially gained by India, which was practically beyond the reach

and realization of many people of rural India. If the concept of nation is an imagined construction, then the concept of freedom, for these people, too, is a constructed one. It is true that people, educated or uneducated, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, participated in India's freedom struggle. But when India gained freedom, and when the decision to divide the nation into two parts was taken, on the basis of religion, the voices of the average Indians were hardly taken into consideration. Partition was simply an imposed idea, the translation of which saw lakhs of people massacred and displaced.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh is trying to bring to the fore voices of the mass, which remained unobserved, unnoticed and ignored during the time of partition through the characters from three religious communities, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. The author brings in the characters like Hukum Chand, the Deputy Commissioner, the sub-inspector and Iqbal the comrade to show how efforts were made to create tension between the Sikhs and the Muslims in *Mano Majra*. Iqbal has a political propaganda and has an ambition to become a big leader even though he is undecided whether he is ready to sacrifice or not. He tries to find out if there is any 'tension' or conflict between the two communities in *Mano Majra*. His mission, however, remains incomplete due to the absence of any tension. So he cannot take any action. His dilemma is clearly portrayed by Pamela Rooks in her film in which she adds a few things, for example, his telegraph to other comrades clearly stating that he himself is a comrade. Hukum Chand tries to create tension between the two communities in order to send the Muslims to Pakistan so that any probable riot may be avoided. He plays his own game by projecting Iqbal as a member of the Muslim

League and relating the Sultana gang, which is now in Pakistan, with the murder of Lala Ram Lal. Hukum Chand's ploy is the first step towards creating mistrust between the two communities. Then the ghost trains arrive at the Mano Majra station. The police and the military try to hide the massacre from the Mano Majrans, but the odour of burning bodies is sufficient for them to realise what has actually happened. Hukum Chand's attitude changes significantly. Through the memory of death, past and present, he becomes a completely transformed man. When he is informed that Malli and some other Sikhs will attack the train to Pakistan from Mano Majra on the railway bridge he changes his game plan. Now Hukum Chand accepts that Iqbal is a Sikh and decides to release him and Juggut Singh who have been arrested in Lala Ram Lal's murder case. He has a small ray of hope in Iqbal who may prevent the

people from rioting. But his main hope lies on Juggut's action because of his clandestine affair with Nooran, the daughter of Imam Baksh who will also be sent to Pakistan by the same train. Hukum Chand, however, has another reason too. Haseena, the young Muslim courtesan, who reminds him of his dead daughter is also going to Pakistan by the same train.

Joy Gould Boyum's comments on the assessment of an adaptation are very interesting:

In assessing an adaptation, we are never really comparing book with film, but an interpretation with an interpretation—the novel that we ourselves have recreated in our imaginations, out of which we have constructed our own individualized 'movie', and the novel on which the filmmaker has worked a parallel transformation. For just as we

are readers, so implicitly is the filmmaker, offering us, through his work, his perceptions, his visions, his particular insight into his source. An adaptation is always, whatever else it might be, an interpretation.

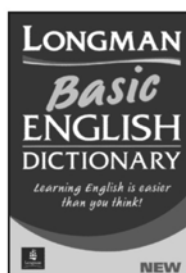
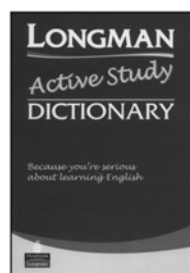
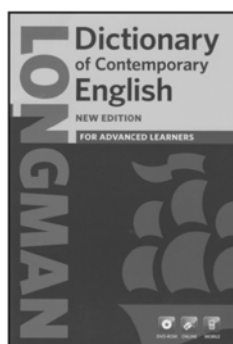
(Double Exposure: Fiction into Film: 61-62)

So it is Pamela Rooks, the script-writer and the director who has produced her own interpretation of the novel on screen. While making an assessment of the adaptation of the novel into a film, I propose to discuss two different interpretations—imaginative recreation of the novel and its parallel transformation into the film *Train to Pakistan*. So it's the perception of Pamela Rooks that has projected Juggut Singh as the protagonist in the first scene itself. It's simply her imagination through which Juggut Singh's father, whom Khushwant Singh says, was a dacoit,

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is now portrayed as a martyr. In another interesting scene, Juggut Singh meets Nooran in the field. (*Train to Pakistan*. clip: 25:32) Nooran is worried about their future because they belong to different religions. Juggut Singh's response is very interesting. He says that he doesn't belong to any religion; his identity is that of only a dacoit which erases all other identities. This is again a significant discourse created by the filmmaker based on the novel and her own understanding of the character. Another significant incorporation is the telegraph office scene. Iqbal's identity is established as a Communist activist in this scene. (*Train to Pakistan*. clip2, 3; 00:25:23 -- 00:26:23, 00:26:30 -- 00:28:00). These incorporations are a reflection of the limitation of a filmmaker who has to say certain things within a specified span of time. So Pamela Rooks uses a few innovative techniques through which she aptly establishes the characters, situations and themes into the fabric of the film. The inclusion of the secular dialogue by Juggut Singh aptly suggests the importance of such innovations. This also refers to the French film theorist Alexandre Astruc's 'auteur theory' which says that the director, who oversees all audio and visual elements of the motion picture, is more to be considered the 'author' of the movie than is the writer of the screenplay. Films should reflect a director's personal vision. The directors should use their cameras as writers use their pens. So adaptation is a process of recreation through which a director tries to express his or her own understanding of a literary text.

Train is used as a significant metaphor for the discourse of a divided nation in both the novel and the film. Pamela Rooks, however, uses deep focus, panning and close-ups of the train and the human

corpses, to effectively visualize the trauma and the concept of a divided nation. The last scene of the film is full of suspense. In this particular scene Juggut Singh is shown slashing at the rope that is tied on the bridge by Malli and the other rioters, with a small *kirpan*. He is shot at, but doesn't leave the rope. Finally the rope snaps in the centre as he falls on the railway tracks. The train goes over him and goes on to Pakistan. (*Train to Pakistan*. clip 4—01:40:40)

The novel *Train to Pakistan* and its cinematic adaptation can be seen as a part of the creative discourse that has tried to bring out the hidden truth and unnoticed voices in microcosm in the form of a small village and the people living in it. Both these works significantly address a few serious questions: Was nationalism realised as a successful mission during the time of independence? Was it able to protect the idea of secularism, which was considered an inseparable part of nationalism? While trying to answer these questions, both Khushwant Singh and Pamela Rooks have created a discourse that challenges another discourse in form of a nationalism that talks about religious segregation and territorial division based on the theory of a divided nation.

In *Train to Pakistan* lie clusters of meanings that suggest that nationalism cannot be singularly defined. Especially during and after partition, Indian Nationalism became such a complex concept for the displaced and dislocated people that it almost lost its relevance for them.

Alok Bhalla makes an important observation:

One of the most unexpected and tragic consequences of the political decision to divide the Indian subcontinent was that millions of people were forced to leave their homes, their

bastis, their *desh*, their *watan*, and undertake a difficult and sorrowful journey, often against their desires and better instincts, to cities and villages whose names and images had rarely ever before drifted across the boundaries of their affective realms.

(*Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* : 4)

Therefore, the concept of a nation-state that takes care of one's political identity was unable to produce a positive effect. It resulted in the loss of homes, loss of identities leading to loss of faith in a nationalism, which the followers of secular ideologies projected during the time of India's freedom struggle.

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In-service English School Teachers' Education Programmes:

Need for a Permanent Agency

S.C.Sood

The aim of this brief paper is to argue that for curriculum renewal projects for teaching English in schools there ought to be a specialized indigenous permanent agency with adequate resources so as to undertake research and development in curriculum design on a continuous basis to address the needs for reforms based on society's requirements as these change with the passage of time. This argument is based on two observations: one, the nature of such projects; and two, the traits exhibited by the participants attending such programmes shortly after the training is over and also in the long run.

If we look at some prominent projects aiming at curriculum renewal in English in India, we find that these are cyclical in nature because the needs of society for English and English teaching keep changing with the passage of time and also because these projects follow a set pattern. They run through a certain life cycle: from initial enthusiasm and energy, particularly among those involved in the project, to a slowing down, weakening and eventual death and replacement with another one - much as a violent cyclone passes through with the passage of time.

I am not thinking of short-term in-service teacher orientation/ refresher courses arranged at all levels all over the country by teacher training institutions such as DIETs, SCERTs, RIEs, NCERT, Universities'

Department of Education for school teachers and by Universities Departments/Academic Staff Colleges for college teachers. The impact of these on teachers' professional ability, too, no doubt needs to be studied for a feedback to make them effective. But I have in mind three major projects for curriculum renewal for teaching of English. One of these was UGC curriculum renewal attempt through Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in English based at Central Institute for English and Foreign Languages (now renamed The English and Foreign Languages University) Hyderabad (1986 - 89) for teaching English in colleges/ Universities. The other two were the 'Madras Snowball', a project aimed at retraining 27,000 teachers of English in Tamil Nadu with the help of the British Council in 1959, and the CBSE-ELT curriculum renewal exercise to introduce Communicative English Language Teaching in secondary schools in India (1988 - 94).

UGC-CDC Report (1989) was an indigenous attempt and was also recommendatory in nature and hence institutions were free to accept or not to accept its recommendations. I have not seen any published systematic study of the impact of this project on the teaching of English at tertiary and higher levels though quite a few universities incorporated some of its suggestions in their syllabi for teaching English. 'Madras

Snowball' project was described a colossal and disturbing failure (Widdowson, 1968). Many reasons were given for the failure of this project and among these the one that strikes us most was given by Prabhu (1987) who opined that it failed because the oral methodology was neither relevant nor sustainable in the local context. Teachers, it was said, continued to use the grammar translation method widely prevalent in India at the time.

My aim here is to focus on the recent CBSE-ELT curriculum renewal project seeking to replace content-based teaching to skill-based methodology (Communicative language teaching) undertaken in early 1990s and funded by ODA through the British Council. The project resulted in a set of four books called *Interact in English* each for class IX and X beside about 50 teachers as trained resource persons who were sent abroad for training for three months under external experts in different aspects of curriculum development - materials production, teacher training and testing and evaluation techniques.

The implementation and evaluation of this project was assigned to CIEFL Hyderabad that brought out its report in 1997. The evaluation of this project by individual independent scholars presents a contradictory picture (e.g. see Tickoo, Mathew, Agrawal). Now that the project has been in existence for about 15 years, an objective evaluation of the project ought to be done by using means other than just questionnaires and personal interviews on a sample larger than has been done in the past. Informal discussions with students and teachers reveal that the course and the methodology could never achieve the intended results and whatever little interest the teachers and students have had might wane

further with the proposed abolition of class X examination and hence it seems that the project is in the last phase of its life-cycle. In any case, there is already a new project called 'Project English' (2009) aimed at improving the teaching skills of our teachers of English.

The participants, too, at such In-service Teacher Training Programmes that seek to introduce new curriculum exhibit certain traits that are akin to those displayed by second language learners learning L2 who must be given repeated exposure to the target language to achieve 'native-like' proficiency in the absence of which they might end up with some sort of what is termed inter-language, deviant form or fossilization.

One of the traits that these participants reveal immediately at the end of the programme is what can be called 'cramming' and not 'understanding' of the new principles. This was seen at an ELT seminar held at Delhi (Feb. 1-5, 1993) being attended by quite a few of these 50 teachers trained in CELT. Their demonstration of the knowledge of CLT principles on the materials prepared for the course was impressive but it was felt that the complex principles of CLT had not yet been fully understood by them and exhibited 'surface learning' rather than 'deep learning'. In order to test this hypothesis, these teachers were given a short poem photocopied and distributed a day in advance and they were asked to prepare and bring a lesson plan for teaching this poem the next morning. The main points of the lesson plan enunciated by them were written on the black-board for all of them to see these. The lesson plan reproduced on the black-board read something like this:

The teacher will give a model reading of the poem; the teacher will ask some students to read out lines

from the poem; the teacher will write down difficult words on the black-board and give their meanings; the teacher will give another reading of the poem and so on.

The exercise proved the hypothesis: these teachers had not yet internalized the complexity of CLT. They could apply CLT principles only to the materials they had been trained on to handle; 'short-circuit' would occur when faced with materials not included in their textbook in which case they would fall back upon the old practice they had been using before the training was imparted. Hence, what is needed is a longer training and practice which can be given by a local agency.

It is also seen that without a sound theoretical background knowledge of ELT, teachers resort to making inferences about new principles which may result in elaborations and distortions (innovations/adaptations to suit the environment in which they teach?) of the CLT principles to which they are introduced.

We would not term such instances as 'tissue rejection' (Holliday, 1994) but tissue modification to suit the body in which it is planted. Modifications of the original are bound to occur in the hands of the non-native teachers; the environment in which they operate and the objective of teaching English for communication in a multilingual and multicultural society. But such modifications must be based on sound theory and not on one's whims and fancies. It is because of this reason that we need a local permanent agency to oversee that such modifications are rational and serve that purpose.

Another factor that begs for a local unified agency for in-service teacher education, and research and development of curriculum renewal in English is the slow drying up of

the number of trainers to achieve the cascade effect. There are several reasons for this: the original batch of trained teachers who are supposed to train other colleagues may fail to influence their colleagues for various reasons; they may retire or get promoted to teach senior classes; may have little time to guide colleagues after their own teaching load; may become principals who prefer administrative work to teaching; may quit teaching and take up other jobs that may be more paying and so on for want of better prospects within their own teaching cadre. The fresh recruits are thus left to fend for themselves and without any mentor to guide them. It is futile to talk of self-development in their situation as requisite environment for self-development does not exist in our present school education system. There are no facilities nor are research and self-development encouraged by stakeholders driven by examination results.

There is one more and perhaps an important reason for my plea. From the cases of school curriculum development in English over the years cited above, it is not clear which agency is responsible for this important task. In the 1960s, the reform process involved a state government; in the 1990s, it was in association with CBSE, primarily an examining body, and not the NCERT, SCERT or any other institutions concerned with curriculum development and in-service teacher retraining and the recent one 'Project English' has evolved through policy dialogues with some state governments, ducationists and corporate sector. Education in India is on the concurrent list and both the centre and state governments can frame rules but if there is one fixed agency responsible for curriculum renewal in English language, an

important tool for empowering the common man at the centre and the states, it will equip itself with the expertise required to undertake the job keeping in mind the local resources, customs and practices either on its own or in collaboration with other agencies to initiate the cycle of curriculum renewal and development from time to time. Creation of such an agency would also obviate chances of any rivalries that often crop up among various agencies and institutions dealing with in-service teachers education and training leading to resistance, non-cooperation or outright rejection and thus mar effective implementation of projects.



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The efficacy of an oral communication task analyzed at an ESL classroom from the perspective of Task based learning

S.Shanmuga Sundaram & Meenakshi Sundaram

Task Defined:

A Task is 'any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. Task is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have

the overall purpose of facilitating language learning.' (Breen 1987)

Dave Willis and Jane Willis emphasize the fact that 'there has been an increasing interest in classroom based research, examining for example, the quality and quantity of the interaction produced by learners doing tasks in different

circumstances. Small-scale research projects, carried out by teachers also shed light on aspects of TBL and learning through the use of tasks. Hence designing and implementing tasks for a wide variety of learner types and teaching situations is indispensable.

One of the successful applications of Task Based Learning was Prabhu's procedural syllabus.(Prabhu 1987)

Design of an oral communication task:

Considering the type of ESL situation (at National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli) in which most of the students' common obstacles were

- low self confidence in speaking English
- their concern over accuracy rather than fluency.

Hence the following task was designed to remove the above said obstacles.

Level	Aim	Content	Activity	Teacher role	Learner role	Organization	Variation	Time	Tips for motivation
1 st year B.Tech., students belonging to Intermediate high level as per ACT-FL speaking scale 1999).	To develop confidence in speaking and to develop fluency	Joke Telling	Telling the whole class/ students of his own caliber	Monitor and facilitator	Active participant	Keep famous jokes to supply – in case the student is not ready. Steps. 1)give them time to read through the prompt 2)The student narrates 3)Cheering by the classmates to boost his/her morale	Better students may repeat telling more effectively/ may ask questions related to the joke.	5 to 10 minutes	Teacher tells an interesting joke initially, cheering by class mates and so on

It incorporated essential components such as objectives, input, activities, teacher role, learner role and settings. (e.g. a frame work for analyzing communicative tasks by David Nunan)

Expected outcome:

The task designed was expected to improve confidence as well as fluency of the ESL learners, chosen to carry out the task.

Participants:

The participants study in one of the Engineering colleges in South India i.e.-National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli. A total number of 10 ESL students, studying in I year Engineering at the intermediate high level (as per the ACTFL Speaking Scale,1999) were chosen to do the task.

Method & Materials used:

Pre Task:

At the outset the teacher motivated the students by telling them an interesting joke to make them get into the task. Having created a conducive atmosphere, the participants were given prompts on jokes to work with and then they were asked to do pair work to discuss the contents of the joke. If needed, they were assisted by the teacher to understand difficult phrases, idioms and words.

The task:

Joke telling by the participants was based on a prompt given to them. The rationale behind choosing this task was to create an interesting as well as amusing atmosphere that will extrinsically motivate(as referred by Rani Rubi) the learners to do the task.

Organization and its sequence:

- Having done the pre task they were allowed to communicate the joke.

- At first they were given enough time to go through the prompt.
- Next the participants came forward to narrate the jokes they had read.
- Once they finish telling the joke, they were applauded by the class mates.

Variation:

- Better students in the group(who volunteered to repeat) were allowed to repeat.
- If the joke was not communicated properly, questions related to the joke were asked by the group members so as to comprehend it.
- Students were allowed to come forward with their own jokes.

Material used:

Interesting jokes from the magazines were chosen for them to communicate in the target language. For instance, jokes were chosen from 'laughter the best medicine' section of The Readers Digest.

As there were sufficient numbers of joke prompts collected from various magazines, the task was conducted for 20 sessions over a period of ten days.

Feed back:

To know the out come of the tasks, the participants were asked to give feedback at the end of the final session. The feedback received from them clearly showed that their confidence and fluency had been improved to a reasonable extent.

Discussion of Results:

- Since there was something interesting to speak on, all the 10 students participated without hesitation.

- Two of them came forward with their own jokes and told them successfully.
- They had the urge/desire to compete which helped them to communicate the joke in a successful way.
- Since they had joke prompts to refer to, most of them had a good flow in their speech.(as it had helped to formulate the message content)
- Cheering by the classmates and the teacher after completion of the joke had motivated them to participate more in terms of telling a new joke.
- Their attention was mainly focused on meaning rather than form which was evident in their attempt to express the joke.
- Though three of them were unable to sustain performances for two sessions they could communicate the joke to the whole class which showed that they had communicative competence like the others.
- Over a period of time, their performance had improved to a reasonable extent.
- Though two of them couldn't deliver the punch line of the joke efficiently for the first session, the joke was clearly understood and cheered by the classmates. For them also, the improvement was gradual.
- Overall the confidence level and fluency had been good (as verified through tone, body language and through the feedback) This confirmed the fact that the aim of the task was achieved.

Learner Role:

- The learner had been an active participant though out the task
- Participants applauding one another proved to be effective to lift up their spirit
- They were encouraged to communicate freely. This helped them to get into a frame of mind in which the pressure of performing was reduced.

Teacher Role:

- The role of the teacher had been that of a facilitator.
- He used a diary to make separate entries to assess the body language and tone of participants.
- The teacher helped them to understand difficult phrases, idioms and words.
- He helped them to get a positive frame of mind by motivating them.

Conclusion:

On the whole, the task had been very effective for the participants. It had achieved the outcomes intended, in tune with the ESL situation. With little variations of the same task it may produce results depending on the need, interest and the level of the ESL learner.

Considering the large population of ESL learners, especially in a multilingual country like India, it is recommended that more and more tasks could be designed/created by the ELT professionals/teachers to make learning meaningful, creative and interesting.

Limitations:

- The experiment has been administered only for the intermediate high level students.

- For other levels it is yet to be tested.
- A small sample size has been tested.



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Penny Ur, a well known author and teacher trainer from Israel held a week-long workshop on materials development at the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILL), University of Delhi from February 15 to 20, 2010. Tara Chadha had the opportunity to have a tête-à-tête with her over a cup of coffee.

Tara Chadha (TC): I understand that you decided to migrate from your native country some three decades ago. What inspired you to make Israel your permanent home?

Penny Ur (PU): I was going to study Hebrew and Arabic at Oxford, so in my 'gap year' decided to go out to Israel and learn modern Hebrew. I stayed on a kibbutz on an 'Ulpan' scheme which allows you to study half the day and work half the day for five months, and acquired a basic knowledge of modern Hebrew that way. But I also fell in love with the kibbutz idea and the country, and decided I would make it my home. I returned to the UK to finish my degree and teaching diploma, and then emigrated to Israel.

TC: You have been a practising teacher and a teacher trainer. How far has your experience as a school teacher helped you to carve out the agenda of your training programmes and teaching materials?

PU: I have been for most of my working life a practising teacher of English; my writing and teacher training grew out of this. To this

day, I see myself primarily as a teacher (it's what I automatically write on things like visa applications where you have to write 'occupation'). I have since studied research literature and have published and lectured as part of my work as an academic; but my thinking is shaped primarily by my own professional classroom experience.

TC: What basic difference do you find between dealing with young school children and mature users of English language?

PU: They learn in different ways. Adult learners are more cognitively and metacognitively developed, can make use of more abstract explanations (grammar rules, for example), or of conscious, effective learning strategies – and use them to inform their own developing proficiency. Younger learners learn more intuitively, so it is better to use activities that have them learning by heart or playing games or listening to stories – acquiring the language through meaningful rehearsal and exposure. In a classroom environment, incidentally, older learners learn much faster than younger ones, so that's another difference.

TC: In the situation of learning English as a second or third language (as in India) which of the skills should be given priority?

PU: Very difficult to answer! It depends on what the learners need English for. If it's for work in call centres, then obviously listening and speaking skills predominate. If it's for advancement in an academic career, then perhaps reading and writing. Internationally, perhaps, because of the development of IT, the skills of reading and writing are becoming more important than they were previously, and for many learners these will take priority.

TC: Earlier the emphasis was on reading and writing but with globalization and communicative methods having come in to focus the emphasis has shifted to the oral skills. In our situation teachers and resource persons are not well exposed to listening and speaking. Even when they have mastery of grammar and lexis of the language, they can not speak with confidence and fluency. As a teacher trainer could you suggest some methods and specially designed materials for a situation like ours to help our teachers?

PU: I'm not sure I agree with your first statement. As I said earlier, the development of IT internationally has meant the development of the use of the written skills: for emails, 'chat', SMS, Twitter, Facebook and so on, which taken together have to a large extent supplanted the telephone as the major channel of communication.

Having said that, I would agree that the oral skills are primary and essential, and how to develop confidence and fluency in the use of the oral language is an important challenge. There are some books which suggest ideas for speaking activities: my own Discussions that

Work or Frederike Klippel's Keep Talking, for example. But it's also important within course books that teach general courses in English to have components that provide students with opportunities to use the speaking skill and develop their fluency.

TC: How much importance should be given to the teaching of grammar at different levels?

PU: I think grammar is fairly important, and that there should be an explicit grammar syllabus of the basic structures at elementary and secondary school level, with the grammar structures being taught and practised systematically. At tertiary level however grammar can be taught 'reactively': i.e. the teacher will respond to lack of knowledge or mistakes as she encounters them, and take time occasionally to draw students' attention to correct usage.

Note that the methods change as students get older, younger students benefit from a lot of learning by heart, game-like practice, and very simple, concrete, explanations. Older students, with more highly developed cognitive and metacognitive abilities can cope with more generalized and abstract explanations, and more



demanding practice.

At school level, I would estimate that grammar teaching in any case should not take up more than about half a lesson a week on an average, the rest of the time can be devoted to teaching vocabulary and the four skills.

TC: You have been interacting with a cross section of users of English in India. How would you place them vis a vis the users of English in other countries?

PU: The people I've been meeting and talking to have been people with MA or even PhD. degrees in English literature, so I wouldn't claim to have met a cross section. These people have an excellent knowledge of English, comparable to academics in other countries I've visited.

TC: During the course of your talk you made an observation that the majority of English speakers today are located, to use Kachru's terms, in the 'outer' or 'expanding circles', using English as a lingua franca. Do the native speakers of English consider this global linguistic development as some sort of threat to the monopoly they have enjoyed for years? Or do they feel happy that English has acquired a global status?

PU: I think on the whole native English speakers are quite happy that English has achieved the status of a lingua franca: those of them who speak a fairly 'standard' variety of English are thereby enabled to communicate with all sorts of people worldwide with whom they could not communicate before. Those who speak a 'non-standard' variety – like 'Singlish' for example, or Afro-American English – need to develop the ability to function in standard English side by side with their 'native' dialect.

TC: In what way is English as

a lingua franca different from the Standard English variety? Could you spell out some of its linguistic features? Has this variety been codified to be used as a teaching-learning model in a second language learning situation like that of India? If it has not been codified, who will be the deciding authority in the event of any dispute?

PU: Users of English as a lingua franca have to use some kind of Standard English, defined as that variety (or range of varieties) of English that will be universally comprehensible and acceptable worldwide. This is very similar to, for example, American English, or Indian English; the only difference is that speakers of these varieties need to 'weed out' those items which are peculiar to their native community and not used worldwide: 'fortnight' in British English, for example, or 'lakh' in Indian English.

No, there is no codification at present. As I said in my talk, I think there is likely to be some kind of 'wiki' that will provide the information necessary, contributed to by linguists from all over the world.

I doubt if there will be any 'authority' that will decide on which is preferable of particular differences of usage. It is likely that the speakers of the language will decide, gradually one usage will become predominant. The experience of academies, as in France, who try to proclaim what shall be the 'right' way to say things is that this kind of authoritative imposition doesn't work: it's the speakers of the language on the street who eventually decide. It will be the same, surely, with ELF.

TC: Despite the fact that local varieties of English have cropped up and are widely used in different parts of the World; there is a strong bias against the local varieties. Do you

see any possibility of similar bias against FLF?

PU: There is an interesting phenomenon of the growth and flourishing of different 'Englishes' at the same time as the growth of ELF. I don't think there's any contradiction. And I don't really understand or sympathize with the bias against local varieties as 'inferior': they have the same right to exist and be respected as any other language or dialect. I doubt if the same problem will arise with ELF; it isn't a variety linked to any particular (superior or inferior) community, but rather an instrument, a useful tool, for achieving certain communicative goals.

TC: What, in your opinion, has led to the rise of ELF?

PU: We need to divide this question into two: why a worldwide lingua franca, and why English?

There is a need for a worldwide lingua franca: simply because of the rapid increase in contact between people round the world due to the amazing developments in communications technology and increased speed and amount of international travel. At the same time, various fields of human activity (business, entertainment, finance, politics, scientific research and so on) are rarely limited to one country these days; if they are international, they need to have a common language in which to function.

Why English: mainly because at the same time as all these developments were occurring and the need for a lingua franca arose, English happened to be the most widely spoken language already in the world. The reasons for the spread of English were mainly political, military or economic: the expansion of the British Empire in the 19th century, and the economic and political power

of the United States in the 20th century, to give two examples. It has nothing to do with the linguistic characteristics of English itself.

TC: What relationship do you visualize between ELF and the Standard English variety? Do you think that ELF will be able to acquire a sort of complete autonomy?

PU: I think ELF will be a 'standard' variety of English, in the sense of being universally comprehensible but this standard variety is likely to embrace a range of usages, not just one 'correct' usage – as indeed does any language. So no, I don't think it will ever be a separate, uniformly accepted autonomous language with only one set of 'correct' form in all details of its grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation: as long as its usages are universally comprehensible, it will tolerate a variety of forms, different accents, for example.

TC: Will there be ever native speakers of EFL?

PU: No, I don't think so. I don't think the concept 'native speaker' is useful or even meaningful if we are talking about English as a *lingua franca*.

TC: What are your general impressions of your visit to India?

PU: I've had a wonderful time in India, but my impressions are limited to my experiences within University of Delhi and some sight seeing in Delhi itself. I got the impression of an exciting country, going places and developing fast; a lot of ongoing controversies (but then, what country doesn't have these!), a rich and very varied cultural heritage, very warm and welcoming people.



Tara Chadha is retired Associate Professor, Shyama Prasad Mukherji College, University of Delhi

A Report on Materials Development Workshop for the English Language Proficiency Course

Ruchi Kaushik

A much awaited workshop on Materials Design for the English Language Proficiency Course (ELPC) by Professor Penny Ur from Oranim Academic College of Education, Israel was held at the Institute of Life Long Learning, Delhi University from 15-20 February, 2010.

The workshop was significant for two reasons. One, it was conducted by Prof. Ur who has authored several books on ELT and is a well known teachers' trainer. Second, the ELPC materials team needed this kind of professional orientation as it prepared materials for the third consecutive year for the ELPC that has grown in size and magnitude in a short span of two years.

The workshop began with two days of intensive theory sessions. Most of them were teacher-fronted with Prof. Ur making power point presentations on different aspects of language teaching. The participants were encouraged to note down their comments/ questions on the topic-related handouts given to them during the lectures. At the end of each session, Prof. Ur entertained our queries. She also distributed some scholarly articles on important topics like improving listening performance, enhancing grammar teaching, developing reading comprehension questions etc. to the participants who were subsequently divided into small groups

and asked to make presentations on any one article of their choice. This encouraged peer interaction and led to some constructive collective work.

The third day of the workshop was devoted to a critical analysis of some existing language learning material. Again, the participants were asked to form sub groups and study the text provided to them. Each group was required to present a critique of the work in question by suggesting alternative activities/ tasks where it found the material lacking in content or objective. By giving the participants a hands-on experience on materials development, Prof. Ur then highlighted certain practical issues and provided a checklist for materials design. The apparent aim of the first three days of the workshop was to offer to the participants an insight into the current research in significant areas of language learning and to help them arrive at an understanding about what 'learning rich' material is and how it can be created. The checklist was supposed to serve as an important aid while designing and critiquing materials.

Interestingly, the last two days of the workshop were spent entirely on creating tasks based on the raw material collected by the participants before and during the workshop. As more and more texts were displayed on the table for the

participants to choose from and work on, it turned out to be a rich exhibition of sources comprising shopping lists, paintings, questionnaires, cartoon strips, warranties etc. Each group picked up what it found interesting and sat down to design tasks around it. Meanwhile, Prof. Ur went around and offered her suggestions/comments to every group. It was fascinating to see how Prof. Ur used her expertise to help participants convert their ideas into actual tasks. By afternoon, the groups were asked to upload their work onto a pen drive and give to Prof. Ur who painstakingly went through it and came prepared the next day to comment on each group's effort. Even the participants enthusiastically worked overnight to modify their work and prepare group presentations to be made the next day. Each group was also expected to analyse the tasks designed by other groups and offer suggestions.

Prof. Ur began the session on the last day by making some general

comments on the materials produced and by giving a detailed feedback on the specific work done by different groups as they came up and made their presentations. Several issues related to creating materials for effective learning were raised by Prof. Ur during this interaction. According to her, the main characteristics of a learning-rich task are validity, quantity, success-orientation, heterogeneity and interest. Prof. Ur also stressed the importance of providing plenty of focussed vocabulary activities for students to enhance their reading fluency and comprehension. Similarly, she highlighted the importance of teaching grammar through a task based+focus on form approach though she felt that a teacher may adopt a different approach towards teaching grammar depending on her/his pedagogical constraints and professional judgement.

Since the workshop was attended by seasoned ELT practitioners as well as new entrants in this field

like me, the interaction between the participants was a fine blend of creativity and practice. Prof. Ur exuded a passion for language teaching which she unknowingly transferred to many of us. What made an impact on the participants was not only the rich content of the workshop but also the manner in which it was strategized in order to invite maximum original ideas, collaborative work and peer evaluation. At the end of the workshop, it was not individuals but the ELPC materials family that was seen setting new aims and challenges for itself. Last but certainly not the least, a special mention of the person who made it all possible- Prof. Rama Mathew, Coordinator, English Language Teaching, ILL who conceptualized this workshop and ensured professionally and personally that each one of us went back with very fond memories of the workshop.



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Story Telling at the World Book Fair 2010

Prashant Rathore

This world Book Fair Pearson did some different things for the visitors. They not only could buy books of their interest but also were able to enhance their knowledge about latest things in the world of education like 'Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation' through interaction with the experts who were present at the



stall to answer their queries. The children were pleasantly surprised to see a Story Telling event organized for them. Ms. Tara Chadha one of our Text Book Writers and a senior member of the FORTELL led the session.

It was not only the kids but the grown ups also sat in enthusiastically to listen to the story of 'Goody - The Good Hen'. Kids dressed up in their school uniforms started gathering at the stall once they came to know about the programme. The word spread around like wild fire that something very exciting was happening at the Pearson pavilion. Children, big and small, swarmed

in big numbers. As the story began to unfold, with the picture on the big TV screen in the backdrop, children sat with rapt attention. Deft in the art of storytelling Ms. Chadha dramatized the story, playing different roles with gestures and her well-modulated voice. She successfully carried the crowd along with her. Soon the session became fully interactive with the children mimicking different sounds and identifying the pictures of Goody, Chinku, Minku and Golu, the lead characters.

Within the short span of 40-45 minutes children not only enjoyed the story telling but had also learnt

a lot about different kinds of birds and animals and the sounds they produce. They also acquired, in the process, many new vocabulary items imperceptibly.

The session ended with the celebration of Golu's birthday party. The entire pavilion came alive when everybody joined in singing a happy birthday to Golu. As a parting gift, Ms. Chadha distributed goody bags to the kids who had participated. Learning really becomes fun once we adopt play- way methods of teaching.



Prashant Rathore is a senior executive at Pearson Longman, he manages the ELT and School sections.

Declamation Contest

Veena Kapur

FORTELL jointly with the English and Education Departments of Shyama Prasad Mukherji College, University of Delhi organized a Declamation contest in the college on 18th March 2010.

The students and faculty members of the departments of English and Education were present in large numbers. Ms. Tara Chadha and Ms. Rachna Sethi represented FORTELL, while Mr. Arun represented Pearson Longman. Ms. Tara Chadha made a power point presentation on the

use of a dictionary with focus on the special features of the latest edition of Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English.

Ms. Uttara from the English department flagged off the event with a welcome message. The topics for the declamation contest related to relevant contemporary issues were:

1. Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament
2. Parents and teachers don't understand teenagers
3. The English language leads to economic empowerment
4. There is only one earth: Take care of it and share it.
5. Pop culture is leading us more towards a Khichdi society.

The participants, in spite of the rather short time allowed to marshal and organize their thoughts, spoke with sharp clarity while making an

impassioned plea for their chosen causes. This gave the event a professional flavour while retaining the spontaneity of a Declamation contest. Among the twelve participants, 'Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament' and 'Parents and teachers don't understand teenagers' seemed to strike a chord with the speakers and the audience, who responded enthusiastically to the speeches.

The students' preparation and their enthusiastic participation was highly appreciated. Dr. Kamal Sachdev, Ms. Nidhi Sharma (both of English Department) and Dr. Sudipta Ghose (Education Department) acted as judges.

The programme ended with distribution of prizes and Certificates of Honour. Pearson sponsored dictionaries as prizes for the winners of the contest. Ms. Kusum Virmani thanked the sponsors, organizers and the participants for a very enriching program.

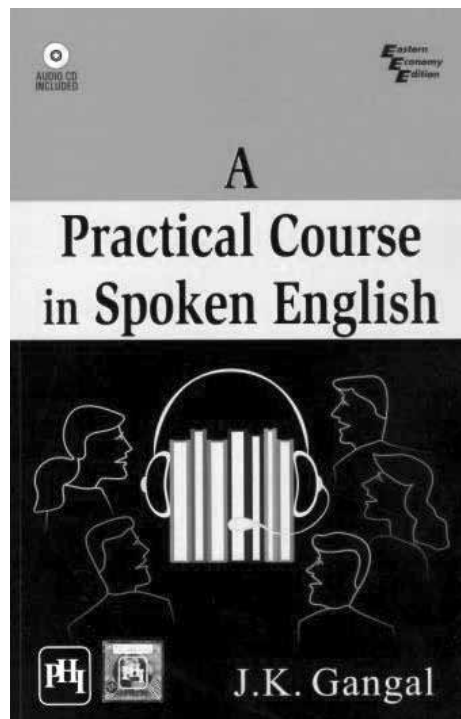


Veena Kapur is Assistant Professor in Department of English, SPM College, University of Delhi



A Practical Course in Spoken English

A Practical Course in Spoken English with an audio CD has been designed for students and learners who wish to improve their spoken English. The book will be of great help to those who have had very little exposure to spoken English during the course of their schooling. The course aims at preparing students to become effective and fluent users of speaking skills so that they could negotiate a variety of life situations successfully and confidently. The course has been designed by a highly experienced ELT expert who has a long experience of teaching English at the secondary and senior secondary levels. The author has been associated with ELT programs conducted by state and national level organizations across India. The course comprises five sections, namely, Phonetics, English Conversations, Essentials of Spoken English, and Self Evaluation. Students are given practice in greeting people, introducing themselves to others, talking about people and persons, answering telephone calls and taking down 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 possessions and current events. The course besides giving students practice in the sounds of English consonants and vowels also helps them to distinguish between



J.K. Gangal A Practical Course in Spoken English, PHI Learning Private Limited, New Delhi, 2010, Price: Rs. 225.

spellings and sounds of English, and relationship between them.

The book deals with 50 real-life situations and gives ample opportunity to practice the language that these situations are likely to demand from the users of English. Besides telling what to say in these situations the author gives a list of expression/phrases that are likely to be of great use to the learner. In every chapter the author tries to enrich the learner's vocabulary and provide him with useful hints for making conversations fluent as well as accurate.

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 practice the listening and speaking activities included in the book, they would be able to extend this knowledge to real-life situations.

A Practical Course in Spoken English will fill a gap in the ELT books available in the market. The audio CD that accompanies the book will not only help students improve their pronunciation of words but also sensitize them to the intonation patterns of English language.



A.L. Khanna, Retired Associate Professor, Rajdhani College is an ELT Consultant and Textbooks Writer

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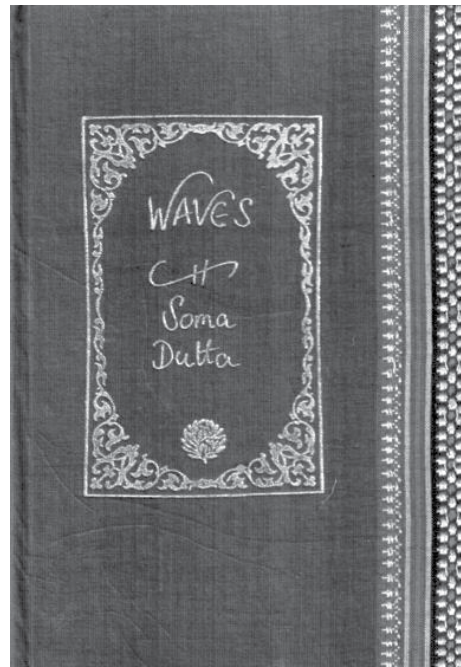
WAVES

Waves is the second anthology of seventy six poems by Soma Dutta who has been educated at Calcutta and IGNOU. She has also been a teacher and an administrator at a public school at Bhilai.

The poems that stand out in the anthology are 'Plastic Menace', 'Beware', 'The Largest Democracy in the World', 'Isolated and Homeless', 'Envy', 'Dyslexic', 'First Night' and 'The Quilt of Sleep'. They show the poet's sensitivity and concern for the individual who faces the challenge of living in the post- millennium era.

'Plastic Menace' and 'Beware' are companion poems focusing our attention on the degradation of the environment in the contemporary world. While the first poem brings out the havoc caused by plastic, the second poem begins on a dramatic note, "Green land ice is melting/ Melting at an alarming rate/ Pay a heed to this news/ Before it becomes too late"(p 68). One cannot blame a teacher for adopting a stern tone in the classroom. Melting of ice has been taking place at such a rate that the earth may suffer an irreversible damage.

'Largest Democracy in the world' is an ironic portrayal of India, the largest democracy in the world. We are proud of living in a country where we forget to pay taxes on time but complain loudly if we are deprived of necessities like water or electricity. We also keep our home neat and tidy but throw our garbage in the neighbor's vacant plot. At the end of the poem, the poet asks a question, "Am I a Pessimist, a bitter critic/ an enemy of the nation? No, I love my Country from the core of my heart/ I am an injured and wounded Indian" (p 14).



Waves by Soma Dutta, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2009, p.104, hard-back Rs.200.00

"The wounded Indian" also figures prominently in poems, like 'Isolated' and 'Homeless'. There is a most moving portrait of a man suffering from AIDS in the poem 'Isolated': "He feels twilight has appeared/Memory is still alive/ Though his days are numbered." (p.27). 'Homeless' is again a poem full of gloom and despair. It shows the plight of a farmer after the flood in Kosi "Whatever I gathered in life/ Kosi took everything in her cruel bosom, bare/ Empty handed, in the relief camp/ I stare with blank vision and despair"(p.53). That it happens when the nation is on the verge of celebrating the sixty years of the republic makes it doubly disenchanting and depressing.

While 'Envy' is a dramatic poem contrasting the attitude of a house wife with that of a working woman, 'Dyslexic' shows the plight of a young learner who "kept on struggling with letters and numbers/ Which always danced before his eyes/ In his desperate efforts to put

them together/He was puzzled to see them fall and rise"(p.65). The end of the poem, when the disabled child becomes a celebrated painter, reminds one of the Aamir Khan's memorable film Tare Zameen Par.

'First Night' shows the predicament of a young bride whose sailor husband keeps on moving across the seas and the bride has no choice but to recall the first night and wait patiently for her husband's return. 'The Quilt of Sleep' is again a dramatic poem that shows the hectic life of the contemporary woman who has to fight hard to balance the demands of home with the work place. The plight of the woman of our time is most beautifully expressed in the last four lines of the poem:

Managing the work of ten hands
with only two

Thus becoming fed up of daily
schedule

I want to take shelter in the lap
of sleep

Intoxicated by sweet dreams,
relaxed, peaceful.(p.97).

All in all, Waves is an anthology of poems that makes us wait for the next volume of Soma Dutta. In keeping with the spirit of the age, her poems are more in the spirit of a dialogue than a song.



N.P. Singh is retired Associate Professor, Raidhani College, University of Delhi.

All members are requested to write to the secretary, FORTELL at rachnasethi7@yahoo.com regarding their email id and any change in it.

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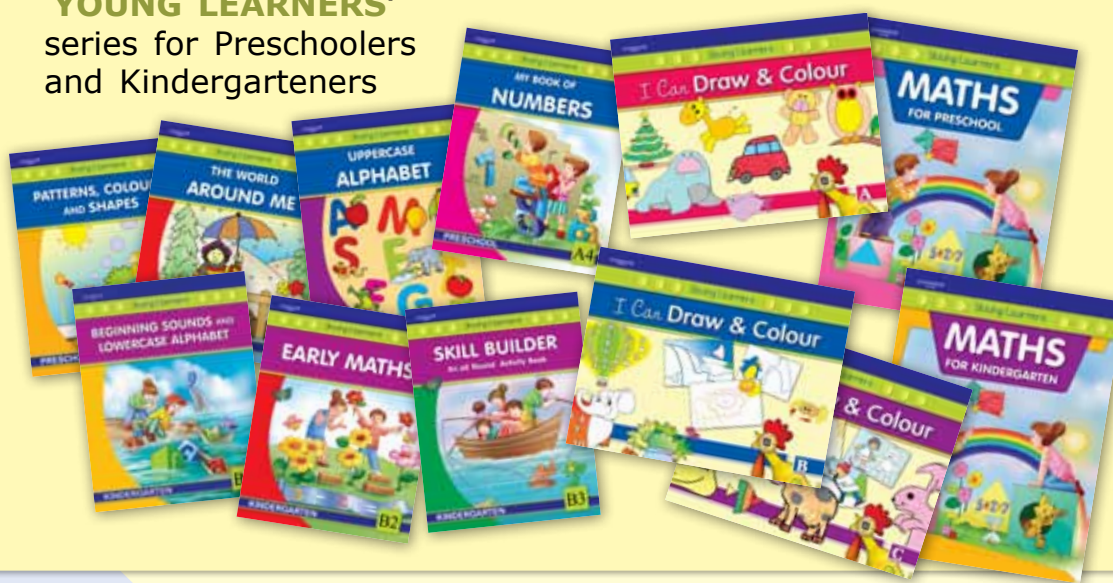


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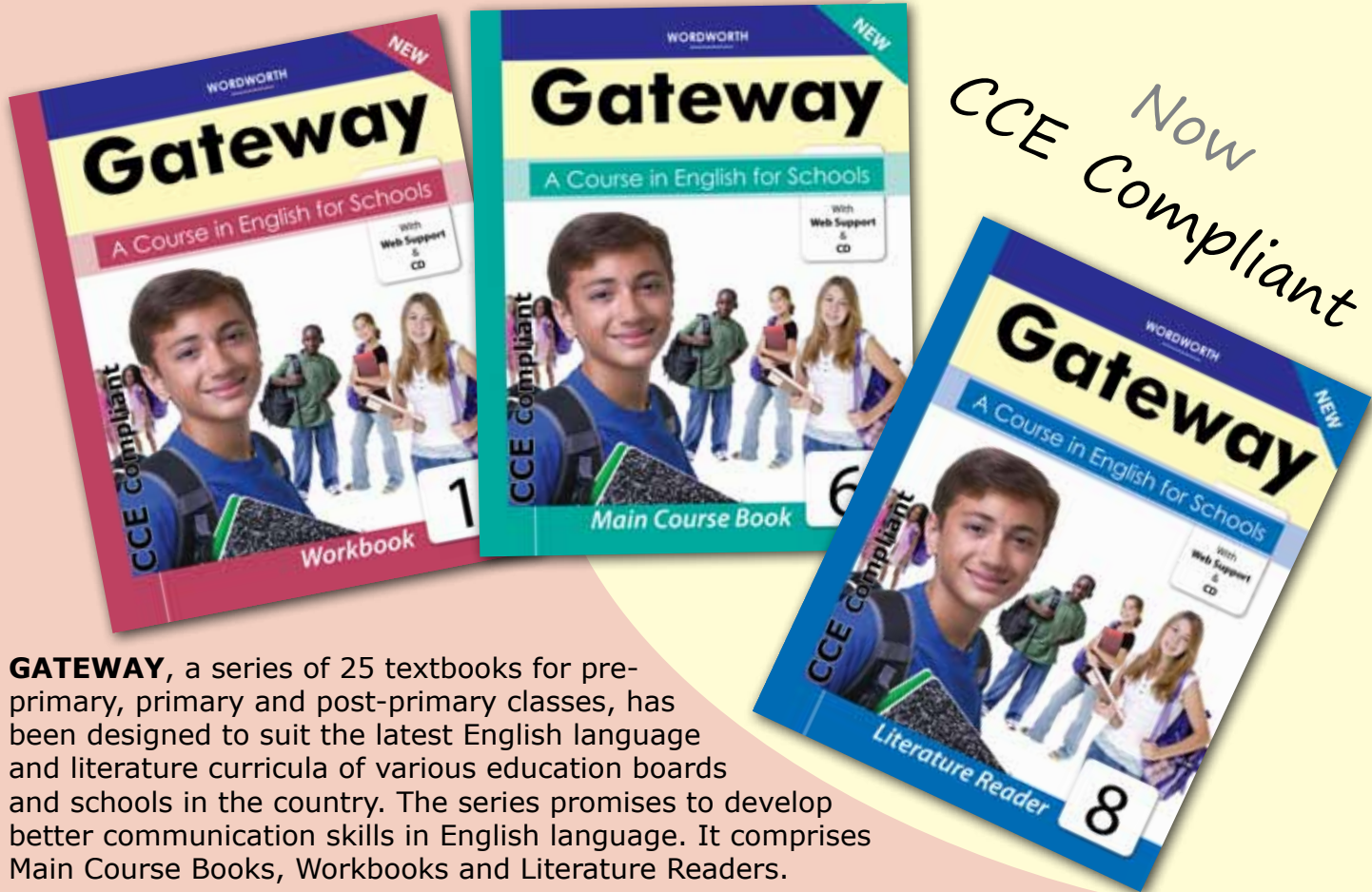


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