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INSIDE FORTELL

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Using Lateral Thinking Tasks to Enhance the Thinking Capacity of the ESL Learners: A study | English
Language and the Media | Using 4R'S for Speech Effectiveness: An Approach |
Neglected Area of Language Teaching

FORTELL, May 2011 Issue

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Who's who in FORTELL/Membership Form

Readers' Response

- Now that each issue of Fortell is coming with focus on some particular aspects of language teaching, I look forward to every issue of Fortell with great interest and enthusiasm. The most interesting point is that various articles of Fortell are giving innovative ideas for conducting Formative Assessment under the latest continuous comprehensive evaluation system. The article "Integrating Language and Literature using Drama in the ESL classroom" by Nandita Satsangi and Vasundhara Saxena was very creative and innovative. The activities suggested would be very useful for interaction between the learner and the teacher. I agree with Rosenblatt that the uniqueness of individual readers shapes their understanding of the text. We must create an environment in the classroom which will encourage the learners to think and express themselves freely. Looking forward to many more such issues.
- Priyadarshini Sur teaches English at Little Angels School in Vishakhapatnam, India

- The January issue is timely and an attempt has been made by the writers to integrate language and literature teaching as is evident through the article on using drama in the ESL classroom. I read with great interest Mona Sinha's article 'Challenging Classroom Transactions: Teaching Poetry Differently'. It is a novel idea to translate the text in L1. The learner would have to grapple with words and images in order to assimilate the core of the prescribed text. The article pertaining to a difficult text like *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was also interesting.

N.P.Singh, Formerly Associate Professor of English, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi

- The articles included in the January 2011 issue of *Fortell*, offer a comprehensive overview of what instructors from a variety of disciplines face while attempting to enhance classroom English skills. I learned a lot from reading these articles. In retrospect, I reviewed my teaching skills... as a classroom instructor and a parent. I developed a devout appreciation for the authors who successfully devised interactive methodologies thereby negotiating English into an Indian vernacular student pool. And lastly, I respect the challenge English Language and Literature educators face in order to assimilate a global vision in the microcosm of the classroom. Benjamin Franklin rightly stated, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." I am glad I got involved into reading *Fortell*.

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- I happened to lay my hands on a copy of *Fortell* through a colleague and was tempted to read it from cover to cover. This magazine came across as an appreciable effort to bring together varied issues of interests not only to learners of English language and literature but to students and teachers of all disciplines. The innovative techniques employed in teaching and the idea of transacting a lecture innovatively in an hour came across as refreshing. The ideas suggested in the articles can sure help to break the monotony in class. In today's tech savvy world, unless we move with time and constantly stimulate the thinking minds innovatively we will not only fail but fail miserably in our efforts to deliver lectures effectively. *Fortell* is a crisp and well packed bundle of informative articles with an invigorating, refreshing touch!

Nelu Gupta, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Aditi College, University of Delhi

From the Editorial Desk

*When vision hauls expectations,
and innovation challenges the potential;
it is then that the real journey begins.*

The overwhelming response of our readers to the last two consecutive special issues, one on **e-Learning** (September, 2010) and the other on **Classroom Interactions** (January, 2011), was gratifying as well as intimidating. Gratifying because **Fortell** succeeded in eliciting many positive responses; in generating debates as also in obtaining several suggestions and proposals about the possible thematic thrusts of the future issues. Intimidating, since the expectations have gone up and our readers feel that it is time that our journal went international. Much as we would like to, **Fortell** is facing a severe paucity of funds and we would urge the **Fortell** fraternity to pitch in, in whatever ways they can: individual and institutional subscriptions, getting suitable advertisements and donations and tap some funding agencies to sponsor an issue, a special issue or all the 3 issues of a year, and so on. This would indeed augment circulation and visibility, both across India and overseas and ensure good health of the journal.

But we are happy to announce that despite the financial constraints, we have decided to traverse the ambitious track - what could be better than beginning with increasing the pages of the journal! This time, **Fortell** has added 4 more pages to its usual number, to accommodate more voices and views. It is heartening to mention that for this issue we were deluged with articles but only the ones that could meet the requisite thrust and fill our pre-defined columns could be published. Interestingly, several were from our young scholars! It also speaks volumes about the recent journey of **Fortell** from a newsletter to becoming a peer-reviewed journal. It is also a telling tale of conscious academicians' urges and desires to become visible and earn credits through publications.

As was announced, the present issue is a general one; an issue showcasing a plethora of diverse sub-themes related to language-literature interface, its pedagogical implications, language and media, and classroom experiential research. In fact, much in line with **Fortell's** long sustained thrust, for our forthcoming issues too, we would welcome articles that are based on classroom observations and research.

Towards the end, we have a thing or two to share about the ... road to success that *Fortell* has travelled in recent years:

"There is no ladder to success, it is always a greased pole"

So enjoy reading the usual with the unusual!

Prem & Ruchi



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To Teach or Not to Teach Grammar

A.L. Khanna

Introduction

The controversy whether 'To teach or not to teach Grammar' has been there in the ELT or educational circles for nearly more than three decades now. The advocates of both the positions have very cogent reasons to defend their respective positions. Although after listening to them one is confounded in the beginning, yet on closer scrutiny of both the positions, one discovers that their positions are not irreconcilable.

A brief overview of grammar teaching

Before Chomsky

According to Rutherford (1987), teaching grammar has been central to and synonymous with teaching foreign languages for the last 2500 years. In fact, prior to mid 1970s, no one even challenged the centrality of grammar as the content for foreign/second language teaching or as the organizing principle for materials development. Since the primary emphasis in foreign language teaching had been on writing and not the spoken language, it was taken for granted that formal grammar improved a student's ability to write. The ability in the foreign language was measured in terms of the reproduction of rules and translation from the foreign language to the mother tongue and vice versa. Thus, students were taught grammar as part of the effort to improve their writing ability.

After Chomsky

However, after the mid 1970s under the influence of Chomsky and his followers (e.g. Jakobovits 1968, 1970) and those working in the Communicative approach (e.g. Hymes 1972, Halliday 1973, Widdowson 1978, Wilkins 1976) and Comprehension approach (e.g. Winitz 1981, Asher 1977, Krashen and Terrell 1983) grammar teaching per se began to be treated with some suspicion. Many researchers went to the extent of saying that grammar instruction had no place in language teaching, be it foreign or second language. Many researchers and educationists began to believe that grammar was a shackle on children's imagination. Some thought it was a waste of time in the sense that children could not use this knowledge in their actual language use. Thompson (1969) remarked that most children cannot learn grammar and even for those who can, it is of no value to them.

Since then the pendulum has shifted to the other side. Now there are many who believe that grammar teaching cannot be completely abandoned. These conflicting opinions are

expressed in professional conferences and methodological literature. One can have a glimpse of the concern and conflict about grammar teaching from the research done from the mid 1970s onwards. Researchers have been worried about the following:

Questions about grammar teaching

- When to teach grammar?
- At what age which grammar to teach?
- Role of grammar in secondary curriculum
- Effect of grammar teaching on writing skills/ composition
- Function and value of formal grammar
- Is grammar teachable?
- Grammar and cognitive levels
- Influence of structural and traditional grammar on language perception and writing ability
- Teaching grammar in context
- Improving students' writing without formal grammar instruction
- Coming back of grammar in composition teaching
- Learning systemic functional grammar in primary level
- Errors in research into the effectiveness of grammar teaching

Grammar teaching at crossroads

As one can see from the wide range of concerns of the researchers, the field of grammar teaching was under public scrutiny. The concerns ranged from whether to teach it at all to how to teach it and for what purpose. Out of this concern grew a body of research that realized that complete neglect of grammar teaching, though intuitively appealing and theoretically sound, can't produce better language users.

Richards (1985) observes that there is no actual evidence to prove that communicative classrooms (which lays very little emphasis on grammar teaching) produce better language learners than the traditional teacher dominated classrooms (which are grammar dominated). In fact, experience shows that those who are product of communicative language teaching are fairly fluent users of language but fare badly in the public examinations and places of work where accuracy and precision is valued along with fluency. Thus, we are at cross roads where we have to decide which way we should go. It appears from research and actual experience that we can't completely

abandon grammar instruction. What we need to do is to think of better pedagogical strategy to make language teaching more effective. A grammarless approach may lead to pidginized, broken, ungrammatical constructions and also lead to fossilized stage (Selinker 1972) in the target language being taught.

Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) suggest how to deal with grammar in their classes. Referring to the work of Higgs and Clifford (1972) and suggesting that there were others like them, she remarks that comprehensible input is not enough to achieve high proficiency in the second/foreign language. To quote Celce- Murcia and Hilles (1988, 4)

It is important to note that, to our knowledge, there are no studies that provide evidence that overt grammar instruction is essential. The burden of proof rests on those who maintain that grammar instruction is irrelevant to language acquisition, and so far no empirical support has been provided to support that claim. Although comprehensible input may be necessary, it is by no means clear that it is sufficient for mastery of a second language.

Another reason why teaching of grammar is essential is that most public examinations for recruitment/scholarships for higher study or examinations at the secondary or at a higher level have a component of grammar. To give students an incomplete grounding in grammar will be an act of doing disservice to them.

How should grammar be taught?

Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988, 5) recommend that there is no single approach for teaching grammar. In their opinion learners would benefit a great deal if teachers vary their approach keeping in mind the learner variables such as learning styles, preferences, age, needs, cultural expectations, etc. In addition to this, grammar should be integrated with language instruction, and the following aspects of language should be kept in mind: social factors, semantic factors and discourse factors.

By social factors they mean the situational factors, social functions, matters of personal choice etc. For instance, there are several ways of refusing an invitation but not all are appropriate. One has to learn to use an appropriate modal to convey one's acceptance or refusal.

Semantic factors involve meaning. The choice of a grammatical form is not governed by whom one is addressing but rather by what one wants to say.

Thus expressions of time, space, degree, and

probability are taught from a semantic perspective. The difference between in or on in the following sentences is a matter of meaning only:

She sat on the chair.

She sat in the arm chair.

In the first case, the chair has a plain surface, whereas in the second case it is an enclosure.

Discourse factors refer to notions such as topic, continuity, word order, and sequencing of old and new information. These factors govern the language use. Giving students a portion of discourse, which illustrate how, for example, logical connectors function in context works much better than explaining these words. For Example, defining **because** may not work as effectively as the following sentences where because has been used in a context:

I could not reach on time because it started raining.

Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988, 11) concludes by saying:

But grammar instruction should always involve the matching of a structure or grammatical point with one of these three aspects of language; if that match can be made in preparing the grammar lesson and it captures a natural tendency in the language, the lesson will be easier for the teacher to prepare and easier for students to understand.

They suggest the following techniques and resources that can be used to make grammar teaching more effective and meaningful.

Techniques:

Dramatization; Listening and responding; Demonstration, Illustration; TPR activities; Text generation and manipulation; Explanation

Resources:

Skits and role-play, pictures, graphs, realia objects and activities such as songs, problems, and stories.

Conclusion

The sort of effort mentioned above will be an improvement on traditional grammar teaching. These newer developments have led to integrating forms with content-based and task- based language teaching. It is clear that grammar today is no longer central as it was before Chomsky. Grammar is now viewed as one component in a model of communicative teaching. It cannot be taught independent of meaning, social function and discourse structure as it had been done traditionally. It should also be made clear that it is a myth that grammar will emerge on its

own among the second/foreign language learners once learners are provided comprehensible input. Grammar still needs to be taught but in newer ways to make it effective and meaningful. Newer methods of teaching grammar suggest that learners should be engaged with the structure of the target language in a context (eg an extended discourse available in a story, novel, poem, speech etc) and encouraged to infer the rules of the language. One need not stop here. One should move a step further and help learners explore how differently and similarly the languages that he/she already knows operate.. This sort of cognitive and critical engagement with the languages will help learners construct the grammar of the target language more effectively and use it as a monitor whenever they are confronted with any ambiguity in the use of the target language.

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English Studies and Linguistic Proficiency Pedagogical Concerns of a Relational Nature

Deb Dulal Halder

Much work and debates have taken place on the nature, role, and politics and so on of English studies in India. Amidst all these issues, it is obligatory to ponder over the linguistic competence of students in English. From the perspective of linguistic proficiency, teaching English literature to Indian students is one of the most exigent and challenging tasks for primarily two reasons: culturally English language is still 'foreign'ⁱ to most Indians, barring the urban elite who had/have public schooling; the education system in India provides less scope for teachers and students to go beyond the customary/conventional/traditional/conservative ways to internalize the language to the extent of mastering it to enjoy and value literature. Therefore, it becomes essential to distinguish the difference

between teaching English language as a tool of communicationⁱⁱ and teaching language to appreciate literature written and translated in English language.ⁱⁱⁱ

To understand the problem, it is valuable to comprehend the reasons of choosing English literature course in graduation or post-graduation studies. There is a general belief, and quite truly, that English as a language will not only fetch better access and prospects in the job market but also will provide cultural privileges such as social elitism and social mobility.^{iv} It is with these dreams that most students join English Studies course (whether graduation or post-graduation), many (primarily the first generation learners) hoping to hone their linguistic skills. But the students who join to polish their linguistic

competence find themselves in utter dismay when they are faced with classics starting from Chaucer to Joyce/Beckett, as they cannot figure out the way to deal with the classics. They do not have the time to build their linguistic capabilities as the course demands reading history of English literature, novels, plays, poems, short stories, essays etc along with critical writing and theory. As a consequence, before they can figure the way out of the problem, the examination rings its bell and the students are forced to somehow mug up the bare minimum so as to pass the examination.

Moreover, as our educational pattern is examination-oriented, therefore, most students including the brilliant ones mostly study not to gain knowledge or critical understanding, but to score good marks/grades in the examination. Therefore instead of understanding literature, what a student looks for in a literary text is answers to the probable questions that may come in the examination, which typically are limited to the plot and characterization.^v Thus, the better students often focus on these questions and prepare the answers throughout the year; memorize or mug up to reproduce in the examination – the supposed better ones full of quotations from the text (s) and often quotations from critics (primarily the western ones) to score well and the lazy students try to figure easy way out and the Indian Publication houses are there to help him/her.

The publishing industry has a great role to play in Canon-formation, but what one sees in India is truly appalling. Apart from the literary texts (novels, plays, poems, collection of short stories and essays prescribed in courses of different universities) what one finds in abundance in Indian book market are 'kunjis', 'champions', 'guides' which provide paraphrasing of the text (often also in Hindi or other Indian language(s)) and elaborate second grade notes on plot and characterization which are full of spurious facts, misleading ideas and erroneous quotations. Yet, often the students, instead of studying the original text(s) prefer to study from these 'kunjis'.

The paper setters/examiners are made to set questions and give marks according to these standards and the net result is that many students who come out with highest degrees from Indian universities are good in summing up the characters and plot of a literary text and show no knowledge of the literary text(s) in terms of its context, its historicization, its significance in ordering one's experience (Kaul, 214) and its importance in examining one's own and text's location in the context in which one is situated. The text and its reading(s) instead of opening the mind of the student and enhancing his/her

imaginative, creative and critical potential, blocks his/her mind.

There are no easy ready-made solutions to these problems as the problems are not merely of teaching and learning, but it has deeper facets in terms of policy decisions, in terms of the reasons of choosing English courses, in terms of socio-cultural milieu in which we are living.

- (i) Before students come to take admission, what they need is proper counseling about what courses are suitable for her or him and what the course consists of. Proper counseling by experts/ subject experts would make the students and their parents understand the career goals of the students and make them excel in the course they choose to pursue.
- (ii) Teachers have a great role to play in figuring out in the beginning of the academic session the students who need special attention in terms of bettering their linguistic skills in English. Remedial classes should be arranged not only for the students from the weaker sections of the society, but for all students who are weak in their linguistic competence.
- (iii) The Curriculum should be designed in such a way so as to make the students understand the nature of the subject that they have chosen. For that the curriculum of English studies (both Graduation and post-graduation) should consist, at least in the first year/ semester of the course – a short history of English language and a short history of English studies in India, along with literature from Indian languages.
- (iv) A comparatist approach should be taken in the classroom in making the students feel at home even while dealing with the classics. It is important to make students understand that classics are not in the course because of their universal significance, but they are a part of literary canon. So the politics of canonization and the resulting impact of it in our literary studies need to be probed in the classroom. Teachers need to emphasize that literary studies do not operate in a social vacuum and neither do exist in "some pure realm of aesthetics and ideas." (Mukherji, *Provocations*, 25-35), but has the role of perceiving one's cultural identity and examine one's location in the immediate socio-cultural context. Moreover, historicization of English literature is absolutely essential to question its essentialist and universalist discourse which has led to its assimilation and continuation even in post independence India.
- (v) The publication industry needs to have a faith in themselves that if they start producing

good critical material and not merely think in terms of short term profit by publishing 'guides' then it is going to help them in long run. Scholars also need to have faith in Indian publishers that their writing will be valued even if published by Indian publishers.

- (vi) The pattern of paper-setting and evaluation needs to be changed, where more emphasis should be given to students' observation of the literary text from their own socio-cultural and gendered perspective, rather than the questions on plot and characterization. Students should be evaluated in terms of his or her understanding of the text from his/her ideological standpoint and not merely in terms of his/her ability to quote from the text(s) and the critics.

Thus, not merely pedagogic; many other reforms are needed in both academic and non-academic arenas to facilitate students' competence in English language and for them to enjoy and excel in English Studies. Teachers have a significant role to play in the process as they can only make the classroom such where the students, even the linguistically weaker ones, find interest in the syllabi and beyond it and are ready to take the challenge of not only doing well in the subject but also mastering the language.

Notes

- ⁱ Though officially English is an Indian language and constitutionally has the status of Associate National Official language.
- ⁱⁱ Business English, Technical English etc are the various epithets given to the courses, which claim to make the students efficient in communicative practices.
- ⁱⁱⁱ I am not against using English literature as a tool of teaching communication or communicative practices, but what I want to focus in this paper is the linguistic skills of average Indian students (primarily from a non-metropolitan and non-elite background) and their study of English literature.
- ^{iv} Gandhi's comment on English medium schooling in *Harijan*, 1938 seems apt – "The English Medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English Schools ... I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes." The same argument is also true about English Studies in India, as knowledge and fluency of English Language can work wonders in terms of not only getting jobs, but also in commanding certain respect in the society. As westernization is still viewed by many as modernization

therefore Makarand Paranjape opines that TELI acts as "a broker between the West and India." (*Provocations*, 54)

^v May be in the urban educational institutions there is a bit more variety to the questions in terms of gender politics etc, but in the non-urban centres plot and characterization in case of novels and plays and critical appreciation of poems still form the major part of the question paper.

^{vi} Publishing is "a social and cultural institution that plays a powerful role in shaping particular ideas, in ensuring their prevalence and acceptance at any given time and indeed, in turn being shaped by them." (Butalia, 321).

^{vii} Aijaz Ahmed – "It is only by submitting the teaching of English Literature to the more crucial and comparatist discipline of historical and cultural studies and by connecting the knowledge of that literature with literatures of our own that we can begin to break the colonial grid and to liberate the teacher of English from a colonially determined, subordinated and parasitic existence. (*Rethinking English*, 260)

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Using Newspapers in an English Class

Miti Dhingra



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The following article is an attempt to promote the use of newspapers as an effective teaching tool for developing the basic skills needed for English language acquisition. However, the focus would be more on developing writing and reading skills of the learners although there are many activities which can cover all the four areas i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking in an integrated manner.

Teaching English in an Indian classroom can be considered a bit of a challenge for any ELT teacher worth his or her mettle. The biggest problem is breaking through the mental barrier that students have against speaking the language in and outside the classroom. Most of the students come from backgrounds where English is not even the secondary medium of communication and, therefore, their usage of the language remains restricted to the 40 minutes or so of the English class. Coupled with that is the fact that most learners do not like to use English as lingua franca amongst their peer groups, making it an uphill battle for the English teachers to generate a feel for the language in the learners.

The basic premise of this article is that not all English teachers will have access to the latest ELT resource material nor will their learners be able to afford the cost of purchasing expensive language skills development material. What is needed is a low-cost and, yet, highly effective resource material that any ELT teacher can take advantage of with ease and some ingenuity. Newspapers are not only cheap and easily available; they also provide an example for the learners on how language can be used effectively. Thus, using newspapers in class can help the teacher create an interest for the English language in her/his students so that the learners look forward to developing their language skills and subsequently become increasingly independent in their language use. The activities given in this article have been tried and tested in an actual classroom with varying degrees of success. I make no claims of creating them on my own but have been inspired by various ELT writers and researchers who have worked in this field.

ACTIVITY 1: MATCHING AND SUMMARISING

TASK : To match the news reports with the given summaries.

Skill focus : Reading and writing

Time : 15-20 minutes

Activity Type : Group (4-6 people)

Objective: To enable the learners to skim and scan and analyze the data available in the news reports.

The front page of the newspapers often has brief two to three line summaries of some of the major news stories inside. These summaries sans their headlines are given to the learners to match with the complete news stories. This activity works well in small groups where each group gets handed out around 6 summaries to match with the complete articles. A reasonable amount of time is given to each group, say around 15 minutes, to match up the two. The students tend to discuss the possible matches within each group focusing on the cues given in the summaries and the stories. Common indicators such as the answers to the WH- Questions are focused upon so that they can successfully match the stories. In an elementary level classroom this activity alone is fairly effective in allowing the learners to develop a sense of the language and the important points in the news stories. More layers can be added to this task in the intermediate and advanced level classroom. The learners are asked to write their own two-or three line summaries for each news report. These summaries are then interchanged within different groups who are told to read the original summaries and the ones written by the them. Towards the end, the teacher analyzes the one most successful in covering all the important points.

USP: I found this simple activity to be fairly effective in my classroom. The collective effort of the group tends to boost the confidence of the learners about their reading and analyzing skills. To make this task more useful and interesting, it is important to include a variety of news reports so that the students are exposed to different styles of writing available even within the newspaper.

For Example:

India is mulling a proposal to introduce the Indian Medical Graduate degree, which can be taken by all doctors graduating from medical school as an additional qualification. The exam, proposed by the Medical Council of India, will be on a par with MBBS, and will equate doctors from all colleges and universities, irrespective of standing.

Terming the misuse of provisions of dowry harassment by women as "legal terrorism", a Delhi trial court discharged a man chargesheeted wrongly for harassing his sister-in-law for dowry.

Misuse of dowry provisions is legal terrorism: Court

Smriti Singh | TNN

New Delhi: Terming the misuse of provisions of dowry harassment by women as "legal terrorism", a trial court has slammed such women who, in a bid to settle scores, drag all family members into a dowry harassment case though they may be "totally unconnected" with the case.

"The provisions of Section 498A are not a law to take revenge, seek recovery of dowry or to force a divorce but a penal provision to punish the wrongdoers. The victims (women) are often mis-

The man had moved the sessions court challenging the magistrate's order saying there was no legal evidence against him.

Even as the complainant alleged that the man beat her up for dowry, the court was shocked to know that he was not even present in the house at the time of the incident. In her complaint, the woman alleged that her brother-in-law on October 23, 1998, asked her to bring more money for her husband and when she showed her helplessness, she was slapped and threatened by him.

The man, however, proved his innocence by producing the certificates which stated that he was living in Mumbai at the time of the incident. After going through the record, ASJ Lau said, "in any matrimonial dispute, it is the primary duty of every court to ensure that for any fault of the husband, his other relatives including married sisters and brothers who may be living jointly or separately and the aged parents are not involved either out of vengeance or to curl out appropriate settlement."

The court also expressed its displeasure over the misuse of the dowry harassment laws. "I am compelled to observe that provision in the recent years has become consummate embodiment of gross human rights violation, extortion and corruption and even the Apex Court of our country had acknowledged this abuse and termed it as legal terrorism," it said.

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Even as the complainant had alleged that the man beat her up for dowry, the court was shocked to know that he was not even present in the house at the time of the incident

guided into exaggerating the facts by adding those persons as accused who are unconnected with the harassment under a mistaken belief that by doing so they are making a strong case," additional sessions judge Kamini Lau said.

The court's remarks came while discharging a man, who was chargesheeted by police for allegedly harassing his sister-in-law for dowry. A metropolitan magistrate had summoned the man on the basis of the complaint.

Ex-CJI J S Verma demanded that former CJI K G Balakrishnan resign as chief of the National Human Rights Commission, following claims by taxmen that his close relatives had black money.

Peer view: Ex-CJI says KGB should quit as NHRC head

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A day after income tax authorities in Kochi claimed that three close relatives of former Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan were found to possess black money, ex-CJI J S Verma on Sunday demanded that Balakrishnan quit as NHRC chief and if he did not, the President should intervene to get him removed from the post.

"I think he (Balakrishnan) should quit and if the allegations are not true according to him, the burden lies on him to prove them wrong and silence is no longer an option," Verma was quoted as saying by a news agency.

Asked what should be done if Balakrishnan refused to step down, Verma said, "Well, in that case, I think it's time the President should move in to take action. There is after all a provision for removal. So if he chooses to keep quiet and doesn't have himself cleared, well then, the removal proceedings should be commenced."

Income tax authorities claimed that Balakrishnan's relatives were found to possess black money during the investigation into allegations of disproportionate income. "As far as Justice Balakr-



TROUBLE BY ASSOCIATION

ishnan is concerned, I cannot say anything. But as far as his relatives — two sons-in-law and brother are concerned, we have found there is black money," Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), Kochi, E T Lukose, had said on Saturday.

Balakrishnan's sons-in-law P V Sreenivasan and M J Benny, both advocates, and brother K G Bhaskaran, former special government pleader, have been found to be possessing black money, Lukose had said.

Verma said, "He (Balakrishnan) continues to be NHRC chairman. His words hold no credibility. See, it's like this. Corruption is the most egregious form of human rights violation. And a person accused of serious human rights violation heading the NHRC itself is a great travesty of justice."

Test for docs to level playing field

Objective Is To Remove Doubts Over Proficiency Of Grads From Different Med Schools

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India is mulling a proposal to introduce the Indian Medical Graduate degree — an examination that will be on a par with MBBS — which can be taken by all doctors passing out of medical school as an additional qualification.

Brainchild of Medical Council of India (MCI), it will do away with doubts over the competence of a doctor with an MBBS degree from not-so-good colleges or universities.

Speaking to TOI, Dr Ranjit Roychoudhury from MCI explained that at present, an MBBS doctor from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) thinks he is better than, say, his counterpart from UP or Bihar. And so, even though the latter holds a valid MBBS degree, the in-



WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY: MCI's recommendation is to standardize the skills of doctors

dividual is discriminated upon all his life.

"Now, a doctor, after passing out of medical college, can take this examination which will be of the same standard as the MBBS degree, and prove his mettle. He can then say that even though he got

his MBBS from a college in Muzaffarnagar, he also passed the Indian Medical Graduate test, which stamps his credentials," Dr Roychoudhury said.

He added, "The test will, however, be voluntary and only for prestige. Those who

don't want to appear for the examination can start practising soon after getting their MBBS degree as usual."

Dr Devi Shetty, another member of MCI's governing body, added that the proposal has been forwarded and is under consideration of the Union health ministry.

"At present, whenever our doctors apply in the United Kingdom for training, British Medical Council asks for a DNB degree. That's because states have hundreds of universities and colleges granting MBBS degree, each having a different standard. So, there is no assurance on quality. DNB, on the other hand, is a national standard examination. This new exit examination will give uniformity to all Indian degrees," Dr Shetty added.

MCI had recently in-

formed the Supreme Court of a common exit test after obtaining the MBBS degree from medical colleges. They, however, said it would be mandatory, but seem to have changed their view.

Considering the sensitive nature of the profession — dealing with life and death — and keeping in mind varying standards of education in medical colleges, MCI proposed this common exit examination for MBBS pass-outs, solicitor general Gopal Subramaniam had told a bench of Justices R V Raveendran and H L Gokhale.

MCI's recommendation is to standardize the skills of doctors and in line with the decision of Bar Council of India (BCI), making it mandatory for law graduates to clear a test to be able to practice in courts.

ACTIVITY 2: READ AND UNDERSTAND

Task : To correct the interpretation of each classified advertisement in the given handout.

Skill Focus : Reading

Time : 15-20 minutes

Activity Type : Pair work

Objective : To be able to read and understand newspaper 'wanted' advertisements.

Writing classifieds is part of the syllabus for class XII and this brief activity lends itself excellently as a preliminary preparatory work for the students to, ultimately, write classified advertisements.

The teacher needs to prepare a small handout with about 4-5 classifieds. Beneath each classified advertisement its interpretation is given. However, each of the interpretation has at least one error.

The students are divided into pairs before being handed out a copy of the work sheet. As an example the first advertisement is read out by the teacher before the students get time to underline the part or parts that are incorrect. If some important information is omitted then the students need to put an X by the paragraph. The teacher should, also, explain each abbreviation in the ads if need be.

For example:

1. PHARMA COMPANY REQUIRES MEDICAL EXECUTIVES FOR DELHI H.Q. PERSON SHOULD BE SCIENCE GRADUATE WITH 6 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR SELLING EXPERIENCE, MAIL C.V. AT INFO@CRYOGENIE.COM

A leading chemist requires medical executives to deliver medicines for their Delhi head quarters. The person should be a science graduate with minimum 1 year selling experience. Mail C.V. at info@cryogenie.com.

2. URG. REQD. COMPUTER KNOWING OFFICE SECRETARY HAVING GOOD ENGLISH DRAFTING FOR MCD COUNCILOR OFFICE AT PUNJABI BAGH, RETD. GOVT. SERVANT CAN ALSO APPLY. WALK IN INTERVIEW ON 23-28 FEB (SUN OFF) 11- 1PM AT 7/77 WEST PUNJABI BAGH.

An NDMC councilor's office in Punjabi Bagh urgently requires office secretary with computer knowledge and drawing skills. Government servants can also apply for the post. Walk in interviews will be conducted at 7/77 west Punjabi Bagh from 23 to 28th February with Saturday and Sunday off. The timings for the job are between 11am to 1 pm.

The class should be given around 15-20 minutes to read through the entire worksheet and mark out the errors. They are also supposed to correct the mistakes wherever they can. The activity can be concluded with eliciting the responses orally from the class where the gaps are filled out by the different pairs for each advertisement.

USP: Unlike the previous activity, where the focus was on scanning an entire set of reports for better global comprehension, here each classified and its interpretation are read very closely to identify the errors. The focus is more on the specific details that are needed to write concise and good classified advertisements. It, also, allows the learners to implicitly draw out their conclusions regarding the language structures and styles used to write classifieds.

ACTIVITY 3: WRITING NEWS STORIES

Task : To write news stories based on the given inputs

Skill focus : Writing

Time : 25-30 minutes

Activity Type : Individual

Objective : To allow the learners to expand and develop given information into a comprehensive news report.

This activity is designed for learners who have, already, acquired a degree of comfort with the language since this involves being provided with a bare minimum of information. Each learner is handed out a couple of headlines with the first sentence of the story attached to it. They are given a hypothetical situation where they are journalists who have been asked by their editor to choose any one of the two headlines provided to them and develop it into a complete report of about 100- 125 words. Depending on the language abilities of the learners, the number of headlines handed out to each student can be increased or decreased.

For example:

1. LAW CATCHES UP, BHANOT ARRESTED
By Abhishek Sharan
New Delhi: The CBI made its most high profile arrests relating to the Commonwealth Games Scam, nabbing its former Organising Committee (OC) Secretary General Lalit Bhanot and Director General VK Verma on Wednesday...
2. ELDERLY LONELY AND NEGLECTED: STUDY
By Ambika Pandit
New Delhi: The breakdown of the joint

family system is not only making the elderly in the capital lonely but it is also emerging as one of the prime reasons for violation of their basic human rights...

USP: The activity allows learners to exercise their creativity to the fullest and is meant for students who are already aware of the structure and syntax of news paper reports along with a fairly high degree of comfort in using formalized written English.

Drawback: The strength of the activity is, also, its biggest drawback. This activity will be a failure in a class where the students are yet to achieve a moderately high degree of ease with the language or where learners have low interest in current affairs. Since the reports used are always topical, it is important that the learners have a

steady interest in reading the newspapers as a rule rather than as something to be done only when directed.

The above-discussed activities are only some of the many possible ways of using newspapers in an English class. For me, personally, a newspaper has always been an excellent tool because of its topicality. Through issues that interest the students, it becomes more feasible to encourage them to read and write in a language that remains difficult and complicated for a whole lot of learners. I have, over the years, observed in my classes that regular use of such activities not only enhances the general knowledge of the learners but also presents to them opportunities to observe English being used for many different purposes in a multitude of styles and syntax.



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Retrieving Activity Based Material: Relevance in the Contemporary Context

S Chitra

This paper is based on some activity based English Learning materials that were published in the 1950s and 1970s. The material is almost archival in nature but such past materials help us to reevaluate and reassess our present methodologies. It is also argued that it is not always necessary to attempt something 'new'. Materials from the past also act as pedagogical tools and suit contemporary English Language learning. The book is:

- I. **English Workbook Second Course by Stoddard.** Bailey. McPherson. Published by the American Book Company in the year 1950.
 - A. The Business Letter Writing Activity from page 42 is reproduced here.

On your paper unscramble the following Business letters. Should any abbreviations be used?

 - a. 482 market street Nashville 8 tenn feb 8 19—yours truly Lawrence Hansen united sporting goods house 718 south street Johnson city tenn gentlemen will you please send me your spring catalogue I should like to place an order with you as soon as possible
 - b. coronet subscription department coronet bldg Chicago 1 ill gentlemen very sincerely yours louise mccormick since I am going to be away for the summer, will you be

kind enough to send my copy of coronet to the fort william henry hotel at lake George new York instead of to my home address is shall be in lake George from june 1 till September 1 thank you for your kindness 2304 walnut street Philadelphia 17 pa april 6 19—

My Observations:

The unscrambling process helps the students in the following ways:

- i. The student will be able fit in the parts of the business letter namely From Address, To address, salutation, body of the letter, complimentary close and the signature.
 - ii. Providing punctuation marks and capitalization of nouns, enhances the understanding of sentence construction.
 - iii. When this exercise is given to the Indian students (if they are from rural background they can be given clues to abbreviations such as tenn- Tennessee (name of a town) ill – Illinois (name of a state in US) or a similar exercise can be prepared by the teacher to suit her class.
- B. Another interesting topic titled “Clarity and Variety in Sentences” Pages 133 & 134 would be of great use to present day learners. It runs as follows:
- Making Sentences we become confused in*

our reading because a sentence is vague: by the same token, we sometimes confuse our readers by writing obscure sentences. If you want your sentence to be clear observe the following suggestions:

1. Do not omit necessary words
2. Do not make faulty comparisons
3. Do not overload sentences
4. Do not break sentences into parts
5. Do not use indefinite word references
6. Do not use dangling modifiers
7. Do not shift the point of view

Below this, 24 sentences are given but only a few are cited here as examples. The contemporary teacher can frame similar tasks based on the level of her learners

On your paper rewrite each of the sentences, making it entirely clear:

1. We complain that we cannot read.
Because we are so busy.
2. A woman magazine writer has written an interesting report. About an interview which she had with Jane Addams.
3. She told her her purpose.
4. They say that Jane Addams was a great reader despite her busy life.
5. The woman was amazed at her wide reading who interviewed Miss. Adams.
6. By reading constantly, her mind was refreshed and renewed.
7. To put vitamins into one's thinking, books should be referred to.
8. Busy people learn to use books wisely, and new ideas are brought to them through them.

My Observations:

- The students can be asked to mark the 'confusion' present in the sentence and number them accordingly as given in the box.
- The sentences can be roughly rewritten as follows (or the teacher can employ her own method) to bring clarity.
 1. We complain that we are too busy to read.
 2. A journalist/columnist had written an interesting report based on her interview with Jane Addams.
 3. The journalist (She) briefed Jane Addams about the purpose of her visit.
 4. The journalist (She) told that despite Jane's busy schedule she is a voracious reader.
 5. The interviewer was amazed at the wide reading of Miss. Addams.

6. Jane Addams felt that reading refreshes one's mind.
7. Books revitalize one's thinking.
8. People with busy schedule are shrewd in getting new ideas from their habit of reading books.

If these sentences are sequenced to form a paragraph then pronouns can be judiciously employed. These exercises cater to students both at a higher and lower learning level. Sentence clarity is essential for graduates who submit reports or projects. Right choice of words and removing the redundant ones is also a part of practicing this exercise.

II Use of Poems in Language learning

Most of the poems chosen for language exercises both at the school level and the college level seem to be monotonous. Deliberately evading poems with dense content and concentrating only on the grammar/language exercises that could be derived from them can be limiting to a certain extent. Instead a shift towards poems which are rich in content and poetic expression would teach the learners in a better manner. Interpretation of words in the poem makes the learner more familiar with the language. The following poem and the exercises are reproduced from the text titled **English for Colleges by Brendan J. Carroll** published by Macmillan in the year 1970. (Pgs 142&143)

The African Beggar by Raymond Tong

1. Sprawled in the dust outside the Syrian store,
a target for small children, dogs and flies,
a heap of verminous rags and matted hair,
he watches us with cunning, reptile eyes,
his noseless, smallpoxed face creased in a sneer.
2. Sometimes he shows his yellow stumps of teeth
and whines for alms, perceiving that we bear
the curse of pity, a grotesque mask of death,
with hands like claws about his begging bowl.
3. But often he is lying all alone
within the shadow of a crumbling wall,
lost in the trackless jungle of his pain,
clutching the pitiless red earth in vain,
and whimpering like a stricken animal.
 - a target : something or someone that is under attack.
 - verminous : full of fleas and lice.
 - matted : tangled together like a mat.
 - reptile eyes : eyes like those of a snake.
 - sneer : an unpleasant smile.

- whine : a high pitched begging tone
- grotesque mask : a face that is ugly, out of shape.
- whimpering : crying softly.

Understanding the poem:

1. The subject of the poem is
 - a. A target
 - b. a man
 - c. a wild animal.
2. Small children may
 - a. Throw stones at him
 - b. give him food
 - c. walk past without looking at him.
3. He is
 - a. Well-dressed
 - b. clean and neat
 - c. dirty and in torn clothes.
4. His eyes look
 - a. Honest
 - b. timid
 - c. cunning
5. When he shows his teeth his face looks
 - a. More beautiful
 - b. more ugly
 - c. just the same.
6. The poet says that
 - a. To feel pity is to be cursed
 - b. the beggar cursed him
 - c. he cursed the beggar.
7. The beggar is actually
 - a. Pretending to be poor and ill
 - b. somewhat crippled
 - c. suffering from terrible pain.

8. He clutches the earth
 - a. To relieve his pain
 - b. to show anger at his condition
 - c. to throw mud at the dogs and children.
9. When he thinks he is alone he
 - a. Sits up and counts the money he has received
 - b. still lies crying with pain
 - c. gets up and walks away.
10. He is lying
 - a. In a street
 - b. in the jungle
 - c. in a field.

Appreciation:

This poem shows that poetry need not always be beautiful, nor always about noble subjects. The rhyme and rhythm are less obvious than in 'The Fog'. (Referring to the previous exercise in the text)

1. Make a list of the rhyming words and a second list of near rhymes. (e.g. hair – sneer)
2. Make a list of noun phrases used to describe the beggar. (e.g. a target. . .)
3. Make a list of words used in the poem which usually refer to animals or their home.
4. What impression of the beggar do we get from the use of these words?
5. Do you think the poet intends to give this impression? Is he justified in doing so?

Thus, it will not be wrong to say that 'old is gold' indeed and refashioning old material to contemporary contexts can yield rich dividends.



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English in India:

Some situational and pedagogical considerations

Pradip Sharan

The teaching of English in schools in India is in a pathetic state. I also contend that the status of English is similar to a "foreign language" in a non-metropolitan/non-urban domain and a "second language" in urban/metropolitan domain. We can perceive India as a Janus with double facets– one, the urban India and the second, rural India. In the urban areas, the teaching of English starts from the primary level. On the other hand, in the semi-urban and rural India, the government schools start teaching English from class 3, 6 or 8, depending on the policy of the individual state. Moreover, more often than not ill-equipped/

untrained teachers in a foreign language situation, abound in rural/semi-urban India. An urgent need is a training in methodology and ELT for these teachers. The syllabi designed are also based on outdated knowledge of pedagogy and perception. Furthermore, the teacher has to teach English, a foreign language, in a negative environment like large class, pupils without texts, lack of motivation among the students towards learning English, traditional and ineffective teaching methods and the only teaching aid available is the blackboard. In non-urban schools, the exposure to English language is limited to classrooms and

that for an hour a day at the most. It is important to note that language acquisition or learning is a gradual process and very different from the study of subjects like History, Political Science, Physics or Chemistry. In these subjects the students have to understand the concept, whereas in language learning one has to learn how to use it to communicate in a variety of forms like letter, essay, story, poem, memo, report or interact/transact with people in different situations in daily life. There is no shortcut method to learn a language, it is a gradual process, so a graded syllabus is required from class one onward.

Before I proceed further, I would like to differentiate between “a foreign language situation” and “a second language situation”. According to Littlewood (1984:2) and Nunan (1989:3) a foreign language situation is when the target language is used within the ambit of school or institution where it is taught and no opportunity is available to the learner to use it in social life. This is a situation in most parts of India, other than big cities and towns where the status of English is a “second language” for all practical purposes. In a second language situation the language is in use in various domains like in education, administration, trade and commerce, law, as well as, in social interactions. Thus, the methodology of teaching would also change with language situation. The curriculum and syllabus design would be different in a foreign language situation from the second language teaching. I would like to state that curriculum takes into consideration the context, methodology and evaluation, whereas, syllabus design deals with the selection and sequencing of learning activities. In other words, a syllabus is a list or inventory of items or units with which learners are to be familiarized. Methodology is concerned with the selection and sequencing of learning activities or in other words, how you choose materials and how you decide to use them.

I suggest that the designing of curriculum of English language need to address the issues like the typology of teaching situations in terms of ‘second’ or ‘foreign’ language-‘elementary’, ‘intermediate’ and ‘advanced’ levels—‘young’ and ‘adult’ learners.(Prabhu,1987)

Moreover, the curriculum of English language teaching should take into consideration the number of years of teaching English in schools, the number of hours of teaching English per day in the time table, the goal in language competence in a graded fashion in one or two skills like reading, writing or speaking. The course content selected and graded with the methodology of teaching inherent with the course. The purpose

and objective of teaching a language is to prepare the learner competent enough to communicate and interact with others in different domains like in school, hospital, bank, airport etc. and to be able to write letters, memos, reports, notice etc. at the advanced stage.

The teaching in a foreign language situation is language oriented with structural-functional syllabus. The structural syllabus focuses on the constructions of different types of sentences like declarative, imperative, interrogative, phatic and exclamatory. The exercises are of various types like framing of sentences from jumbled words, matching the group of words from different columns, guided paragraph writing, fill in the blanks and framing sentences from the words given, and then joining those sentences into a paragraph. The vocabulary consists of semantic/content words like nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and grammatical/structural words like determiners, articles, prepositions and pronouns, selected as per the frequency of use in daily life. In a graded and guided exercises the students learn a foreign language in a due course of time. In a foreign language situation the main reading skills required by an EFL student are as follows:

- “ - recognizing the letters of the alphabet
- reading groups of letters as words
- understanding the meaning of punctuation
- understanding the meaning of vocabulary items
- understanding the grammar of a sentence
- understanding the relationship between sentences and clauses in a text
- recognizing the effects of style
- recognizing the organization of a text
- making inferences
- reading longer texts (extensive reading)
- skimming for gist
- scanning for specific information
- reading for detail” (Mary Spratt)

According to Vai Ramanathan (TESOL: 1999), teaching of English in India – school or college-is in no way preparing the students to use English in the real world.

Further, it is important to note that the teaching of English in Secondary schools is literary study, which does not help students to acquire a language for all practical purposes. The course content comprises of short stories, poetry, essays and other literary writings. The students are not proficient enough to appreciate literary pieces. They memorize the answers based on the text and succeed in their examinations. Their success is measured by the score they get in the examinations by rote learning. When it comes

to use English in interaction/transaction with people in different domains, like in hospital with doctors, in banks, in business/commercial sectors, they fail to communicate. So, the teaching of English (in most parts of the country) in Indian schools and colleges is bookish and far from the real life situation. To offset this handicap, they resort to memorizing a set of expressions to use in different situations in social interactions, which turn out to be artificial or they improvise pidgin English, as tourists do. So, it is required that a "Spoken English" course be incorporated into the curriculum of English in schools, so that they learn how to communicate with people in different situations, like in school/college, hospital, airport, hotel, bank, or other commercial sectors and social gathering.

The teaching methodology would be basically communicative but other models like audio-lingual, oral and situational would also be used on different occasions and situations as per the need, because it has been found that all these models have both, advantages and deficiencies.

In this connection, I would like to mention the innovation made by Nikki Ashcraft (1999:42-43) when she taught the students in the Middle East to construct sentences on familiar words and express themselves creatively in dialogues, and thus, indirectly teaching them how to construct sentences with adjective clauses. In other words, grammar is being taught in the process of learning how to be communicative in a foreign language, as well as, defining the cultural items. For this, Ashcraft prepared a list of words familiar to the students and gave one example on the blackboard and thereafter the students constructed other sentences defining other words with adjective clauses. For example, she defined the word 'Zubeida' as "Zubeida is a fish that swims in the Arabian Gulf" and "Ramadan is a month when people fast and pray". And once students have prepared sentences defining each cultural item, they are able to develop them as an essay or oral presentation about their home culture (Ashcraft: 1999:42-43).

The text for teaching English would be based on stories for children, folk tales and mythologies connected to their socio-cultural milieu. The context should be related to their daily life so that their participation would be natural in learning English. The children would learn such realities like giving and exchanging information, asking questions, giving orders, apologizing etc. (McArthur; 1983; 102). They may also be encouraged to write about their family, about the cinema they saw on TV at home or the marriage party they attended recently. The text based on the

cultural milieu of the learner would be the source for preparing the exercises, to make the learner at ease in learning an alien language.

I propose the methodology of teaching of English to be communicative since the basic teaching aids like text books with visual aids are not available. The only teaching aid available would be practical demonstration orally and the blackboard. The teacher has to supplement the teaching aids by using diagrams, pictures, cartoon drawing on the blackboard to make his teaching effective and goal based in achieving the communicative skills in the learners.

In a second language situation, as in cities in India, the teaching of English could be for different purposes, like English for the Academic Purpose (EAP) or English for the Specific / Special Purpose (ESP). English for the Academic Purpose (EAP) means a curriculum prepared for those who study English as a major subject and get the BA or B Ed degree in English. However, English for the Specific Purpose (ESP) means a language course prepared with the aim that the students may use English in the study of their major subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Engineering, Economics, etc. English for Special Purpose means a course for specific applications, e.g. in air traffic control and maritime. The objective of these courses is to prepare students to take-up their major subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Engineering, etc. in English medium, which will later-on help them in higher studies and research. Without English one cannot think of continuing higher studies and research in Science, Medicine or Engineering.

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Using Lateral Thinking Tasks to Enhance the Thinking Capacity of the ESL learners: A study

S. Shanmugasundaram & C. Meenakshisundaram

There are many factors/reasons: psychological, sociological, pedagogical and linguistic, that could affect the oral communication of ESL learners. This paper primarily focuses on the psychological aspect, especially pertaining to self-esteem and the confidence level of the ESL learners. The paper is based on a classroom research (in ELT) experimented in one of the Engineering colleges in South India: National Institute of Technology, in Tiruchirappalli, South India.

A total number of 10 ESL students studying I year Engineering (could be rated at the intermediate high level as per the ACTFL speaking scale, 1999) were chosen for the study. Initially they were given an oral communication task namely JAM (just a minute pep talk based on a topic). The topics were chosen in tune with the interest of the ESL students. But they were not able to perform the task successfully. To know the reason for their poor performance, they were personally interviewed by the researcher. After the interview, it was understood that they lacked confidence in terms of getting ideas on the topic they spoke on. This was also obvious from the key responses noted down by the researcher.

Some of the responses by the participants are given below.

"I don't have a point to proceed."

"I just couldn't get any idea on that topic"

"I have a feeling that I lack ideas"

"I just can't proceed any further since I don't get anything to speak on."

Having analyzed the responses of the participants, it was understood that they seem to be lacking in confidence, in terms of generating ideas related to the topic. To enable them to overcome this, they were introduced to lateral thinking, a term originally coined and introduced by Edward De Bono. Initially they were asked to work on a few tasks based on lateral thinking. The idea was not to get exact solutions to a problem but to motivate students to think of the various possibilities related to finding solutions to a problem. For instance one of the tasks experimented with them, is given below.

Problem:

A man fires at something and in two minutes time he gets killed.

Possible solutions:

Possibly he is in a snow covered mountain and fires at a snow fox. The shot fired accidentally causes an avalanche. So in two minutes time he is killed.

Or as a hunter, he fires at an elephant with a low caliber gun. The elephant not wounded properly kills him.

After introducing lateral thinking tasks to them, brain storming on a topic was done. The participants were deliberately given a tough topic namely "Smoke" and they were simply asked to relate/associate any points related to "smoke" Initially the researcher had a guided conversation with them to get points like "If any one is lost in a forest then smoke could be used as a communication tool to get the attention of the rescue team" "Smoke creates burning sensation to the eyes" and so on.

This resulted in a momentum in generating ideas related to the topic 'smoke.' Interestingly, each one of the participants came up with at least one or two points related to the topic, which was a typical result of lateral thinking tasks.

Some of the points given by the participants were as follows:

1. *Smoke could be used to make bananas ripe.*
2. *It is ironic that smoke produced by the smokers, affects the non-smokers (victimized to passive smoking).*
3. *Smoke and fog put together called smog.*
4. *Smoking is injurious to health.*
5. *Smoking is an indication that something is burning and that will soon catch big fire.*
6. *Some people consider smoking as a fashionable thing.*
7. *Smoke means fire, which could be a figurative meaning for 'life'*

At the next stage, they were deliberately given simple topics to work on with the premise that they will find it easier to work backwards. Therefore, at this stage they were shown their ideas produced at the previous task (a tough one) and they were told that "if you are able to produce points for a tough one then why not for an easy one?" In this way they were extrinsically motivated (as pointed out by Rani Rubi) so as to get points related to the topic given. After



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the end of the task routine, it was found that they performed the tasks easily. There were more responses. Invariably everybody produced more number of points than their previous attempts. This was followed by an additional session (conducted after the break) given to the participants. Interestingly every time there was a great improvement in terms of getting points related to the topic. At the final stage, every one of the participants was interviewed by the researcher. It was found that almost every body seemed to have understood the concept indicating that their thinking capacity had improved. This type of training/practice was conducted for a week. The sequence, procedures and conditions remained the same for all the seven days.

Performance of the students-

Stage-I

Task 1 (with a tough topic)

Name of the Students	Topic given	Time given for preparation	No. of ideas produced
Akila	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Ramnik singh	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Saran	Smoke	5 minutes	0
Gopinath	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Soumya shree	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Vikas	Smoke	5 minutes	2
Praveen	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Pallav	Smoke	5 minutes	0
Ashish	Smoke	5 minutes	1
Manas	Smoke	5 minutes	2

Task 2 (with simple topics)

Name of the Students	Topic given	Time given for preparation	No. of ideas produced
Akila	Dowry system	5 minutes	2
Ramnik singh	School life	5 minutes	2
Saran	God	5 minutes	3
Gopinath	Your village	5 minutes	2
Soumya shree	City life	5 minutes	2
Vikas	Cricket	5 minutes	3
Praveen	Film stars	5 minutes	3
Pallav	Politics	5 minutes	4
Ashish	Education	5 minutes	3

Name of the Students	Topic given	Time given for preparation	No. of ideas produced
Manas	Sports	5 minutes	4

Assessment

Additional Session-I (with simple topics)

Name of the Students	Topic given	Time given for preparation	No. of ideas produced
Akila	exercises	5 minutes	3
Ramnik singh	Friends	5 minutes	3
Saran	Hobbies	5 minutes	4
Gopinath	Library	5 minutes	5
Soumya shree	Animal world	5 minutes	4
Vikas	Music	5 minutes	5
Praveen	Books	5 minutes	4
Pallav	Yoga	5 minutes	3
Ashish	Fashion	5 minutes	3
Manas	Pet animals	5 minutes	5

Some of the interesting points / ideas generated by the participants on simple topics are as follows:

On dowry system: As per the Hindu culture, the brides' family gives dowry to bridegrooms where as, among native Africans, the bridegrooms give bride prize to the brides/ brides' family.

On Exercises: The two types of exercises – grounds exercises for turning the body and – muscle building exercises using tools and so on.

On Yoga: his/her opinion on yoga, types of yoga techniques – Asanas, pranayamas and so on.

On Cricket: Influence of cricket in India; the behavior of the crowd during matches and so on.

Film stars: Film stars turned politicians; the impact of film stars on their fans etc...

Food: Fast food, nutritious food, junk food, etc... food carried by dabba walas (a person employed to carry food in carriers...)

Festivals: Deepavali – when and how it is celebrated unlike Holi – when and how it is celebrated etc...

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.

Conclusion:

This short training has helped the participants to enhance the thinking capacity by making them

aware of the role of the mind with reference to lateral thinking. Meenakshi Sundaram in the article on “Teaching Spoken English-A psycholinguistic approach” has also emphasized that “In speech production, the role of the mind in formulating the message and translating it into an audible and meaningful form becomes crucial.” (2009)

The participants sustained effort and engagement on lateral thinking with reference to topics helped them generate points / ideas on the topic. They were given exposure to various psychological hindrances that come in the way of creative thinking. One of the major objectives of lateral thinking is to chip away mental locks that close the mind (Kirshnamoorthi & T.Sriraman P.94) as well as to encourage thinking afresh to get the chain of ideas / points to a topic given. This was effectively done using a contrast technique, contrasting a tough topic with the easy ones (from the perspective of the participants) Besides, until the completion of the session, they were properly motivated so as to be in the suitable frame of mind to think freely as is also pointed out by Robert Thomson, “motivation is an essential factor in thinking” (157)

On the whole, Lateral thinking can be considered

as one of the innovative techniques that can be employed by the teaching community to enhance the thinking capacity as well as the confidence level of the ESL students of the intermediate level.

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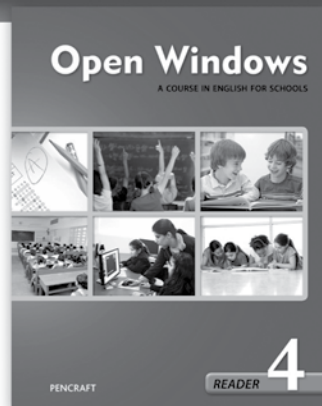
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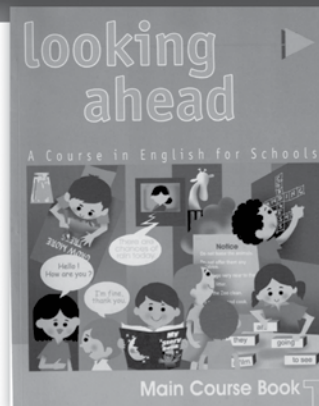


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English Language and the Media

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Words are but a means of communication...strung well, they make a good sentence; woven with skill, they hold the target's attention. For the mass media, that target could be a newspaper reader, a television viewer, a radio listener, an Internet surfer or user of an advertisement, some or all of them. This convergence of media in the digital age has subtly changed the way we communicate, and language has been equally affected. Thus "bite" no longer denotes just a function of our teeth; we also have "news bites" on television or on websites. An effective communication comprises a good choice of words, the right syntax, a judicious placement of adjectives or adverbs, and maybe contextual imagery or an apt idiom to complete the picture.

The multiplicity of communication channels underscores the need to get this combination right in any piece of journalistic work. Often, a strong visual on television fails to impress because the accompanying commentary does not do it justice. A trained ear may detect the absence of, say, the correct verb and possibly lose track of what follows. For example, "impelled" cannot be used when the right word is "compelled". This could put off a discerning viewer. His attention broken, there is a chance he switches channels, and you lose him.

If there is a scroll accompanying the visual, the writer must be as careful. A misspelling, for instance, "sovereign", is jarring (this happened on BBC), and makes viewers wonder why the television reporter or anchor is sleeping on the job. They may not know that an entirely different department carries out this duty. A misspelt or mispronounced word does disservice to the viewer; a good script can keep him riveted. So whether it is the reporter, the anchor or the scriptwriter, they must know their language well. Similarly, a trained eye can get caught on an incorrect sentence. It could be the writer's fault; it could be that the rewrite desk messed up or the copy desk failed to catch the error. Anyway, it disappoints intelligent readers, and some do actually complain. My duties at Mint included penning "Corrections & clarifications", where we owned up mistakes and acknowledged feedback on errors.

Gross Neglect of Basics of English Language

Read the following:

"m very cool & help full boy"

This is an example from a self-description put up by a Facebook member, incidentally also a Delhi University graduate. Though not a brilliant example, it is illustrative of the bigger picture: a growing neglect of the basics. One cringes at such howlers. The Internet, newspapers, magazines, advertisements and so on are replete with them. Look at this other example: The following caption was spotted on the NDTV website:

"The Dhobi Ghat stars - Prateik Bubber, Monica Dogra and Kriti Malhotra - had field day to judge a photo exhibition"

An obviously poorly constructed sentence/caption faltered with spellings too! 'Babbar' is misspelt.

I distinctly remember, my school principal, an Englishwoman, would exhort us to listen to Lotika Ratnam for diction and read the newspapers for current affairs and good English. Regrettably, we can no longer say that.

... convergence of media in the digital age has subtly changed the way we communicate, and language has been equally affected.

There is a tendency to shrug off as routine any feedback on errors or omissions. The US-based Columbia Journalism Review is a valuable resource for journalistic introspection. But the Indian media is not on that track yet: It's all right if poor language turns off

some—there are others who will read on. This disregard for others' views, though, ought to be discouraged from the learning stage itself. An informed opinion holds great value, and absence of feedback cannot be a licence for mistakes in language.

A Keen Eye

A well-written piece will have simple English, appeal to a cross-section of readers and skip use of jargon. It should be well-researched, have pertinent information that a reader can use, and to the extent possible, spell-checked at every stage. A writer loses nothing by running a spelling check on his own copy; a copy editor is duty-bound to run one again before sending the final version for publishing.

Even so, a computer's spell-check program is not foolproof. It simply ensures that a word is in conformity with the dictionary fed into it. Typos can be very embarrassing, to say the least. The

“Spelling and grammar” tool on the computer may point out grammatical errors, but rarely bad or incorrect usage. A journalist must have a keen sense of the language and a keener eye for detail, or “ample” could go as “sample”, “blind” as “bind”. A computer can’t detect such mistakes.

A simple yet recurrent error that completely alters the meaning of a sentence is the presence or absence of “not”. “The scientist had not intended to harm the boy” can easily be turned on its head if “not” is missed or deleted: “The scientist had intended to harm the boy.”

The context will decide whether the scientist did or did not mean to harm the boy. An incorrect version will puzzle the reader, and that should be avoided at all costs. It is best to check back with the original writer or source if the sentence seems out of sync with the story line. But it will be caught only if the person handling the text is alert and alive to the nuances of the language and distortion of meaning (see picture).

Incorrect use of “a” and “an”, “their” and “there” are some other common errors (see list). Again, note the erroneous “is” at one place: “The issue is whether it will match expectations, some of which is misplaced, given that India is at present the second fastest growing economy in the world.”

When in doubt, Ask

Sometimes those who edit a copy tend to distort the meaning out of sheer ignorance or a misplaced sense of importance—a belief that they know better. A word one may not have encountered, such as “discrete”, could end up in a “discreet” avatar. We must discourage such over-confidence; it is better to reach out for the dictionary than assume. To the extent possible, it should be our constant companion at work or study. Or, as some newsrooms stress: “When in doubt, Ask.” Ask seniors, colleagues, juniors, but do not let a mistake go.

Easy recourse to dictionaries online may be affecting the use of the physical book, but consulting them is desirable nevertheless. A good vocabulary is definitely an advantage, but a dictionary is a great friend. Websites have the luxury of being able to rectify an error, but on television, what’s said once or written on the screen cannot be recalled or corrected; the printed word too, once in the public domain, is out of one’s hands. Put to best use, dictionaries teach you the right pronunciation as well. Be conscious of the following:

LOOKALIKES

(Words similar, but not interchangeable)

its	it’s
tote	tot
lead	led
loose	lose
their	there
who’s	whose
advise	advice
classic	classical
assume	presume
historic	historical
principle	principal
gourmet	gourmand
stationery	stationary
ingenious	ingenuous
economic	economical
compliment	complement
uninterested	disinterested

A Sense of Grammar

Punctuation is being given short shrift nowadays. At my last job, for example, my colleagues in a section dealing with highly technical financial stuff could never figure out why I would remove the question mark they regularly put after headlines such as “How to calculate your tax liability”, “What this implies” or “Where you should invest”.

Journalists tend to drop or introduce commas and apostrophes at will. Two eloquent instances:

A headline—“Talwars’ to approach court, says lawyer”

Talwars’? To what or whom does the possessive apply?

A sentence in a newspaper report—“The incident took place at a spot, which is close to the police station.”

Don’t all incidents take place at some spot or the other? The comma is redundant; so is “at a spot which is” because of what follows next. It would also save five words in the process.

This illustrates the need for brevity, though never at the cost of clarity.

Economy Pays

Language is used best with an economical use

of words. Space being at a premium, we must describe a development and its implications in minimum words with maximum effect. Command over the language can help find the most apt expressions without sacrificing the essence of the message. Comprehension and précis writing are skills that help in clever crafting of news, views or profiles. Reading opinion pieces contributes to such skills, because these edits are compact and often written or edited by the best in the business. At my first workplace, we were encouraged to solve crosswords and jumbles and play word games in our free time.

As language is dynamic, prejudice has no place in the realm of words. One has to recognize and accept that the language is assimilating new words, phrases and coinages, changing in step with the times.

Aspiring journalists must be encouraged to constantly update themselves, not only on news but also on the latest developments in the language. They ought to consult the dictionary and thesaurus frequently, and practise their synonyms and antonyms. Even avid readers can repeatedly err in elementary grammar. To become good anchors, columnists or commentators, they must respect the language and love to spar with words; they could browse through books such as *A Dictionary of Wit, Wisdom and Satire or English Idioms and how to use them*. After all, good communication must be simple, but smart too.

Look out for the Reader

Assiduous reading with attention to detail and internalizing usage are excellent ingredients for journalistic enterprise. A writer must ensure that the reader is not left to figure out things for himself, or made to go over a sentence twice to understand it. Our primary duty is to the consuming public. Caring for the end-user's point of view will ensure that we never fail him.

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Using 4Rs for Speech-Effectiveness:

An Approach

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Do you at times wonder why some people are always the centre of attraction wherever they go? Why are certain people successful in collecting a mammoth gathering of people to listen to them, when some others fail to get even a small number of people despite all strategic efforts on the part of their organizers? It happens because of their widely earned reputation as mesmerizing speakers. They succeed because they speak from their heart and express their thoughts and ideas in a unique and inimitable style.

After all, what is this 'speech-effectiveness' that enables them to conquer the world?

The following are some of the most distinctive traits that intimately go with what is considered 'speech-effectiveness':

- A commanding yet friendly voice of a speaker, giving a pleasant experience of listening to the listener(s) irrespective of the duration of speech..
- Content and the vocabulary used for the thoughts and ideas presented are as per the mental level and interest of the listener(s).
- There is a perfect clarity of thoughts and ideas expressed with the help of proper stress, appropriate pitch and right intonation as per the demand of the situation.
- An effective speech is very often packed with anecdotes and checkered with wit and humour.
- It always reflects the uniqueness of the speaker's personality.

Improving speech-effectiveness

- To become a good speaker one has to learn how to create a rapport between himself/herself and the listener(s), which, as we know, is not automatic. It is created, and largely depends on the speaker's quick reflexions and ability to read the faces and minds of the listener(s). The speaker's ability to mould his/her tone and shape the direction of the talk, according to the listeners' mood, mental ability and interest, will go a long way to create the desired rapport.
- Since, with every word of a speaker his/her

personality gets reflected, the pace at which a speaker communicates matters a lot to ensure speech- effectiveness.

- A speaker who tries to speak very fast indicates a lack of self-confidence. But when a person tries to speak with proper articulation of words and sounds, it indicates his/her vibrating self-confidence, and a firm grasp of the subject under discussion. Learning to speak effectively does not mean speaking like a native speaker or using RP (Received Pronunciation) only. It simply means utilizing fully one's innate capacity to speak with confidence in a natural way.

Improving voice and Speech

It is worth recalling that voice and speech are not the same. They are two different things, though closely related. While voice is the raw sound, speech is the process of shaping the sound of the voice into words by means of speech organs. Although, by and large, we cannot much change the quality of our natural voice and speech, we can always improve them by taking a special care of their limitations, identified with the help of friends and well-wishers. The quality of human speech can be further improved by a well-planned speech therapy and regular speech practice in real life situations.

Using 4 Rs for speech-effectiveness

There are a number of factors which contribute to the speech- effectiveness of a person, but using 4Rs judiciously has been found to be highly efficacious. The following are the 4Rs to be included in the scheme of work to be devised for improving speech-effectiveness.:

1. Response ability:

For every stimulus there are two ways to respond to it: positive and negative. Choosing a positive response always gives the desired results whereas the negative response like doubting one's ability to get what one wants drastically negates the chances of getting it. You must have seen some practitioners of martial arts like judo and karate breaking a stone with his/her hand only without getting the hand injured. This happens because the breaker just breaks it without ever doubting his/her ability to do so. Similarly, positive thinking on the part of a speaker always makes him/her stable, detached and emotionally balanced, leading to the desired results. But when he/she harbours any kind of doubt regarding the desired result, it makes him/her weak leading to frustrating results. Thus living with a positive bent of mind, is the first requisite for the attainment of speech-effectiveness. It is, however, very

unfortunate that at no stage in the students' life children are taught '**how to think**' and convert their negative thinking into a positive one by substituting it with an optimistic thought. This characteristic needs to be inculcated in children at an early stage.

2. Role playing:

In real life, we are all actors essaying different roles at different stages in life. However, our status / position-conscious attitude makes it extremely difficult for us to be original and as a result; we simply go by the dialogues repeatedly used by others in similar situations. There is hardly any creativity in our communication. Naturally, such interactions are bound to be dull, monotonous and unnatural. But once we treat ourselves as only 'actors' playing different roles on this 'world-stage' as Shakespeare rightly puts it, it will impel us to create our own improvised dialogues as per the demands of a situation, which will go a long way to empower us to speak naturally, spontaneously and effectively, leaving a great impact on the listeners' minds.

3. Relationship building:

Building strong relationship with the listener(s) during the interaction is yet another important trait of speech-effectiveness. This can only be achieved when there is sincerity of purpose and genuineness in the speaker's thoughts and intentions. The fear of an unsatisfactory performance often makes one's well-intentioned performance a fiasco especially at the negotiation table or while addressing people in public.

4. Resource exploiting:

The presentation of thoughts on the given subject is as important as the thoughts themselves and therefore tapping all possible sources imaginatively for collection of appropriate views/arguments on the subject concerned is very important. A speaker needs both 'what to speak' and 'how to speak' on a subject for a lasting impact on others.

Conclusion

To sum up, working towards speech-effectiveness is not a one-time activity. It is rather a continuous process, which begins with certain level of speech behaviour and goes on and on---, with only the sky as its limit. The following lines from Shakespeare's King Lear are worth remembering to remain ever vigilant in the area of speech-effectiveness:

**"Mend your speech a little
Lest you may mar your fortune"**

A Neglected Area of Language Teaching

Rama Kant Agnihotri



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Till the 1970s or even 1980s perhaps, teaching idioms and proverbs was an essential part of language teaching. No doubt, it was done in a rather boring and mechanical way and one had to just memorize idiomatic sentences often without really understanding the meaning of the idiom or proverb being used. Then, with the popularity of direct method and more recently of communicative method and computer-assisted language learning, the teaching of idioms and proverbs went out of fashion. This is not a plea to go back to the old method of teaching such expressions.

However, one must realise that the language used in a substantial part of our day today, is actually formulaic. If you analyze any piece of conversation or a written text, say a story by Prem Chand or Ruskin Bond, you will soon realise that a substantial part of the text is socio-culturally rooted and frozen in idioms, proverbs and such formulaic expressions as greetings, opening and closing turns in conversation etc. The problem with such frozen expressions is that they constitute a list that has to be consciously learnt as opposed to the rest of language which is generative in character and where if you have internalised one set of rules you can produce an infinite number of sentences. Again, the meaning of such idioms and proverbs is NOT compositional in character i.e. there is no way you can even remotely tell the meaning of the whole from the meaning of the parts.

For example, if you know the word 'cat' and 'dog' and the verb 'see', you will have no problem in making sentences such as:

The cat saw the dog.

The dog saw the cat.

The cat will see the dog.

....

One could go on ad infinitum. But not if you come across a sentence such as

'It is raining cats and dogs'

This sentence is quite another matter and requires serious consideration.

Consider the case of a large number of idioms involving body parts. There are for example

over a 100 each involving the use of 'hands' and 'eyes' (as is the case of many other body parts). Consider 'not bat an eye' in sentences such as:

My father did not bat an eye when I got my Ph.D.

She can spend thousands of rupees without batting an eye.

In this case, the same may mean different things in two different contexts. Commonly used expressions like 'hand in hand' or 'hand in glove' may actually mean something very different from what we can gather from the individual words used in them.

Thus a substantial part of language as it is actually used has to be 'learnt' as opposed to say 'acquired'. We must find innovative ways of teaching such frozen expressions. The old method of teaching the list of idioms and memorizing proverbs limited the knowledge of learners to the use of the frozen expressions that were frequently asked in examinations.

We need to find more creative ways of negotiating this important component of language use. One possible way of doing it is to engage learners in small projects when they come across frozen expressions in their texts. Let's turn to body parts again. Suppose you come across 'bat an eye', some learners could be asked to collect as many idioms as possible using 'eye'; others could be asked to focus on other body parts such as: teeth, ears, face, tongue etc. The sheer number and variety of meanings here is overwhelming. They could also be asked to find out if comparable expressions exist in their own languages also. Generally what happens is that learners (often teachers too) pick up some vague idea of the proverb or idiom from the context and rarely if ever gain the capacity to use it productively. In the case of proverbs, it is possible that many Indian languages will have equivalents of proverbs such as **'a bad workman quarrels with his tools'**, **'burnt child dreads fire'**, **'empty vessels make the most noise'**, **'barking dogs seldom bite'** etc.

Finally, if there actually exists comparable expressions across languages, cultures and geographical regions, we have something to think about the human mind and human societies.



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Unwrapping the trappings



Continuous Cumulative Evaluation (CCE): an Irritant or a Blessing in Disguise?

Professor Geetha Durairajan of the Department of Testing and Evaluation at the English and Foreign Languages

University (EFLU), Hyderabad in a forthcoming online interview to Prem Kumari Srivastava, Guest Editor, Fortell and Associate Professor of English, MAC, University of Delhi, unveils the conflicting reactions to the myriad issues related to Continuous Cumulative Evaluation that schools across the country are grappling with.

Prem Kumari Srivastava (PKS): Thank you, Professor Durairajan for acceding to Dr Khanna's request and taking out time for an online interview for Fortell, May 2011 issue. You have been working in the field of evaluation for a long time now and must have heard conflicting views on the novel intervention that CCE is, at the school level. Can you differentiate CCE from the old system of evaluation in which the teacher evaluated students at the end of each term and also at the end of a year?

Professor Geetha Durairajan (GD): It all depends on how CCE is interpreted. If, like what the CBSE has done, CCE is seen as formative 1 and formative 2, then there is no difference. CCE then, is nothing other than old wine in a more attractive bottle; it is the same old unit tests held quarterly and half yearly, it is mini summative evaluation. If this is what is happening, then, I would not call it CCE at all! CCE has to be genuinely pedagogic in nature. Its focus has to be on assessment for and not of learning. There ought not to be any marks or grades, for evaluation cannot be genuinely formative and also be graded/marked.

PKS: Experts of the field suggest that CCE would reduce stress on the students. How will that happen?

GD: If an attempt is made to actually 'capture' what students are able to do, and not look at what they have not achieved and also, if such assessment is not marked, then, the pressure of being marked and therefore evaluated and found wanting will disappear.

PKS: Usually our classes have more than 40-50 students. Will it be possible for the teacher to evaluate his/her students meaningfully and objectively in the co-scholastic areas in the time available to him/her?

GD: I do not see a problem here; but I would acknowledge that until a teacher gets used to this idea, it might be daunting. This does not mean that I am saying it is difficult or impossible. To understand this further, let us do a thought experiment. Let us imagine that a teacher (and here we will think of someone conscientious and who 'knows' her children) is asked to identify, out of a class of 40 or 50 children, 5 -8 children from her class who can take part in some inter school competition. No teacher will tell you: "oh my god, I need to give a test to find the kids; I need a week to do this". It will take that teacher, a maximum of 15 minutes, or even just 5 minutes, to mentally go through her kids, and identify the children. Such 'identification' is also based on evaluation and this is what continuous evaluation is all about. In this sense, no, it is not difficult, for teachers are already doing it. The only difference is that they were not maintaining any systematic record.

PKS: You are indeed right there, but, is it feasible for a teacher to keep so many records of a student and yet think of innovative ideas for formative and summative assessment?

GD: The innovative ideas exist, but for me, that is not the area that should be pressured! Also, beyond 'open book examinations' and a couple of projects and assessments, summative, for certification assessment cannot be 'innovative'. Let us accept that summative assessment is frightening, daunting and full of tension for a student. Rather than waste a lot of effort into making that innovative, I would rather 'train' my student to take that summative examination and then spend the energy into making continuous assessment innovative.

PKS: This brings me to another much discussed issue related to CCE. Will board examinations being made optional lead to lack of standardization of grades across the country?

GD: It might, if standardization is what we are looking for. But then, the board has made it clear that this is only for those students who do not want to change their schools. So what is the problem? And from what I have heard, CBSE is planning to send common papers to all schools for their examinations. The only difference is

that evaluation will be done by the school and not at a central level. This statement makes me want to ask you a question in return. Do you honestly think that with central evaluation being done across the country in many places, evaluation was standardized? If you had evaluated 100 answer scripts, can you tell me honestly that all 100 got the same treatment? Unless we are going to reduce the number of scripts evaluated by a teacher, and also train and re-train, and keep establishing inter and intra rater reliability, even standardized, central evaluation will continue to be varied? So, what is the problem with school-based evaluation? Central evaluators are and will always continue to be schoolteachers, who are anyway the evaluators now.

PKS: Will so many co-scholastic activities to be done in a year, lead to thinner syllabus content?

GD: I disagree for the term co-scholastic implies that it will be a part of teaching and learning. We assume that only memorizing of knowledge is covering of the syllabus. An application of theory that lends itself to the creation of a model, for example, in science, is also 'covering' the syllabus, and in a better manner, for it is going beyond understanding of a concept. I would argue that co-scholastic activities will 'cover' the syllabus in a richer manner.

PKS: Many schools follow different academic sessions. Will CCE allow schools, flexibility to plan their own academic sessions?

GD: Maybe they should, but I am not sure of this and how feasible it would be.

PKS: How about a post school scenario. Will CCE help students to be better equipped to face the competitive examinations after class XII and will CCE reduce seriousness among the students for academics?

GD: I do not think so that is it will not reduce seriousness. This does not come only from taking examinations! Life is not about passing examinations; at the same time, life is also not about facing competitive examinations. Whether CCE will help them face them, am not sure at all. Time will tell.

PKS: Why do you think grades are better than marks? Do grades conceal the individual differences among students?

GD: I disagree completely with this because except in a subject like Mathematics, (and even there, with a problem of sampling, I would not state that fine clear distinctions can be made between a 99 and a 97 and a 95) there are no 100 points of discrimination possible in a subject. As such, grades are better because they state

that a student is somewhere between 55 and 60 for example. If we were asked to swear on a religious book in a court of law that a mark we have given, (a 58 or a 68 or a 75 for example) is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, that it captures only the ability of the child, all the ability and nothing but the ability that we wanted to capture, I do not think any of us would have the courage to do so....

Marks are an easy way out; we can pretend to have distinguished between students that is all! What is the clear distinction between a 78 and a 79 in History, or Economics or even Science? If a particular problem had been replaced by some other problem in Mathematics, a student who got 98 may have ended up with either 95 or 99...

PKS: You have hit the nail at its head, but here is another issue that is bothering competitive parents and students. Since percentile ranking is at the school level, how will a student across the board know whether he/ she is as good or better than another student in another school?

GD: Why should this information be needed? The student is going to continue in the same school so.. and why is this information so important? Was it needed in Class 9 or is it needed in Class 11? So why only in class 10?

PKS: Personally, I do not subscribe to the following view. But there are many who claim that it is a reality. It is often seen that teachers have a bias against some students. Will this influence specifically the formative assessment of these students?

GD: Let us say welcome to reality, but then would this not have influenced quarterly and half yearly marks which are also fed into summative evaluation? So what is new? Biases will always be there, but I would rather accept the teacher's sense of plausibility and knowledge of the student and not look only at the negative aspects.

PKS: Will formative assessment, which is entirely in the hands of the teacher lead to sycophancy and may not reflect the actual level of learning/ attainment of a student?

GD: If teaching and not learning has not led to sycophancy, why should only assessment lead to it? If for years, quarterly and half yearly exams, and unit tests have not led to it, why only now?

PKS: My fear is that the system of CCE is an extremely fluid system and the teacher can justify the grades in any manner. The parents don't have any method of questioning the validity of those grades. Is THIS true?

GD: The same pattern of checking available

earlier is also there now. It is all a matter of trust! We have faith in our teachers to teach our students and shape their character, but not to evaluate them?

PKS: Has CCE caused a dilution of academic excellence?

GD: Why should it! In fact, with no fear of examinations, for once, concepts are being taught and not only portions and syllabus being covered.

PKS: The CCE system seems to have lifted all the pressure from a weak student. Earlier, he at least made an attempt to work hard for the fear of exams. How do you justify this?

GD: Extremely unfair statement: I would state that the weak student's 'petrification' and fear are now gone and he can study and learn in peace.

PKS: Are there ways and means to identify, motivate and reward a gifted child? What is the incentive for him to strive for an outstanding performance?

GD: As always. There is "criterion referenced testing". Or being able to better your best?

PKS: Why this CCE was not first piloted? What was the hurry? Indian school authorities claim that the system does not suit their conditions, which includes teacher preparedness and availability of infrastructure etc.

GD: I do not know why it was not piloted, but I instinctively feel that piloting would not have helped.

You are talking about teacher preparedness. Well, let us look at RTE or at the introduction of English in class 1. Are we prepared for either and can we afford to wait till we are prepared? It does not happen that way. Teachers will grow and learn as a result of engaging with and 'struggling' with CCE. That is a part of the package deal.

PKS: What is the basis for this shift in the paradigm of evaluation? Has this form of evaluation been tried out elsewhere in the world? How is it doing there? Have the shortcomings of this CCE as practiced elsewhere been remedied in the new avatar here?

GD: I do not know whether this particular form has been tried out, but the idea of teacher evaluation is a part of education in many parts of the world so I do not see a problem. But beyond that, I have not studied other forms and this in such detail (from a research/analytical/critical perspective) to make an informed statement.

PKS: Thank you, professor Durairajan for your well informed and stimulating views on CCE. You have given us, particularly the schoolteachers much food for thought! It was a pleasure interacting with you.

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Fossilization in Adult Second Language Acquisition

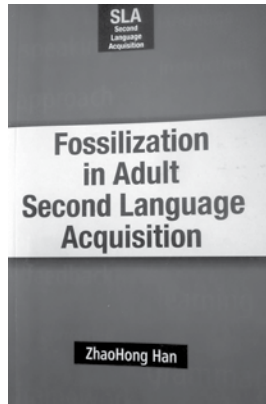
Deepti Gupta

Every teacher of language has faced the roadblock of fossilization at some time or the other. All teachers know that a certain time comes when the growth and development of a learner simply stops, preserving errors that should have been weeded out. The text under review is an attempt to understand this phenomenon. Han makes it clear in the

Preface p ix '...the book synthesizes the major research on the topic, provides a conceptual framework for interpreting various manifestations of lack of learning, and explores the relationship between instruction and fossilization, an issue of extensive interest to second language researchers and educators'.

Neatly organized in eight chapters, the first chapter of the book introduces the readers to the notion of fossilization and its relationship to complete second language acquisition. Taking an overview of main opinions in the field, the author gives a comprehensive review of all related literature and research. The introduction winds up with the conceptual framework of the author's argument along with an outline of the remaining chapters.

Chapter two gives the chronological development of the concept of fossilization, ensuring that all research right from the coinage of the term is included whereas the next chapter examines the full range of behavioral reflexes connected with fossilization and the taxonomy of causes that lead to it. Chapter four looks at the connection between the critical period and fossilization, taking every bit of research done into consideration. The chapter also makes an attempt to consider the role of genetic factors in this direction.



Viva Books Pvt. Ltd, 2010.

by Zhao Hong Han

201pp.

Rs 395.00

The cognitive factor of native language transfer and the qualitative plus quantitative research conducted in the area so far are dealt with in chapters five and six. Chapter seven is an exhaustive account of the relationship between second-language instruction and fossilization. Taking instances from studies around the globe, the author builds on the premise instruction under certain conditions can promote fossilization. The concluding chapter briefly summarizes the main argument of the text, examines its implications for research and application and suggests general directions for future research.

The book gives a very detailed and comprehensive treatment to a significant aspect of adult SLA and is sure to be of great value for specialists, researchers and scholars. The review of literature, both current and past is especially helpful. But, it also exemplifies the snag in most ELT texts. A book in ELT must hold practical and applied insight that can assist the teacher in the classroom. Very few texts cover this aspect. Perhaps Han's next book will.



Dr Deepti Gupta is Professor at the Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

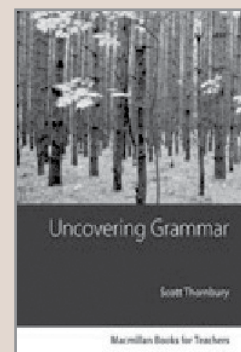
Uncovering Grammar

A. L. Khanna

Uncovering Grammar by Scott Thornbury questions the traditional way of teaching grammar and discusses how grammar should be approached to enable students to uncover the rules of the target language. Thornbury does not view grammar as a thing to be learned; he offers a new perspective and views grammar as a process in which teacher acts as a facilitator.

He coins a new term- 'grammaring'- to describe this new concept of grammar learning/teaching.

The book provides a holistic view of how language emerges. It looks at grammar not as an 'out there' body of language facts that has to be forced into the learner. Rather, it assumes that grammar is aa kind of organic process that, in the



Macmillan: Oxford, 2005

by Thornbury Scott.

pages vi, 122

price Rs 700



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A.L.Khanna, Retired Associate Professor, Rajdhani College is an ELT Consultant and Textbook writer

right conditions, grows of its accord and in its on mysterious ways.

The book has eight chapters divided into two parts: Part 1 Uncovering Grammar has 5 chapters and Part 2 Classroom activities three chapters. Chapter 1 looks at the role that grammar plays in 'perfecting' language and describes grammar as a dynamic process. Chapter 2 lists activity types that activate the 'grammaring' process. Chapter 3 suggests that the role of the teacher, particularly in the second/foreign language teaching, is to activate/oil the grammaring process. The chapter looks at the ways in which teachers can intervene in the acquisition of process grammar. Chapter 4 outlines the theory of language emergence and shows how language---and grammar ---' follows a developmental route that shares characteristic with other complex systems, suggesting that grammar is not knowledge imported from outside but a capacity that emerges from within'. Chapter 5 talks about teaching processes that are implied by a process view of grammar. It describes how the process view shapes overall lesson plan, materials choice, syllabus design, and even teaching style.

Part 2 has been designed to actually realize the aims of a process-approach to teaching grammar. It has a variety of photocopiable materials based on the assumptions discussed in Part 1. Chapter 6 'Grammaring Tasks' has 12 task sheets in which learners are given practice in adding grammar to essentially lexical texts, and deploying grammatical forms in various contexts. Chapter 7 'Consciousness-raising Tasks' has 5 task sheets, which include 'noticing' and 'grammar interpretations tasks'. The set of consciousness-raising is designed to raise learners' awareness regarding specific grammatical items in order to promote the 'restructuring' of their mental grammar. Chapter 8 'Grammar Emergence Tasks' has 5 task sheets which include reformulation and reconstruction tasks. Some of the tasks included in this chapter are input enhancement task and therefore directed towards drawing attention of the learner to features of the input.

The book provides a lot of authentic texts including some extracts from real classroom exchanges and language teaching tasks. The tasks are of practical nature and can be used in an actual classroom. The book has been written in an easy to read style and therefore will find favour with most practising teachers of English.

Call for papers for Fortell, September 2011 issue

ISSN no: 2229 – 6557

Contributions are invited for publication in the September 2011 issue of Fortell with a focus on innovative pedagogical practices and teaching of English language and literature as also based on classroom research.

Note for the Contributors

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Guidelines for submission

Soft copies of articles/research papers (not exceeding 2000 words) reports, book reviews, (300-350 words) and letters to the editor (100-150 words) should be sent along with a photograph and a brief bio note in about 25-30 words to Dr. A.L. Khanna, Coordinating Editor at amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com. The contributors should clearly indicate their name, email ID and phone number. Contributions should conform to the latest/seventh edition of the MLA style sheet in format, citations and bibliography. Contributions from the members of FORTELL are solicited. Look for the manuscript guidelines on the Fortell website. To become a member of Fortell log on to the website www.fortell.org or write at amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com to seek membership details.

Last date for submission of articles: June 30, 2011. The authors will be communicated by 20th July.

Guest Editors for September, 2011 issue

Prem Kumari Srivastava

Ruchi Kaushik

Declamation Contest

Nidhi Sharma

FORTELL, in collaboration with the Study Circle of Shyama Prasad Mukherji College, (SPM College), University of Delhi organized a declamation contest on 24th February 2011. Pearson Longman, a leading Publishing Group, sponsored the event and the prizes. The aim of the contest was to enhance the inter personal skills of the students. Dr.Jolly, the Principal of SPM welcomed the guests, judges and the participants, following which the students gave an impressive performance.

The topics of the contest were 'The Road to Success is not straight', 'Advertisements create unnecessary wants', 'All things are not connected-living in harmony with nature', 'We are progressing materially but failing morally' and 'Commonwealth Games have enhanced India's status'. The jury members comprised Ms. Shashi Khanna, Head of the Department of English, SPM



Nidhi Sharma, Deptt of English, SPM College

College, and Ms. Ruchi Monga an Executive with Virgin Atlantic Airlines. Ms. Tara Chadha, Treasurer FORTELL graced the occasion by her esteemed presence and gave away the prizes

Smiriti (III Yr English H), Sapna (I English H), and Simran (II Yr. English H) won the first, second and third prizes respectively. Nupur (I yr English H) bagged the consolation prize.

Ms. Kusum Virmani of the English Department summed up the event, congratulated the prizewinners and proposed a vote of thanks.

ELT Workshop

Jaideep Chakraborti

The New Oxford Senior Secondary School, Vivek Vihar, East Delhi, hosted a daylong workshop on English Language Teaching (ELT) on 24th March 2011, for the teachers of their chain of schools. Sponsored by Pearson Longman group, one of the leading Multi National Corporation publishers of English language and other books, it was attended by about 25 teachers from the various branches of the school.

Dr. Tara Chadha, the treasurer of FORTELL and Resource Person for ELT, conducted the workshop. With her vast and varied experience and commitment to the cause of ELT, she led the participants through a host of interactive activities. The focus of the workshop was on experiential learning. With her practical approach and demonstrative methods she brought home the point that the teacher is not the store house or the owner of all information; nor is the role of the teacher to interpret or present the texts as holy books.

The teachers were encouraged to use innovative strategies in the classroom by developing their own tasks and activities based on real life situations using simple authentic material, be it



Jaideep Chakraborti, Senior Sales Executive, Pearson Longman

for the teaching of vocabulary, grammar or even for developing listening and speaking skills.

By her precept and example Dr. Chadha tried to reiterate the point that teachers have to be facilitators rather than disseminators of knowledge.

Tara Ma'am, known for her informal free style, made the event a joyful experience for the participating teachers.

It was quite encouraging to learn that the Principal, Ms. Jyotsna requested the sponsors to organize another such workshop in the near future.



Ngangbam Mrinalini
Devi, Lecturer
DIET, Pitampura, Delhi

A Report on Instructional Material for a Short Term Proficiency Course

Ngangbam Mrinalini Devi

An innovative step has been taken by District Institution of Education and Training (DIET), Pitampura, New Delhi by developing “Instructional Material for Short Term Proficiency Course” for in-service teachers as well as pupil teachers in collaboration with FORTELL members.

One of the most impressive aspects of this book is that it emphasizes on all the four skills of language and provides interesting activity based material on diverse topics. Although the book has primarily been designed for the ETE students, it can be equally useful for the teachers in developing their proficiency in English language which is considered as an essential qualification for professional development of existing and prospective teachers.

The course aims at providing opportunities to the pupil teachers to improve their proficiency in

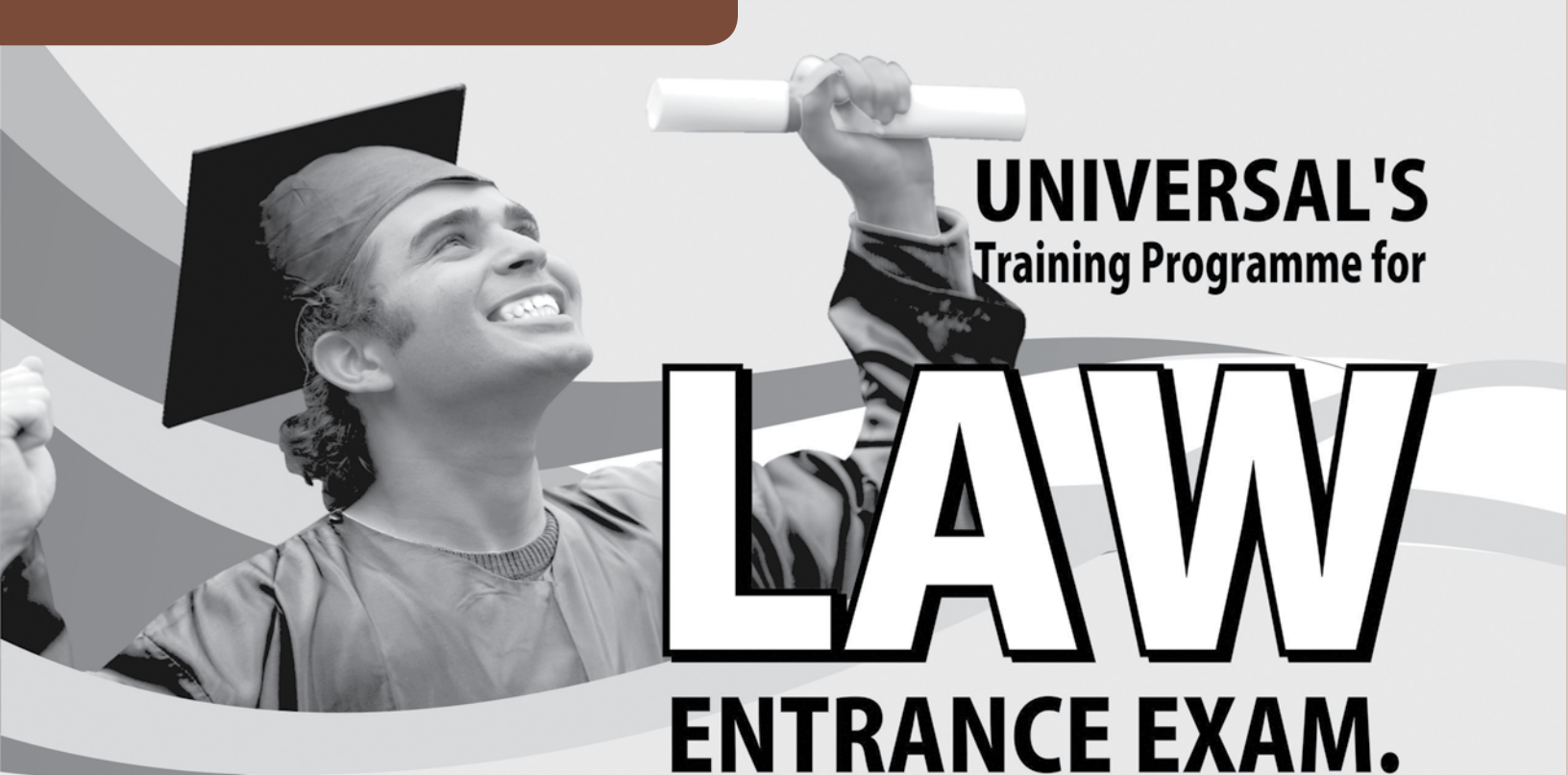
English Language through various communication strategies used in the classroom such as participation in group discussions, role-play, presentations and observations and recording their own presentations. The course offers attainment of proficiency at the Basic Level as well as the Advance Level through 30 classroom interactive sessions. Every session comprises two and half hour rigorous, active involvement of students and teachers.

First phase of the course has already been conducted successfully with ETE IInd year students of the college. 32 students joined the course and certificates were also distributed. The students’ performance during the course was praiseworthy.

Since this project was envisaged as a collaborative venture, the FORTELL members lent their unconditional support to the project. Dr. A.L.khanna, being a consultant and advisor and Dr. Kusum Sharma being the project in charge took lead to steer the work. The FORTELL members Dr.Tara chaddha, Dr. Savita Behl, Ms. Ng.Mrinalini Devi, Ms. Neelam Kulshrestha and Ms. Falguni Chakravarty contributed towards the development of topics. Dr.A.L.Khanna not only provided guidance but also helped others in making vital changes in the draft. Dr.Tara Chaddha helped in editing the entire draft.

Since it was a project conceived by Dr.Kusum Sharma, Principal DIET,Pitampura it goes without saying that the entire project was a team work accomplished with DIET-FORTELL partnership.





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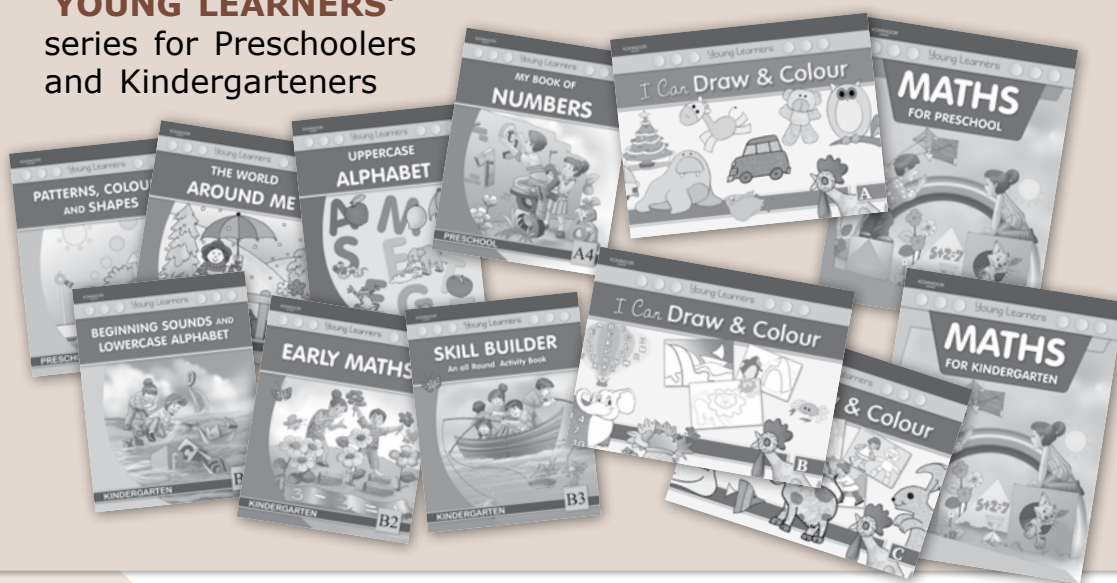


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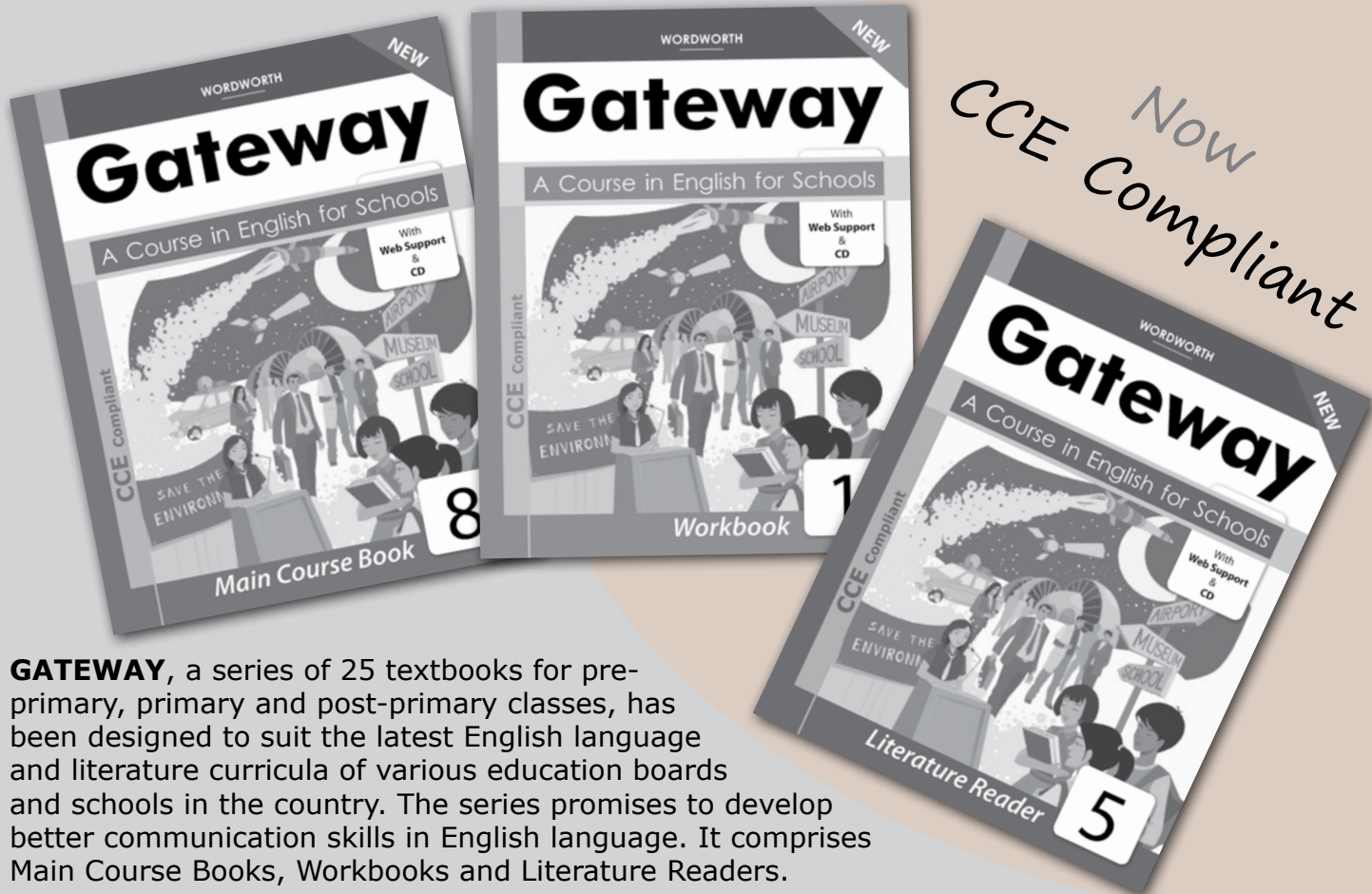


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