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Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature

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INSIDE FORTELL

Making Evaluation Authentic | Learner Autonomy through ICT in an English Language Curriculum | Keeping 'Reading Habit Alive' | Assessment: An Opportunity to Learn | The Classroom Reception of Spenser's *Epithalamion* | Learning Styles and Classroom Activities | An Appraisal of the N.E.T. in English Literature | Honing Verbal Skills: the Most Essential yet the Most Neglected! | Beyond the Achievement-Proficiency Divide: a New Perspective on Language Assessment | An Interview with Rod Bolitho on Continuous Cumulative Evaluation (CCE) | Book Reviews | International Workshop on Teaching of Foreign Language in Large Classes | Language Games and Activities

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FORTELL, September 2011 Issue

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Readers' Response

- At the moment, the journal reads more like an erudite document on the theory rather than the practices in ELT. We all know that there is a lot of difference between what is given in an ELT book and what happens in the actual class. I guess there should be a balance between both where the Journal will be the bridge between these two. While school teachers need to be kept updated with what is happening in the ELT world, they should be able to have access to more than just theory. I hope you can get more such writers. “

Miti Dhingra, is a PGT in English and teaches at Bal Bharati School, Rohini, New Delhi.

From the Editorial Desk

As we roll out yet another issue of *Fortell*, the din around examinations and its aftermath, the results, as also admissions has finally settled down. Moreover, over the last six months, considerable discussions have taken place on the National Eligibility Test (NET) for Lecturers and JRF aspirants on various fora, specially due to the very poor performance, particularly of English students. (Of course that has changed with the recent declaration of results that shows some improvement). To add to this, is the countrywide current debate about the feasibility and desirability of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) introduced by the CBSE at class 9-10 level gradually percolating down to the lower classes too. For many teachers and Principals it has become a nightmare. Many stakeholders in education at the school level, including the British Council in India, and SCERTs are busy organizing workshops directed towards training teachers to handle the new tools of evaluation more reliably so that teaching-learning is viewed as one whole and not as discrete categories. Under the scanner are: Class 12 marks/grades, their criteria, yet the difficulty of access to higher education, the viability and feasibility of the NET exam and the gap between expectations and achievements. Thus, we thought it fit to present before you this September 2011 issue predominantly on 'Evaluation, Assessment and Testing'. The feature article by Professor Jacob Tharu, a renowned scholar on evaluation and testing makes a very crucial, critical analysis of the new venture of the CBSE followed by some thought provoking ones on NET, making evaluation authentic by weaving it in everyday classroom activities and the like. The other articles in this issue highlight significant areas of language and literature teaching such as discussing learning styles and learner autonomy, strategies to motivate students develop their reading, writing and communication skills. Most of the articles in the present issue are based on the practicing teachers' observations and classroom research. The present issue also carries an interview of the well-known British scholar Rod Bolitho, Academic Director, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), U.K. on 'Classroom Observation and Supervision'.

We are also happy to announce that our erstwhile regular feature on Language Games and Activities is back! It has been a favourite

column enjoyed by school and college teachers alike and we hope that our readers will not only contribute more innovative ideas in future issues but also send us their feedback on the ones we have included in this issue.

Towards the end, we would like to draw your attention to a couple of initiatives taken by FORTELL in the recent months: Firstly, a new dynamic and interactive FORTELL website is knocking at your door, you simply need to open your computers and laptops to log on to it! FORTELL is also in the process of creating a Resource Persons Pool who can facilitate and initiate workshops and seminars in schools, colleges etc. *Fortell*, as announced earlier too, is a refereed journal and therefore all articles that are submitted to *Fortell* for publication are reviewed anonymously by a team of eminent scholars from language and literature. This issue also announces new subscription rates.

One of the major concerns of our readers and those at the helm of affairs is to increase the volume and frequency of the Journal. You may have noticed that *Fortell*, now attracts contributors from across the country and outside, and many have been suggesting that instead of three issues a year we should make it quarterly. We would love to do it but for the fact that there is an urgent need to nurture the full-grown plant that *Fortell* is, by getting advertisements, donations and sponsorships! As always, we urge members to pool in their efforts towards this.

Awaiting your comments, suggestions, feedback and more...

Prem and Ruchi

(Guest Editors)



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Making Evaluation Authentic

Mukti Sanyal

Background

Thirty-two years of teaching English tells me that one of the only ways of making testing interesting and relevant is by making it **an authentic activity and an integral part of the students' learning programme**. This is especially important for teaching and testing at the under-graduate level. Students at this stage have already had twelve years taking formal testing and most have mastered the art of cracking and passing exams without necessarily learning anything valuable or significant. They are oriented to the system well enough to know that memorizing from guidebooks or *kunjis* is a sure route to success while for the reckless or the adventurous, cheating from slips of papers tucked away into shoes or blouses or attempting to send in proxy candidates are attemptable options. It is against this mindless taking of tests and examinations that I see value in what I wish to share.

The University of Delhi has thankfully made space for Internal Assessment from 2007 with 15 marks being allotted for Project/Seminar, etc. and 5 marks for Assignment (besides 10 marks for Home Exams and 5 marks for Attendance). It is in the space available for Projects and Assignments that I experiment with interactive, learning-oriented evaluation procedures.

Introduction

My motivation to explore alternative and authentic assessment procedures arose from a need to make assessment a part of instruction; to integrate the language testing with the teaching and learning process. Assessment activities often stand out as different, formal, threatening or interruptive but they need not be so. If the assessment activity can be an authentic task (and not created exclusively for the purposes of scoring students' performance) that requires time and effort for completion in a non-threatening atmosphere, then the students can continue to learn while demonstrating the entire scope of what they have learnt. In fact, authentic procedures have been found to be 'highly cost-effective' because they save time and maximize 'the impact of education'. Furthermore, they provide guidance to both teachers and students about effective directions for continued learning.

Setting the stage

Since my attempts at using portfolios, journals and logs met with limited success, I applied some

of those principles, when occasions arose, that I could bind the needs of assessment with those of teaching and learning.

Experiment 1

The first experiment that I wish to share arose by chance. I was asked to set up meetings between a researcher in a UK business school and my college students; the researcher was interested in collecting data for her M Phil dissertation. I decided to use this opportunity to serve my purposes as well.

There were two dissimilar groups of students (approximately 12 each) representing widely divergent sub-sections of the student population in my college (and most colleges in Delhi) for her study. One set constituted B.Com Honours and B.A. English Honours students, all had email ids, spoke fluent English, came from upper-middle class urban homes and wished to study abroad or get high-flying corporate jobs. This group was easy to come by and was more than eager to meet a foreign researcher.

The second group, however, would **not** have met or interacted with the researcher if I had not made it part of their Project work which would translate into marks for the annual examinations. This was my class of English B students in Year 1, who came from conventional homes, had studied in government-run Hindi-medium schools, and spoke and read little or no English (not having studied it beyond Class X). I explained in class that it was very important for them to listen to a language in order to be able to speak it; however, none of these students had seen a Hollywood film, Hindi was the preferred language for home television and they found it difficult to listen to the English news. Not only did I facilitate the meetings by receiving and passing messages, but I also spent several hours explaining the value they would get in being able to listen and speak to a 'native speaker'.

The students had to submit a written account of their meetings with the researcher, giving their comments on the entire experience. What was especially heartening is that every student submitted her work readily and each of them wrote it without feeling the need to copy from one another (which is invariably the recourse when faced with written assignments). Figure 1 shows a sample report.

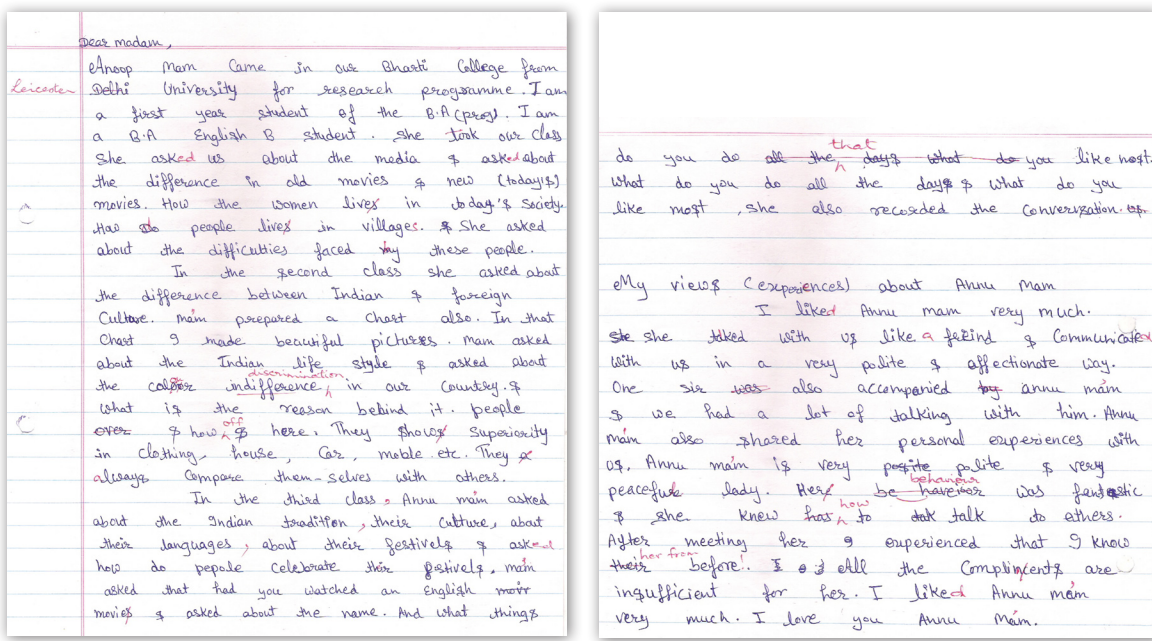


Figure.1 Report by Baby Yadav

Experiment 2

The second opportunity arose when I was asked to co-ordinate a Refresher Course in the Teaching of English for college teachers. For the practice teaching sessions, the student group consisted of thirty student volunteers from my class. The intention was to place them in real-life situations where they interact in English over a sustained period and the written assignment was a report of what they had done. Figure 2 is a sample report from three student volunteers.

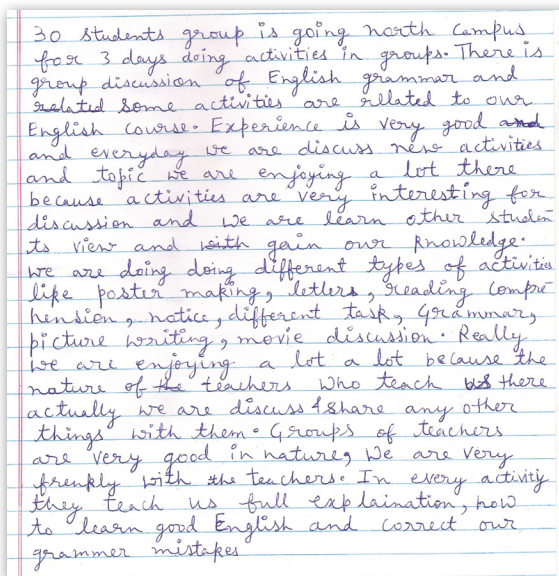


Figure. 2. Report submitted by a group about their experiences of 'being taught' at the University campus

There are several advantages in such a multi-tasking approach in teaching young adults in colleges. Today, students want tangible value in all their activities. Even if you invite them to a talk, they want to know if they will be given a "certificate" for attending the talk. My strategy makes me kill several birds with one stone: teaching; testing and contributing to 'corporate life on campus'.

Conclusion

Experimenting with authentic assessment practices allows teachers to combine the requirements of evaluation with teaching and communicating. It makes the enterprise of testing meaningful, flexible and one of discovery. All that is required of the teacher is that he/she be resourceful and flexible. Any teaching situation, whether it is school, college or the university, allows space for the teacher to negotiate the teaching-testing process creatively, if both the teacher and the students want. It is up to the teacher to use this opportunity for the benefit of the learners and the teaching-testing process. The complaint that the system does not allow such innovations is neither valid nor tenable.

Notes

For the purposes of this article the terms 'evaluation', 'assessment' and 'testing' are used synonymously without making the distinctions that are made in the literature dealing with evaluation theory. The article is aimed at practicing teachers and at making testing learner-friendly. Therefore, theoretical discussions have been kept to the bare minimum.

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Learner Autonomy through ICT in an English Language Curriculum

T. Jayasudha

Learner Autonomy is basically independence in language learning, which includes willingness for (language) learning on one's own. Autonomy is defined as:

...the freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well. Responsibility may also be understood as being in charge of something, but with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one's own actions. Autonomy and responsibility both require active involvement, and they are apparently very much interrelated. (Scharle & Szabo, 4)

The underlying assumption is that autonomous learners are more likely to succeed than are learners who are passively reliant on their teachers or textbooks to set the destinations and routes in language learning. Hence it is important for language teachers to 'know' the learner before attempting to teach them. Learners like to get information in different ways and these different ways are called perceptual styles. A person who receives new information in his/her favorite style will learn better, understand better and remember better. Knowing about perceptual styles will help us understand when we study/teach and when we organize meetings or give presentations. There are four perceptual styles:

1. visual (seeing)
2. auditory (hearing)
3. kinesthetic (moving, doing)
4. tactile (touching or holding)

Visual learners like to learn new information by seeing it. A visual learner prefers to see information in the form of language – words, sentences or text of any kind or in the form of pictures, charts, graphic organizers like mind maps or clusters and diagrams. **Auditory** learners like to learn new information by hearing it. Short lectures, discussions and asking learners to repeat information aloud will help auditory learners remember new things. **Kinesthetic** learners prefer to learn new things by moving or doing. They will like to present role-plays, move or walk while reading. They will also like to write things on a blackboard or other large surfaces like a poster. **Tactile** learners like to learn new information by touching or holding things. We can teach learners who are tactile by giving them objects: instructions written on cards, pieces of text or steps in a process on pieces of paper that must be put in order.

Teachers should investigate students' learning needs and experiences with some input about their background and plan instruction that will be appropriate and should create a classroom context that is comfortable and less stressful. They should also provide learners with opportunities to integrate new information with their experiences and practical needs. Problem-solving, decision-making, case studies and other higher level thinking tasks are appropriate for this purpose. Use of the computers, language labs, audio-visual equipment and the internet can make learning more fun and purposeful. There are a variety of language software programs and web resources for second language learning. Learners can have hands-on experience in an ICT-enabled classroom as there is scope for self-learning which is absent in a traditional set up. The World Wide Web is a vast database of current authentic materials that present information in multimedia form and react instantly to a user's input. It is also a major drawback of the Web as it is easy to plagiarize online content. The teacher's role as facilitator can help the learner locate the right resources and provide guidance to learners to use them.

Web resources can be used for a variety of activities to foster language learning.

- Reading and literacy development: creating own newspaper, stories with audio component
- Writing and Grammar: Grammar, punctuation, interactive grammar exercises, quiz, games, vocabulary worksheets
- Listening and Speaking: American rhetoric, BBC world English, Voice of America English, Cyber listening lab, repetition lab
- Online interactive Games: dictionary games, Hangman.

The Encyclopedia Britannica Reference Library is available in an online format and in CDs. It has an audio and video component with tasks to check comprehension. The Oxford Talking Dictionary, Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Power Vocabulary and a host of other interactive modules are available on the internet.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences has paved the way for a learning-centered curriculum as opposed to a learner-centered curriculum propagated by the Communicative Language Teaching paradigm. Designing modules that enables learners learn in their perceptual styles

with the optimum use of their intelligences would make learning more purposeful and meaningful. This would not be possible without the use of technology and the Internet. The primary problem of doing research on the Web is not merely identifying the myriad sites available, but being able to evaluate them and discover what each does and how well it does it. New information technologies will transform notions of literacy, making online navigation and online research two critical skills for learners of English. The new reading skills required of the students include:

- Efficiently locating information
- Rapidly evaluating the source, its credibility, and timeliness of the information located.
- Rapidly making navigational decisions about whether to read the current page of information, pursue links internal to the page, or revert to further searching.

Indian educational system has been producing man power with sound subject knowledge devoid of soft skills or communication skills including computer literacy. Introduction of computers and technology in language learning will empower learners to hone their soft skills and render themselves employable. It has to be remembered that language learning 'does not happen only in classrooms'. Hence learners need to be taught effective language learning strategies and also to experiment with strategies on their own. This not only helps learners build their ability to engage in autonomous learning successfully but helps build comfort with the idea of learning on one's own. The class can be used as a launching pad for autonomy by giving learners assignments which require students to make a significant number of choices for themselves about methods, materials, and even goals. Having learners report their autonomous learning experiences will reinforce its importance.

There is another set of learning styles which has to do with the personality types of learners, and in this area some learning style contrasts that have been suggested include distinctions between:

- Extroverted versus introverted learners
- Thinking versus feeling learners
- Closure-oriented and judging learners versus open and perceiving learners.

These contrasting style distinctions can be bridged if there is a technology-interface which creates a less stressful learning environment for the learners. Teachers can use a reasonably broad and rich variety of teaching techniques using a language lab so that a learner is more likely to experience a method that is relatively good match for his or her style. Learning through computers can be less intimidating as it is not strict like a

human teacher in marking answers in 'red' or correcting errors 'on the spot'. On the other hand it encourages learners to attempt again and this serves as an intrinsic motivation for the learners. Finally, there are three aspects involved in leaning through technology for learners:

- A feeling of power (I am capable of doing things)
- A feeling of being someone special (I am special)
- A feeling of connectedness (I belong o a group).

Teachers need to focus on a number of measures that are necessary to ensure that the equipment is used properly. They need to make sure that the students realize that this is a facility which needs to be used, appreciated and not to be abused. Teachers need to also monitor that students are accessing only the relevant sites and are not logging into unwanted sites that may detract their attention and hamper their learning.

Schools and colleges having a language lab facility can try installing i-LOTUS: Linguaphone software (Foundation and Advanced levels) along with SRS (Speech Recognition Software. These softwares enable learners monitor their own progress and work at their own pace. They also give them a lot of self-confidence to become a part of the 'can-do' crowd with regard to their communication skills. Schools and colleges without a language lab but having internet facility can use the following sites.

Examples:

1. (<http://www.pathfinder.com/time/time100/index.html>) The Time site divides the people of the 20th century into five categories: leaders and revolutionaries (politics), artists and entertainers (the Arts), builders and Titans (business), scientists and thinkers (science) and heroes and icons (society). Students may be asked to access the site and look at the names of people in the five categories. They can choose people who they are interested in and speak on them. This kind of an activity is called Opinion Gap activity. One can see that there is an integration of skills in this task as learners use more than one skill at a time. The focus of the activity can also be past tenses, used to, descriptions when used with advanced learners at the college level. (Adapted from Dudeney, 50)
2. (<http://uk.tickle.com/test/traveller/start.html>) (<http://www.responsibletravel.com/TripSearch/Ecotourism/ActivityCategory100020.htm>) There is a quiz on 'What Kind of a Traveler Are You?' Students can do this and choose a destination from Responsible Travel. The

site has photos (visuals), activities, itineraries and a section on how the holiday makes a difference. Students can make a presentation on their favorite spot with visuals and other details. Language skills involved can include reading, writing, speaking, past and future tenses, vocabulary. (Adapted from Dudeney , 61)

3. (http://www.aafra.org/6oic/primer_frmst.htm) Students interested in sports can be involved in the task and asked to research about events like Olympic Games and talk about the improvements they would like to make to develop any particular game from the knowledge gained from the site. They can also research on historical details about the Olympics and then present it to the class. (Adapted from Dudeney, 78 - 79)
Teachers can design their own tasks based on the various sites given below and can also use readily available in some of the sites. Some guidelines on what to look for in each site is given. But it would be better for teachers to access the sites themselves and get to know the range of possibilities the sites offer for a resourceful teacher.

Websites that Support English Language Learning and Teacher Development

Below is a selection of the many websites available for English language learners and English language teachers.

Reading and Literacy

- <http://www.bartleby.com>
Offers thousands of free online texts (poetry, fiction, etc.). For similar kinds of resources, also see The Online Books Page: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/> and Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page
- CNN Student News
<http://edition.cnn.com/studentnews/>
Multimedia news resources
- Create Your Own Newspaper (CRAYON)
<http://www.crayon.net/>
A toll for managing news sources on the internet and making a newspaper. No fee.
- Moonlit Road
<http://www.themoonlitroad.com/>
Spooky stories with an audio component so students can listen while they read.

Writing and Grammar

- Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling from Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL)
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/>

Reference materials and practice activities. This OWL also contains many helpful writing guides and exercises, including business-related writing (CVs, memos, etc)

- <http://www.marks-english-school.com/games.html>
Interactive grammar exercises.
- Grammar Bytes, Interactive Grammar Review
<http://www.chompchomp.com/menu.htm>
Index of grammar terms, interactive exercises, handouts, and a section on grammar rules.
- ESL Galaxy
<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/>
Contains handouts, lesson plans, links to other ESL sites.
- ESL Tower
<http://www.esltower.com/guide.html>
Online grammar quizzes, grammar and vocabulary worksheets, pronunciation guides

Listening and Speaking

- American Rhetoric
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/>
offers speeches and voice recordings from authors, leaders, comedians and hundreds of notable figures (MP3 format). Some material has an accompanying video.
- Voice of America Special English
<http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/>
News reports in language adapted for English Language Learners. Includes a glossary and podcasts for English Learners. Broadcasts can be downloaded and played while offline, and transcripts of broadcasts are also available.
- BBC World English, Learning English
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>
Music, audio and interactivity to help students learn English. Language study modules are based on news events from the radio.
- Listening Skill Practice
http://esl.about.com/od/englishlistening/English_Listening_Skills_and_ActivitiesEffective_Listening_Practice.htm
This resource provides listening quizzes, interviews, specific English learning listening resources as well as where to go to listen, listen, listen!
- Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab
<http://www.esl-lab.com/>
A good selection of listening exercises for easy to advanced levels.
- Repeat After Us
<http://repeatafterus.com/>
Copyright-free classics with audio clips, including poems, fables, essays, soliloquies,

historical speeches, memorable audio quotes, nursery rhymes, and children's stories from around the world.

- **Shaggy Dog Stories**
<http://www.antimoon.com/other/shaggydog.htm>
Humorous stories with actors who speak clearly and slowly. Recordings can be downloaded, saved and played while offline. The recordings are the property of the English Teaching Forum magazine, a publication of the United States Department of State.

Online Interactive Games

- **Your Dictionary Online Games**
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/esl/Free-Online-ESL-Games.html>
Links to online English games.
- **Online Hangman**
<http://www.manythings.org/hmf/>
Online, interactive hangman vocabulary game.

Teacher Development: Online ELT Journals

Some of these may require you to subscribe.

- <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/>
- <http://iteslj.org/>
- <http://www.languageinindia.com/>
- <http://eca.state.gov/forum/>

Teacher Development: Professional Organizations with a Large Web Presence (you will need to subscribe to access their archives)

- **TESOL:** <http://www.tesol.org>
- **IATEFL:** <http://www.iatefl.org/>
- **ELTAI:** <http://www.eltai.org/activities.htm>

Miscellaneous

- **Dave's ESL Café**
<http://www.eslcafe.com/>
Everything from lesson plans, teacher forums, job postings...if it has to do with ELT, it'll be here!

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Keeping 'Reading Habit Alive'

Zahra Ramish Rizvi

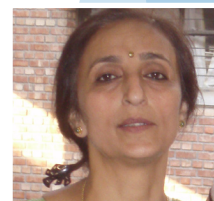
For those who are avid readers, reading perhaps is the most interesting and pleasurable activity but the present day youth would perhaps defer. They have a plethora of interesting things to keep them engaged, where do they have the time to waste on the printed word found on paper! For these young people there is the electronic media- the TV with such a wide variety of programmes being aired 24*7, the computer abounding with websites. And so we all agree, all but the community of teachers, specially the language teachers.

Everyone who is connected to the teaching fraternity would agree whole-heartedly that reading is an important aspect of the process of acquiring knowledge. And thus the job of language teacher gets even more challenging. It is not to make the learner comfortable in using the language; it is to give the learner the ability to read with interest, to read with speed, to read with comprehension. This, according to me, is because of two major issues: first, one needs to read to gain knowledge of any subject and second; leisure reading is the most beautiful way to relax.

The onus of developing the interest of students towards reading falls on the language teachers who are forever trying to devise new strategies to achieve this (almost unachievable) goal! One project which has proved to be very effective in this connection is the **class library project**. I take no credit of having designed it, but I have been in charge of it for several years and have the first hand knowledge of its implementation and results, and that I would like to share through this article.

The Project

The first step in this project is the selection of some titles which students would find interesting. The list should have books on general knowledge, current affairs, fiction- both short and long stories. Once the list of books is ready, multiple copies are procured and issued to the class teacher. The class teacher, with the help of a 'class library monitor', maintains a record of issuing the books. These books are available in the class to be read during substitution periods, zero periods and to be taken home. The students are encouraged to read all these books during the academic session.



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Several activities are designed to ensure that students have really read the books. The activities depend upon the level of class we are dealing with. Some activities are- short quizzes, book cover designing, drawing the favorite character, writing the book review, work sheets and calling students from senior classes to tell a story (during the zero period). None of these activities takes a lot of time or energy of the teacher as detailed correction is not required. In fact teachers teaching subjects other than language can use some of these activities to keep the students occupied during their substitution periods.

As we all know a word of appreciation goes a long way to encourage students, so a few certificates of appreciation are given to the students. Every quarter the class teacher or the language teacher can suggest the name of one student per class for this certificate.

With the introduction of the CCE, some of these activities can also be used by the language teacher or the librarian.

An example

The following books are a part of class 7 library and there are five copies of each title available with the teacher:

1. *Tagore ki Sampooran Kahanian-I*
Ravindra Nath Tagore
2. *Animal Fact File*
Tony Hare
3. *Eminent Indian Economists*
M.L. Ahuja
4. *Living Judaism*
Cavan Wood
5. *Our Mutual Friend*
Charles Dickens
6. *Tales & Legends from India*
Ruskin Bond
7. *Jurassic Park*
Michael Crichton
8. *Fifth Formers of St. Clare's*
Enid Blyton
9. *Marry Poppins in the Park*
P.L. Travers
10. *Long Walk for Bina*
Ruskin Bond
11. *Gavial Avial*
Kalpana Swaminathan
12. *Essential Science*
Dilip M Salwi
13. *Time Stops at Shamli*
Ruskin Bond

14. *Night Train at Deoli*
Ruskin Bond
15. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
16. *Summer Term at St. Clare's*
Enid Blyton
17. *Malgudi Days*
R.K. Narayan

Activities conducted

- 1- Story telling to junior classes- Books selected: *Tales & Legends from India, Malgudi Days*
- 2- Quiz: *Eminent Indian Economist, Essential Science, Living Judaism, Animal Fact File and The Hound of the Baskervilles*
- 3- Book Review: *Fifth Formers of St. Clare's, Summer Term at St. Clare's and Time Stops at Shamli*
- 4- Book jacket design: *Jurassic Park, Malgudi Days and Mary Poppins in the Park*
- 5- Character sketch: Your favourite character from the following books-
The Hound of the Baskervilles
Fifth Formers of St. Clare's
Our Mutual Friend
- 6- Work sheet (of MCQs): *The Hound of the Baskervilles, Mary Poppins in the Park*
I am elaborating a couple of activities to explain the concept in detail.

Activity-1

WRITING ACTIVITY

Focus Point: Reading and Expressing Opinion.

Time: 30 minutes.

Task: Pair work

Any two students who have read the book can work together to attempt the character sketch _____

WORKSHEET

Our Mutual Friend

Time: 30 mins.

Give the character sketch of any one of the following characters in 80-100 words.

1. Eugene Wrayburn
2. Bradley Headstone
3. Bella Wilfur

USP: Students enjoy writing the sketch when working in pairs. This gives them a chance to talk, not only about the character they select, but also about the book in question. This activity gives them a chance to discuss and thus is also helpful in developing oral skills. Moreover, it helps to develop the learners' analyzing skills and makes them confident about their understanding of the text in question.

Activity-2

A QUIZ

Focus Point: Reading and Comprehension.

Time: 15 minutes.

Task: Individual

Students shall be given the work sheet, and they are expected to tick the correct answers on the basis of their understanding of the book they have read. _____

WORKSHEET

Quiz

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Time: 15 mins.

Read the given questions carefully and tick the most appropriate answer.

- How was Stapleton related to Sir Henry Baskerville?
 - He was his neighbor and friend.
 - He was brother-in-law.
 - He was his long lost son.
 - He was his cousin.
- Why does Stapleton pretend his wife is his sister?
 - They are actually related.
 - He needs to pretend he is single in order to inherit the Baskerville fortune.
 - He needs to pretend he is single in order to convince Laura Lyons and Sir Henry that he and his wife are free agents.
 - He is no longer in love with his wife.
- Who established the Baskerville curse?
 - Sir Hugo Baskerville
 - Sir Charles Baskerville
 - Sir Henry Baskerville
 - Stapleton
- Who took advantage of the Baskerville curse?
 - Sir Hugo Baskerville
 - Sir Charles Baskerville
 - Sir Henry Baskerville
 - Stapleton

- What substance does Stapleton use to make his hound look scary?
 - Blood
 - Glow sticks
 - CO2 cartridges
 - Phosphorous
- How did Sir Charles die?
 - Eaten by the hound
 - Attacked by the hound
 - Scared by the hound
 - Shot by the hound
- Who let dog out?
 - Stapleton
 - Sherlock Holmes
 - Miss Stapleton
 - Dr. Mortimer
- With whom does Stapleton share an evil resemblance?
 - Sir Henry Baskerville
 - The woman who is supposed to be his wife
 - Sir Hugo Baskerville
 - Sir Charles Baskerville
- Where does Holmes send Cartwright in search of cut-up copies of The Times?
 - A newspaper stand
 - The garbage
 - The printers
 - Devonshire
- Who is Frankland?
 - The hound of Baskerville
 - Laura's father
 - The true heir to the Baskerville fortune
 - Stapleton's accomplice

USP: This is a very simple activity which students enjoy. They don't find it stressful as they feel that they are just to mark the correct answer, but as teachers we know that this is a simple yet a very comprehensive way of testing the comprehension of students.

Developing resource material

A question bank is prepared for all the books that have been included in various activities like quizzes and MCQ work sheets. This is done with the help of the entire teaching faculty of the institution. During the summer break each member is issued one book to read and prepare a question bank along with answers. This is of great importance as any teacher who wants to conduct a work sheet during the academic session simply needs to select a few questions and take a print out.

Result

Anything that deals with language development does not show short term results. There is a need to work diligently and patiently over long periods of time to reap the fruits of hard work put in. So, as project managers, we try not to look for short term results. We just keep on working persistently, ensuring that students are actively involved in the project.

It is after two to three years, from class sixth onwards that we can see the results. In class sixth, language teachers and the librarian notice that students are interested in leisure reading. They develop interest in some of the authors we had introduced them to. For example, in the list of books of class five, there are a couple of titles by Enid Blyton such as *The Mystery of the Burnt Cottage*, *The Mystery of the Missing Man* etc and students start getting other titles issued by

the same author and even try to complete reading the entire series. Similarly, some students show interest in the authors whose texts are a part of their formal syllabus and do extended reading.

This trend of interest in reading continues to grow in the middle school. However, once the students reach the secondary section, the percentage of students doing leisure reading shows a sharp decline. This can be attributed to the fact the students are under pressure to procure high percentage of marks during their boards. Moreover, they need to prepare for various competitive entrance exams too. This need not worry us as the habit of reading is strong enough to help students achieve their targets. And old habits die hard—once they have some free time they are sure to get attracted to some interesting book!

Assessment: An Opportunity to Learn

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Purpose and relevance of assessment

As we all know, tests have become an accepted component of formal instructional programmes throughout the world. They are considered valid, reliable indicators of students' performance and potential and are being used increasingly to make decisions about the quality of a particular programme/course, admission to various courses and selection for jobs. Sometimes tests are justified on the basis of accountability: are students learning what they are supposed to be learning? This kind of evidence is required to make judgments about how to spend resources, whether to continue with a particular course/textbook etc. Tests also provide an opportunity to give feedback to language students for future improvement.

Hence it is important to deliberate upon whether our language tests help us to draw inferences about the language abilities of our students that are reliable and a true indicator of their proficiency and consequently help us to make correct decisions based on those inferences? What does a particular score tell us about that student's language ability or about classroom teaching? Do scores and grades shed light on the kind of errors our students make, provide reasons for those errors along with solutions? Do they help curriculum developers to revise textbooks or help teachers to modify their teaching practices?

It is important to define the purpose of a test

even before we design it because it is the goal which will guide us throughout the process of test design, its administration, scoring of test scripts and finally drawing inferences based on those results. When great emphasis is being laid on the processes of learning and gathering information and celebrating the individuality of the child, it becomes imperative to put in place assessment procedures that take processes, and not the product into cognizance while assessing the learner. This lack of congruence between the assumptions behind language teaching and actual testing methods means that we are unable to use assessment opportunities to either get a realistic picture of what students are capable of doing or help improve their future performance.

Testing as an opportunity

Testing should also be seen as an opportunity, an opportunity to help students reach their potential. Researchers call it a sharing of power when students and the teacher/tester collaborate through dialogic interaction because it allows for greater equity and fairness in testing (Fox, 2008). When students actively participate in the process of evaluation, when they are aware of and help select the criteria of evaluation, they not only internalize it but also use it during the process of attempting the task, to produce better results. Therefore, assessment should be seen as a dynamic process which is not carried by predetermined or unknown criteria, but is a result of consultation

and collaboration, where learners interact in an open dialogue with others to decide what is to be evaluated and how.

On the one hand, it demystifies the whole process of assigning scores which usually does not lead to any real learning, except to teach students to produce “expected” answers; on the other, the teacher is no longer mystified why her students repeat errors despite corrective feedback because interaction, collaboration and dialogue, between students and teachers and among students provide insights into the reasons for error.

Collaborative learning and assessment

When a teacher values her learners, inviting them to discuss and decide upon the criteria for

assessment, she is empowering them by helping them to self-assess, which is one of the most important characteristics of a successful learner. For instance, the teacher can generate a discussion on what are the features of a good piece of writing; students can be asked to enumerate the features and develop a grading/ scoring key which will act as a benchmark for them while they attempt writing tasks. This ability to assess oneself is acquired over time by interacting with more able peers and/or elders and is internalized with repeated practice, helping students to do a self check on the quality of work they are producing.

The following rubric was modified for use after discussions with 8th grade students of Berlin Middle School, Worcester County, US.

Writing to Persuade Rubric

Score Point 4

- I have taken a clear stand on an issue and I fully support it with appropriate personal or factual information.
- I have chosen numerous specific details that more than adequately support my stand.
- I have an organization that is logical and does not jump around.
- I understand the type of audience I am writing for and I use language and arguments that they will understand.
- I make good language choices to help influence the reader to agree with me.

Score Point 3

- I have taken a clear stand and I give it some support. The information is presented clearly.
- I have chosen enough specific details to support my stand.
- I have an organization that is logical but it strays a little.
- I understand the type of audience I am writing for.
- I make some good language choices to help influence the reader to agree with me.

Score Point 2

- I have taken a stand but I may not have made my position very clear. I tried to support it with some details but I may not have done a very good job. The details may not be the best ones I could have chosen or they might not even support my stand.
- There are some details but they are too general or may not really help to explain my position.
- I tried to have an organization but I did not do a good job with it and it tends to jump around.
- I tried to understand the audience I was writing for.
- I did not use good language choices to help influence the reader to agree with me.

Score Point 1

- I saw the prompt and I tried to respond to it. I did not take a stand on the issue. I presented some information but it still is not clear how I stand on the issue.
- I have little or no details.
- I have no real organization.
- I did not try to write for the audience.
- I did not use any language choices to help influence the reader to agree with me.

Since, we seldom work in isolation, without recourse to a friend/peer, a dictionary or in today's e-age, google, we must provide similar opportunities for students so that they can work in collaboration, visit and revisit the task at hand and focus on the process rather than simply getting the end product right. Observing students as they are actively engaged in meaningful learning activities and with their peers over a period of time examining the work that they produce not only presents the most authentic and complete view of what students know and can do, but the most informative.

Multiple methods of assessment

Traditional tests only measure students' current performance level, that too, at a particular point in time which may not provide an adequate and fair measure of the students' language proficiency. If we want test results to be fair and valid indicators of student performance, we must provide our students more than one opportunity to attempt tasks, just as in the real world we get more than one opportunity to demonstrate that we can complete tasks successfully. Assessment over time is important also because learning is a continuous, dynamic process and ongoing assessment provides teachers with regular feed-back on students' performance and enables them to adjust their actions accordingly.

Multiple methods of assessment such as interviews with students, group and pair work, and pencil-and-paper tests offer a more holistic picture of student learning than time bound tasks. For instance, a student's writing ability and progress is better reflected through a writing piece that has been through several drafts than a task that has been completed in the first attempt. Also, some features of students' performances are not apparent unless they are viewed on multiple occasions as their performance may vary across texts, tasks, and settings and be influenced by affective and cognitive factors.



Fig.1

Just as grades, scores and teacher comments such as "excellent", "good", "needs to work hard" and "rewrite" are incomprehensible to both parents and students, the teacher or assessor has no way of knowing whether the students faced any difficulty in attempting the tasks or the reason(s) behind their performance. For instance, students enrolled in an English language proficiency course performed poorly in a task that asked them to write a note with the following instructions:

You have some new neighbours. They want to know about the shops near you. Write a message for your neighbours telling them

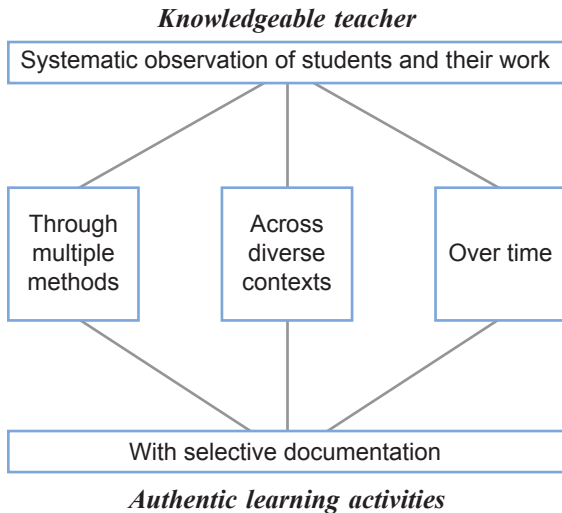
- *who you are*
- *where the shops are*
- *what they can buy there*

Traditional method of assessment would have only assigned a poor grade but interaction with students revealed that they found the task unrealistic as they would not write a note to their neighbours but simply share information through verbal communication. When the task was changed to one on writing an email to a friend about their favourite festival, it produced better writing and consequently better grades, and proved to be a better reflection of students' ability. It is obvious that the students had not suddenly 'become' better language users but the task had provided them a better opportunity to showcase their proficiency.

Hence, students' inability to perform a task could be due to a poorly constructed task or students' misunderstanding of test instructions. Also, students often do not understand what is expected of them: Dave Garrison, a college junior, who when asked to give advice to his juniors about writing for their college courses, replied, "'I'd tell them,' he said, 'first you've got to figure out what your teachers want. And then you've got to give it to them if you're gonna' get the grade.'" He paused a moment and added, "'And that's not always so easy.'" (McCarthy, 1987)

This helplessness or uneasiness with teacher feedback, of what is expected of students, of what constitutes correct usage/ writing and how to produce expected answers is not usually addressed by the traditional system of assessment. Moreover, since the context, the activity and the learners are inseparable and learning is a dynamic, ongoing process, we need assessment practices that compliment the process of teaching- learning, presenting a picture that is emerging and evolving rather than an inaccurate static result. Wolf's model of informed assessment (1993, p.520) puts it together in the following manner:

A model of informed assessment



Conclusion

To conclude, we can only exploit tests as opportunities for teaching and continued development of our learners' skills and language proficiency when assessment is carried out by knowledgeable teachers and assessors who involve students in meaningful dialogues and create an

atmosphere of mutual trust. They draw on a variety of strategies to observe and document their students' performances over a period of time as students are engaged in authentic learning tasks and help students to become lifelong learners by enabling them to be critical assessors of their own work.

Acknowledgements Fig 1: <http://www.ioxassessment.com/index.php?cPath=24> accessed on 5 July 2011

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The Classroom Reception of Spenser's *Epithalamion*

Teaching texts as remote in time and place as Spenser's *Epithalamion* is a challenge indeed. The ears of city-bred adolescents, so accustomed to the unabashed big bang of our pronouncements in *Backstreet Boys*, *Venga Boys* and *Savage Garden* etc. just do not respond to the snow-soft mercy-petitions in Platonic love poems addressed to "impossible she's". And the small towners: the rural and the semi-urban first generation migrants, sitting quietly as "backbenchers" in the class, find it funnier still because fresh in their mind are the reverberations of a more vibrant, terse and dialogic Desi or Margi (popular and classical) tradition of native love poetry embedded in Mangalacharsⁱ, Barahamasasⁱⁱ, Bhramar Geethasⁱⁱⁱ and other Radha-Krishna duos like these.

Any Indian child who has had the chance to spend even a few hours with grandparents, distant aunts and other folk-narrators readily available at community meets is at least vaguely exposed to Parkeeya Nayika^{iv} or Nakh-Shikh Varnan Parampara^v of Indian classics. And my humble submission is that one of the ways of arousing interest in Spenser and his kind of apparently artificial and urbane utterances of love is to place

them against the more sophisticated and vibrantly passionate utterances of love in the popular songs or couplets of Jaidev, Vidyapati, Soordas^{vi}, and the Reetikal poets^{vii}. Thus, studying *Epithalamion*, as the mangalachar of a typical marriage song of the Nachari^{viii} tradition could be both interesting and rewarding from the post-colonial perspective of highlighting the subtext of differences.

Even in the lesser poetry of Reetikal, women do radiate an individual stamp. Not only the physical features in Nakh-Shikh Varnanan (tip to toe depiction) but also the quality of wit has individual variations. Seldom in Reetikal poetry are women depicted as tongue-tied Barbie-dolls as in pre-modern English texts where beaming eyes, golden tresses, snowy bosom and blushing cheeks of the lady seem interchangeable from a Beatrice to a Laura, from a Stella to an Elizabeth Boyle. To begin with, one introductory example from oral tradition would suffice. Shekh was the professional dyer whom Alam sent his turban to dye. In the corner of the turban was a knot in which lay an incomplete couplet of his that read "Kanak Chari Si Kamini / Kahe Ko Kati o Cheen" (The woman is like a stick of gold/ why



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is her waist so slender, we wonder). Shekh read the line and completed the couplet thus: “Kati Ko Kanchan Kati Vidhi Kuchan Madhya Dhar Deeni” (God chipped off gold from the waist to put the extra ounce on the breast). Alam read the couplet, paid Shekh one buck for dying the turban and a thousand bucks for completing the couplet. With its force of libidinal banter this discourse on a woman’s body in the Reetikal automatically fits in the tradition of folk poetry thus offering a pleasant contrast to its frigid treatment in Spenser where the sense of awe towards the lady placed up “above the world so high / like a diamond in the sky” ruins the spontaneity and naturalness of treatment. The class consciousness and the element of guilt associated with transgression punctuate the passion.

Epithalamion: Classroom Interactions

For the paucity of space let us concentrate on the technique of raising cultural parallels that I have tried out in my deconstruction of *Epithalamion* for a class of first generation migrants from small towns of the Hindi belt. I begin by talking about the fact that, since the *Epithalamion* was a public form concerned with the religious bonding of pairs in society, and a celebratory one, we can hardly expect much individuality of treatment. As role-playing bride and groom, the protagonists hop and dance around like little puppets. Marriage is the creator of hermaphrodite, some kind of an Ardhanareeshwar^{ix}, but here the idea of sex as ‘debt and payment’ has a fuller play. This idea has a long history ranging from Chaucer’s Wife of Bath to Victorian pornography, but here it works to anchor marriage in a sexual transaction figured as fundamentally economic, social and political wall – climbing. It is significant that while most Elizabethans turned chiefly to Ovid, Spenser was more vitally affected by the finer act of Virgil! In him one could easily read the happy blend even of Irish Folk and the Roman Classical. His *Shepherd’s Calendar* reminds us of Indian Barahmasas and the fondness with which he refers to the poor maids of the Irish Jungles, even in the shorter pieces like *Epithalamion*, reminds us of Indian folksongs which fondly refer to heroines like Seeta and Draupadi interacting with the ordinary little woman on equal intimate terms.

As I suggested this to one batch of Honours students and explained the lines where Spenser is asking little girls from the Irish woods to join his marriage procession, one of my quieter student was reminded of the Doli scene in Phaneeswaranath Renu’s “Mare Gaye Gulfam Urph Teesri Kasam^x” where little girls on the way run after the carriage of the unknown bride

singing all kinds of little advises and warnings both to the bride and the groom. In fact, this good-natured banter is basic to all marriage songs.

During the practical criticism of the poem it was useful to tell students that from poets like Spenser they could at best expect a simple fairy tale pleasure sophisticated by polyphonic technique, a simple moral sophisticated by a learned iconography. By way of explaining iconography, the cultural parallel of Jatra comes in very handy; one could tell them that the pageant was one member of a wider class of contemporary forms in which meaning was conveyed iconographically. And this pageant was somewhat like a Jatra, procession or group of symbolic figures in symbolic costume often in symbolic surroundings. Ramnawami or Shivratri Jatra or symbolic processions at Ganapati / Devi / Vishwakarma Visarjan prove excellent illustrations.

Regarding the beloved and the lover in *Epithalamion*, any reader of this poem is familiar with the sense of vertigo inducted by the endless shifts in scene, time sequence, tone, mood and stance. The lady, of course, does not change at all, at least in the sense that she never gives in, but her inflexibility reinforces the protean and unstable character of the Petrarchan lover. Ultimately what the lover writes about, in the absence of change in the lady, is the change in his attitude towards her. Indian love poems allow a wider variety of roles to women. Women there are depicted as intelligent, talking partners who can counsel, amuse, guide, question, rebel and take some time off for personal fulfillment and gratification too. All the Gopies are liberated in the sense that they treat Krishna as their pal who does not mind “Preeti Kalah”(friendly fight) and allows them proper space for independent growth. Ramakant Rath’s “Sri Radha” and Janakivallabh Shastri’s “Radha” are individuals in their own right. Marvelous is the treatment of Padmawati’s love-hate conflict in Prasad’s “Pralay ki Chhaya”. And so is the pre-modern treatment of love-hate / marriage motifs in Indian tradition of Vipralambh Shringar and Nayikaas of all models and manners, all categories (Mugdha to Praudha, Swakeeya to Parkeeya, Padmini to Hastini) are chirpy, witty, domineering and vibrant. The way Gopies hoot out the “knowledgeable” and the “serene” in Udhava is a case in point.

Another cultural parallel that can be referred to is the perception of time. The theory of Relativity proposes time as the fourth dimension of things. If we analyze the zodiacal motion depicted in the *Epithalamion*, we would realize that it is in tune with Indian Barahmasa writers who underlined the mystical bonding between man-woman and the wider cosmos.

To conclude, without employing the riff-raff that a mother employs in making her children sit through an art movie, without raising these cultural parallels – it would be practically impossible to make the students sit through the texts of poets like Spenser and Sidney. Only as Barthe's playful text *Epithalamion* could invite their participation and reproduce the processes (intellectual and emotional) by which the poems' struggles come to be verbalized. This we all understand that even reading, the most privatized of all cultural experience, emerges as a patent tool of international cultural politics today, but it is not as a part of a political agenda – that I suggest the validity of raising cultural parallels. It is basically a strategy of coping up with the bored expressions one encounters in classrooms: "Why should we read texts that do not cater to the basic psychic urge of identification"? If at all it is a part of a political agenda, it is a part of the agenda of survival politics. If at all we have to survive as teachers of half-dead gasping English texts as these, learn we must the tricks of the trade of revitalizing, vitamin- raising, doctoring, adapting and moulding them afresh to suit cultural contexts. How can they dare travel across the seven seas till they are issued a fitness certificate.

Notes

- i Invocation of gods in Indian Folksongs.
- ii Songs of separation marking the subtle change of seasons in all twelve months.
- iii Soordas's epic where Gopi's sarcastically refutes knowledgeable Udhav's suggestion

of leaving Krishna alone. In the later years, many other poems were modeled on this mode of sarcastic rebuttal.

- iv There are two broad divisions of heroines in *Sahitya Darpan* according to their marital status: 'Parkiya Nayika' has an intense affair beyond the confines of marriage. Radha, for instance is a Parkiya Nayika, Swakiya Nayika (married to the lover) is Rukmani.
- v Tip to toe depiction as of Padmavati in Jayasi's *Padmavati*.
- vi They have all written popular poems on the mystical boundary of the soul and the super soul reflected in the deep intimacies of Radha and Krishna.
- vii Reetikal refers to that school of poetry in the 17th and 18th Century which wrote sensual couplets and padas celebrating intense moments of carnal and divine passion to illustrate the rules of Prosody.
- viii Nachari songs celebrate the celestial marriage of Shiva and Parvati.
- ix In *Shiva Purana* there is a reference that Shiva held Parvati in such a tight embrace that half of their bodies merged into each other. In *Tantra* it hints at the right blend of the Male principle and Female principle for the equipoise of creation.
- x This story of Renu has been made into a famous Hindi film titled "Teesri Kasam" with Raj Kapoor and Waheeda Rehman as the protagonists.

Learning Styles and Classroom Activities

L.R.Vartak

What are learning styles?

Every individual is unique and hence the way she/he approaches learning is unique. Individuals have preferences regarding the way in which they would like to learn. These are determined by the learning style of the individual. Learning styles are the ways, tendencies, preferences and conditions under which the individual learns best.

This approach to learning emphasizes the fact that individuals perceive and process information in different ways. The learning styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are "smart." In fact, educators should not ask "Is this student smart?" but rather "How is this student smart?"

Some definitions of learning style

- Learning style is a student's consistent way of responding to and using stimuli in the context of learning.
- Learning style is the complex manner in which and conditions under which learners most efficiently process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn.
- Learning style is a student's own tendency to absorb a special learning strategy independent from the environment.

Various ways in which learning styles have been classified:-

We can say that learning style refers to the individual's characteristics and preferences. These determine how the individual will look at his



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environment, how she/he would interact with the environment and how her/his learning would take place. Researchers have studied individuals and classified them on the basis of their preferred learning style in different ways. Given below are a few classifications:-

David Kolb's Model

Type of learning style	Characteristics
Converger	Abstract conceptualization and active experimentation is dominant learning style. Good at making practical applications of ideas. Good at solving problems that require one solution. Not very emotional and tend to prefer things to people.
Diverger	Concrete experience and reflective observation is dominant learning style. Good at imagination and hence come up with innovative ideas. Emotional and get along well with people.
Assimilator	Abstract conceptualization and reflective observation is dominant learning style. Good in creating theoretical models and inductive reasoning. Interested in precise and logical development of ideas rather than its application.
Accommodator	Concrete experience and active experimentation is dominant learning style. Good in doing things than merely studying or reading about them. Ready to take risks.

Fleming's VAK/VARK model (based on the dominant sensory organ)

Type of learning style	Characteristics
Visual or Spatial	Learn through seeing, prefer to have their own notes, enjoy writing, drawing, like to use and learn through visual presentations like concept mapping, mind mapping, organized observers.
Auditory	Learn through listening, follow instructions easily, good at memorization, benefit from traditional style of teaching-lecture method, learn from discussions.
Kinesthetic or Tactile	Learn through touch, experience or by doing, like to explore, enjoy practical assignments, good at demonstration, active, like to have hands on experiences.

Types according to the theory of Multiple Intelligence:-

Type of learning style	Characteristics
Linguistic	Love to read write and tell stories, learn best by saying, hearing and seeing words, good at spellings.
Logical	Mathematically inclined and love to solve problems and puzzles, good at categorizing, classifying, working with abstract patterns, are logical and straightforward.
Spatial	Visualizers and love to work with colours and pictures, they are creative and artistic, day dreamers.
Musical	Love music, rhythm and melody, rap and narratives help them in memorizing.
Bodily (Kinesthetic)	Constantly on the move and use body language, need active participation, lot of energy, interdisciplinary lessons are very successful with these types.
Interpersonal	Patient, understanding, empathetic and social, excellent leaders love to be with people, learn through group activities.
Intrapersonal	Love to be alone and have good understanding of their own self, strong willed, independent and original, like to work alone.

Why think about the learning styles?

One has to bear in mind that no learning style is superior or inferior. Each one has its own advantages and disadvantages. Further we all have elements of each learning style in us. But only one or two types stand out in each of us. In our class we have children with all these learning styles. It is true that we won't be able to cater to each style every time. We need to teach our children partly in the way they prefer and partly in a less preferred manner. This is essential to balance their way of thinking and solve problems and function effectively. So we can at least try to incorporate different activities in our teaching so that we are catering to children with different learning styles. Also we can try to help each child realize what his/her learning style is and at the same time, help her/him learn along with children who have different learning styles which, in turn, will maximize their learning.

Given below is a lesson plan based on Jeremy Harmer's ESA (Engage Study and Activate) model which tries to cater to all the learning styles. It is also an attempt to integrate topics from other subjects (here science and geography) with English. This lesson plan is an example of

how effort can be taken to cater to all the three domains i.e. cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. Since it is a language lesson, an attempt is made to focus on all the language skills: - listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Level: Upper Primary

Time duration: 40-50 minutes

Material: pictures, objects, chart sheet, job sheets, LCD projector.

Objectives:-

Knowledge and Comprehension:-

1. Students define what natural resources are.
2. Students differentiate between animal resources and plant resources.

3. Students classify the various natural resources according to their types.
4. Students tell the uses of different natural resources.

Application:-

1. Students tell why we should use natural resources carefully.

Skill:-

1. Students prepare a slogan for conservation of natural resources, prepare a poster giving the message of conservation of natural resources, prepare riddles on different natural resources and write an acrostic or a rap song on 'natural resources.'
2. Students write a skit on the 'importance of natural resources' and then present it to the class.

Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher shows pictures/actual objects, distributes among the students and asks following questions:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">Name the different things you see?From where do you get them?What are they called?						
Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher explains what natural resources are.Teacher displays a concept map on chart to explain how natural resources are classified as living or non living.Teacher writes on the blackboard and asks students to write down.Teacher shows the pictures of plants as a natural resource using the LCD projector and asks the following questions:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">How are plants useful to us?Teacher asks students to give more examples.Teacher shows the pictures of animals as a natural resource using the LCD projector and asks the following questions:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">How are animals useful to us?Teacher asks students to give more examples.Teacher shows the pictures of sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, metals, as a natural resource and asks the following questions:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">How are sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, metals, useful to us?Teacher asks students to give more examples.Teacher shows an audio video clip on natural resources and asks students to listen carefully to the narration.Teacher then asks students to explain the message in the clipping.Teacher distributes various items and asks students to classify them into natural resources from plants, natural resources from animals and natural resources from sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, and metals.Teacher asks students to write them in a tabular format as given below:-<table><tr><th>Plants as a natural resource</th><th>Animals as a natural resource</th><th>Sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, metals, as natural resources.</th></tr><tr><td>flowers, thread, cotton, fruits,</td><td>silk cloth, eggs, honey, woolen sweater</td><td>jewellery, coins, stones, mud pots,</td></tr></table>	Plants as a natural resource	Animals as a natural resource	Sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, metals, as natural resources.	flowers, thread, cotton, fruits,	silk cloth, eggs, honey, woolen sweater	jewellery, coins, stones, mud pots,
Plants as a natural resource	Animals as a natural resource	Sun, soil, land, rock, water, air, minerals, metals, as natural resources.					
flowers, thread, cotton, fruits,	silk cloth, eggs, honey, woolen sweater	jewellery, coins, stones, mud pots,					
Activate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Classroom activity: - Teacher gives a quiz.Teacher asks students to solve the job sheets individually.Teacher makes groups and gives each group a different task to do: - prepare a slogan for conservation of natural resources, prepare a poster giving the message of conservation of natural resources, prepare riddles on different natural resources and write an acrostic or a rap song on ‘natural resources.’						

Extension activity: - Teacher asks each group to write a skit on the topic 'importance of natural resources' and then present it to the class.

Quiz: - Teacher divides the class in to four groups and conducts the quiz.

ROUND 1:- Give two uses of the following natural resources:-

Fruits, Snake, Cotton, Soil

ROUND 2:- Give reasons:-

1. Air is called a natural resource.
2. Bullocks are said to be useful to man.
3. We should use our natural resources carefully.
4. Sea is a natural resource.

ROUND 3:- Answer the following:-

1. What do we mean by a natural resource?
2. In what way is the sun useful to us?
3. What is the difference between animal and plant resources?
4. Why land is called a natural resource?

ROUND 4:- Unscramble the words:-
rceeruos, eehnyobe, nimaelrs, falylurce

ROUND 5:- Visual round



Identify the natural resource from which this object is made.



Which natural resource is used to make the above?

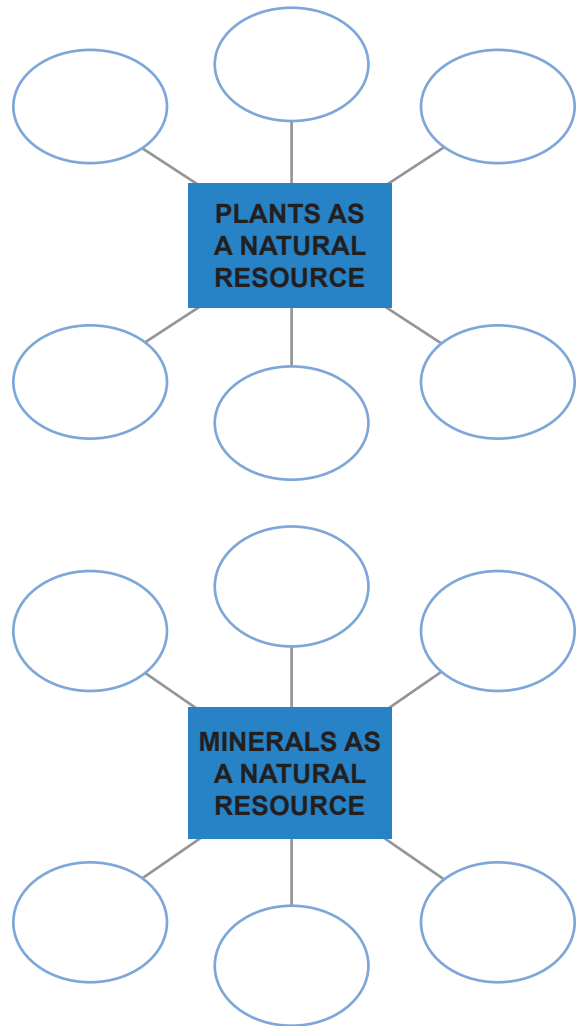


Which tree leaves do you see here? Give its use.



Which natural resource is used to make chalks?

Write uses of plants and minerals as natural resources in the following figures:-



Activities for teachers:-

Activity 1:- Present the classification of natural resources using a concept map or a mind map.

Activity 2:- Write which activity in the lesson plan you liked the most giving reasons.

Activity 3:- List all the activities the students have to do in the above lesson plan. Select any of the classification of the learning styles discussed above. Enlist the activities that go under each style.

Activity 4:- Classify the activities in the lesson plan according to the language skills.

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The course

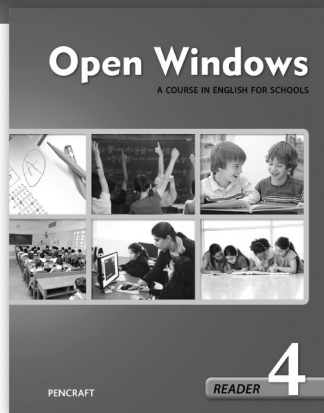
- Has a wide range of reading materials relating to neighbourhood, science, technology, environment, sports etc.
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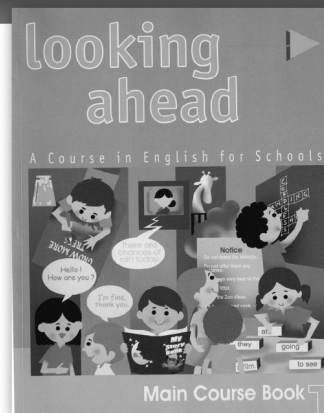
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An Appraisal of the N.E.T. in English Literature

Manjari Chaturvedi

A status message on a popular social networking website posted after the recent N.E.T. exam reads:

Joke of the day: "The wasteland" has how many lines? Will someone, please, enlighten me?

'The Wasteland' (1922) is an acclaimed poem by T.S.Eliot. Any post-graduate student of English Literature can expound on the poem's structure, content, meaning etc. But is knowing the number of lines relevant? The comments on the above post go on to analyze the logic of such a question and whether the information asked is a benchmark for possessing the knowledge of English literature and if it is then to know the number of lines of enumerable poems becomes vital to pass the exam. Add to these the questions asked on plots, names of characters, settings, locations and bio specifics of authors and one wonders if the exam is for a teacher or an encyclopedia enthusiast. The above instance also underscores the fact that a wrong answer here could fail the examinee if a requisite score is not obtained resulting in multiple attempts at cracking the biannual N.E.T. exam even as excellent scholarship and academic record hang in limbo. Evidently the situation necessitates an assessment of the suitability of N.E.T as an appropriate examination for evaluating teaching aptitude and testing subject knowledge especially of English Literature. It involves a critical look at the disparity, lacunae and shortcomings in the pattern and syllabi of N.E.T. that produced a skewed result of only eleven successful candidates in English in June 2010.

The National Eligibility Test or N.E.T conducted by University Grants Commission has been a subject of hot debate in the past year. The deteriorating standards of education at all levels, low employability of majority of graduates, mushrooming private institutes and the absence of an effective monitoring body has brought even laymen to vociferously call for pulling up the education system. From letters to the editor in newspapers to comments on blog posts and news articles on the internet, there is a strongly voiced demand to improve teaching standards especially in higher education.

Introduced in 1989, N.E.T. was a filter to sift out the teaching aspirants who 'neither had the competence nor the aptitude for teaching but had made an easy entry into the profession', according to a U.G.C note. Although a test for Junior Research Fellowship or J.R.F was being conducted since 1984, the Mehrotra Committee constituted by the UGC recommended a test for

Lectureship as well, on the basis of its observation that an M.Phil/Ph.D degree as the stipulated minimum eligibility for Lectureship had led to 'a dilution in standards of research on account of the rush to get a research degree in the shortest possible time' (Review of National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by UGC and UGC-CSIR -A Brief Note). N.E.T. was then a panacea to harness teachers with necessary competence and aptitude.

However, right from the inception of N.E.T., U.G.C. provided exemptions to the exam. In 2006 U.G.C. exempted M.Phil holders from passing N.E.T. for under graduate level teaching while Ph.D holders were exempted for post graduate teaching as well. The window led to the filling up of a huge backlog of vacancies in teaching institutions across the country. That M.Phil.'s sell like hot cakes whenever UGC gives a relaxation on the requirement of N.E.T. came into huge criticism. Consequently the exemption from N.E.T for M.Phil. degree holders was lifted in 2009. This time the rule's implementation from retrospective effect put at peril the careers of a sizeable number of scholars leading to a slew of protests in universities and petitions being filed across the country.

For the teaching community in higher education, N.E.T. is a subject of deliberation. More so as in the last two decades N.E.T. has undergone little revision. With a pass percentage of about 2% it remains one of the most formidable examinations to clear. Considering that N.E.T. is not a competitive exam, its success rate is dismal prompting one to delve deeper into the methodology of the examination and deliberating on the reasons for students from premier centers of learning namely University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi and Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi failing to clear N.E.T. even in numerous tries.

Pattern of N.E.T.

At the outset the pattern of N.E.T needs to be understood. The examination consists of three papers. Paper 1 is 'General paper on teaching and research aptitude' meant to assess the teaching and research capabilities of the candidates. It comprises fifty Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ's) from ten topics of equal weightage. Paper 2 is subject specific and objective again having fifty MCQ's. It is mandatory to clear the first two papers with minimum 40% in each paper individually and scoring 50% combining

the marks scored in the two papers for general category. If any of the two conditions are not fulfilled, the third paper is not corrected. For success at N.E.T. the candidate must score 90 out of 200 in Paper 3 whereas a score of 100 leads to the award of J.R.F. On the face of it, it doesn't look difficult at all. So where is the problem?

The syllabus and sample questions on English, available on UGC website, appear to not have been revised since the early years of the examination. The fundamental flaw in the exam

appears right here as the syllabus comprises of broad areas rather than detailed sections. Perhaps due to the extent of information that exists in Literature, U.P.S.C. did not offer Literature in any language as an optional in its MCQ based Civil Services Preliminary examination.

The pattern of paper 3 has undergone at least three revisions in the past decade. Yet the syllabus of English remains delineated as it was over a decade ago. The tables below give an idea of the changed structure of Paper 3.

PART	Type of questions	No. of questions	Words per answer	Total words	Marks per answer	Total marks
3-A	Short essay/ definitional questions	10	300	3000	16	160
3-B	Long essay	1	800	800	40	40

The total questions were 11 to be answered in 1100 words.

This format was revised and the following pattern was adopted from December 2005 onwards.

Section	Type of Question	No. of Questions	Words per answer	Total words	Marks per answer	Total Marks
1	Unseen passage/ stanza	5	30	150	5	25
2	Short definitional answers	15	30	450	5	75
3	Analytical/ evaluative questions on electives	5	200	1000	12	60
4	Essay	1	1000	1000	40	40

The total questions are 26 to be answered in 2600 words.

This format was again revised again and a slightly changed pattern given below was adopted from June 2010 onwards.

SECTION	TYPE OF QUESTION	TEST OF	NO. OF QUESTIONS	Per Answer	Total	Per Question	Total
1	Essay	Ability to dwell on a theme at an optimum level	2	500	1000	20	40
2	Three analytical/ evaluative questions	Ability to reason and hold an argument on the given topic	3	300	900	15	45
3	Nine definitional/ short answer questions	Ability to understand and express the same	9	50	450	10	90
4	Text based questions	Critical thinking, ability to comprehend and formulate the concepts	5	30	150	5	25
Total			19	-	2500	-	200

From a preliminary comparison it can be deduced that an effort has been made to arrive at a suitable balance of different kinds of questions testing information level, analytical skills and expression. The balance, however, tilts in favour of information. Knowledge of a subject is essential for claiming expertise. Nevertheless, for subjects like Literature information is endless. For both Paper 2 and Paper 3 the syllabus prescribed consists of periods of literature within which hundreds of authors, their works, dates, characters, plots and a humungous lot of snippets of information could form potential questions. Knowing an answer then becomes a matter of chance and destiny. In such a case, the effectiveness of the examination that selects good and able teachers on the basis of chance is a matter of concern.

The kind of questions asked is of course reflective of the syllabus, which enables their setting in the first place. The syllabus for paper 2 has ten broad areas namely 'Chaucer to Shakespeare', 'Jacobean to Restoration Periods', 'Augustan Age: 18th century literature', 'Romantic period', 'Victorian period', 'Modern period', 'Contemporary period', 'American and other British literatures', 'Literary theory and criticism' and 'Rhetoric and prosody'.

For Paper 3 there is a twofold division, the core group and the electives. The core group comprises 'British Literature from Chaucer to present day' and 'Criticism and Theory' and ten separate units. These are 'Literary Comprehension', 'upto Renaissance', 'Jacobean to Restoration periods', 'Augustan: 18th century literature', 'Romantic', 'Victorian and Pre- Raphaelites', 'Modern British Literature', 'Contemporary British Literature', 'Literary theory and criticism upto Eliot' and 'Contemporary theory'. There are five Electives – 'History of English language, English Language Teaching', 'European literature from classical age to 20th century', 'Indian Writing in English and Indian Literature in English translation', 'American and other non-British English literatures' and 'Literary theory and criticism'.

At a glance, the syllabus reads more like titles of papers from any undergraduate and postgraduate English literature syllabus. What's missing is the detailing- which authors, texts, critical readings, literary movements, contemporary social, economic and politically relevant history etc, all the specifics given for not just the other subjects offered by UGC but also for a similar exam conducted by Union Public Service Commission for Civil Services.

In India, English Literature was one of the first courses to be introduced in the present college and University systems established by the British during colonial rule. The courses designed for most of these institutions remain unchanged for

over sixty years resulting in few centers where courses have been revised and new authors included reflecting the changing literary trends. As a result a huge disparity exists in what comprises English Literature and how it is taught and studied at different locations in the same country. Linked to this is the gap in the fluency level of students of English literature. One may have the knowledge of literature written in a particular language, but not the proficiency in speaking and writing it. Consequently, the standards of writing in a pan-Indian exam like N.E.T. will have to be basic to accommodate all kinds of students and also to focus more on memorization of facts rather than flair for writing, argument, analysis, illustrations and creative inputs. It is no surprise then that the students refer to an array of guides, keys available in the market and basic information sources on the internet like Wikipedia and Spark Notes for the preparation of N.E.T. The present pattern of N.E.T. may definitely be testing information but the profession for which it tests is concerned more with how much this knowledge and information reflects in teaching and trickles down to the beneficiary of the exercise- the student.

The present and revised Paper 3 of the N.E.T does address a few concerns raised earlier but does not fully rectify them. Introducing two essays of 20 marks each rather than one for 40 marks gives more leverage to the candidate. Similarly raising the word limit of definitional questions from 30 to 50 allows a better explanation to a question. Reducing the number of these questions from 15 to 9 and increasing their individual weightage from 5 marks to 10 marks and collective weightage from 75 to 90 marks is to raise the 'chance' quotient in the paper. Sample these questions from the December 2010 N.E.T. Paper 3- 'Discuss the significance of Ursula's encounter with the horses at the end of *The Rainbow*.' and 'Explain the significance of the Railways in *Dombey and Sons*' from Paper 3 of June 2010 N.E.T. Clearly these are the simplest questions asked. Yet, in the absence of a clearly defined course, if for some unforeseen reason one has read all of D.H. Lawrence's and Charles Dickens' novels except those in question then it results in a straight loss of 20 marks. A corollary to a plot-character question is whether this is the knowledge UGC is looking for in the teachers and researchers of this country.

Another alteration in Paper 3 has been the reduction of questions from 5 to 3 in the Elective section. Perhaps this was with the general idea to shorten the paper, but to reduce the marks allotted to this section from 60 to 45 is regressive. The elective section focuses on specialized knowledge based on individual interests that is well in place by the time post graduation concludes.

Evaluation

Consistently N.E.T. has come under critique for not being transparent about evaluation. Prior to 2007, neither the passing marks nor the marks obtained by candidates were revealed. Even the question papers were not made available. After a court direction, UGC began displaying marks obtained by both the successful and non-successful candidates on its website. Since then a number of students see themselves as coming very close to the passing marks but not reaching it. For example score between 85 to 89 in three attempts but not 90 creates frustration. So clearly a subject like English literature needs a criterion not based on marks of a singular paper. Another vital question is who corrects the answer scripts? Is correction centralized or decentralized? Is the standard of evaluation uniform throughout the country? Clearly answers to all these questions may not be disclosed in the public domain, but the requisite stake-holders can intervene and ensure redressing of grievances at the appropriate levels.

In December 2009 UGC had introduced negative marking in Paper 1 and 2 with the view to further make evaluation stringent but subsequently withdrew it. UGC is evidently laboring to reform the N.E.T and create a better examination suited for the purpose it seeks to achieve. The need for the reformation of N.E.T. for English Literature and its course is crucial. Unless some of the core problems are addressed N.E.T will continue to be a roadblock in the careers of many. Just so that the next N.E.T. does not feature questions like the number of lines in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, or worse still Homer's *Odyssey*. For can the magnitude of Picasso's 'Guernica' be gauged by how many feet and inches the painting measures?

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Honing Verbal Skills: the Most Essential yet the Most Neglected!

A. Srivalli

Spoken word travels faster than written word! Oblivious to this fact that verbal skill is one of the most sought after skills compared to reading and writing, it is either neglected or ignored in academic circles. Basically, spoken/oral/verbal skills are always on top of the list as any kind of communication begins with the spoken word starting from a new born to a person with a last word. Despite the fact that verbal communication skills are indispensable, modest attempt is being made to hone verbal skills in a good number of schools. Teaching spoken skill often poses difficulties considering various factors such as strength of class, influence of mother tongue, stage fear, fear of being mocked at, faltered pronunciation etc. Besides, many of the syllabi do not focus on spoken skills and this is evident from the fact that all these years, focus in the evaluation process has been on reading/ writing but not on listening and speaking.

It is quite understandable that the need to learn another language is sometimes not natural but arises out of necessity. Anybody moving to a new place attempts to learn the spoken form first rather than the written form. But that is not the case with English. I wonder why school instruction spread over a span of twelve years fails to hone the spoken skills of a child. Doesn't this demonstrate that learning spoken

form in natural surroundings is more effective than formal learning of twelve years of English in a classroom? The reason is that very little emphasis is laid in developing verbal competence of students while they are in school. As a result, at the moment of entering their professional life, they face the exit door due to lack of effective spoken skills. What amuses me is that a child spending ideally ten years in an English medium school finally lands in a spoken English Institute with a hope to learn it in forty days or so. Therefore, it is not surprising to see mushrooming of so many English language institutes in India. It's really bewildering to comprehend how these institutes can make such promises.

Verbal competency not only lets a person communicate effectively, but also instills in him or her sense of confidence and gets rid of any kind of inhibitions. As aptly quoted by Howe (2003, 12) "Speaking is extremely important: it's a voice into pupils' writing, it helps them to develop and make sense of their reading, and it also does wonders for their self esteem, building confidence for the outside world".

Working in a spoken English institute has not only given me insights into the problems that the learners face in oral skills but has also given me great opportunity to try innovative techniques



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that stimulate them to speak. It is amusing to see that these students speak mistakes confidently unaware of the fact that what they are speaking is not right. In fact, teaching a new batch of students always poses challenges for me because the learner group is heterogeneous; being adults they are encased with some amount of self-esteem and come with background knowledge; they show little interest in activities such as vocabulary games, extempore etc., and wish for activities that match with real life situations as they come from varied professions with different language needs. In this article I would like to share two innovative methods that I have employed and found them to be very effective in not only enhancing spoken skills but also in motivating the students to be active participants.

Method 1: Cogent talk

Task: Talk about a topic assigned by teacher (10 min)

Level: Advanced

Objective: To prepare the students to speak coherently, confidently and fluently.

Procedure: In this activity the student speaks on a teacher-assigned topic with the help of clues. The students get a brief idea about the subject they have to talk about, and the clues help them in sequencing bits of information and linking ideas to form a complete story in a coherent manner. The topics are randomly distributed to the students before the presentation. They are encouraged to do a kind of mapping and visualize the events before an oral presentation.

Examples:

Topic 1: Enables the students to sequentially arrange ideas/events

Title: Tsunami in Japan

Clues:

Introduction: What happened in Japan and how did the events in Japan unfold.

What is an earthquake? (Hints: huge plates under the earth move causing quakes, Japan is an earthquake zone etc).

Body of presentation: On March 11, 2011, an earthquake struck off the coast of Japan – followed by a devastating tsunami – affecting the entire coastline up to United States – thousands of people perished – extensive property damage -- how the Japanese are bravely fighting the disaster and so on and so forth.

Conclusion: How can natural disasters be averted? How far is nuclear power safe? Lessons to be learnt from the Japan's nuclear disaster.

Topic 2: Enables the student to organize ideas chronologically:

Title: How Bin Laden was captured and killed

Clues:

Introduction: Who is Bin Laden? An international terrorist – Founder of Al Qaeda, the Jihadi organization -- responsible for various terrorist attacks in the US .

Body of presentation: On June 2, 2009, President Obama vowed to capture Bin Laden – In August 2010 Obama was given a possible lead on Bin Laden. In February 2011, they intensified their efforts to pinpoint his hideout – the hideout was identified as Abbottabad in Pakistan . During March 2011, President Obama held a series of meeting with defense officials . On April 29, 2011, Obama ordered to carry out the operation – on Sunday midnight at 3.30pm EST operation was carried out – At 11pm EST Obama declared the death of Osama Bin Laden.

Conclusion: Thus the US played a big role in eliminating one of the most wanted terrorists. Death of Bin Laden end of beginning? Can awareness in values and principles among children stop in making of a terrorist?

Topic 3: - Enables the students to mentally arrange ideas thematically.

Title: Kung Fu Panda 2 (cinema story)

Clues:

Introduction: Kung Fu Panda is the story about an overweight panda, masters the art of kung fu – in part one of the film the panda grows from a zero to a hero – in part two, he is puzzled over his parentage- how can he be the son of a goose and there the story begins - the entire movie revolves around a philosophical theme.

Body of presentation: The main theme of the movie is about saving the world and China from the evil domination plans of the albino peacock Lord Shen – but before they can do that, the panda tries to find his parentage. Finds inner peace and overcomes his weaknesses and frailties, aims to defeat the enemy and achieves it finally.

Conclusion: This animated movie has won young and adult hearts alike as it conveys a message – on the whole it's a good movie for family viewing.

Topic 5: Enables the students to mentally weave ideas around a problem/causative factors, solution and result

Title: Global Warming

Clues:

Introduction: Global warming is all about drastic climate change around the world -- the debate on this issue started way back in 1950's – sudden change in climate around the world, rise in natural disasters alerts the scientific community – increases awareness about conservation, pollution control etc.

Body of presentation: What is global warming? – global warming is heating up of earth – gases are trapped in the atmosphere resulting in increase in temperatures –there is no escape route for the heat – the result, trapped gases may destroy animals, plants, cause skin cancer, result in new incurable diseases – melt glaciers resulting increased sea levels -- result in erratic climate changes affecting the farmers due to unseasonal weather conditions. What causes global warming? Emissions, vehicular population, water pollution, deforestation etc.

Conclusion: How can our future generations survive? How to prevent global warming? Decrease use of electricity, fuels, pollution, and population, conserve energy, forests, water etc. – Follow what Gandhi's said "Earth provides enough for every man's need but not every man's greed".

Method 2: Rapid conversation

Task: Connect speech (30 minutes)

Level: Advanced

Objective: To introduce the students to fillers and train the students to respond spontaneously.

Procedure: Meaningful conversation is broken and jumbled. Then the same is transferred on to strips of paper. Strips of paper containing questions and answers are randomly distributed to the students. Each student holds in hand about five to six strips containing either questions or responses. One of the students begins to read aloud from the given strip, while the remaining students should carefully listen to it and link with the content in their strips. While they read aloud contents are sequenced to form into a meaningful conversation. All the participants should be very alert and try to make sense out of the jumbled sentences to form a meaningful dialogue. One student takes the responsibility of writing the questions and responses on the blackboard. This method also enhances the listening skill of the students. Since conversation is spontaneous and the speaker has little time to think and respond, it is necessary to train the students to think quickly and respond. In order to train the students to respond spontaneously this method was employed and it was well received by the students.

Sample conversation with fillers highlighted:

Speaker 1: Hi! How do you come to office?
 Speaker 2: Usually by car sometimes by metro.
 Speaker 1: Don't you have a car pool?
 Speaker 2: **You mean** sharing a car?
 Speaker 1: Yeah, **In fact** that's what I meant.
 Speaker 2: No, **not really**.
 Speaker 3: May I know why?
 Speaker 2: **Well, honestly** speaking I don't believe in that.

Speaker 4: What do you mean? Don't you care for the environment?

Speaker 2: **Certainly** I do, but does just car pool save the environment?

Speaker 5: Every drop makes a sea. **I mean** every small step matters.

Speaker 2: **Probably**, what about the huge things like deforestation, population, corruption, and pollution? How many things can we ignore?

Speaker 6: **In other words** you mean to say let's not bother.

Speaker 4: **Anyway** let's not argue over this.

Speaker 3: **Oh yes, Gosh!** Let's stop it. Let's not argue for argument's sake.

Speaker 5: **Perhaps** we must not argue but have a productive discussion.

Speaker 4: **So to continue**, I would like to support a cause that helps save the environment.

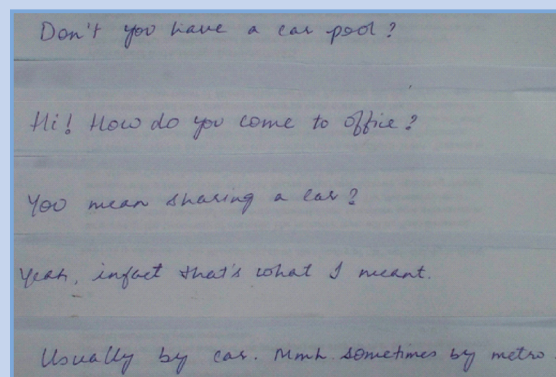
Speaker 5: **As I was saying**, every small step matters and let's us do something.

Speaker 5 to 3: **And what about you?** Don't you have anything to say?

Speaker 3: **Well let me think. May be** we can try to bring about awareness in our colony itself to start with.

Speaker 5: **Absolutely!** That's a good idea.

Authentic Sample:



These strips with broken dialogue are randomly distributed and the students are supposed to rebuild it into meaningful dialogue.

Often the strength in a typical spoken English class is not more than 15. However, the techniques evolved in this present study worked out very well with my students. They all actively participated and even some timid students contributed to a large extent. I would like to conclude that the two techniques that were experimented can also be tried in large classes with meticulous planning.

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Beyond the Achievement-Proficiency Divide: a New Perspective on Language Assessment

Jacob Tharu

The field of *language teaching* (represented by ELT as we know it) has one rather unusual feature which sets it apart from other formally taught school subjects. In the specific domain of assessing the progress of learners or pupils receiving instruction, a clear sharp distinction is made between testing, which is *achievement* oriented and testing which is *proficiency* oriented. It is widely accepted that the central aim of teaching English language is the development of the ability to use the language for communication or proficiency, though the value of different means (techniques) is a matter of vigorous debate. School board and university syllabi and examinations are known to be heavily weighed down by the ideational content of the 'passages' in the readers and lists of grammatical elements demonstrating form delinked from meaning. It is a long-standing complaint that these achievement tests favouring memorization and reproduction do not measure language proficiency. Mathew (2006) in the pages of *Fortell* highlighted this issue, asking whether the move from achievement to proficiency is being realized. It is taken for granted that this is an appropriate direction of change or reform. I do not dispute this basic argument in the specific setting of the unhappy history of ELT in India. However, the proposal to address proficiency directly and 'bypass' achievement needs more analysis. I propose in this essay to revisit this achievement-proficiency tension in language education from the wider perspective of educational measurement. I go on to address the basic issue of articulating a framework for assessing the progressively developing *language ability* in English over several years.

In the register of psychological measurement we have three categories of tests: aptitude, achievement and diagnostic. Certain characteristics are associated with each. The achievement (*of course objectives*) tests are the ubiquitous examination. The diagnostic test is also familiar (since it is often found as a ritual pre-fix to the remedial courses prominent in ELT practice). The term proficiency is virtually synonymous with ability. Proficiency is sometimes defined in

contrast with aptitude. Proficiency is demonstrable ability that *has actually developed* through relevant learning experiences, sometimes including deliberate instruction. Aptitude is the potential that facilitates such development of an ability along with motivation, effort, learning support. It is worth noting and stressing in passing here that aptitude is not a genetic/inborn/hardwired and unchanging characteristic of individuals: both nature and nurture are involved.

The achievement or attainment test ---the bad guy---is our focus. Its definition indicates its primary function in formal public education. This is to gauge the degree to which pre-set learning objectives of a course (or segment thereof) of planned instruction has been achieved by each learner, for certification and other administrative purposes. Such tests are syllabus linked, or rather, bound. The requirement of content validity (match with syllabus specifications) is strict: question papers are subject to moderation. The achievement test is also located necessarily after the unit of instruction: chapter or block, or (calendar wise) fortnight, month, term, and year. The last one seems to be highly favoured in Delhi. These two features – control of scope by a static syllabus statement and location at the terminal point – are major factors contributing to the varied problems of 'examinations' that call for reform. As a student of measurement I shall record a partisan observation. Many unheeded suggestions for reforming evaluation have come from our field. Final examinations remain toweringly dominant despite years of endorsement of internal and continuous-comprehensive assessment. Syllabus committees proclaim model question papers largely oriented to memory, though we can test understanding. It is the wider context of values, beliefs, policies, habits, pressures arising in the cultural politics of public education determine how the nature of evaluation in practice. The major paradigm shift needed now is not in measurement theory.

Getting back to the proficiency-achievement divide in language testing, as noted earlier this tension is not found in the setting of other fields

or school subjects. The distinction if made at all is between a specific syllabus oriented achievement test and a broad achievement/proficiency test; these comparable in scope and difficulty and differ only in some specific aspects. A ready example is found in the Std. XII mathematics paper of a state board its counterpart in the national level IITJEE.

What is it then that makes language instruction different? A clarification is needed here. The term 'language' in the present discussion refers to a specific strand within the far wider enterprise of language education. This is the functional skills orientation of General English: the core concern of "ELT". This stands in contrast with the liberal education/humanistic orientation of English literature. . The memorable phrase "language through literature" (which is in a way constitutive of the history and identity of ELT) captures the point here. The formal study of the linguistics of a target language even when it is housed in a university language department has no skills focus. It is a curious fact that many issues central to ELT are not echoed in the discourse around the school curriculum for regional languages. With this clarification, we can consider the implications of a widely accepted argument (restated here).

A considerable amount of language learning takes place outside the requirements and provisions of the formal 'teaching syllabus'. Young learners especially are constantly interacting with others and responding with curiosity to the 'texts' encountered in the world around them. Such exposure to English is spreading into so-called remote areas too. This additional learning is largely unconnected to and certainly goes beyond what is required and suggested in course related 'homework', fortunately. Since language learning is our primary concern, it is reasonable to recognize and value this enrichment of the limited and limiting formal syllabus and achievement test in the direction of proficiency. Testing at least could be made more skill oriented (and hence more valid). It is here that we need to be careful, as there is the danger of overlooking certain critical aspects of validity when assessing students' progress in learning.

The spirit of content validity is that what is tested should match what is actually taught. There are two degenerate (and convenient) interpretations of 'taught'. One lies in the policy level perspective which treats taught as that which the syllabus specifies. Another more realistic one accepts portions actually covered. In a pedagogically honest perspective what is taught would mean the curriculum transacted (and experienced) in

the manner intended by the syllabus developers. While the test specification on paper materializes unfailingly into appropriate activity (test production, administration, scoring, declaration of results), the syllabus plan on the other hand has no such 'power'. In reality children are absent, teacher shortages and teacher absenteeism exist, working days are lost; even lessons nominally 'taught' are often inappropriate because of poor teacher capacity, crowding, noise, indiscipline. The only truth we know is that (most of the) portions are somehow covered. Thus the basis for pedagogic validity-- appropriate transaction-- lies in the realm of faith and hope. The point emerging is the disconcerting fact that even the low level tasks of the traditional achievement test make inappropriate/unfair demands on large numbers of learners (as pupils). The well-meant further demand of proficiency has to be seen in this perspective. The bottom line is that even in the hands of the kindest teacher, a message of inadequacy goes to some; and for many of this some it is virtually daily bread. It is the cumulative of effect of always being behind others that we see in demoralized and apathetic students in higher classes.

I do not mean to suggest that we just give up presenting learners with challenges. I wish to draw attention to the challenge of establishing a sounder basis for selecting tasks, and more importantly for the interpretation of individuals' performance. The public face of assessment begins with the result of scoring: the mark or grade which represents a position on a low-to-high scale related to some standard of adequacy. . Different levels of learning are linked to higher/lower score in a model that underlies any assessment exercise. A learner (her/his performance) gets one of these known or preset scores. Where do these level definitions come from? The obvious answer is that there is a broadly agreed upon continuum of ability/proficiency in English (for non-native learners) spanning the 'beginner' and 'advanced' levels. This axis of development is visualized (for convenience) as a sequences of stages through which learners pass. In the schemes of the CBSE and state education boards the 'long range syllabus' for teaching English span about a dozen such stages --each rendered operational through a syllabus and course book and of course assessment scheme. This represents the mechanism for the implementation of policy relating to English language teaching. A sizeable proportion of the ELT expertise we have accumulated over half a century is located in

the processes of design-development-revision of the syllabus-materials-methods package for these successive levels. Thus when a student is to be assessed she/ he is placed at a known zone in the already charted sequence of progress. The lack of pedagogic validity, which weakens the model, has been noted. However, there is a more fundamental issue to be addressed: the delivery problem is a practical one that can be solved.

Consider the hypothetical case of a student in class 5 in a well provisioned and managed KV. In a mid September assessment certain tasks linked to the syllabus are given and a certain quality of performance is expected. How can we say, "You should have reached this level"? Remember here that 'you' covers any and every student at this class level across the system. Is the grand theory underlying the entire English teaching syllabus (and ideal curriculum transaction) all that well founded and fine-tuned? It seems much more likely that its appropriateness lies not in theory but in our shared practical experience. After all, a number of children do manage... fairly well too sometimes. But does their success reflect the sound logic of the syllabus delivered thus far? Or could it be unaccounted 'exposure and engagement' outside the syllabus? This factor somehow seems uncomfortably associated with social privilege. When in our impatience with the 'memory based' achievement test we raise the demand to proficiency, the claim of intrinsic appropriateness of the sequential-cumulative syllabus is even stronger. Uncertainty about appropriate standards for assessing performance looks large. My submission is that we need as a profession to find the time and energy to look critically at the model of developing* proficiency (*an adjective here) that informs the sequential structure of the 12 year syllabus for English. If overlaps are found across these arbitrary stages (I believe there are), we need to acknowledge them upfront and allow much more latitude or slack in applying 'standards'. We should stop pretending there is principled gradation in the 12-year language syllabus, and give up the larger fiction that a gentle but steady gradient runs through each one in the sets of the attractive course books flooding the market.

My intention is not to stop with criticizing Mathew for overloading students with achievement plus proficiency, as it might appear. It is, rather, to endorse the way forward she suggests. After finding that "[W]hile the Can-do statements that the tasks exemplified were not within [their reach] the tasks could in fact capture

some of the on-the-way or enabling abilities" these children did possess. Thus the Can-do statements of the tasks can be seen to be "made up of several sub-Can-do statements", and a study of longer duration could "throw light on the development sequence of such abilities". Yes, we need many such studies—urgently.

I end with two expressions of hope relating to the deeper engagement with an old challenge called for; both have a bearing on the examination reform agenda. The indeterminacy of language learning is the main complicating factor: we can't trust our children not to learn more.

This pushes us to see the steps in the preset syllabus (which have to be indicated for sheer practical reasons) not as determining the end of assessment, but a resource for the beginning of assessment --as discovery. Our responsibility as teachers is to discover/understand where our learners are initially and help them move forward. Only hardened autocrats will fail to see the possibilities of collaboration (learner participation) here. In this frame teaching and assessment become mutually dependent and supportive. On-the-way assessment yielding formatively usable information comes to be seen as a necessary aspect of pedagogy. I believe we are better placed than our subject area colleagues because of the clear indeterminacy of learning trajectories in our field. They (poor souls) have less encouragement to believe that what is learnt is more/different from what is in the syllabus, and thence to employ assessment as discovery rather than audit/inspection.

The second hope relates to a likely consequence of this process. If we come to value assessment as support for teaching we would naturally want to engage in it more, also more purposefully and comprehensively. This would not depend on the official weight for internal assessment being raised (by orders from above). More assessment in this mode will shift the emphasis away from conventional summative evaluation. Formal examinations will then be relegated to their rightful but very specific and very limited role in education. This seems one sure way of making some progress towards examination reform.

The thought that these hopes place teachers of English language in the role of pioneers is a happy one for me.

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“Classroom Observation and Supervision” within the ambit of Continual Professional Development (CPD)

An Interview with **Rod Bolitho**, Academic Director of Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE) United Kingdom

After an intensive workshop on ‘Classroom Observation and Supervision’ organized by MINDS (Mentoring in Delhi Schools) Project, headed by Professor Rama Mathew, Central Institute of Education (CIE) University of Delhi and British Council, New Delhi on 26th April 2011, Prem Kumari Srivastava and Sabina Pillai, both Associate Professors of English at the University of Delhi, caught up with the workshop leader, Rod Bolitho, a well-known English Language Teaching (ELT) expert. An Academic Director of Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), UK, Rod Bolitho started out teaching English in Germany and has been active in teacher education and trainer training for over 30 years. He has also been a consultant to a number of British Council projects since 1989, including the CBSE Curriculum Reform Project in India, and is currently involved in Teacher Education and Materials Development initiatives in Uzbekistan and Romania as well as in Policy Dialogue initiatives in India.



Prem Kumari Srivastava (PKS): Right at the outset, Rod, it is indeed a pleasure meeting you and then interacting with you for the whole day in this intensive workshop on “Classroom Observation and Supervision” organised by **Professor Rama Mathew**, Coordinator, Minds Project in collaboration with the British Council, New Delhi. Many thanks for agreeing to talk to us after a full day and to discuss some significant issues related to classroom pedagogy: Observation and Supervision.

Rod Bolitho (RB): Not at all. I hope everybody enjoyed the workshop as much as I did.

PKS: A little about **Fortell**. An affiliate of **IATEFL**, **Fortell**, is a Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature, located in New Delhi. Amongst its myriad activities like organising workshops and conferences as also

having a pool of resource persons for these events who are experts in diverse areas related to the pedagogy of English Language and Literature, **Fortell** also brings out a peer-reviewed journal thrice a year.

Sabina Pillai (SP): What brings you to India this time?

RB: I have been involved in a Policy Debate on the future of ELT in India. The British Council has organised a ‘Think Tank’ on it and I am here for its second meeting on **Continual Professional Development (CPD)**.

SP: Talking of CPD, it is not yet a widely recognised or acknowledged concept in India. How do you view it in the Think Tank?

RB: CPD is not exclusive to the teaching profession. The interest in it stems from a wider context. For example, it has been prevalent in the

engineering, medical and other professional fields where people were keen to know what others were doing in their respective fields. Part of the mandate of the Think Tank is to raise awareness about it amongst Principals and education managers. CPD need not just be in-service training. Any professional development activity can be seen as CPD.

There is a direct link between the individual and the institution here. An institution's development depends on its staff's professional development. It is a good indicator of the professional climate in an institution.

SP: When will we hear about the recommendations of the Think Tank? Is there any schedule for the roll out of this programme?

RB: I am sure that there will be a strategic launch of the programme, supported by a publication in due course. I am not sure when that will happen but probably some time in 2012.

PKS: You have been associated with the CBSE Curriculum Report project in India since 1989. It is 2011 today. What are your observations on the Indian educational system and particularly the way English teaching is being handled? Have you noticed some significant changes?

RB: I think there is a marked shift in the way English is perceived in India today. David Graddol's English Next India (2010) established that English is very much a tool for economic growth in the country. I remember a time when it was seen as a post colonial legacy and therefore faced a lot of hostility. It was perceived as an alien force. That is no longer the case. This shift is also felt in the CBSE school curricula. In fact Indian English has come of age. There are recognizable varieties of Indian English today. Then, there was a generous use of the present progressive forms. Interestingly, even today there are some striking archaic usages in India. What immediately comes to my mind are examples such as: 'to nab' or 'lakhs and crores'. Beyond the sub-continent, I doubt if anybody can understand these expressions.

PKS: Looking at your vast repertoire of scholarship, it is clear that you have been keenly interested in understanding the negotiation of classroom pedagogy of English language. What interests you the most?

RB: I have been in teacher education and training for over 30 years. Initially I was in teacher training and also got involved in in-service training. Then I saw the wider implications. Interestingly I came down to India at around the same time as Adrian Underhill to meet and write about the self-help group called English Language Teaching Community (ELTC) in Bangalore with members like Michael Joseph, Esther Ramani and Jaya Gowri Shivakumar after

the Special Interest Group in IATEFL wrote of them. The group was a model of its kind and worked in a very democratic, non-hierarchical way to discuss issues. It had a bottom-up approach. CPD brings me back full circle. We were looking at Observation and Supervision today within a CPD framework.

PKS: How important are observation and supervision in a discussion of CPD and classroom pedagogy?

RB: The Minds project is a perfect example. Within the ambit of CPD the different purposes of observation and a principled approach to supervision have a potential impact on professional development

SP: Outcome based teaching has become a central concern of education today. Given that, what would you include as imperatives in class-room pedagogy?

RB: Teachers must know where they are headed and therefore outcomes and predicting destinations are important. At the same time they should not be obsessed with outcomes only. The process of getting to the destination is more important. One should not emphasise the product at the expense of the process. Observation and supervision are part of that process.

PKS: You are widely travelled and have interacted with scholars from around the world. In Institutes other than teacher training institutes, what are the other segments of higher education where observation and supervision helps?

RB: Apart from Teacher training institutes, institutions such as the Higher Education Academy in Britain demand that there should be a mandatory observation exercise by a peer every year. This is followed by a written report on the exercise. Such initiatives are indicative of a learning organisation.

SP: Observation and supervision are much more complex than they appear to be. What are the inherent challenges?

RB: I look at these challenges as four dilemmas that a practitioner must negotiate to derive value from the exercise. The first one is to understand that we all carry 'Baggage' consisting of our own views on quality teaching and this means that we tend to become judgemental about others' methods. One must consciously make a package of all these critical voices in one's head and leave it outside the door before entering a room to carry out an observation exercise. It is not easy but it comes with self discipline and practice. The second dilemma is the 'Perception Gap'. By this I mean the different perspectives people have to the same event. The teacher's point of view could be at variance with that of the observer's. This can be minimised by dialogue and raising of awareness by the parties concerned. If handled

well it can be a good opportunity for mutual learning. Such a strategy would allow the observer to go deeper into critical moments in the session than look at the particular class as an artefact.

The third dilemma is the 'Impact of the observer's presence in the classroom'. What status should he be accorded? Is the observer to be included in the equation as a guest, an assessor or a participant in the event? Would it not then distract the learners and also impact negatively on the teacher's performance? Is there a need for the observer to be always present? The last dilemma is 'Feedback'. It is a vital part of the whole exercise. The degree of directiveness of feedback is normally proportional to the experience of the teacher who was observed. A fresh young teacher would expect to be told what to do, whereas an experienced teacher would be more likely to benefit from prompts to think about, rather than being told how to teach. In any case, feedback has to be negotiated wisely and should be based on questioning techniques. The supervisor should not be abrupt, judgemental or conclusive in his feedback. He must not lose sight of the fact that he also has a mentoring role to play.

SP: You mentioned Donald Freeman's² seminal article on observation in this context?

RB: Yes. Freeman makes a distinction between Training and Development. He sees them as two ends of a continuum wherein training is mainly concerned with imparting skills while development addresses the whole person by way of personal and professional growth. It is here that he discusses three possible approaches to Observation and Supervision - the Directive Approach which is largely prescriptive and therefore addresses training issues for the observed teacher, the Alternatives Approach which is more equitable and non-evaluative and lastly the Non- Directive Approach where the observer uses the counselling approach and becomes an 'understander' or a catalyst in facilitating self enquiry in the teacher.

PKS: Supervision simply means "having an overview of classroom teaching" It is also supposed to be a non threatening strategy. Is it really so?

RB: It is the business of the supervisor to take the threat out of supervision. Clarity about the focus of the observation exercise and pre- lesson and post- lesson dialogues will help.

PKS: What is the difference between observation and supervision?

RB: Observation is simply the 'watching the lesson' stage in the overall process of supervision, which includes pre-lesson and post-lesson meetings with a teacher.

PKS: How can observation, supervision and classroom teaching happen in a collaborative manner?

RB: It is a real fight to banish subjectivity from the exercise. Observation and supervision with a developmental perspective and with the teacher feeling secure and unthreatened is always likely to be the best way forward within a wider framework of CPD.

PKS: In a University like Delhi, where we have been teaching English for the last 20 years or so, formal observation of classroom teaching has never happened. Our observers and supervisors are our students. How do you respond to this?

RB: Students know how to differentiate between good and less good teaching. But it is important to look at feedback from the whole student body and not rely on any one isolated response. That would give you a skewed picture.

PKS: Isn't observation and supervision a top-down approach with an inbuilt hierarchy in it?

RB: Teachers have to understand that it is a collaborative venture which is going to benefit them in the long run. A classroom cannot be seen as a closed-door domain. Gibbs and Habeshaw(1989) and King(1983), both talk about the advantages of post-observation feedback procedures.

PKS: The last decade has witnessed a new kid on the block, a novel challenge in learning platforms: VLE, Virtual Learning Environments, E learning, E-Classrooms. Some claim that this has shaken the fulcrum on which classroom learning rests: face to face interaction, observation and supervision. How do we negotiate this novel menace that is 'e' in nature?

RB: E- learning can never replace face - to- face learning. E-learning options are quite different in that they offer flexibility, logistical advantages and wider participation. E-Learning gives opportunities to those learners who can't physically come to attend classes. In NILE, where I work we use blended learning wherein face-to-face sessions are supported by online tutorials. This I feel is a model which offers the best of both worlds.

PKS: Don't you think that observation, supervision and feedback are still some challenges that this new kind of platform needs to overcome.

RB: You are right and that is why I say that it can never replace face-to-face learning.

PKS & SP: Thank you Rod, for talking to us and sharing your views on the areas of observation and supervision.

Notes

¹<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-english-next-india-2010-book.pdf>

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Beyond a Sense of Belonging: Race, Class and Gender in the Poetry of Yeats and Eliot

S.A.Jafri

Indranil Acharya's recently published book, *Beyond a Sense of Belonging: Race, Class and Gender in the Poetry of Yeats and Eliot*, is a fascinating reading of the two of the best known Modernist poets of British literature. Although in the title of this book he has included only the poetry of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot, on reading the book I found out that he has not limited his analysis to them. He draws extensively on the plays (exclusively in the case of Yeats) and also the prose works of Eliot as well as other major British writers.

In his introduction, Acharya uses various contemporary approaches and theories to the problematic of race, class and gender and surveys the cultural, political, religious and personal identities of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot. He analyses the use of the literary persona, the issues of selfhood and the postcolonial critical engagements with the issue of identity referring to the major critics, thus presenting his strong roots in literary theory and a nuanced reading of cultural and sociological practices.

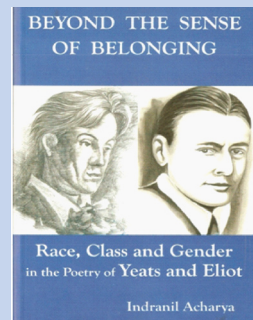
The second chapter of the book presents the genealogy of identity. He surveys the evolution of the concept of identity in its traditional philosophical and psychological dimensions from the Romantic period to the Modernist era and particularly alluding to major poets like Wordsworth, Arnold, Yeats and Eliot. In this chapter, Acharya also looks at the issue and problematic of identity from a sociological point of view making the reader aware of determinants like race, class, and gender in the background.

In chapter three, the writer examines the poems of Yeats and Eliot in the light of the issue of problematized race and class identity. In charting his movement from an idealistic vision of a unity of culture to a gloomy realization of failure and subsequent alienation from the mainstream, Acharya also explores the duality in Yeats' approach to nationalism and social class-structure. Further, discussing the issue of displaced autobiography that is a central concern in any assessment of Eliot's works, he looks at Eliot's camouflaged identity in respect of his ambiguous racial and class status in the light of his early poems including *The Waste Land*. The author's discussion of Eliot's poems is a novel one as he takes into purview his lesser-known early poems.

The fourth chapter of the book deals with the question of women, particularly the phenomenon of "New Woman," in the production of the complex gender identity and dynamics in the poetry of these two great modernist poets. Referring to certain important poems and texts Acharya presents Yeats' "contradictory stance" to the question of the emancipation of women. He also refers to the androgynous identity of the older Yeats and his efforts to assimilate both male and female elements to forge a unified sexual identity. He then focuses the shift to Eliot's treatment of the gender issue dealing primarily with the problem of the formation of "the complete male identity in the presence of mighty female figures." According to Acharya, "Eliot attains successfully a gendered notion of identity by silencing the impressive female voice."

The final chapter of the book investigates the problematics of belonging, unbelonging and transcendence of belonging. Acharya concludes by making a plea to fellow scholars for broadening the scope of this comparative study in future by expressing an ardent desire to include the complex nuances of Ezra Pound's cultural identity. He notes that "any future research initiative may well look into the textual reflections of such cultural identities by analyzing how world history, myth, literary tradition and controversial doctrines intermingle in the discourse of this cosmopolitan poet."

The book comes with very strong recommendations and praises from Prof. G. K. Das, Prof. S. P. Singha and Dr Amrit Sen, who on the back cover note it as "a pathfinder's work," "a welcome addition to the already existing vast body of Yeats-Eliot criticism" and praise it for its "rigorous theoretical structure" respectively. I also strongly propose that this exceptionally well-written and beautifully designed book, *Beyond a Sense of Belonging*, is a must have for all the students, research scholars, teachers and libraries in India and abroad not just for the insightful perceptions it offers but also as a resourceful companion to British poetry, modernism, postcolonial and gender studies.



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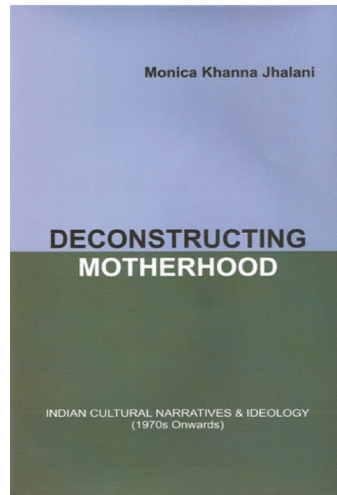
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Deconstructing Motherhood: Indian Cultural Narratives and Ideology (1970s Onwards)

Vijay Laxmi Pandit



by Monica Khanna Jhalani. CLC Series/SSS Publications, New Delhi: 2010, ISBN No. 81-902282-2-6, Pp 292, Rs. 795 (Hardbound)

Recently I was gifted *Deconstructing Motherhood: Indian Cultural Narratives and Ideology (1970s Onwards)* by a colleague in the Department of English of our college. Being from a Political Science background I had hardly expected to spend hours of engrossed reading on this title. My interest was first captured by the inter-disciplinary approach of the introductory chapter which employs the definition and constructions of the concept of motherhood from very varied perspectives—biological, anthropological, Marxist, historical and finally, feminist perspective. The book essentially examines cultural narratives from the 1970s to the present but it also takes into consideration seminal texts from the 1950s and 1960s, which serve as important points of comparison for the changes that have occurred.

This incisive monograph then goes on to analyse the representations of the “mother” and “ideologies of motherhood” in Indian literature, film and culture. There is a surprisingly large variety of texts both from cinema and literature. Ranging from the classic “Deewar” with its “mere pass maa hai” dialogue to blockbuster “Gharwali Bharwali” to the critic’s choice like “Astitva” and “Fire,” the book does not shy away from either

the brashly popular or the highly controversial. The same can be said for the choice of literary texts, which include, both critically acclaimed works like those by Mahashweta Devi and Anita Desai, popular writing by Jhumpa Lahiri as well as seminal regional language texts in English translation such as the Bengali novel *Subarnalata*. It is an exploration of the social and cultural changes that need to be brought about by individuals, families, organisations and governments in order to break free from stereotyped notions of masculinity, femininity, mothering and fathering.

However, what is really noteworthy is the conceptual variety enriched by relevant textual examples. Be it the case of disabled women, lesbians, or women who are biologically unable to reproduce, the social and familial pressures on a mother, the cultural construct of the “ideal mother” and the resulting feeling of guilt and insufficiency, the question of choice and subversion and finally, a positive vision for the future in view of the changing times, Monica Khanna Jhalani tackles each concept methodologically and coherently. She concludes that just as literature and media have played an instrumental role in constructing these images, so also can they be used to reconstruct these very images, thus making parenting a meaningful and enjoyable experience for both the sexes.

I must point out here that each chapter is divided into logical sections and sub-sections with refreshingly catchy titles that make for easy and enjoyable reading despite the academic thrust. This study is well-referenced for anyone interested in further research providing both a bibliography and filmography. A useful and well-prepared index allows for selective reading too.

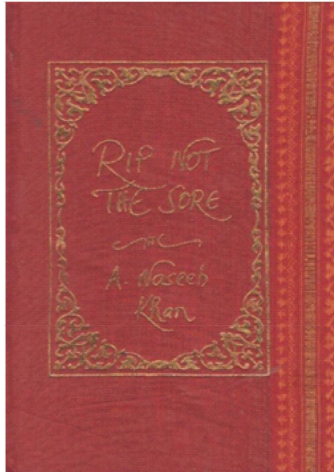
Brilliantly structured, with a crisp and lucid writing style and a very contemporary revisiting of a timeless subject, this book is a must read for scholars of literature, film, women’s studies, Indian culture and general reader (like myself) who wishes to keep herself informed about the trends in latest research.

Rip Not the Sore: A Collection of Poems

Ghazala Siddiqi



Ghazala Siddiqi is Lecturer at Jamia Senior Secondary School, JMI, New Delhi and is a freelance CESOL Examiner with the British Council.



by A. Naseeb Khan. *Writers Workshop: Kolkata, 2010: Pp 110, Rs. 200 (hardbound)*

Consisting of 60 poems, *Rip Not the Sore* is the first collection of A. Naseeb Khan. Beginning with 'Ramu and Abdul' showcasing lucid state of quietude and communal amity, the collection culminates into 'Launch into Fray', which not only contemplates the issues of human existence, and fear that threatens to seep into the spine, but also exudes rare energy to brave challenges.

'Ramu and Abdul' takes the readers onto a journey that narrates the saga of two characters living in an idyllic world with salubrious surroundings. Fluidity and ease with which the poet delineates their life is remarkable. Representatives of constructive reality, they believe in perpetual keeper of humanity. Their life does not rest on the shifting sands of time, thus not vulnerable to any onslaughts. The subtlety with which Naseeb concludes the poem is an indication of continuity.

'Mayhem' presents a sheer nakedness of emotions. Vulnerability in state of being, outcome of morass and bedlam caused due to intolerant nature, gradually gets shrouded in the mist of fear and uncertainty. The expressions evoke an imagery of a world caught in throngs of reckless attitudes leading to an emotional rape of sensibilities. It projects the cataclysmic end of human bondages.

'Terrorism' etches out an ambiance that is fostered by violent activities, impregnated with shrieks

of wailing mothers and death of nascent lives. Amid all topsyturvydom, it is difficult to retain one's vital elements, as sense and sensibilities get warped by dust of whirlwind. Feelings of disorientation, fear and panic dominate the concluding stanza. The poet meticulously takes the reader to a different domain of human sensibility wherein the reader is introduced to a forced sense of apathy that sets in with maturity. The sense of detachment and lackadaisical attitude that comes with apathy is a mere camouflage.

'Victors of War' represents an ideology - a philosophical view of elusiveness of life and denouncement of war. Mind and machine, abstract and concrete coexist in tandem with arrhythmic beats of life. The choice of words may have varied connotations; suggesting repercussion of an aggressive act and implying a state of human mind that war perpetuates. The weapons speak the language of destruction and suffering of mind, body and soul. Manifold misery brought by war benumbs consciousness to an extent that reality and illusion merge.

The poet's expressions in the first three stanzas convey a static projection of war. All activities seem to have come to a standstill as war immobilizes movement. Amidst this inert existence, movement acquires dimensions of an illusion. Ironically, a war that may result in victory often has no survivors to commemorate it. The irony is depicted in a subtle and understated manner, as opposed to ambiance of a war ground that is loud and violent. The paradox of victory is rather concrete. The poem, adorned with a lucid style, is profoundly solemn, compelling the reader to wonder who the victors of war are. The concluding line deftly captures elusiveness of life and leaves the reader wondering whether life in all its abstractions can manifest itself tangibly.

The collection spans as multifarious areas as hard and suffering lives of the dispossessed, family chats lubricated by steaming hot brew and so on. Through unvarnished pictures of life's brutal realities, Naseeb expresses his recurrent concern for social awakening, justice and equitability. He presents everyday woman, man and themes in a way that one can easily relate with them.



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International Workshop on Teaching of Foreign Language in Large Classes

Alka Rani Agrawal

A one day International Workshop on "Teaching of Foreign Language in Large Classes" was organized by Department of English for UGC Minor Research Project at N.K.B.M.G. PG College, Chandausi, Dist. Moradabad (U. P.) on May 1, 2011. The main objective of the workshop was to find some effective ways to deal with the severe problem of teaching a foreign language like English in over-crowded classes in most areas of western U. P.

Dr. Kusum Pant delivered the welcome address. Convener Dr. Alka Rani Agrawal, acclaiming the words of J. W. V. Goethe, "Those who know nothing of foreign languages, know nothing of their own", presented the theme of the workshop. The focus was on discussing various methods of teaching (Interactive Method, Learner-Centered Method, Cooperative Method, Content-based Method and finally, Task-based Method) and thus to reach a conclusion as to which one is most effective for teaching a language in large classes.

Presenting keynote address as Chief Guest of the Inaugural Ceremony, Prof. Gill threw light over the fact that according to the CIA World Fact Book; only 5.6 % of the world's total population speaks English as a primary language. That number doubles when people who speak English as a second or third language are counted. As English has become a global lingua franca over the past several decades, to remain monolingual is to stunt our educational development, to restrict our communication and to deny ourselves the ability to fully appreciate and understand the world in which we live.

In the first technical session, Dr. Asha Choubey captured the attention of all as soon as she started her demonstration through power point and her interactive session continued for more than the allotted time. During post-lunch session of workshop Dr. Sinha threw light on almost all the related thematic issues which proved to be beneficial to all participants. The participants' involvement in the form of cross-questions, queries, objections, solution-finding discussions and learner-centered examples and experimental experiences helped a lot to achieve the goal of the workshop.

In the Valedictory Function, Principal Dr. Rekha Agrawal welcomed the guests and reiterated the importance of the theme of the workshop. Anchoring the Valedictory Function, Dr. Manisha Agrawal, invited Prof. Arun Kumar for his Valedictory Address. Prof. Kumar advocated teaching of foreign languages as a must because such skills open our eyes to new sights, opportunities, and experiences around the world. Also, his speech compelled everybody to think over the pitiable situation of teaching English in crowded classes.

Thanking everybody, Convener Dr. Alka Agrawal announced the fruitful execution of this grand International Workshop organized by Department of English for UGC Minor Research Project with the words of American poet Robert Frost- "Two road diverged in a wood and I... I took the one less traveled by; and that has made all the difference". Let the zeal created by this International Workshop may prevail far and wide.

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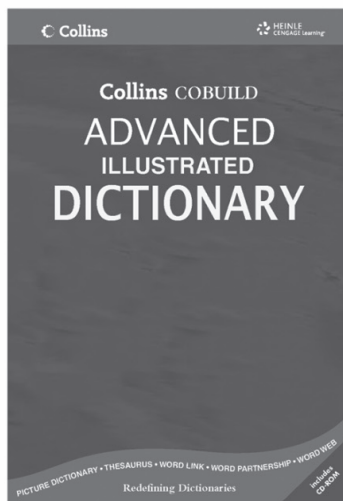
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great 338

Word Web **greenhouse effect**

Over the past 100 years, the average **temperature** around the globe has risen dramatically. Researchers believe that this **global warming** comes from added **carbon dioxide** and other **gases** in the **atmosphere**. With **water vapour**, the gases form a layer that holds in heat. It acts like the glass in a greenhouse. Scientists call this the **greenhouse effect**. Some natural causes of this warming may include increased **solar radiation** and tiny changes in the earth's orbit. However, human activities, such as **deforestation**, and the use of **fossil fuels** seem to be an important cause.

Word Link **est = most: greatest, kindest, latest**

great /greɪt/ (greater, greatest) ■ ADJ BEFORE N You use **great** to describe something that is very large. □ ... **great columns** of ice. ■ ADJ **Great** is used to emphasize the large amount or degree of something. □ She had **great** difficulty in keeping her eyes open. ■ **greatly** ADV □ He will be **greatly** missed. ■ ADJ You use **great** to describe someone or something that is important, famous, or exciting. □ ... the **great** novels of the 19th century. □ ... the **greatest** scientist since Einstein. ■ **greatness** N-UNCOUNT □ No-one doubted his claim to **greatness**. ■ ADJ If something is **great**, it is very good. [INFORMAL] □ I thought it was a **great** idea. □ It would make a **great** film.

Usage

Great, big and large are all used to talk about size. In general, **large** is more formal than **big**, and **great** is more formal than **large**. **Big** and **large** are normally used to describe objects. If you use **great** to describe an object, you are suggesting that it is impressive because of its size. □ The **great** bird of prey was a dark smudge against the sun. You can use **large** or **great**, but not **big**, to describe amounts. □ He noticed a **large** amount of blood on the floor. □ The coming of tourists in **great** numbers changes things. **Great** is often used with nouns referring to things such as feelings or ideas. It is the only one of the three words that can be used in front of an uncount noun. □ It gives me very **great** pleasure to welcome you to the town. Remember that **great** has several other meanings, when it does not refer to size, but to something that is remarkable, very good, or enjoyable.

Thesaurus **great** Also look up:

ADJ. enormous, immense, vast; (ant.) small ■ ■ distinguished, famous, important, remarkable ■

greed /grɪd/ N-UNCOUNT **Greed** is a desire for more of something than is necessary or fair. **greedy** /grɪdi/ (greedier, greediest) ADJ Someone who is **greedy** wants more of something than is necessary or fair. □ ... **greedy** bosses who award themselves huge pay rises. ■ **greedily** ADV □ She ate the cakes **greedily**.

green /grɪn/ (greener, greenest, greens) ■ ADJ & N-VAR Something that is **green** is the colour

greyhound

of grass or leaves. □ ... **green** olives. □ ... a **paler** and softer shade of **green**. ■ ADJ A place that is **green** is covered with grass, plants, and trees. ■ **greenness** N-UNCOUNT □ ... the lush **greenness** of the river valleys. ■ ADJ BEFORE N **Green** issues relate to the protection of the environment. □ ... the power of the **Green** movement in Germany. ■ N-COUNT A **green** is a smooth, flat area of grass, for example the area around a hole on a golf course. → see **colour, golf, rainbow**

greenery /grɪnəri/ N-UNCOUNT Plants that make a place look attractive are referred to as **greenery**.

greenhouse /grɪmhaʊs/ (greenhouses) N-COUNT A **greenhouse** is a glass building in which you grow plants that need to be protected from bad weather. → see **barn**

'greenhouse effect' N-SING The **greenhouse effect** is the rise in the earth's temperature caused by a build-up of gases around the earth. → see **Word Web: greenhouse effect** → see **ozone**

greet /grɪt/ (greets, greeting, greeted) ■ V-T When you **greet** someone, you say something friendly such as 'hello' when you meet them. ■ V-T If something is **greeted** in a particular way, people react to it in that way. □ The move was **greeted** with disappointment by union leaders. ■ V-T If you are **greeted** by something, it is the first thing you notice in a place. [LITERARY] □ Customers are **greeted** by wonderful smells from the kitchen.

greeting /grɪtɪŋ/ (greetings) N-VAR A **greeting** is something friendly that you say or do when you meet someone. □ He raised a hand in **greeting**.

grenade /grɪneɪd/ (grenades) N-COUNT A **grenade** is a small bomb that can be thrown by hand.

grew /gru:/ **Grew** is the past tense of **grow**.

grey [AM GRAY] /greɪ/ (greyer, greyest, greys) ADJ & N-VAR **Grey** is the colour of ashes or of clouds on a rainy day. □ ... **grey** trousers. □ His hair is a dark shade of **grey**.

Word Partnership Use **grey** with:

N. **grey** eyes, **grey** hair, shades of **grey**, **grey** sky, **grey** suit, go **grey**, turn **grey**

greyhound /greɪhaʊnd/ (greyhounds) N-COUNT A **greyhound** is a thin dog that can run very fast.

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Word Order Maze

Falguni Chakravarty



Falguni Chakravarty

Falguni Chakravarty is a Cambridge ESOL-Celta certified ELT Consultant, Content Developer and Teacher Trainer, working on a freelance basis

Teaching word order is an important aspect of developing writing skills. Students are often quite confused as they move from simple to complex sentences. The Word Order Maze given below is a fun exercise to help students practice word order.

ACTIVITY

Objective: To provide practice in word order

Level: Primary

Material required: Worksheet – one per student

Method:

1. Prepare a worksheet as given in the sample below, using as many sentences as possible.
2. Break sentences into grids.
3. Students will connect the words with a line to make correct sentences.
4. For simple sentences two rows are sufficient; you may add more rows and boxes for more complex sentences.
5. Two examples are given to help you.
6. Set aside a time limit to complete the task.
7. Students may work individually or in groups.

Examples:

Mother	baked	a
today.	cake	delicious

Mother	baked	a
today.	cake	delicious

Chitra	beautiful	picture
painted	a	yesterday.

Chitra	beautiful	picture
painted	a	yesterday.

Sample Worksheet

1.

He	sailing	afternoon	five
went	this	with	friends.

2.

Gobind	stood	on	a
stool.	wooden	brown	tall

Writing a Cinquain

A Cinquain is a five-line poem that describes a person, place or thing within a specific number of words/syllables. The best known form of cinquain

poetry was created by the American poet Adelaide Crapsey in the 1900's.

A good form of creative writing, cinquains are better written on concrete objects rather than on abstract ideas. In a cinquain, the lines generally do not rhyme. However, they must adhere to either the word pattern or the syllable pattern as specified.

For more advanced learners, you may use the syllable pattern.

Example

Puppy
naughty, playful
jumping, growling, licking
a joyful bundle of mischief
Dachshund

Word pattern

Line 1	One word- noun
	Puppy
Line 2	Two - adjectives
	naughty, playful
Line 3	Three -ing participles
	jumping, growling, licking
Line 4	Four/five – a phrase
	a joyful bundle of mischief
Line 5	One – another noun/synonym
	Dachshund

Syllable Pattern

Line 1	Two syllables	Puppy
Line 2	Four syllables	naughty, playful
Line 3	Six syllables	jumping, growling, licking
Line 4	Eight syllables	a joyful bundle of mischief
Line 5	Two syllables	Dachshund

ACTIVITY

Objective: To provide practice in writing a Cinquain

Skill: Writing (Creative writing)

Level: Primary/Secondary

Material required: Worksheet – one per student/group

Method:

8. Prepare a worksheet as given below for each student individually/group.
9. Set a time limit for students to complete the task.
10. Have students/groups read aloud their cinquains to the class.

Worksheet

Use the following hints to write a cinquain:

1. _____ (a one word title/noun that tells what your cinquain is about.)

2. _____ (two adjectives that describe your title/noun)
3. _____ (three -ing participles that further describe your title)
4. _____ (a four or five word phrase that describes your title)
5. _____ (a one word substitute/another noun that can be used for the title)

Activities

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Activity 1 - Letter Game

Level: Pre-Primary

Objective: Letter reinforcement
Vocabulary enrichment

Materials required:

Picture cards of letters to be reinforced (l,t,I,f) and picture cards of associated vocabulary(lamp, tree etc).

You will need at least 5 picture cards for each letter.

Method:

1. Make four children stand in four corners of the classroom holding the letter cards.
2. Distribute picture cards to each child in the class.
3. Start the game by telling the students that they have to run to the letter matching with the picture card that they have.
4. Play some music to give the students a ready sign. They should reach the correct letter before the music stops.

Activity 2 - Shapes

Level: Pre-Primary

Objective: Reinforcing shapes (as many as done)
Reinforcing numbers
Cognitive skill of sorting, observation and visual discrimination

Materials: Picture cards of shapes

Method:

1. Give picture cards of different shapes to the students.
2. Call out a particular shape –example ‘CIRCLE’
3. All students who have that particular shape will come out and form the shape holding each other’s hands.
4. Continue in this manner for other shapes as well.

Activity 3 - Sorting

Materials: Picture cards of shapes, number cards from 1-10

Method:

1. Drop picture and number cards in a basket.
2. Write a number and draw a shape on the hand of each child.
3. Children will be made to sort the shapes from the basket according to the number and shape on their hand e.g.



5



2



3

4. For large numbers, this game can be played in groups. Instead of drawing on hands, chits or slips can be given.



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Call for papers

for **Fortell**,
January, May &
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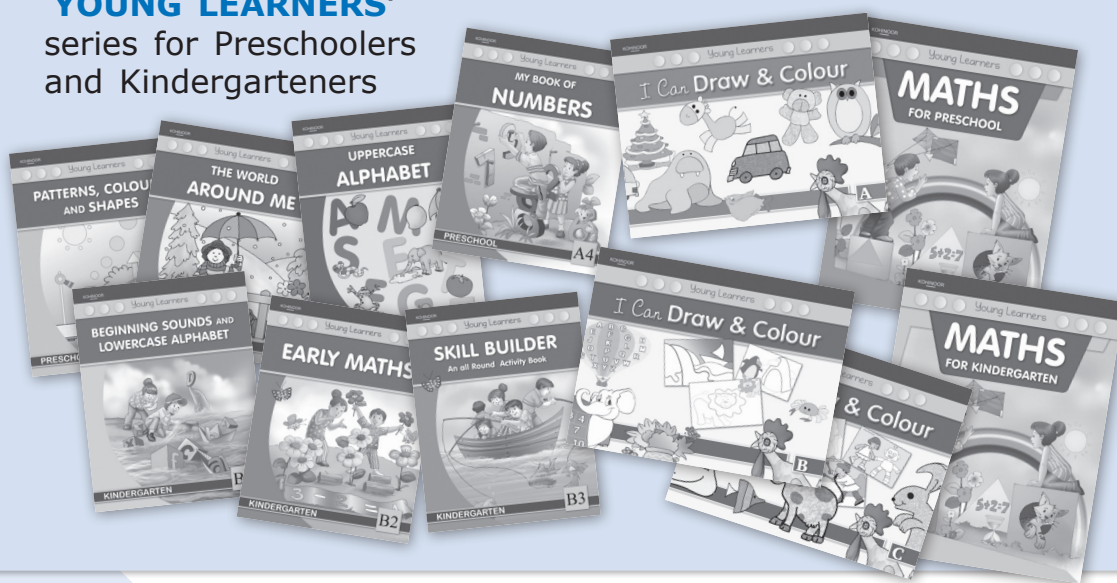
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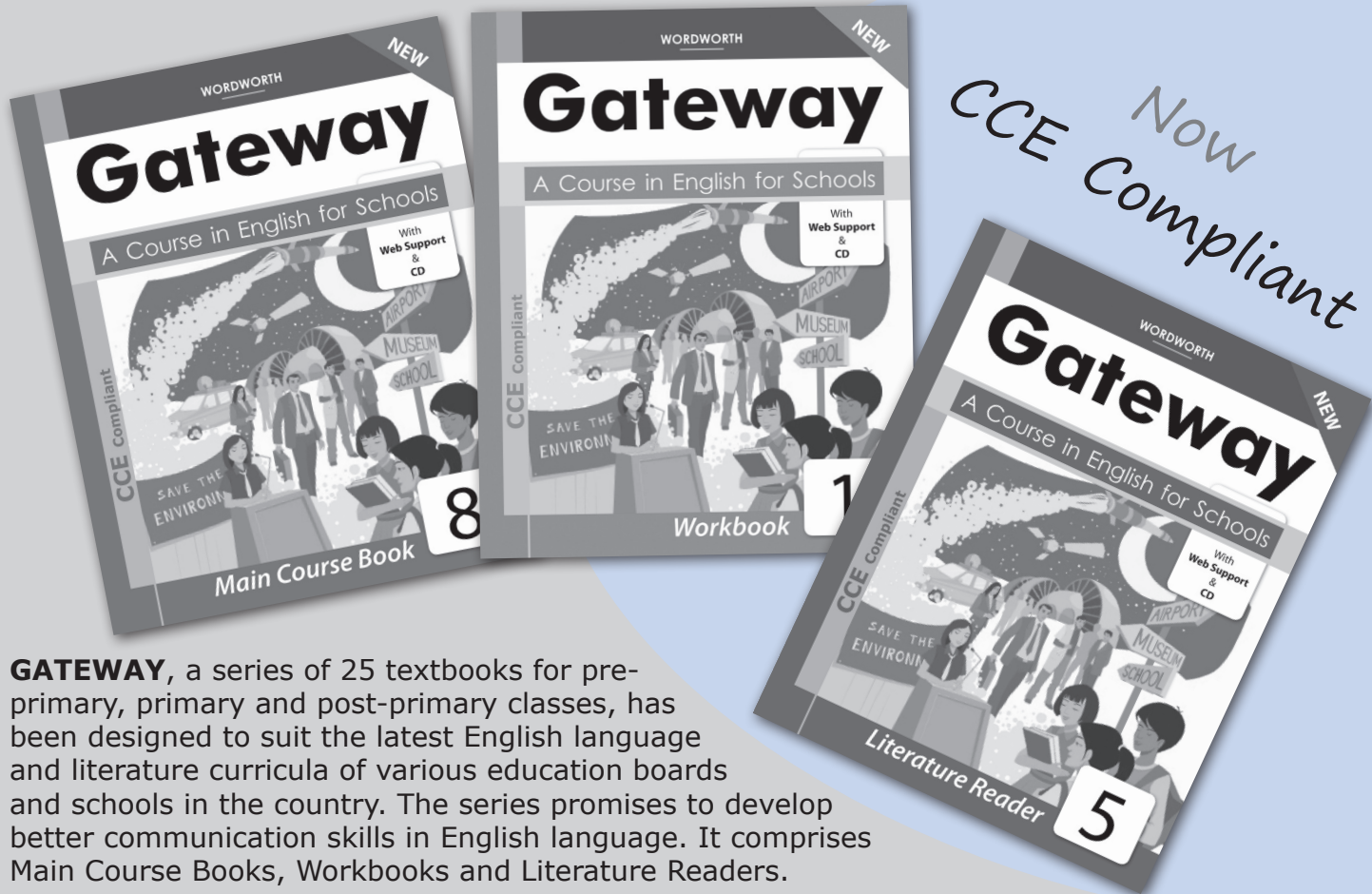


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