fortell

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Special Issue on

'Using Literature for Developing Language Skills'

INSIDE FORTELL

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Readers' Response

▶ Congrats on the latest issue of fortell. I especially was helped by the article on letter writing and found the article on the story behind words interesting.

Very best wishes

Robert Slattery

▶ Many thanks for sending me Fortell so regularly. Each issue is both enjoyable and informative. I particular liked your recent article "To teach or not to teach Grammar".

With best regards,

RWD

(Rupin Desai)

From the Editorial Desk

'Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I Learn.' Benjamin Franklin's words seem to be the echo that resounds in every page of *Fortell* that we publish. *Fortell* does believe in publishing articles and research papers that deal with experiential classroom research that involves the teacher and the taught in the lifelong journey called learning. The thrust of the journal has always been on two-way communication: a process of building partnerships between the learner and the learned. 'Teaching and learning by example' is another strategic pedagogical methodology that the journal subscribes to.

This special issue on "Using Literature for developing Language skills" comes at a crucial point when bridges and conduits between literature and language pedagogy and departments are reaching a breaking point. The rising significance of English language training and teaching methodologies in English departments is reaching a crescendo and needs to be addressed. Literature lovers are realizing that their domain is shrinking by the day. Happily cocooned in their shells like a lost princess in the ivory tower they are awkwardly marooned. Yet as English teachers we know that one without the other are also little islands apart from each other. Thus, to address the meeting points of literature and language, this issue highlights their dependency on each other and their mutual exchange.

From 'framing narratives' to 'enhancing language skills'; to using 'drama to aid social communication'; and to 'performativity' of literary texts, the contributions in this issue explore the potentialities of tapping literary resources to enhance language skills. An interesting study on 'processing literary and non literary texts' by students followed by an in depth textual analysis of seminal texts interrogates the intersecting space between the hitherto parallel domains of literature and language. An interesting attempt to 'harmonize' the two is not a just a fitting finale to the discussion but also opens up avenues for further negotiations.

We acknowledge our debt to our contributors for their timely submission and co-operation that made our journey even more pleasurable. *Fortell* has survived the onslaught of inflation and digitization largely due to its benefactors whose contributions ease our constant battle with rising costs. We would like to place on record our appreciation of Mr. B. L. Singhal whose generous financial help is much appreciated. We hope that our readers will continue to contribute to help *Fortell* sustain its unceasing endeavours. Looking forward to your comments and suggestions.

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▶ Fortell's special issue on Film Studies is a welcome initiative, specially Ravneet Kaur's article, "Film Studies: Speaking of and for the Discourse". This piece without terrorizing through overloading of theoretical apparatus opens fresh sites for viewing and interpreting films

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Framing Parameters for Teaching Language through Literature:
Special Focus on Stylistics and Linguistics Overcoming Learning Disability Challenges

Shoba. K.N

The idea of employing literature to teach language is an age-old methodology still prevalent in the academia, which has been undergoing constant revamping. However, an intriguing fact that calls for further analysis is the notion of deriving certain parameters within the broad framework of literature in English, purely for the purposes of teaching language to foreign learners.

Introduction

This study has germinated from a thought that is evoked by a statement made by Roman Jakobson almost half a century ago. In his oft-quoted words Jacobson (1960: 377) indicates the relationship between linguistics and literary studies stating that:

> If there are some critics who still doubt the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I privately believe that … linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.

In recent times a renewed interest has emerged in the teaching of literature in the language class, and quite a lot has been written on the subject whereas, in the past not much was said about the appearance of literature in a language classroom. It started from 1980s, when things started to change in language teaching. Continuous debate on the place of literature in the ELT/ESL/EFL classroom took place, with reference to the interface of literature and language. Hence, the teaching of literature is now often seen within the framework of the following dimensions: Carter and Long (1991)

i. the cultural dimension

ii. the language dimension

iii. the personal growth dimension

The present study aims at analysing the 'language dimension' with its linguistic and stylistic considerations and also to see general practices in the same.

Language teaching is a process which varies not only from country to country and culture to culture but from individual to individual. The problems faced in teaching foreign languages forced the teachers to find out and develop new methods and techniques. The so called "Communicative Language Teaching", which is very popular nowadays, gives credit to the use of the "authentic language" as it is used in a real life context whenever possible. Structured drills, which are widely used in especially audio-lingual method, make the process monotonous and these boring activities direct the students to look for new tools and materials, other than the text-book, to make the learning interesting. As seen, using literary texts in language teaching is a new innovation, but teaching a foreign language only by using literary passages cannot, of course, be so useful. So in this research, the use of literary genres in teaching a foreign language will be discussed in a specific frame.

Many scholars (Lazar, 1993; Collie and Slatter, 1994; Ur, 1996; Carter and Long, 1996; Pison, 2000; Maley, 2001) have discussed the various advantages of using literature as a language teaching resource. These reasons can be interpreted in the following ways:

i. Linguistic reason: Students are exposed to real, authentic usage of language in literary texts; these texts show them a variety of styles, registers and language learning materials at several stages of difficulty.

ii. Methological reason: Literary texts are open to various interpretations and therefore create an enormous opportunity of interaction in a language class.

iii. Motivational reason: As literary texts are the product of the writers' particular feeling

about certain aspects of life, this 'genuine feel' motivates the reader a lot. Students can easily be stimulated to express their opinion, to relate the topics and the characters in the literary texts to their own life.

Parameters for Teaching Poetry through Stylistic Approach in Language Classroom

According to Short (1996), stylistics is the direct application of linguistic evidence to interpret and analyze literature, and is a general analytical tool that uses explanations of formal aspects of a poem to discuss meaning; for instance, lexical repetition can be used to strengthen the impact of a word, and the number of turns a certain speaker has in relation to another speaker in a poem indicates his or her relative impact or importance. Rosenkjar (2006) gives examples of language-centered activities used for poetry teaching in a university ELT class in Japan, where students do the following:

- highlight complete sentences in a poem with alternating colors
- categorize words from a poem into logical groups
- circle personal pronouns and find a pattern
- underline the main verbs

Buckledee (2002) offers similar activities from a university ELT class in Italy, where students look at a poem and answer questions about verb tenses, possessive adjectives, and singular versus plural forms.

Parameters for Stylistic Prose Techniques: Applicable in Language Teaching

In attempting to make the language of the novel more accessible to students and increase their awareness of how it communicates mood and theme, I have concentrated on two main activities. The first of these is close textual/stylistic analysis - examples of which can be found in both Carter and Long (1987) and McRae and Boardman (1984). Students are encouraged to analyse an extract from the novel to identify how specific lexical and grammatical features produce particular stylistic effects. The second type of activity is more 'global' in that it focuses on how lexical clusters recur throughout the text to create a web of associations.

Close analysis:

Example:

Read the extract and then answer the questions.

> There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week- ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing- brushes and hammers and gardens hears, repairing the ravages of the night before. Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York-every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb. At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough coloured lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold.
>
> ### *The Great Gatsby,* p. 45l

i.   What kind of verbs are used to describe the motor boats (line 7) and station wagon (line 12). Does this have any particular effect?

ii. The word 'his' is repeated many times in the passage. To whom does it refer and what effect do you think is created by using it so often?

iii. Rewrite lines 20 to 23 in the active voice. Do you think this would change the effect of the paragraph?

iv. Write down all the adverbial time phrases you can find in the passage. When are time phrases like this usually used? Why do you think there are so many here?

Lexical clusters:

Examples:

i. The following words recur throughout the book. Try to organize them into three main groups which you think have some characteristics in common: Dust, Silver, Rolls Royce, Music, Smoke, Flower, Stars, Yacht, Money, Ashes, Gold, White, Mansion, Light.

ii. Write down all the possible associations you have for a particular word and the other words in its group. For example, perhaps you grouped 'ashes' and 'dust' together and both words made you think of death or destruction. Compare your associations with those of other students and of your teacher.

iii. Look at the first three chapters of the novel again. Write down any phrase or sentence containing one of the words above. Can you find any connections between the words above and their description of particular settings or characters?

The Functional Aspect of Literature in terms of Language Learning

The first advantage of literature which merits attention is its function in language learning. Literature can serve this purpose by having different aspects of language authentically within itself including not only syntax and lexis but also pragmatic and cultural points not easily found in non-literary texts. Van (2009) states that since literature is full of instances of real-life language in various situations, it provides unprecedented opportunities to ameliorate syntactic, pragmatic, cultural, and discoursal awareness among learners. In a similar line of inquiry, McKay persuasively asserts that since certain syntactic patterns and certain stylistic word order inversions occur more frequently in literature, it can be an ideal reading content for ELT classroom because it involves the integration of four language skills, it also promotes students' close reading of texts, and it is an ideal source for extensive reading programs in L2 classroom because becoming engaged with literature will certainly increase students' interest in reading. Considering the writing skill mentions that literature can be a rich and provocative source for writing in ESL/EFL/ELT contexts. McKay (1982) cites Allen (1975, p.111) as judiciously arguing that it is important that students understand cultural issues by saying that "Literature is a facet of a culture." In other words, Literature and culture are inextricably bound together. So, students come to understand cultural differences through diverse literary texts. Literature, moreover, promotes cultural and intercultural awareness (Van, 2009) especially in the era of globalization. In the era of globalization, there is a growing concern of universally shared needs and wants rather than individual needs. Since literature deals with universal concepts (Maley, 1989), there is an urge to grab on literature as an input source for flourishing language learners' competence.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning language through literature demands dynamic involvement of both the teacher and the taught in bringing the literary text to life. George Eliot calls it aesthetic teaching, "I think aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity" (George Eliot 1967 p.9).The medium is language and the context and form of a literary work arouse interest in the meaningful use of that medium and this is the idea of George Eliot's "aesthetic teaching". But in this technique, the role of the teacher is very crucial and important. His role is to support the students' efforts to establish intensive relationship with literary texts without interfering too much in their act of creating meaning.

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Enhancing Language Skills through Reading Literature

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Literature plays an important role in language learning. It has an affective, attitudinal, motivational, cultural and aesthetic factor which provides an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use. The literary text aids in the development of reading proficiency which contributes to students academic and occupational objectives. Selecting relevant themes for different levels of learning is important. Traditionally literature functioned to develop language for wisdom. Today its usages are many. It extends linguistic knowledge, word formation, common expressions, vocabulary expansion, grammar and communication. It also fosters reading proficiency.

Literature enables communication. The development of oral and written communication skills enhances personal effectiveness. It prepares our careers which involves the experience of communication proficiencies. As the world is becoming more and more globalized, it is shrinking in terms of communication. So, business has to take the global market place. This is not just about new markets to sell products in, but also where to locate production and where to source resources from. Today researches on language, literature and communication aim at preparing students to understand traditional and emerging communication technologies from a variety of perspectives, including communication studies, rhetorical studies, human – computer interaction, technological communication.

Another way literature can be used in classroom is teaching grammar of the language. The structural complexity, its level of usage helps in acquiring knowledge of linguistic rules. The level of use gives us the rules for effective communication. The grammatical rules are salient in the text of literature. The text promotes language skills on the level of usage. It could be followed by some exercises on regular and irregular verbs. This could be done through games, fill in the blanks, encircling etc. Other exercises could be on degrees of formality, tone of voice and exploration of role relationship. Reading literature could also help in the development of word forms, common expressions and vocabulary. Language usage could be explored to gain information.

Research shows that isolating language skills is ineffective in the practical use of them. When the skills are kept in the context of literature and writing they take on new meaning for the student. This method not only gives the student more understanding for the skills, but also adds to the retention of them. Studies indicate that students who once disliked language skills when using a basal program, decided it was their favorite subject when they learned language through literature. Using an integrated approach to learning, students learn the skills in the context of real literature. This creates a deeper understanding and generates greater interest in grammar, writing mechanics, vocabulary, spelling, and other language skills. For example, a basal program may teach adjectives separately from other skills. The student may be asked to fill in blanks with adjectives and circle them in a paragraph. This may give students a clue about adjectives, but does not translate into his/her practical use of adjectives in their writing.

While teaching students a language skill, for example, adjectives, passages from literature can be read pointing out the adjectives. We can first read literature passages that use adjectives. Then they might be asked to read the passage without the adjectives and decide how important they are to the understanding of a story. This will help them to easily assimilate and internalize adjectives. Another activity may include writing a descriptive sentence/paragraph about a picture using adjectives or rewriting the passage using different adjectives. These activities not only teach language skills in addition to adjectives, but students will incorporate the skills into their everyday writing.

We read literature for aesthetic and efferent purpose. Efferent reading is aimed at using a text to gain information. This mode promotes language skills on the level of usage. Aesthetic reading is the enjoyment attained by interacting with the text. Usage comes into play only when it impedes or highlights that experience. Readers often make judgment about the characters. A reader fantasizes as to what one would do in a similar situation. Such discussion promotes interaction. So, language usage should be explored to such an extent that it will be relevant to that experience.

Reading of literature necessitates the ability to interact with a text by decoding the language and comprehending the concepts presented. It involves two levels of interaction, i.e. linguistic and

conceptual. There is complex relationship between linguistic complexity and cultural background. In some instances familiarity with the text makes it easy to deal with complex syntactic structures. Reading is not a reaction to text but as interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text.

Literary texts reflect particular cultural perspectives and nuances. We may be unfamiliar with some of the cultural assumptions in literature. This is useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on the usage and use level. Examining foreign culture through literature may increase the understanding of that culture and spur imagination, thus leading to creativity. Studying imagination can encourage tolerance. The cultural problem of literature could promote creativity. Thus, literary works promotes greater tolerance for cultural differences.

Human life holds lots of mysteries and it is not possible to explore all. Rather it benefits us if some of the realities are accepted unquestionably. It helps in making life easier. Literature helps us in understanding these irrationalities. Irrationalities in life can best be explored by reading of literature which paints on its canvas, life in its multiple facets.

When we focus from life to communication we find that drama as a genre of literature aids in understanding and analyzing discourse. Application of conversational principles to the written text in drama yields results. This can be extrapolated for an understanding of real life talk. Apart from it we could harness wide range of theoretical, philosophical thinking in writing which includes novels, cinema and music.

Conversation in organizations is difficult to capture in its complexities. We can study the nuances relating to conversation by using drama as a device to gain an understanding of the governing structure of communication. This can be focused from life to communication through reading of dialogue in plays and fictions. The dialogues in the plays help us in understanding the nuances governing talk in the set up. It helps in understanding of conversation through reading of syntax and semantics. For understanding we can view stylistic devices, repetition, question-answer sequences, use and efficacy of the stylistic devices, extrapolate the findings and devise a model for effectiveness in naturally occurring talk. Language is used to communicate. The purpose for the exchange of communication may be relationship centric or task oriented. In task oriented communication the emphasis is on accuracy of details, the factual correctness with

the right quantum of information. Reading of conversation in plays provides great depth and insight into effective strategies.

Let us take some dialogues from the absurd play, *The Zoo Story* **by Edward Albee (Pg 160)**

Jerry : It's …it's a nice day.

Peter   [stares unnecessarily at the sky]: Yes, it is; lovely.

Jerry : I've been to the zoo.

Peter : Yes, I think you said so…didn't you?

Jerry : You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow if you do not see it on your TV tonight.
You have TV, haven't you?

Peter : Why yes, we have two; one for the children.

Here, Jerry initiates topic of the zoo and moves away from it. The sudden conversational switch distracts Peter.

To study communication principles through drama for developing communication in the business world requires competencies that can be perfected through a study and comprehension of dialogue. Multiple perspectives could be presented in the dialogue. Nature of communication, the manner of approach is the fundamental prerequisite for effective communication. How plays would be useful? For the given purpose plays are generally viewed through the themes, vision of life they project, organization of events, manipulation of characters, the use of language. Some of the dialogues are similar to everyday ordinary conversation. Hence application of principles of communication holds good. In support, we argue that conversation is generally found to correspond to ordinary conversation in structure, goals and adherence to maxims. The special effect of plays lies in theme, in vision etc. The naturally occurring talk is obvious that special effect could be found in these parameters. So the applicability stands justified. Gradually, quantity, quality, manner and relation of conversation are improved.

On studying general pragmatics which refers to the study of general conditions of the communicative use of language, we could emphasize the role of rhetoric at the interpersonal and textual level. In a speech situation these two types of rhetoric are used to produce a certain effect through language in the mind of the receiver.

Interpersonal communication has received great attention in social psychology. This line of study has consistently demonstrated how personal

influence affects individuals to make choices. The power of interpersonal communication through word of mouth communication has been well recognized in consumer literature. Consumer behaviour depends on argument quality to the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in an informational message. Relevance refers to the extent to which the messages are applicable and useful for decision making.

Dramatic action can capture attention and arouse emotion. If well done, this is among the most effective of influence strategies. Dramatic does not necessarily mean flashy visuals in presentations; sometimes the effect is felt through the most prosaic means.

Another innovative strategy to develop skills is through literature and films. They have the advantage of action and thrill in real life tales. The evocative and formative power of literature can be used to develop concepts of leadership and ethics. We can explore the comprehending ability for enhancing communication skills through dramas. As human life holds a lot of mysteries and literature can help us in understanding these irrationalities as it helps us to understand the nuances governing human conduct in all situations. Art and literature help in self development which gradually evolves into a world –view including the ability to understand things. For instance Hans Anderson in The Ugly Duckling studies the importance of self esteem. The formative power of literature has been used to teach and develop concepts of leadership and ethics. Literature and films are fast gaining ground as innovative strategies for teaching managerial skills. Texts should be selected keeping linguistic and conceptual level in mind. It is essential that literature be approached not efferently but in a manner which establishes a personal and aesthetic

interaction of reader of a text. So, literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use.

Literature is a very provocative instrument for raising variety of enduring ethics. It could be used in the business world where competencies could be mastered and perfected through study and comprehension of dialogue. This could combine with multiple perspectives presented in an inordinate degree in a stipulated talk. So, for communicating effectively we can take the stylistic devices, extrapolate the findings to workplace talk and devise a model for effectiveness in naturally occurring talk with a workplace backdrop.

Teaching language through literature will equip the student for a lifetime of communication through the written and spoken word. Students will acquire a deeper understanding and a greater interest in learning language skills. Reading real books instead of basal stories makes reading a joy and the beginning of a lifelong adventure for learners.Using authentic literature increases chances of life-long reading. It improves literacy and communicative practices. It improves communicative practices and sparks students' interests. Moreover, teaching literature in language class fosters critical thinking skills and a love for reading. Learners attend class more regularly and go the library on their own time to read and enjoy discussing books, plots and characters and relate them to their own personal lives. It stimulates connections to students' lives and empowers them to become leaders among their peers.

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Processing of Literary and Non-Literary Texts by Engineering Undergraduates of ESL

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Introduction

There are some basic questions that crop up in the mind of a classroom teacher-researcher or even a language teaching theorist. What goes on in the mind of a learner when he/she processes a text? How helpful are literary texts as compared to other non-literary texts? Can English literature be used for language teaching in a non-intimidating way, in a multilingual, mixed ability, multicultural Indian classrooms? The study presented here would try to answer these questions with empirical evidence.

In this study, a distinction between Information-processing and Input-processing is made. Information-processing refers to the chunking of ideas/concepts present in the written/spoken text, in order to comprehend the message / gist of the text. The priority here is meaning-embedded units/chunks rather than the language structure of the text. We argue, therefore, that "reading a text" and "listening to a speech" involve Information-processing and that reading involves the processes or activities for comprehension of the essence of the written text source and listening involves the processes for absorbing the main ideas put forward in the spoken text. Hence, the focus is on the extraction of meaning-embodied text chunks.

Input-processing refers to the focus on the linguistic structure of the written/spoken text. This is revealed when a learner prepares a script from the written text source (selected by him/her) s/he has read (note-making); when s/he takes down notes while listening to a Speech (note-taking); and finally, when s/he answers questions (in a written test) based on the contents of the text and the notes-made or taken.

Theoretical background

Theories of SLA proposed by researchers have stressed on: the role of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985); the role of comprehensible output (Swain, 1985); the role of writing (Swain & Lapkin 1995); the structures come out of the meanings of words while following universal principles in LAD (Jayaseelan, 1996); and that the learners process input moving from input to intake to monitoring and finally output systems and throughout prioritize either form or meaning (Van Patten, 2003:420 in Gragera, 2005: 2). Learner Language studies are considered in detail to understand what goes on in the mind of a learner. (Ellis, 2005; Corder, 1967; Selinker, 1972; Faerch et al, 1984)

The Experimental Study

The subjects (20 in number) are from an autonomous engineering college in Haryana. The Experimental Task (cf to Appendix: 5 - 6 for the complete tasks) had two types of extracts. 10 subjects (LT-S1 to LT-S10) were given seven Literary Texts (LTs); and 10 subjects (NLT-S1 to NLT-S10) were given seven Non-Literary Texts (NLTs) - of which any two had to be analyzed from two perspectives: (i) Linguistic structure of the texts (Input Processing); and (ii) Meaning and the modern interpretations of the words and expressions used in the texts (Information Processing). The hypothesis is that: There would be a qualitative difference in the processing of Literary and Non-Literary Texts.

Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative Analysis: The responses of the 20 subjects (LT-S1 to LT-S10 and NLT-S1 to NLT-S10) were analyzed along the criteria discussed here. The five criteria for evaluation for Input-Processing were: (C1) Total number of words; (C2) Creativity: The idea units that did not depend on the script verbatim but were expressed by the subject in his or her own words were considered as instances of creativity. Examples: Hostel life, wow! (C3) Self-Corrections: The number of instances of self-correction in the responses. Examples: teaches de-technical destruction; (C4) Errors: in Vocabulary and Syntax; (C5) New Vocabulary: new expressions. Examples: Share study (for combined study).

The five criteria for evaluation for Information-Processing were: (C6) Clarity: The idea units that expressed the definition of a concept or illustrated a concept were identified as instances of clarity. Examples: [in Biotechnology] which is the manipulation of the genes with the help of different techniques; (C7) No. of idea units: group of words which would express/embody an idea of the speaker. Examples: with the development of; (C8) Discourse Structure: The coherence and relevance of the response with respect to the question; (C9) Criticism: The idea units that have a critical content in them – either considering negative and positive aspects of something or arguing for or against something - are considered as instances of criticism. Examples: He wonderfully threads (suspense and superstition); (C10) Text Dependence: The idea units that repeated verbatim parts of the script were considered as instances of script dependence.

The quantitative analysis of the responses of the 10 subjects (LT-S1 to LT-S10) for Literary Texts; and 10 subjects (NLT-S1 to NLT-S10) for Non-Literary texts, was done by giving individual scores criteria-wise and then ranking them relatively. In the Table given below, the consolidated ranks of the subjects are given as follows: H=High; M= Medium; L=Low.

The Consolidated Ranks of the Processors of Literary Texts & Non-Literary Texts

A. Maximal Processors

Criteria→ Subject↓	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10
Literary Texts										
LT-S1	H	H	H	H	L	H	H	H	-	M
LT-S2	H	H	H	H	L	M	H	H	-	H
LT-S3	H	H	H	M	L	H	H	M	M	H
Non-Literary Texts										
NLT-S1	H	H	H	L	-	H	H	M	-	H
NLT-S2	H	H	M	H	-	H	H	H	-	H
NLT-S3	H	H	-	L	-	L	H	H	H	H

B. Optimal Processors

Criteria→ Subject↓	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10
Literary Texts										
LT-S4	H	M	-	M	M	L	M	H	-	H
LT-S5	M	M	H	H	-	M	M	H	-	L
LT-S6	M	M	L	L	-	H	M	H	-	M
Non-Literary Texts										
NLT-S4	M	M	-	H	-	L	M	M	M	M
NLT-S5	M	M	L	M	H	M	M	H	M	M
NLT-S6	M	M	-	L	-	-	M	M	H	L

C. Minimal Processors

Criteria→ Subject↓	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10
Literary Texts										
LT-S7	L	L	L	L	-	L	L	H	-	L
LT-S8	L	L	L	L	-	L	L	L	-	L
LT-S9	L	L	-	L	-	L	L	M	-	L
LT-10	L	L	-	L	-	L	L	L	-	-
Non-Literary Texts										
NLT-S7	L	L	-	L	-	M	L	L	-	M
NLT-S8	L	L	H	L	-	L	L	L	M	L
NLT-S9	L	L	-	L	H	L	L	L	L	L
NLT-S10	L	L	L	M	-	-	L	L	L	L

Conclusion and Implications for Classroom Teaching and Research

For the Maximal processors: Self-corrections, Errors and New Vocabulary; and Clarity were high in LT processing. Criticism and Text Dependence were higher for NLT processing. So, the LTs are more suitable for both Input and Information processing whereas NLTs are suitable only for Information Processing.

For the Optimal processors: No. of words, Self-corrections, Clarity and Discourse were higher in LT Input and Information processing. New Vocabulary and Criticism were higher for NLT processing. The balance tilts towards the LTs for Optimal processors.

For the Minimal processors: Self-corrections, Errors, New Vocabulary & Clarity, Criticism, and

Text Dependence were higher in NLT Input and Information processing; whereas only Discourse was higher for LT Information processing and none for Input processing. So, NLTs are more suitable for the Minimal processors.

For the classroom based teaching, literary texts need to be used for Maximal and Optimal text processors (highly motivated learners); whereas for the Minimal processors (for less motivated learners), Non-Literary texts need to be used to begin with.

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Appendix/Annexures

NC College of Engineering, Israna (Panipat) Orators' Club

Name:

Course:

Branch:

Year:

Roll No:

Analyze any TWO of the extracts from the two perspectives given below: 2X5=10 marks

1. Linguistic structure of the extracts (comment on the words; phrases; sentence structures used)

2. Meaning and interpretations of the words and expressions used in the extracts

   a. Rainwater harvesting is a technology used for collecting and storing rainwater from rooftops, the land surface or rock catchments using simple techniques such as jars and pots as well as more complex techniques such as underground check dams.

   b. The method of mining gold varies with the nature of the deposit. Two types of deposit can be considered here: one is placer deposit, which refers to the occurrence of gold in sand particles or gravel in a riverbed; the other is lode mine which refers to gold occurring as veins in gravel or rock.

   c. Smart materials with a memory, and in the form of metals and plastics which can change their shapes automatically, are emerging from their infancy. They are all set to play a key role in many aspects of everyday life early in the next century.

   d. Advances in biotechnology, materials technology such as carbon nano - fibres, and information and communications technology will support development of bio-fuels, fuel cells, new energy carriers such as hydrogen, micro-power networks, and new generations of solar technologies.

   e. Solar technologies use the sun's energy and light to provide heat, light, hot water, electricity, and even cooling, for homes, businesses, and industry.

   f. Nuclear reactors produce wastes which remain dangerously radioactive for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. The disposal of these wastes is a serious problem. At present, they are often

stored in underground tanks or sealed in containers and dropped into deep ocean trenches. Neither method is very satisfactory. The threat of environmental pollution is always there.

g. Pedaling is probably the most efficient use of the muscles of the human body. Pedal power, using either bicycle-like pedal arrangement or a treadle mechanism, can be used to power a range of agricultural equipment, water pumps, grinders and electric generators.

NC College of Engineering, Israna (Panipat) Orators' Club

Name:

Course:

Branch:

Year:

Roll No:

Analyze any TWO of the extracts from the two perspectives given below: 2X5=10 marks

1. Linguistic structure of the literary extracts (comment on the words; phrases; sentence structures used)

2. Meaning and the modern interpretations of the words and expressions used in the extracts

a. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?/And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?/ Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss

b. How sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child

c. Mind in its own place/ Makes a heaven of hell or hell of heaven

d. A man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for?

e. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –/ I took the one less travelled by, /And that has made all the difference.

f. The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, / But I have promises to keep, /And miles to go before I sleep,/And miles to go before I sleep.

g. How happy is he born or taught /That serveth not another's will;/Whose armour is his honest thought,/And silly truth his highest skill!

Speaking as Performance: *Using Drama to Aid Social Communication in a Language Classroom*

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...the ability to interact and to communicate in efficient ways is, after all, at the heart of language teaching/learning
-Manfred Lukas Schewe

The use of drama to teach language skills has been in practice for some decades, the primary motivation being that of encouraging the students to step out of their shells and to provide them a platform to engage their speaking skills. This paper analyses the process of language learning (specifically speaking skill) through the process of composition and enactment of a skit as part of the English Language Proficiency Course (ELPC) conducted by ILLL, University of Delhi, this year.

The course structure of ELPC required the students to create and present a skit at the meeting of all students who were enrolled in the program across different colleges towards the end of the program. We are presenting our observations based on two skits performed by students of two different centers.

1. The skit entitled 'Fun TV' was a series of short segments comprising of an anchor, a newsreader, two students as models in an advertisement, a standup comedy by two students, an interview between two students and finally a song sung by a student. The variety of characters is indicative of the diverse ideas and inclinations of the group of students. An effort was made to ensure maximum participation onstage and opportunities for all the students to speak the dialogues of the skit.

2. The second skit titled 'Letter to a Son' was about a misunderstanding which crops up

because of an unclear letter written in English by a mother, living in an Indian village, to her son who lives in the city. The skit was prepared by the students highlighting their own predicament of being unable to communicate clearly due to lack of linguistic and grammar skills. The students interestingly ended the skit with a message that English should be taught as a language of practical communication as it has become a necessity in the present world.

For the purpose of the present discussion, we are going to concern ourselves with the engagement of the students in the process of discussing, writing and presenting the play and the effects these exercises had on their ability to 'converse' in the Second language, English.

Speaking skills comprise of two co-ordinates: fluency and accuracy. Initially, students were encouraged to be fluent rather than accurate as constant interjections usually results in an increase in inhibition which is detrimental to fluency. Moreover, it is highly unnatural even for native speakers to speak in grammatically correct language with complete fluency. It was important for the students to understand this.

Charlyn Wessel in her book Drama talks about the omniscience of drama in our lives. We act out some or the other role everywhere: that of a student, a relative, a friend etc. This is important for the purpose of the current theorization because drama as 'life' and drama as 'action' is carried out through the medium of language in a particular context. This also helps the students in challenging their fright of grammar and focus on fluent communication even if by extra-linguistic means. The difference between learning by rote and learning through drama and action which provides a context is that when the students participate in the action/situation they inhabit the context and hence the assimilation of ideas and language is much more thorough. The difference can be imagined by thinking about two scenarios:

1. When a student is given a conversation to learn and practice through a text by rote and

2. When a student is asked to perform a dialogue with a classmate where the 'communication' of the idea dictates the dialogue and the student has the freedom to express and innovate.

The emphasis in the more dynamic of the two techniques is on the process of communicating the ideas and the complex tones involved in the literature (irony, comedy, satire, moralistic etc.)

that the students engage with. This kind of an opportunity to go beyond the grammar and engage with the intricacies of the language is usually available to them only in the practice of their first language. A similar opportunity can be generated by the means of drama or a staged 'performance' in the second language. In the skits under discussion, the teachers played a minimal role and were present mostly for guidance, moral support and spell/grammar check.

The concept of 'performance' can also be variously understood. For the purpose of this paper we take the definition given by Heuvel (1991, p.4) who says that the term 'performance' "…is traditionally defined…as the staging of the literary artifact and is thus implicated in the reconstituting of determinate meaning and authorial power". The skits performed by the ELPC students can be analyzed only through such parameters, as these skits were not mere enactments of already available texts. These skits were scripted by the students themselves, thereby adding new dimensions to the ideas of 'reconstituting determinate meaning' and 'authorial power'.

At the level of the performance, the inclusion of drama in a language learning class gives the students a platform to speak and creates the necessary space and 'need' for social communication. It also gives students 'masks' or 'characters' to assume so that they can talk in a less inhibited fashion. The ELPC skits took the students out of their primary positions as language learners and put them in 'contexts' where they became active and natural participants: as mothers, as friends and other characters. Especially since most of the students were first generation learners, this sort of facilitation helped the students come out of their shells and position themselves as confident language consumers thus subverting the traditional 'authorial power' that a text exerts upon a user/speaker of the text.

It also gave them the control over the 'text', which they had created anew. It put them in a position of power over a second language where they could come together to 'maneuver' the language to facilitate communication at a level which was comfortable for them.

According to Wessels, drama can also enable the students and teachers to interact at a more democratic level. The students are able to interact more freely and enthusiastically with the teacher and with the classmates when they are in an equal environment where everyone is responsible for some aspect of the drama/skit. We

felt that the students felt responsible for the skit/performance and hence assumed a more confident persona because they were able to maneuver the language to suit their needs. During the practice sessions of the two plays being discussed here, the role of the teacher was minimized to that of a 'facilitator' rather than an instructor. Apart from being a rewarding exercise from the point of view of language acquisition, this also served as a confidence building exercise, which enabled the students to speak more uninhibitedly.

Producing a text for performance:
(i) Generating content: A discussion of the brainstorming sessions to compose the script of the skit.

The first reaction to the prospect of staging a skit in front of an audience was a unanimous withdrawal. Persistent prodding revealed that most students had never performed on stage before this and they felt that they were incapable of doing so now. The problem was not only the perceived deficiency of adequate second language skills but it also concerned apprehensions they had about themselves. Gradually, the students started the discussions about the performance (at first largely in Hindi and then in English) and eventually, to their delight, they found this to be an interesting exercise. There was a spirited exchange of ideas resulting in minor arguments and major jokes (perhaps for the first time, they were using their second language skills to express themselves in various moods, even humor, despite the acknowledged fact that their English was not grammatically perfect or fluent). There was also a growing sense of confidence at their ability to use English, which reflected in their body language. For instance, while composing the skit 'Fun TV' the students were divided into smaller groups of 2-3 students each to prepare a small segment/episode. Communication among individuals was achieved through both verbal and non-verbal means. They were also alerted to the usage of non-verbal media to enable communication as it is also a decisive factor in constructing meaning on stage. The discussions were simultaneously accompanied with the writing of dialogues and stage directions, which underwent several stages of editing before being finalized.

It has been agreed that every student who is a competent and confident user of even one language has 'linguistic' ability. Second language acquisition can be assisted by making use of these available linguistic abilities. The process of producing their own text for performance was important according to us because the students drew on their ability and imagination of the first language. These ideas were then transformed into skits in the target language, English. The students picked up jokes and stories they had heard in Hindi and transformed them into skits in English. The process was highly rewarding as it re-enforced their confidence in the first language and in creating a legible 'text' through translation and transliteration they entered confidently into the arena of the second/target language. The cultural markers within the text were familiar to them, even though they were now in a different language, and hence in case of confusions they collaborated with each other to come up with solutions rather than relying on or being bound by a textbook.

These cultural markers also served as a context within which the language was played out as a means of social exchange according to the story and the characters. The variations in language, even though it was English, according to the different characters and situations were explored by the students on their own. The provision of this 'context' made them more active learners and observers of the language.

Rehearsing the skit
After the complete (rather rough) draft was prepared, the students began rehearsing for the skit. Often additions and deletions were made to the script by the students as they practiced through the script. The script of the skit was being constantly rewritten to accommodate fresh ideas. These practice sessions, guided by the teachers, overflowed with vibrant communication among the students, and they were more at ease with themselves and with the language. They even attempted newer sentence structures and became vigilant about punctuation marks while speaking out the dialogues.

Performance
While staging a performance, the students find reassurance and re-enforcement from their peers, making them essentially collective participants in language rather than mere learners or observers. The students act on cues given by their fellow students and actors. Another important aspect of the performance is that if the students fail with language between the performance they find encouragement and support from their peers and have to necessarily resort to other non-verbal avenues of communication.

Also, on the platform that was provided by the ILLL, the students were observers as well as participants as every group present in the audience

was supposed to present their own skits. The students hence were saved the anxiety of being judged by 'competent' practitioners of the English language. There was however anticipation about the performance of other groups of students. The course instructors also formed a part of the audience. During the performance, they spoke their practiced dialogues in a seemingly spontaneous manner and also at times, had to improvise if they forgot their dialogues. Such acts of impromptu dialogue construction displayed their speaking skills and their ability to use language as required.

After the performance, students from both the groups reported that this was a memorable experience which they would cherish all their lives. They also specifically commented on how it enabled them to shed their inhibitions and boosted their confidence.

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"Ada" un-cloaked: Performativity of Language in Ruswa's Umrao Jan Ada

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Ruswa's novel, Umrao Jan Ada (1899), found its place in the literary canon of Indian literature for several reasons: the bold engagement with the narrative of a courtesan's life; promoting a new found place for the feminine subjectivity within the canon; development of the novel form in Urdu; but above all, for the radical authorial complexity to weave the intricate web of self-reflexive narration coupled with subjectivities of desire veiled in language and especially, poetry. This paper will look at a 'third' performative element in the novel after Umrao, the narrator-protagonist, and Ruswa the author-narrator; namely, language in/of the text as a performative character. The paper will also address how teaching a text like this, in translation, may resultantly be both, an exhilarating and annihilating enterprise.[1]

In 2010, a compilation of lectures delivered by Orhan Pamuk was published in English titled, The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist. I'd like to begin this paper by referring to the opening lecture in the book, "What Our Minds Do When We Read Novels", and borrow from Pamuk's reading of Schiller. Pamuk lists, in the course of his argument, several 'operations' that the mind of a reader undergoes in the process of reading a novel, where an especially keen observation reads such:

"To read a novel is to wonder constantly, even at moments when we lose ourselves most deeply in

the book: How much of this is fantasy, and how much is real? A logical paradox exists between, on the one hand the experience of losing oneself in the novel and naively thinking it is real, and, on the other, one's sentimental reflective curiosity about the extent of fantasy it contains. But the inexhaustible power and vitality of the art of the novel stem from its unique logic and from its reliance on this type of conflict."[2]

This intimate study of the novel, acts as a perfect springboard to 'unveil' the way the form of the novel, especially the one in question – Umrao Jan – builds this conflict between logic and fantasy. My preoccupation will be to establish how the linguistic competency of the novel lends itself to the articulation of subjectivity and of desire on the part of the socially ousted protagonist. Desires exposed and concealed, seductive effects on the audiences, bold transgression of conservative social codes – all mark the rich tale of Umrao Jan 'Ada' in nineteenth century Awadh.

The reader/student is first acquainted with the protagonist whose 'sound' enters the narrative, but is yet 'veiled' from the sight of the narrative. She praises a verse that she overhears and cannot prevent herself from responding to it. Through Ruswa's subsequent narration and deference in tone, we know that it is Umrao Jan 'Ada', a renowned courtesan. The sheer courtesy of address tells even an unacquainted reader that the woman could not have merely been a prostitute, and it

is here that the difference between a prostitute and courtesan is first marked out. As Sukrita Paul Kumar notes, "Ruswa used self-conscious fictional devices to explore the inner scape of Umrao Jan's personality because he believed that the novel as a genre had the potential of presenting human beings truthfully… When he works out complex narrative ways to 'simply record a faithful portrayal of actual happenings', he indirectly projects also the complexity of both Umrao Jan's personality as well as her situation in a social context."[3] Paul Kumar's observations lead us to a deeper insight of the role that the narrative plays in etching the psychological complexity of the protagonist who has now been brought centre stage from the margins of traditional society.

Umrao stands as an 'excess' to the bourgeois nineteenth century domestic, conjugal space – that is she cannot be placed at par with the wife or the widow – but commands almost equally high respect and deference in the eyes of the elite men of Awadhi society. To what does she owe such esteem and admiration? Why is the position of the courtesan different and better than that of a prostitute? The answers to all such questions of position, identity and selfhood rests, I propose, within the morphology of language. 'Ada', an address that Umrao uses, means coquetry and signifies the performativity behind the persona of Ruswa's heroine. The games that she plays, teasing the audiences, exuding her charm and skills at poetry, flattery, erotic seduction and a range of such talents, are the alluring attractions of Umrao that catch the reader's attention at first.

The courtesans were highly skilled singers who had access to education, were taught to read and write, and trained in etiquette and sophistication. They were entitled to the patronage and protection of the court and commanded immense respect in society. Living in lavish apartments in the bazaars of the chowk, these courtesans were not only seen as the preservers and performers of the high culture of the court, but also the shapers of development in Hindustani music and Kathak dance styles.

The first mushaira, acts as the perfect stage for the reader to understand and acquaint herself with the mid-nineteenth century Awadhi society: its linguistic labyrinths of the culture of poetry, and coquetry and the leisure that is awarded by virtue of being modern elites under the British Raj influence. The text of Umrao Jan Ada has remarkable self-reflexivity about it, with the narrator-heroine constantly teasing a 'performance' out of a confessional mode of story telling. For instance, Umrao reminisces with Mirza Sahib in attendance, "Before that I had been given money, but never a whole rupee. I kept it with me a long time, first because I had nothing to spend it on and second because if I tried to spend it people would have asked me where I had got it. I now learnt to keep secrets – a clear sign that I was approaching the age of discretion."(my emphasis)[4] Almost simultaneously, with effortless ease, Umrao travels, here, from a nostalgic self-reflective confession to a 'performance' of an episode from her life.

Umrao's style of speech, too, was "extremely refined, and this was only natural", and it is important to remember that "she had seen things with her eyes that most people never heard of." She is a master of impromptu verse – mastery such that even the greatest masters did not dare to open their mouths in her presence[5]. While her accomplishments precede her through most of the introduction, when Umrao takes the stage, the naïve reader is left with no choice but to admire and watch in front of their eyes, the unfolding of this enigmatic selfhood.

The problem with feminine selfhood that arises in self-reflection is a basic disjunction between the idea of the self-condition (conditions of birth, development, habitus) and the educated mind embedded in domestication. In Umrao's case, her education and acculturation of taste in music, dance, and poetry along with her embeddedness within the kotha frame the coordinates for the rise of her new found selfhood. The language used in narration of her bildungsroman suggests embittered nostalgia towards her past and her fated destiny.

In the latter half of the narrative, Umrao's decision to elope with Faiz Ali, is played out by an interior debate of honest self reflection, that lead us to identifying the registers of confidence in Umrao:

"Faiz Ali had so far treated me so well, that if I had been free to choose, I would not have hesitated to go with him… I was toying with the idea, when Bua Husaini returned to say that on no account would Khanum let me go… Finally he gave up, but when Bua Husaini left, I could see that he had tears in his eyes, I felt sorry for him. Whenever I read romantic tales about fictitious beloveds, I would curse them. Now I thought that if I did not join him, my own faithlessness and ingratitude would be proven."[6]

The language of these lines, allows the reader to see the complexity of thought as well as depth of character that Ruswa etches. A 'sentimental' reader, as opposed to a 'naïve' one,[7] will immediately identify that such will, freedom, and even such a 'voice' was not the privilege awarded to a bourgeois wife or daughter. Such 'transgression' was only relegated to our heroine

by virtue of her occupying the liminal space in conventional society.

Interestingly, the aspect of 'performativity' that is linked to, rather is central to the selfhood of Umrao the courtesan, can be seen at play in her discussion about love and emotional attachment: "Mirza Sahib! In my opinion there comes a time in every woman's life when she wants someone to love her. Please do not imagine that this is a passing fantasy, but it is a desire which begins with the onset of youth, and grows stronger with the passing years."[8] She is enamoured with the attention and flattery bestowed by Gauhar Mirza, but before she can fall in love with Mirza, our protagonist checks herself by deeming the love "lacking" as she is not given (gifted) anything. She was now "looking for a lover who would pander to her every whim, spend fortunes on her and regale her with banquets."[9] In Nawab Sultan, she finds just such a match. Notice how the words shift from "superficial", "flattery", "ulterior motive" (used to describe Gauhar Mirza) to "fair", "rose-like complexion", "bright eyes and rippled biceps". A companionate relationship began to ensue between Umrao and Sultan. Unfortunately though, at the end of the novel, Umrao realizes the fated rejection of true love in the life of a courtesan or tavaif, and declares for all, a parting heed: "My poor, simple prostitutes! Never entertain the false hope that any man will ever love you with a true heart… Only the virtuous who see one face and never turn to another, will have the pleasure of true love."[10]

Towards the close of the novel, as keen readers, we can see how language itself performs to - reveal the true feelings or emotions behind the dual veil of narration and authorship. Where both Ruswa and Umrao attempt to 'author' the tragic tale of Ameeran-turned-Umrao Jan, the language in the text performs a simultaneous ballad and reveals the true maturation of her selfhood. In this process of moulding the selfhood, Umrao's linguistic abilities also traverse the trajectory of maturation and develop from naïveté: fearful and unsure sentences turn into bold, embittered and fearless declarations of universal truths. For instance, the incident where she picks the copy of Gulistan again after many years symbolizes this transformation of the self. Things which appeared difficult to her earlier are now rendered clear and she reads the difficult text with "the greatest pleasure".

In teaching a text like this, the "greatest pleasure" possibly lies in this unearthing of the selfhood through the veil of nuances that Ruswa sketches for Umrao. A central example of this process of discovering the protagonist as she discovers herself lies in the poignant scene where Umrao reads the manuscript of her 'life'. The veil of performativity is at once dropped to reveal the bare self that is facing its nuanced reflection in the pages of the manuscript:

"Mirza Rusva! When you handed me you (sic) manuscript to check, I was so angry that I wanted to tear it to shreds…but once more I began to read it. I finished the first page, glanced at a few lines of the second, and soon became so engrossed in my own tale [my emphasis] that I could not put it down."[11]

With her tale, and her narrative, Umrao carves a niche for the independent woman with a valiant "voice of her own", who does not necessarily have to be within the domestic paradigm to gain literary and social recognition, to write her own magnificent saga.

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Notes:

[1] I have consciously chosen to read this text in its English translation, and the particular translation being referred to is by David Matthews. I have deliberately steered away from including any comments on poetry or shayari in translation.

[2] Pamuk, The Naive and the Sentimental Novelist. p.21

[3] Paul Kumar, "Aap Beeti or Jag Beeti". p.228

[4] Ruswa. Umrao Jan Ada. p. 44

[5] Ibid. p. 69

[6] Ibid. p. 102

[7] I am applying Pamuk's argument of the Naïve and Sentimental novelist onto the reader,

[8] Ruswa. p. 56

[9] Ibid. p.56

[10] Ibid. p. 200

[11] Ibid. p.187

Language is Worth a Thousand Pounds

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English literature is replete with texts which lend themselves to the exploration of language as means of communication (more interesting being how language more often than not lends itself to miscommunication), how words and concomitantly languages are constructed, the flaws inherent in a language viz English language as a system. G B Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Lewis Caroll's *Through The looking Glass*, George Orwell's *Ninety Eighty Four*, James Joyce *Finnegan's Wake* are but a few texts which focus on language as an entity. Of these, two texts which are of particular significance to me, are Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Caroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. It was while teaching these texts to students of literature that one enjoyed how students realize that apart from the satirical import that these texts are imbued with, they also subtly induce them as students of literature to enquire into how languages are constructed, semantic principles in particular of English language. At the same time students are engaged in critical exegesis of the text, which allows for development of their skills for reading, comprehending and discerning the subtleties of the text. Besides this, both the texts explicitly engage the adult reader as well as children's imagination and have consistently won critical acclaim. Like Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*, Lewis Caroll's child protagonist Alice (an embodiment of Victorian ethics and mores) undergoes a surreal journey into a looking glass world where she like Gulliver engages with the question of identity and self hood and perhaps, more significantly the validity of language.

To begin with, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is one of the foremost precursors of the novel as a genre and has remained in more ways than one a seminal text. Making forays and intersecting with several genres the text is read as travel literature as well as science fiction and has been unanimously perceived as a scathing indictment of humanity as a whole. Swift employs a very gullible, observant, dexterous narrator to satirize political, cultural and social institutions of mankind. Gulliver undertakes journeys into the fantastical and carnivalesque land of Lilliputs, Brobdingnags, Laputans and Houyhnhnms while disparagingly condemning man as a social, political animal with the text ending on a note of despair alienating the narrator Gulliver from mankind as a whole.

However, another significant aspect of this text which elicits the interest of the student/reader is it's emphasis on language - the text is replete with allusions to 'language' in various contexts such as language acquisition, projects on how to eliminate language, on how to facilitate language learning skills etc. Swift has not only chosen a protagonist who is fluent in several languages but more importantly, the first task that Gulliver very punctiliously sets himself to in every new land he visits is to learn its language. In fact as a critic observes, "Gulliver is given a privileged position in the worlds of 'otherness to himself' that he visits, because he has access to, and the ability to understand, the language and literature of almost every culture he encounters."[1]

Swift's use of language as a means of satire and condemnation is interesting. For instance, in the third voyage to the land of Laputans, Gulliver tells us that the Laputans were so engrossed in their scientific pursuits that they had lost their potential to communicate. Instead, they relied on attendants who used flappers to make communication feasible. In the last voyage which is considered the most brutal and scathing of all voyages we have the rational horses Houyhnhnms and the barbaric Yahoos. Herein, it is interesting to note how Swift manages to deploy language as a mode of distinction between the rational horses and the brutish despicable yahoos. While the Houyhnhnms have no written alphabet they do have a language which Gulliver with his natural felicity for languages immediately grasps. However, what is of interest is that while all characters that populate this satire bordering on the realm of fantasy have their unique system of languages the yahoos have no language at all. Swift has in his searing denunciation of mankind completely deprived the yahoos of any potential for speech at all. At a reductionist level it easily lends itself to a marginalization of the human beings which is hegemonic in its leanings. In a text where language plays a predominant trope it is indeed worthy of examination why Swift deprives the yahoos of any potential for communication thus implying that perhaps any attempt made by humans at communication using an arbitrary language system is farcical. The barbaric and fiendish groans that they express only serves to highlight the disgust that Swift wants to induce amongst the readers for the yahoos

and make his contempt for mankind even more abrasive and profound.

Returning back to the trope of how all languages are arbitrary constructs one has to focus on the third voyage where in the Academy of Lagado, Gulliver is introduced to the ongoing projects on Language in Lagado. While one project was to "to shorten discourse, by cutting polysyllables into one, and leaving out verbs and participles"[2], another project suggested a total abolishment of words "since words are only names for things, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such things as were necessary to express a particular business they are to discourse on."[3]

While the immediate impossibility of these projects is conveyed to us it also makes the readers focus on the shortcomings that attend language as a means of communication. This aspect of flawed Language as a means of communication is a trope that Caroll develops more prominently in his text *Through The Looking Glass* (1871). Enigmatic to the core the narrative is set in the form of a chess game which however does not follow the rules of a conventional chess game. Instead we have a naïve, intelligent and, curious, Alice alighting on her journey in a chessboard world to be crowned as a Queen. While the concept of her being crowned has been variously interpreted as coming of age, as her aspiration to acquire adult authority etc, what is of interest herein is that how Caroll has used the looking glass world with its nursery rhymes, riddles, game theory, nonsense verse, etc to comment on the very nonsensical and arbitrary manner in which English Language functions. His comment on the arbitrary nature of semantic principles that form the basis of language as a system in fact is a strategy to highlight the absurdity and chaos that prevail in the real, adult world as contrasted with the alleged chaos that prevails in the dream world which Alice is engaging in.

The text besides capturing the student's imagination also hone's their skills in apprehending the arbitrary rules that structure English Language. It was indeed interesting to see students questioning the unscientific principles which rule English Language which until then they had (mostly) accepted without any qualms or doubts. While almost every chapter in the text is infused with the absurdities of the English language, the nonsense poem Jabberwocky and Alice's interaction with Humpty Dumpty is at the core of this debate. While Jabberwocky on one hand introduces the genre of Nonsense verse it also brings to fore how words are constructed through word combinations - Portmanteau words, nonce words etc. It is evident that Caroll in this text aimed at teaching children logic [game theory, set theory] and how language is used and constructed through stories and nonsense poems.

While almost every chapter in this text is imbued with lessons on the ambiguities that inform the English Language, the chapter on Humpty Dumpty undeniably is the most significant with its interpretation of the nonsense poem Jabberwocky. Besides engaging the students of literature with a new genre - nonsense verse (a technique which was to be eventually excessively put to use in modernist literature) the students also focus on the impossibility of ascertaining meaning in Caroll's linguistically nonsensical world. It is Humpty Dumpty who using the language of nonsense helps Alice. Grumpily, Humpty Dumpty (claiming to be the world's expert on language and poetry) states,

"When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."[4]

These words of Humpty Dumpty also help to emphasize how reductive his assumptions about language are, an aspect which Alice in her modest, unassuming yet subtly questioning way highlights even more strongly. Humpty Dumpty then in his megalomaniac manner proceeds to teach Alice about how words are built, explaining the poem piece by piece. It is in this poem that Caroll first uses Portmanteau words; in fact it is in this text that he has first coined the word Portmanteau which combines the sound and meaning of two words into one. The text coins several portmanteau words like 'Slithy' which as Humpty Dumpty tells us is a combination of Slimy and Lithe. Enlisted below are a few of the portmanteau words coined by Caroll :-

Frumious – Fuming and Furious

Manoxome - man and buxom

Mimsy – Miserable and flimsy

Galumph – Gallop and Triumph

Frabjous – Fabulous and Joyous

While some of these have found currency and acceptance into the English language few have survived the test of time. Caroll also has made ample use of fractitious or madeup words like "uffish," "tulgey," "burbled," "whiffling," "snicker-snack," "beamish," etc. It is evident that Caroll wishes to explore the potentialities of language while at the same time highlight the flaws inherent in English as a language system. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to state that the text is intricately woven with instances of Caroll's witty use of English as a language which only serve as a

means to attest the ambiguities inherent in it. For instance, the talking flowers explain to Alice how they are protected by a tree. And how can that be? asks Alice. Because the tree's branches could bark if any danger came, they could say bough-wough with their boughs which sounds remarkably like a dog's bow-wow. Or yet another instance when Alice expresses her surprise that flowers could speak, the flowers explain that they often could not speak for the gardener had made their beds too soft which lulled them off to sleep. The scene where the horse speaks in a hoarse voice or when the King asks the messenger if he saw 'nobody on the road' and the messenger confirms he saw 'nobody' on the road to which the King responds that Alice also saw nobody on the road.

Indeed, there is no dearth of such examples in this text which on one level elicits pleasure and tickles one's imagination and on the other more significant level it serves to question the strengths and weakness of English as a language system. Through his strategy of a game employing riddles, nursery rhymes, nonce words etc Caroll induces students of literature to be more aware and responsible while using language as a mode of communication.

In all, these two texts written centuries apart have an agenda which pertains to the flaws that attend language and more significantly communication. Both texts have enjoyed an uncompromised popularity, stimulated student's imagination to the core while at the same time both are seminal texts which have made major landmarks in the genre of travel literature, fantasy and children's literature. In an way the texts also teach students to become judicious and develop scanning and skimming skills which enhances their ability for comprehension and enhances their potential to communicate with clarity and unambiguously.

Notes

[1] See Chapman, Michelle. (1997). *An Exploration of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.* http://www.fractalmyth.com/essay/swift.html

[2] See Swift, Jonathan. (1985). *Gulliver's Travels*. New Delhi: Penguin p. 230.

[3] ibid

[4] See Caroll.Lewis. (2000). *Through the Looking – Glass*. New Delhi: World View Publications, p 57.

Harmonizing Literature and Language Teaching at Undergraduate Level

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The paper is an offshoot of my teaching experience in a government college in Rajasthan where the learners come from very remote, rural areas. As a teacher it is a real challenge to teach students of literature as they are not accustomed to studying English in English. In such a situation, I make the class interesting through communicative language teaching (CLT). I have been trying this for the past four years at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and it is showing encouraging results. The paper highlights three such activities in which I integrate language teaching along with literature. The first two activities talk about using poetry to teach language and the third one takes up integrating language while teaching essays. These activities can be modified as per the teacher's suitability and his/her innovativeness.

According to Alexander Baird, 'Literature is the use of effective language in suitable conditions' (Baird, 1969; 203). It is probably because of this that language teaching and learning has taken a

backseat due to the predominance of literature in most of the university syllabuses throughout our country. There were times when standards of English were tested on the basis of a person's knowledge of grammar and grammar rules, which in a way for an ESL learner was correct. Linguists such as Topping (1968) argue that 'literature should be excluded from the foreign language curriculum because of its structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules ….' Even this extreme view against literature is unacceptable. In fact, there should be a perfect balance between language and literature but unfortunately now there is a strict divide between the two in institutions of higher education for vested interests. The situation is so paradoxical that students writing an answer for a critical appreciation of a poem are not judged for their originality of ideas and critical understanding of the poem but for their grammatical range and accuracy in spellings and punctuation. On the other side there is an upcoming breed of pseudo-

intellectual breed of scholars who thrive on theory and theory alone. They take pride in their access to various theories without in the least realising the relevance of these in practical teaching and learning. They do not pay much heed to grammatical rules. They project themselves as refined scholars and proudly confess being strong votaries of literature and literary theories. Most of the so-called scholars have taken on to the 'noble' path of theorizing everything in literature to establish their dominance. This does not percolate down to the students and result into any kind of improvement.

In states like Rajasthan the state of affairs is so dismal that students cannot even write direct and precise answers to questions asked in the exam papers. Irrespective of whatever is asked, the answer is a plain summary of the text learnt from a trash passbook, be it poetry, drama, novel or essay. Even the question in the papers are repetitive, picked up from the last year papers with no change in the language, resulting into an almost exact guess by the students resulting into selective reading. Even the texts read are not the original ones; a mere summary of that is read through pass books and guides. Even the teachers carry the same to the classrooms and narrate the summary rather than giving any critical insight into the text to be taught. The same teacher evaluators cause further damage by granting marks liberally while assessing the answer scripts because of which students pass out as 'half-baked Shakespeare, Milton and Hardy.' This situation in Rajasthan epitomizes the conditions in most of the other states where the major lot of learners studying literature come from rural background.

With more than a decade of teaching at such institutions, I have realized that very simple classroom activities can help in language acquisition through literature. Ever since getting exposed to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through Project High-TEC (from 2007 – 2010), I have been trying to make small beginnings by integrating language and literature teaching. Below are a few activities which I use in this regard to make the students learn language along with literature.

Activity 1: Split and Knit

This exercise is primarily used with students opting for literature at BA Part I level who have been taught poetry in a very traditional method by giving them the gist in their mother tongue. The poems prescribed in the syllabus start from some selected sonnets of Christopher Marlowe to 'Solitude' by Alexander Pope. Some selected poems of Indian poets like Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore have also been included now.

Step 1

I start by making one student read one stanza of the poem. Thereafter I give a modal reading and ask them to listen to the poem carefully.

Step 2

Once the poem has been read out, I split the poem by segregating the subject from the predicate and write only the subject on the board, leaving the predicate for them to guess by recalling what they heard.

Step 3

The class is divided into two teams; team A and team B. Each team is asked to knit it into cohesive text banking upon whatever they can recall. In case they are not able to respond, I read out the poem the second time.

Step 4

Once the poem is knit in order, simultaneously I discuss sentence structures and point out how structures in English vary from Hindi and also basic language terms like phrase, clause and sentence as this forms a part of 'Elements of a sentence'; a topic prescribed in the curriculum.

Activity 2: Soul Analysis

The next activity which I take up is mainly with my postgraduate students; 'Literary Appreciation of a Poem.' Most of our postgraduate students consider writing the paraphrase of the poem as poetry appreciation. At the most they can point out some very simple figures of speech like alliteration, simile, metaphor and rhyme. They are absolutely clueless about analyzing the poem from the point of view of language because they have never been taught to do so. For this reason I start by taking up a poem they are already familiar with and this is how I proceed.

Step 1

I make them read the poem and ask them to tell me what they would write if they have to attempt a critical appreciation of the poem. Students come up with their comments on the background of the poem, the paraphrase and some are able to point out some figures of speech. None of them talks about the stylistic features and the language content because they have not been conditioned to this.

Step 2

So I draw their attention to language areas like sentence structure, parallelism, ellipsis, inversion, finite and non-finite usage, extraposition of

particle, pre modifiers, post modifiers, cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences, inflection, deviation and verbless clauses by extracting the lines from the first stanza of the poem.

Step 3

I then form small groups of 3-4 students and ask them to analyse the remaining stanzas in their respective groups in terms of language. Thereafter I take up the discussion and help them revise their responses if required.

This exercise is received quite well as it opens up an unexplored world for them and they have a sense of achievement.

Activity 3: Frame your quality question

The next activity that I take up is while teaching essays at the undergraduate level. Reading an essay, understanding its content and appreciating its language is something very difficult for my students. At the very outset the length of the essay dissuades most of the students to read it. Here I make use of skimming and scanning technique somewhat in this way.

Step 1

Before we take up to reading an essay, I try to activate their schema by talking about something related to the title/ topic. This brainstorming leads them on to forming an idea of what is to come next. Once they have discussed things in detail, they are then introduced to the essay.

Step 2

The class is divided into pairs. Before the whole essay is taken up, I ask one of the students from each pair to read the introductory and concluding line of each paragraph. The partner listens to it and in the meanwhile frames questions on the basis of what s/he listens.

Step 3

The partner who was listening asks the one who was reading the questions he has framed and tries to get an answer to his questions. In this way, they both get familiar with framing questions and also answering them. Just because they already have the text before them, they falter less and whenever they do, they take recourse to it.

Step 4

They are then made to write those questions and their answers. Attention is drawn to the tense used, the verbs and Wh- words and what is expected in the answer.

It is alarming to see that most of them miss out the actual meaning of the Wh- word because of which they answer incorrectly. This exercise

helps in building up their confidence level in both speaking and writing. So we can say that literature can provide a basis for extending language usage. Povey (1972; 18) rightly says that 'Literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge.'

Conclusion

These activities may sound to be very basic but they work quite well with ESL/EFL students coming from rural background where their exposure to English is very less. They not only promote communication but also ensure language learning through authentic material. If tried and tested in similar situations as per the level and requirement of the students and connecting it to the syllabus to be followed, these will go a long way in ensuring a harmonious relationship between language and literature. Another significant advantage of these activities is that they discourage rote learning and promote more interaction and hence more real learning. Moreover, one thing should be realized while teaching English in an ESL country like India that most of the learners take pride in possessing strong linguistic skills. They have a sense of achievement. So language is of paramount importance for our learners after which they can move on to focusing more on literature if they intend to go in for higher studies and research.

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Multilinguality and English: *Choice of Language for Education in India*

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The question of choice of language for educationists has been a burning issue. It has been examined from socio-political perspectives. This paper suggests that a scientific understanding of the nature and structure of language in socially relevant and sensitive context is required for a workable choice. To examine the naturalness of the choice this papers looks at the theory of language acquisition in generative context and explains how the idea of linguistic performance is embedded in the 'knowledge of language' and linguistic competence. Looking at the mismatch between the linguistic capabilities of students and expectations of academic institutions, this paper suggests multilinguality as a natural choice for education.

Language, Mind, and Society

For long researches believed that language learning takes place through imitations and practice. Chomsky came up with a major breakthrough in 1965. He locates language in human mind; human biology to be precise, and concludes it as special human ability. In his opinion, children are born biologically hardwired to learn language with 'language acquisition device' (LAD). This helps them develop 'knowledge of language' which includes every nuanced and intricate rules of language at the levels of sounds, words, sentences; and some argue even the grammar of the use of language. In short, this knowledge includes all the possible rules that constrain structure of language. The evidence is that children use incorrect forms very frequently. It is unlikely that they could have heard forms such as tooths, goed, childs, and more better etc. Therefore, these forms could not have been learnt by imitation. Rather, these are the results of linguistic overgeneralizations. This suggests that children process the impoverish input they receive for extracting rules. The development of this language specific human ability is so fast that a child is comfortable in delivering linguistic tasks that they have never heard before and can process them as well. The LAD that has Universal Grammar embedded in it shapes up the Knowledge of Language in such a way that a 3-4 year old can make complex judgments as to whether or not a string of sounds are possible in her language. This description of the phenomenon of language learning is generative approach. The goal of this approach is to describe the mental structure that is responsible for generating all the grammatically viable sentences of a language.

The same mental and language specific human capacity is responsible for extracting the abstract rules of language use. It appears that performance is embedded in competence and function is embedded in the form of language. Children learn very early that they are not supposed to speak certain things. They learn very early that they are not supposed to be too informal (linguistically) with several kinds of individuals. This develops without specific instructions. Let's examine the following. The use of please in imperative constructions is a marker of higher degree of formality. Such a lexicon adds explicit 'request' for a lot of speakers of English of India. The lack of please for the speakers of English of India adds a sense of 'order' to the construction. Now consider the following example. While talking to a friend if one says 'Come home in the evening', one clearly knows that she is not ordering a friend. At the same time, if the supreme commander of armed forces asks the army general – 'I will really appreciate it if we could discuss this in the evening. Please come for a cup of tea in the evening.' The general knows it with all clarity that he does not have an option of negotiation for time i.e. that is standing order to meet with the commander-in-chief in the evening. It is evident from the above examples that such kind of knowledge about the use of language is not instruction dependent. Neither is it available as specific input. Rather, children have to extract such knowledge of language use. Therefore, the knowledge of the use of language is part of the 'Knowledge of Language'.

Chomsky's (1965) theory of language learning clearly recognizes that insufficient quantity of input is responsible for extracting syntax; and if we can add the use of language. A careful examination of language in society revels that nobody speaks one language (Agnihotri 2007 and 2009). The language in the real world cannot be defined as 'a language'. We speak many languages at a time. There does not exist an ideal speaker hearer; or for that matter an ideal native speaker. 'A language' is human artifact. The concept of 'a language' makes language convenient for us to perceive. However, in the absence of such a concept, we propose that what we speak is a continuum of repertoire/language.

Thus far, we have established that learning language is natural and biologically speaking an inbuilt human capacity. It is human specific and an outcome of a generative system which enables us to speak unlimited and grammatical strings. We have established that the 'knowledge of language' includes both linguistic competence and performance. To quote Heath (1984) – 'in one way or another every effort in the study of child language – has dealt with the fact that children learn language in their early years by making use of both their innate abilities and by drawing from the social environment around them. (Heath, 1984, p.260)' In the next section, we talk about English, Multilinguality, and choice of language for instruction in Education.

Language and Education

Underlining the role of the study of language (linguistics) in education a famous educational anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath (1984) writes –

> 'The boundaries of the discipline of linguistics have been largely broken. – Today the root ideas in such diverse areas as cognitive science, literary theory, language planning, and communication theory carry basic information contributed by linguistics. – Language increasingly will be a natural part of the research domain of the fields ranging from computer science to industrial sociology. – In the decades ahead the functional knowledge of language that has come from linguistics will be like certain principles of mathematics, physics, and biology, basic knowledge for other disciplines as well as for practical domain such as teacher training, legal and medical education, and computer software production. (Heath, 1984, 268-269)

Such is the domain and role of language and linguistics for education. The understanding about the nature and structure of language, functioning of language in social contexts in a scientific fashion, and interrelationship between language and education appears to receive not so much priority in educational domains in India. Let's look at the following situation. In most parts of India, children use their 'first' language in schools. One of the languages (in most cases Hindi) from the list of languages in the 8th Schedule of our constitution is taught in schools. English is partially taught in schools. English instruction begins from grade 5th or 6th depending upon schools and availability of teachers. It is important to underline that in most of the schools of India – at least in rural schools, English remains a 'foreign' language and the instruction begins after or around the completion of the 'critical period'. Soon after the completion

of elementary and secondary education when students reach the institutions of higher education, the language situation is exactly reverse. English become dominant language of instruction and interactions. The first language of every student receives back bench. Hindi still exists in the middle and probably this is what saves students from breakdowns. In short, for lot of students the language that was not that important in schools becomes the language they are expected to perform inside and outside the classroom; and the language they used in all possible domains in schools becomes insignificant.

This, probably, is the biggest challenge of education planners in general and instructors in particular. However, students continue to remain sufferers. In the light of the above discussions about language learning, use of language, and the role of language in education, we examine the question of English and Multilinguality.

Multilinguality and English

Singh (2012) claims that Indian English is part of the linguistic ecology of India like other language. With all seriousness of social and linguistic investigations, Singh questions the concept of 'non-native speakers'. For him, English has to be looked at as 'English of India'. The study of English as 'English in India' subsumes application of the concept of a native speaker in the sense that English in India is English of non-native speakers. This powerful but apt claim helps us understand the role and position of English in the Indian linguistic climate in a better way. Indian English has been a vibrant domain of research for many (Agnihotri and Khanna 1997, Agnihotri 2007, and 09, Bhatt 2001, Dasgupta 1993, Kachru 1983, and Singh 2012 are a few among others). These studies examine several different aspects of Indian English. There may not be consensus on nuances, however broadly they agree and define the features that establish Indian English as a variety of English. Singh (2012) presents a shift in the paradigm of research on Indian English. Continuing the debate in Agnihotri (2008), Singh points out that Indian English appears to be a variety of English only when we consider speakers of Indian English as non-native. He finds it unfair to call speakers of language X non-natives of language Y. This position provides a huge relief to the idea of English as an associate official language. Thus, English of India like many other languages is on the continuum of the repertoire/language of the speakers of this geography. The continuum of the repertoire/language defines and assimilates the idea of multilinguality. Multilinguality is not only language X and Y, it is X in Y and/or X with Y.

Therefore, nobody speaks just 'a language' and the ideal speaker hearer or an ideal native speaker does not exist.

The question of choice of language in education arises when we look at language as 'a language'. We find choice of language for education as challenge and we try to find an answer only when we want to see language as Hindi, English, and Urdu, etc. A close examination revels that what people speak are not Hindi, English, and Urdu; they speak a continuum of repertoire/language. An answer to the question of choice of language in education is located in what people speak. The natural and clear answer is what people speak. In short what people speak is defined as multilinguality and that is the natural choice. To repeat, the choice is multilinguality (that people speak) and not 'a language' (that is our artifact).

This naturally raises questions about study materials, examinations, and singularity of teachers. Again, multilinguality is THE answer to all these. Difficulties remain not in practicing multilinguality as multilinguality does not require practice; rather difficulties remain in liberating ourselves from beliefs about 'a language'.

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Nupur Samuel in conversation with N.S. Prabhu

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N.S. Prabhu retired from the English Department of the National University of Singapore in 1994. He was an English Language Specialist for the British Council in Southern India for many years, and carried out a 5-year project of teaching English in state primary schools employing task-based activity. The project was reported in his book Second Language Pedagogy and has been widely referred to as the Bangalore Project.

Teachers' professional development is crucial to the field of education and for improving the teaching-learning process. It is usually argued that constraints such as large heterogeneous classes, the never ending struggle to complete the syllabus, innumerable tests and exams leave the teachers with no time for engaging in their own professional development. Dr. Prabhu will help us look anew at the role of the teachers and others in teachers' professional growth.

Nupur Samuel (NS): Dr. Prabhu, you have made some insightful observations about teachers' professional development in your article 'Teachers' Growth' (2004). Please tell us how teachers can grow professionally through everyday activities and what are some of the practical ways which may help teachers to become empowered for their professional growth?

Dr. N.S. Prabhu (NSP): I believe teachers' growth arises from ongoing teaching activities- the process of thinking about and making sense of one's classroom experiences, reflecting on those and using them to improve one's teaching. The paper "Teachers' Growth" describes the types of activity likely to support that process. That paper, however, is only speculative, in the sense that it

states some possibilities which need to be tried out and reviewed, probably throwing up in the process other possibilities. The occurrence of this latter – teachers thinking of new possibilities in the course of acting on existing ones – is for me a form of empowerment.

NS: Could you elaborate on some activities that are likely to prompt teachers to reflect and consequently engage with various possibilities?

NSP: There are 4 activities that can prompt such a process:

Observing a class in progress, whether one's own (video recorded) or a colleague's, at any level. Here I do not mean observing the class for identifying or categorizing anything but simply to see what is happening. I believe there is something about viewing a lesson in progress that touches a teacher more than any talking about teaching can. Teachers thinking about and making sense of their classroom experience, has for me the most central, most essential role. I am asking how we can make teachers become critical thinkers, who do not passively accept what others ask them to think or how others expect them to act. I am arguing for a more active, engaging role by teachers in their own professional development that can be strengthened and supported by others (trainers, specialists).

The second activity is the teacher exercising his/ her own judgment in making decisions about what to teach or what activity to conduct with particular classes / in particular lessons. These decisions could be guided by memories of how things had gone in past lessons or by a teacher's experience about the class at that point or simply by a wish to find out by experiment. The more decisions the teacher makes, the more stake she has in how the lesson goes and therefore the stronger reason to look back and interpret / assess the lesson afterwards. It may not be possible to do this with each lesson but even irregular, occasional use of it is likely to add to pedagogic judgment and professional growth.

The third activity that I would like to talk about is attempting to communicate one's current pedagogic understanding to a colleague. This can be challenging, since one's own understanding is still not fully developed, is uncertain and less than accessible. However, the very act of trying to articulate a half-formed, vague idea, perception or understanding, helps to make it more intelligible and more accessible to oneself. A teacher's attempt to articulate her pedagogic understanding at a given point in time can be useful in clarifying one's understanding and furthering it. An added

benefit is the possibility of conveying it to a colleague and thus building a shared knowledge system.

An extension of this idea is to interact with specialists and this is the fourth activity that I want to suggest. Of course, this is more challenging than sharing one's ideas with a colleague but it is a valuable source of teachers' growth. Usually, teachers' perceptions and ideas are in a formative, uncertain stage; more importantly, they are also necessarily, personal and subjective. Though specialists' arguments too are very often based on their own pedagogic perceptions, they are moulded to fit the conventions of academic discourse and stated as part of some more general, objective truth. When teachers have developed some confidence in their own perceptions, they can perhaps penetrate the professional convention and deal with academic discourse with greater confidence, thus making contact with specialists' perceptions.

NS: In your interview with Alan Maley in The Teacher Trainer (1989), you mentioned that you would like to adopt the 'process writing' approach to help teachers clarify their ideas, develop thoughts and help reflective practices. Have you had some success in this? If yes, please tell us briefly about it.

NSP: What I have in mind is the process of trying to state in words precisely what one has in mind. This can be a trying and frustrating process which does not lead to a quick or satisfying product, but it is so because it constantly throws up various other possibilities of wording – and some of these other wordings lead one to look back at what one (thought one) had in mind. That produces fresh interpretations of one's own thought, which in turn needs a fresh attempt at wording. The experience in general multiplies one's interpretations and leads one towards a deeper and more differentiated understanding. I see this as the most valuable lesson of the "process writing" movement. I have tried to put this view of mine to students in Singapore (secondary school teachers upgrading their qualifications) and to get them to observe themselves while trying to write their assignments, but can only say that the try-out has increased my own confidence in the view. (A one-semester course – about ten weekly encounters of two hours each – is not long enough for more visible evidence.)

NS: As you mentioned in your article 'Hoping for the best' (1999), learning is accidental, it is individual even private. Since the process of learning is unpredictable and intangible, how can

teachers understand it to improve their instructions and teaching?

NSP: The process of learning (as a mental phenomenon) is invisible, but not the product of it. When something has been learnt, that fact is revealed fairly clearly by the learner's subsequent performance. The teacher can easily be guided by whether there of evidence of something having been learnt, in contrast to earlier evidence to the contrary.

Although we cannot predict which of the things we teach will be learnt, we can predict that some of the things taught over a time will be learnt; and we can also see whether more has been learnt in one case than in another. This enables us to prefer one kind of lesson plan, classroom procedure or activity over another, and thus to arrive at more and more effective teaching procedures.

NS: India today is faced with the massive task of teacher training across the country. Could you suggest some methods for large scale implementation of newer ideas in language pedagogy?

NSP: I am disillusioned with large-scale implementation of new ideas in language pedagogy - not just with past attempts at it but with the concept itself. I doubt that good teaching results from new ideas, unless they are the teachers' own (evolving) ideas, and believe that individual teachers have the potential to develop ideas. The number of teachers overall has little effect on the growth potential of individual teachers

NS: You mentioned in your articles that you believe that trying out new ideas, interacting with people and getting their responses etc, leads to professional growth of teachers. How much importance do you attribute to teachers' disagreement with the prevailing or dominant view in their professional growth? What can teachers do to hold meaningful dialogues with researchers and specialists, given the fact that differences exist?

NSP: Yes, I do believe that disagreement is generally more productive of new thought than its opposite, and the search for a better way to teach begins with a belief that the current way is not the best. I wouldn't, however, specially want to disagree with something because it is prevalent or dominant. I think it is more important not to hold back from disagreeing with things that are at variance with our current understanding, whether those things are other peoples' views or our own past views. This is because stopping to disagree with things is stopping to (re-)think about them – and stopping to grow. An ultimate teaching method with which we can all live in satisfaction can only be a convenient myth.

NS: Thank you Dr. Prabhu for an insightful discussion. I am sure your words will encourage teachers to actively become involved in their own professional development.

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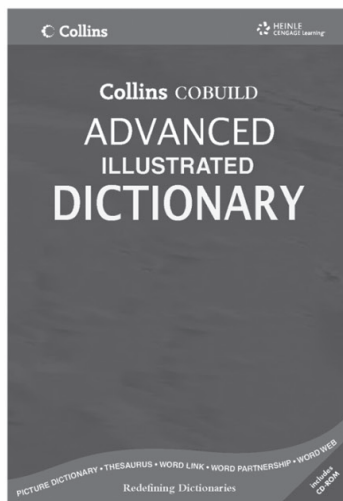
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Workshop on "Teaching of Poetry" at Sanskriti School, Delhi

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The English Department of Sanskriti School organized a workshop on "Teaching of Poetry" as part of their Professional Development Programme on 28 July, 2012. The Resource person for the Workshop was Dr Mukti Sanyal, an eminent educationist with vast experience in the field of ELT.

The hour long workshop began with a discussion on the disinclination shown towards poetry in present times and how to develop poetic sensibilities among young learners. A handout which contained famous poets talking about different aspects of their art was distributed to trigger a discussion among the participants. Teachers shared their experience and passion for poetry while freely acknowledging a changed scenario among students today. Dr Sanyal underscored the importance of catering to young learners' taste in rhythm, tempo, theme and length in making poetry attractive to children. For example, TS Eliot's 'Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat' would appeal to middle school children but William Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminister Bridge' wouldn't.

Subsequently, she elaborated on various methods that can be used to teaching poetry. At the primary level, the teacher could practice effective recitation with action and movement so that children would unconsciously pick up words and use correct word stress, rhythm and intonation. Poetry recitation is an enjoyable experience and allows for all the repetition that learning a second language necessarily requires. At the middle level, teachers can further students' engagement with the creative use of language by encouraging students to have a wall paper where they bring poems they like to class. They can also be encouraged

to write poems individually or in groups. In the senior school, comparative study of similar or contrasting poems can stimulate students' interest. For example, Felicia Hemans 'Casabianca' or Lord Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade' can be contrasted with Wilfred Owen's 'Futility'. Children should be encouraged to write their responses too, so that they get to know that the same poem can evoke different responses. Blogs are also an effective medium for developing writing skills.

Overall, it was a very enjoyable and informative workshop. All the participants felt that they have learnt something new in the workshop and it will finally improve their teaching strategy.

The Door is half open

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The Door is Half Open by Susheel Kumar Sharma, Adhyayan Publishers, New Delhi, 2012, Pp 141, Rs. 150/-.

Susheel Kumar Sharma has already been widely acclaimed as a poet after the publication of his first collection of verse From the Core Within (1999). In his new collection, The Door is Half Open, he has proved beyond doubt that, for an Indian poet writing in English, to use the rhythms of the Indian languages, which go easily with Indian speech, is salubrious and effective in capturing the nuances and images of our country. The poems in this new collection evoke the exuberance of India, its colours, the heat, the light, the skies and the fragrance of the land. The poems exude a sense of nostalgia for the simplicity and values of the past, and a spiritual yearning for a return of the old glory of India:

I don't want to bury
The glories of the past;
I don't want to fetter
The freedom of the past;

The introductory poem Ganga Mata – A Prayer sets the tone of the collection, and serves as a paean to the river Ganga. The poem, hits out at the "poverty, squalor, dirt, sloth and melancholy" of our country, sending a piercing prayer to the 'Karunamayi' – "May you flow eternal in the hearts of people." The holy river comes alive as the poet evokes sharp images of the bleakness of modern Indian reality. The poem, along with other poems in this collection, is suffused with a plethora of Sanskrit words, shlokas, and names of the many manifestations of Gods and Goddesses of Hindu mythology. Keeping the uninitiated reader in mind, as well as the Western readership, the poet has thoughtfully added a detailed glossary at the end of the book.

The 52 poems in this collection are reflective of the multi-hued, but largely valueless postmodern existence of India and the world, in general. The poet's sensibility captures the essence and nuances of contemporary life in a lyrical style without sounding pedantic, and aesthetically converts them into well-crafted verses.

The title of the book The Door is Half Open compels the reader to contemplate and then to categorize the poems, thereby leading to realms that sometimes reveal despair and intense grief (Grief/Dwellings), while bemoaning the loss of paradise in the contemporary scenario (Colours). There are direct references to recent topical issues as in the poem Nithari and Beyond. Reminiscences run through the poems like a skein by a frequent juxtaposition of the old and the new (A Poem for My Country): "Hungry farmer, homeless engineer, /Drug-addict father, free boarding house," while presenting an ironic picture of the manic overdrive of modern India with its "Metro-rail, sky-scrapers, space-shuttles, / Mobile revolution, educational satellites." The old/new theme encompasses the myriad facets and experiences within the Indian milieu, providing a sense of unification. In the same vein the poet presents an ironical picture of Democracy – both worldwide and closer home – its promises and let-downs, the idealistic expectations in the past contrasted with the ugly realities of the present (Democracy: Old and New).

Reading the collection is like oscillating between different emotions, between questions and answers that sometimes defy description, celebrating the highs and lows of the poetic vision (Agony), while the poet claims to have "sold dreams to the world"(Swan Song). After describing his cathartic experiences in the poem Purgation, where both hopes and despair exist, the poet concedes the fact that "God has been very kind to me/ He allowed me to have a dream…." The positivism of the last two poems of this collection, "Hope Is the Thing to be Lost" and "Liberation at Varanasi" reiterates the promises denoted by the title, exhorting us to not lose hope and to seek salvation, along with the poet who decides:

… to find answers
On the banks of the Ganges and
In thy narrow streets
That brings me to you, O Varanasi.

In modern Indian poetry in English there has always existed a confessional tradition, particularly noticeable in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel and Kamala Das. Susheel Sharma, too, tends to frequently veer towards the confessional mode. Hence the poems possess an immediacy, openness and self-revelation that prove to be endearing and affecting. The collection has several long poems that support the recent trend of an increasing interest in long poetry, which assists in enabling the poet to go beyond the fragmented vision and isolation associated with the short lyric. Sharma's poems are lyrics written in the free verse mode and feature the shared national and communal values and sentiments of the classical epic, as aesthetic emanations of a sensitive soul.

Focusing on Improving Listening and Speaking Skills in an English class

Manu Gulati

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The tasks given below are some of the ways to improve the listening and speaking skills of government primary school children. Often children in government schools do understand English, but the problem is that they are not provided enough exposure to listen, speak and feel the English language. Simple activities can create wonders in the classroom. I have tried these tasks with my Grade III M.C.D. school learners and my learners' performance increased my faith in carrying out such tasks to improve their listening and speaking skills.

Task 1 - Likes and loves

Language function: Expressing liking

Skill involved: Listening

Level: Primary

Type of participation: Individual

Objectives
- The learners will distinguish between what they like and what they love.
- The learners' listening comprehension will be developed.

Material required: A tape recorder, recorded tape (with 8 conversations), students' worksheet.

Procedure

1. The learners are asked to listen to a recorded tape which has three situations, each situation depicting the difference between a person's liking for something and his love for something. The words of the situations played in the recorded tape are as under:

   1. **Food**
      Rekha and her mother went to a restaurant to have lunch. Rekha's mother said, "What would you like to eat Rekha? See the menu card and decide." Rekha said, "Mummy, I like eating dosa, I like eating chowmein but I love eating chole bhature. So order chole bhature for me."

   2. **Dresses**
      Ritu and Sangeeta went to a market to buy a gift for their friend Mansi. Ritu asked Sangeeta, "What does Mansi like to wear ? What shall we buy for her?" Sangeeta said, "Mansi likes wearing frocks and skirts but she loves to wear jeans. So I think we should buy Jeans for her."

   3. **Games**
      When Mahinder Singh Dhoni was a child, he played both football and cricket. He liked playing football and hockey but he loved playing cricket. He continued to play cricket and became a famous cricketer.

2. A worksheet is given to each learner.

3. The tape is played again and the learners are asked to encircle the correct option/options in their work sheets.

4. The worksheets are evaluated followed by a discussion in the class.

Worksheet

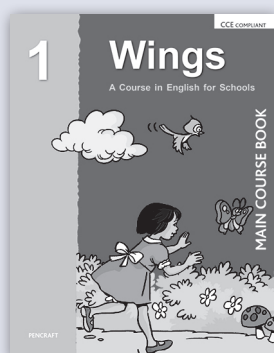**Name:** _____

Class: _____

Q1. Circle the item/items which
   a) Rekha liked to eat
      - ○ Cholle bhature   ○ Dosa
      - ○ Chowmein   ○ Samosa

   b) Rekha loved to eat
      - ○ Cholle bhature   ○ Dosa
      - ○ Chowmein   ○ Samosa

Q2. Circle the dress/dresses which
   a) Mansi liked to wear
      - ○ Frocks   ○ Skirts
      - ○ Trousers   ○ Jeans

   b) Mansi loved to wear
      - ○ Frocks   ○ Skirts
      - ○ Trousers   ○ Jeans

Q3. Circle the game/games which
   a) Dhoni liked to play
      - ○ Football   ○ Hockey
      - ○ Baseball   ○ Cricket

   b) Dhoni loved to play
      - ○ Football   ○ Hockey
      - ○ Baseball   ○ Cricket

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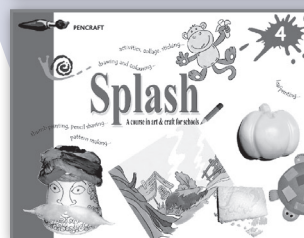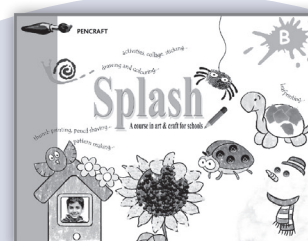
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The Guest Editors for the issue will be **Tasneem Shahnaz and Mona Sinha**.

The last date for receiving contributions for this issue is 30th October 2012.

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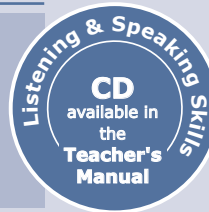
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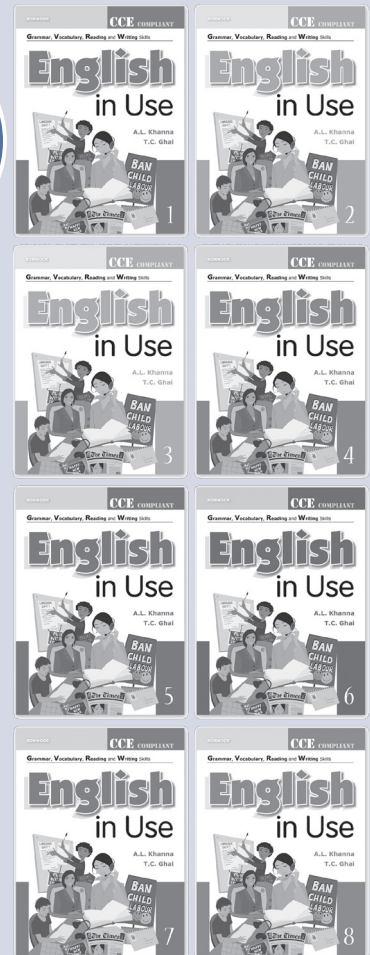
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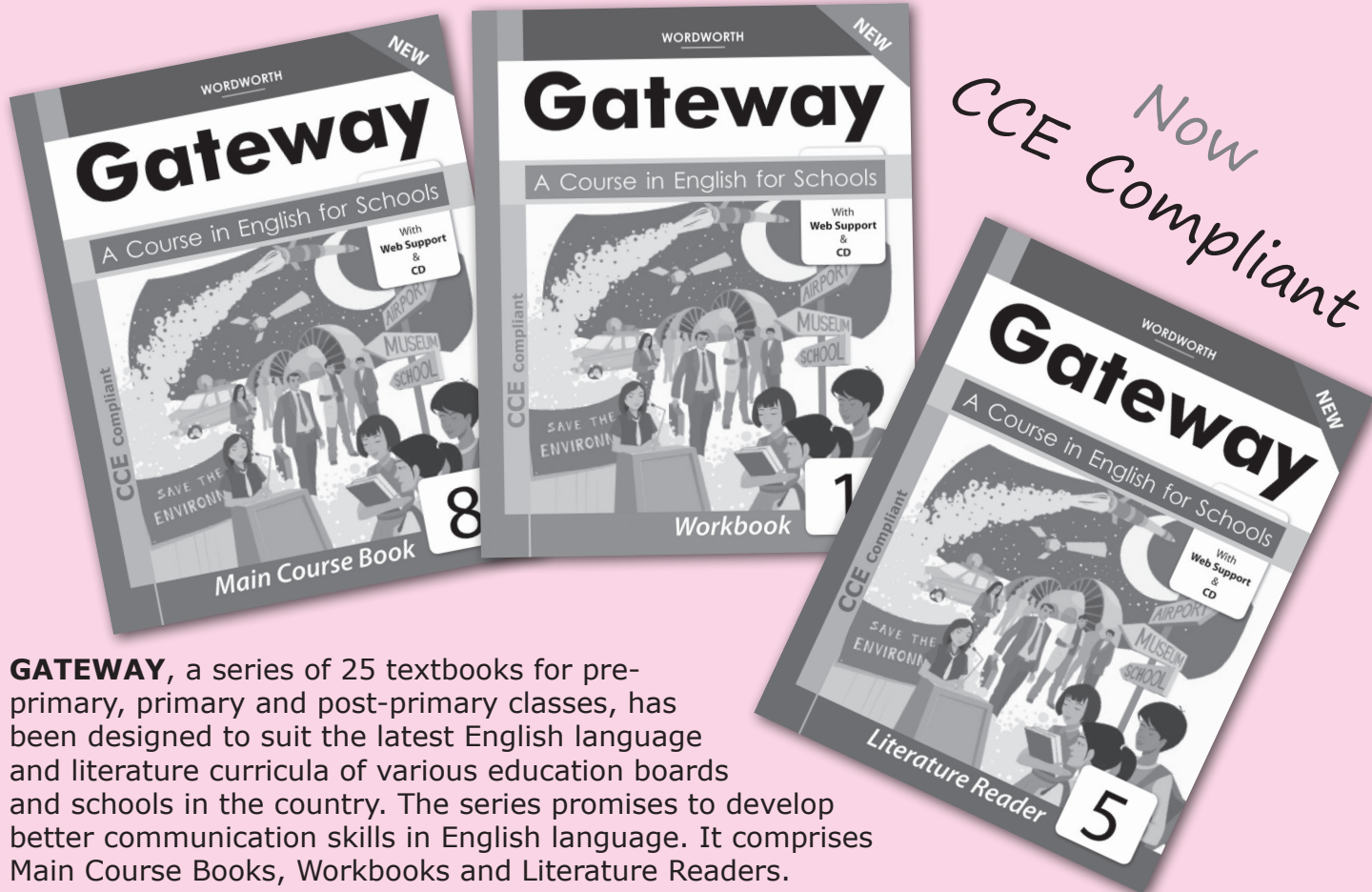
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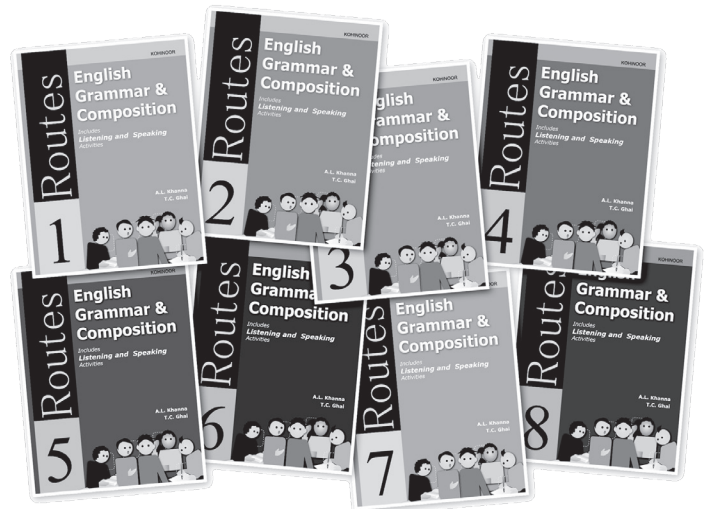
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