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Introducing new feature: **Language Assessment** of Adult Learners of English

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From the Editorial Desk

In the present day teaching-learning environment it has become imperative that teachers of literature engage more and more proactively with the processes of language teaching and learning. It has been the consistent endeavour of FORTELL to build bridges between the needs of the learner and methodologies of the teachers through innovative and thought provoking presentations. The present issue of FORTELL once again attempts to create such meaningful dialogues amongst the practitioners of this craft. Through topics ranging from the use of ICT in the class-room to observation as a learning tool, this issue showcases the multi-dimensional approaches towards teaching and learning methodologies.

Literature as a veritable feast of language continues to be an old favourite. The articles, 'Using Literature for Developing language Skills' by Nisha Misra and 'Literature in the Class Room: Practices and Reflections' by Nidhi Kunwar highlight the significance of literature in language teaching, over-riding objections that the complexity of structures in literature might inhibit the learner of language. Rather, the aesthetic reading of literature not only provides mastery over language but also assists in the enhancement of creative thinking and reflection in the learner. This, then, brings up the issue, how does one teach the language of literature? A demonstration can be seen in Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary's article where he provides a language based approach to interpretation of poetry and suggests that an understanding of linguistic organization can help to unravel the meaning of a poem for the student.

If there is one area which has dramatically affected teaching practices today, it has to be information technology (IT). So much so that a previous issue of FORTELL was dedicated entirely to the interface between teaching and IT. Taking this forward, the article, 'Use of Mobile in the Class-room' (Ved Mitra Shukla) puts forth the point of view that the mobile phone not only assists in the learning of the English language but also generates a language of its own. Soma Bannerjee, in her article, 'The Use of ICT-enabled Classroom in Facilitating the Teaching and Learning of Literature' argues for a well equipped classroom which would make it possible for using cinema (or any other technology) as a supportive tool to the teaching/learning of literature. A pedagogy that uses technological aids would require a classroom with enabling technology in place. This can, dramatically increase learner interest levels and productive understanding of literature along with language acquisition.

Other analyses, such as a socio-linguistic approach to the teaching of second language and using observation as a tool in teaching add to the richness of this issue. Shoba's article on 'Observation as a Learning Tool: Experiences and Experiments' deals with using the act and art of observing as an assessment and learning tool in more ways than one. For one, it is a more humanistic method of formative evaluation which tracks a student's progress, achievements, strengths and weaknesses etc. On the other hand, a teacher can *learn* about her/his own teaching practices through observation. This will enable the teacher to change, modify, adapt or adopt pedagogies which will directly affect the learning outcomes and indirectly contribute to her/his professional growth and development. Shabitha and Mekhala provide a very interesting perspective on how factors such as socio-economic background, ethnicity and educational level, influence the ESL learner. In their essay 'Influence of Sociolinguistic Factors in Second Language Learning', they also suggest ways in which learners can overcome some of the inhibiting influences when a conducive classroom environment and a positive attitude in teachers are created.

We hope that this issue is able to address some of the perplexing yet important questions that teachers of English language and literature face from time to time. We also hope to add some new pedagogical strategies that can be modified for use in the classroom depending on the target group of learners. Book reviews, reports, interviews are some of our regular offerings. In our language games section, which we have called 'Language Assessment', we have given a sample paper at basic level for testing adult learners. This is a new first for our journal. We try to make each issue of *FORTELL* a rich learning experience and pack as many punches as we can about language and literature.

At the end, we would like to make an announcement regarding the publication of the journal. From now onwards, *FORTELL* will be published twice a year (in January and July) with more pages and more intellectual and practical engagements.

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Influence of Sociolinguistic Factors in Second Language Learning

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Abstract

Language is an integral part of society and there are number of social factors that influence and change the language of an individual. This paper focuses on how sociolinguistic factors influence second language learning situation and explores further how societal factors control the attitude of the learner. Language is conditioned by the individual's lifestyle and demands. The paper discusses how social and economic background, education, ethnic and language background influence the learner in ESL context. The paper also suggests how the learner can get over the influence of certain sociolinguistic factors and discusses how the classroom environment and teachers' attitude impact the behaviour of target learners.

Key words: Sociolinguistic Factors, Second Language Learning, Cultural Factors and Learners' Attitude.

Introduction

Language is a social convention learnt by generations of communities. It is a systematic set of principles and codes accepted and used by a group of people restricted by geographical boundaries. Language is an integral part of society that can be studied in two ways – through the use of language in society and the sociology of language. According to Trudgil (1974), society is reflected in language in this way and social change can produce a corresponding linguistic change. Sociolinguistics deals with the various social factors and their interaction with language. Trudgil (1974) states that sociolinguistics is the part of linguistics that is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. Elements such as culture, community, tradition, religion and socio-economy are found within the social context of language learning. Further sociolinguistics also investigates the influence of language and culture on learning a second language. The effective learning of a second language is determined mainly by social factors and supplemented by psychological factors.

Language learning is conditioned by the way in which the mind observes, organizes and stores information. This paper concentrates on the relationship between social context and second language proficiency. Learners' attitude towards second language and learning opportunities is determined by their socio-economic classes and the relationship between social factors and learners' choice of second language. According to Collier (1988), the factors that affect second language acquisition and advancement in language learning depend on the learner's cognitive style, socio-economic background, formal schooling in first language and so on.

Language being the medium of communication, the learner who is learning the language learns not only the rules of its linguistic structure, but also learns the language with reference to the social context. Social context and social factors are two distinct features. Social context is a kind of setting in which communication takes place. Social factors include age, peer pressure, mother tongue, parental background, social class and ethnic identity.

Culture in Learning Environment

The prime elements in learning a second language are the cultural and contextual backgrounds. While learning a second language, the influence of the culture of that language is inevitable. The other fact is that the learner of second language is shaped by her/his first language culture. If there is no association made between the first language and second language, the learning will not be effective.

Learning environment plays an effective role in language learning. The teacher and the learner play a crucial role in the class room. The learners have their own set of cultural experience and teachers, in fact, share their own culture in the classroom. In this classroom interaction and transaction, a knowledge sharing session takes place, based on the distinct roles played by the teachers and learners. Such classroom atmospheres contribute in improving the language proficiency of the learner.

Different cultures, community and language habits in the learning environment can pose problems in learning the language effectively. Each learner has practiced an entirely different pattern of language, habits and culture. Language also reflects the cognitive code of the particular community. If the teacher has to provide an absolute explanation of the meaning of cultural terms in second language, it can be explained by referring to cultural knowledge of the target language. If the teacher does not clarify, then the learner will understand by applying his or her cultural frame. This will result in lot of confusion due to unfamiliarity in the second language culture. So it becomes mandatory for the facilitator to explicate the cultural references in second language.

The relationship between the learners' cultural background and the background projected by the second language culture often influence their attitudes towards second language and determines their motivation level in a larger perspective. In this respect Lambert (1974) distinguishes between two major types of bilingualism: additive and subtractive. In additive bilingualism, the learners feel that they are adding something new to their skills experienced by learning a new language, without taking anything away from what they already know. In subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, they feel that learning a new language reshapes the frame work of what they already gained for themselves. Successful second language learning takes place in additive situations and learners will feel diffident in subtractive situations and will not succeed in their goals. So a facilitator should create an additive environment for learners' effective language learning. Munby (1978) has asserted that effective learning can happen only in a learner-centered environment.

Parental Background

Parental background is another significant factor that influences the second language learning. If the parents have the knowledge of the second language it helps the learner to acquire the target language easily as the learners have a chance of communicating in second language even at home. The vital external factors that impact the learner in second language speaking environment are interactions with parents, teachers and peers. Many research studies have authenticated the above fact that there is a significant correlation between parental encouragement and achievement in second language learning environment.

Socio-economic and Ethnic Background

Socio-economic factors play a vital role in the second language achievement. Most of the studies establish that children from lower socio-economic groups are less successful in comparison with the children from higher groups, because it depends on their level of education and exposure to the outer world. Ethnic identity has profound influence on second language learning, as it gives a sense of identity and serves as a major factor in language development. Ellis (1994) claims that influence of ethnic identity can take three forms corresponding to normative, socio-psychological and socio-structural views of the relationship.

Normative view emphasizes the distance between the culture of the native and target language. If the distance between the two cultures is too much, then the second language learning situation becomes difficult. Schumann (1978) refers to this as social distance, which is the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual (in a metaphorical sense it refers to the dissimilarity between two cultures). The socio-psychological view emphasizes the learners' attitude towards their culture. Positive attitude towards the language motivates the learner to learn the second language effectively. They can maintain their cultural identity by adding the aspect of the second language culture to their repertoire. The socio-structural view examines the nature of their interaction with the native speakers. As Spolsky (1986) noted, learning an L2 is intimately tied up with one's personality and being forced to learn L2 as a replacement for L1 is a 'direct assault on identity.'

Learning Contexts

The outcome of second language learning is associated with different learning contexts. SL learning takes place in a majority of contexts where the target language serves as the associate official language of the country. Learners pay more attention to second language learning where the target language plays the role of official language. This situation can be found in decolonized countries in Asia and Africa. SL learning takes place in an international context, if the target language serves as the means of communication between speakers of different languages in a wide range of contexts such as business, trade, science and literature.

If the learner's second language is the national language of the country where he/she resides, the learner has a chance of using that language outside the learning environment. The communication exposure plays a strong influence in the learning achievement of second language learner. If the learner lives in a society where her/his second language is a mother tongue for other

members of the society, he can acquire the second language by observing their speech and interacting with them. It becomes a profound need for her/him to survive in that kind of society. Variations in the regional contexts also influence the learning process. If the learner lives in a regional setting where he can get more chances for using second language, the learning will be effective. In this context s/he can have a chance of using the second language outside the classroom.

Role of Mother Tongue

The use of mother tongue in second language classrooms is one of the most debatable issues in the history of language pedagogy. The use of mother tongue in class rooms has both strong and weak forms. It has the weaker form where the whole classes are handled in their mother tongue. It has the stronger form where the learner is learning the second language through the medium of mother tongue by comparing it with the mother tongue and understanding the explanations rendered by the teacher. It can help him to comprehend the content easily. Switching over to mother tongue can function as a learning aid which improves the communicative competence of the second language learner.

Age and Peer Pressure

Age is one of the most affective social factors in second language learning. Psycholinguists believe that children are better language learners than adults. Taking a sociological perspective adults are less ready to learn than children. The main social reason is adults are not ready to give up the sense of identity their accent provides. They are unwilling to surrender their ego to adopt a new language, which entails a new world. But children start to learn before puberty; in that stage they do not have any sense of identity and ego. For children, all languages are the same and the process of language learning is also similar to that of their first language. Preston (1989) suggests that children may be more prepared to share external norms because they are not subject to peer pressure and have not formed stereotypes of their own identity.

Peer pressure has both positive and negative impacts on learning. In second language learning, peer pressure often undermines the goals set by parents and teachers. Encouragement from peer group and their positive attitude towards second language can facilitate learning. If the peer group is not ready to accept the second language and discourages the learner from conversing in the second language, then learning cannot be successful.

Learners' Attitude

Learners have diverse attitudes towards the target language and target language culture and the social value of learning the second language. Learners may have conflicting attitudes. A positive attitude towards second language and its culture enhances their learning attitude. Chamber (1999) confirms that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) in their extensive studies have stated that positive attitudes toward language enhance the language proficiency of the learners. The learners learning pace in target language is determined by their attitude towards the second language. Learners' attitudes have a secure relationship with motivation. Krashen (1985) proposes that attitudes can act as bridges in learning a new language and are the essential environmental ingredients for language learning. Brown (1994), in his work '*Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*' adds:

> Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience.
>
> (Brown, 1994, p.168)

Conclusion

The major thrust of the paper is how learners' attitude towards second language learning can overcome sociolinguistic factors that profoundly impact the learning of a second language. The learner can get over the influence of the other factors if he has the positive attitude and he believes that by learning this language he tries to add a new skill to his knowledge. The teacher also should be aware of the societal factors that impact the learners in learning the second language and should assist the learner to get over the negative attitude towards learning. The learning environment plays a vital role in second language learning and most sociolinguists have advocated the learner-centered approach, as potential learning can happen only when the learning environment is learner centered. So it becomes imperative for second language learner to inculcate a positive attitude in order to overcome the sociolinguistic constraints in second language learning.

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Introducing Mobile in ELT Classrooms

Vedmitra Shukla

Abstract:

In the present time, ICT learning has become a powerful learning solution. There are various kinds of technologies which provide learners and teachers a prospective environment in order to learn and teach more effectively. In this regard, radio, television, computer, DVD, etc. are some celebrated technological resources. But, as far as use of mobile (cell) phone in education is concerned, it has been a debatable and problematic topic for educationalists. At the same time, it is also noticeable that some organisations like the World Bank are showing their interest in a variety of activities investigating issues related to the use of mobile phones in education in developing countries.

Keeping in view these points, the paper will try to explore some of the strengths and weaknesses of mobile phone as an educational tool in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). Along with this, it will also be interesting to discover and discuss some learning activities with the help of some frequently used features of mobile phone for learners.

In the *Mahabharata*, Ekalavya stands out because of the uniqueness of his character. He is known to have acquired his skill in archery in *a different and innovative way*. By citing the example of a character like Ekalavya, there is no intention to glorify ancient India, or to claim any kind of rich tradition of Distance Education in India. Here, the focus is on *the different and innovative way* of learning of Ekalavya. In the modern age, most of the time students do not find themselves comfortable with the traditional way of teaching and learning process in the classroom. Therefore, they adopt their own way of learning, i.e. *a different and innovative way of learning*. In this regard, there is an example based on my own classroom experience. In the ELT classroom, I was teaching a unit on the passive voice entitled "Forming passive sentences" from Martin Hewing's *Advanced English Grammar*. In that unit, students are suggested to consult a good dictionary in order to know transitive and intransitive verbs. Among 36 students, three

consulted *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, and fifteen students consulted electronic dictionary in their mobile phones in *a different and innovative way*. The different and innovative way was that their mobiles were kept hidden under their tables. The reason was that the use of mobile was not allowed in my ELT classroom. The question is whether modern Dronacharyas should encourage modern Ekalavyas' different and innovative way of learning or not. With the purpose of breaking fresh ground, in the present paper, there is an attempt to introduce mobile phones as an effective learning tool in ELT.

In the present paper, we are more concerned with mobile phones for education in developing countries like India than other portable or mobile technologies. Many projects and conferences, etc. have been created in the advancement of mobile learning. For example, m-Learning, WMUTE, ICML in Jordan, Mobile Learning in Malaysia, IADIS Mobile Learning international conferences series, EnableM in India, Handheld Learning in London, SALT Mobile in USA, etc. are some noteworthy names. It indicates the acceptability of mobiles in education at the world level. A few scholars like Mike Sharples, Joseph Dias, Liz Kolb, Eliot Soloway and Cathleen Norris are some noteworthy names taken as the early adopters of mobiles in education. In the developing countries, the usefulness of mobile phones in education cannot be ignored. It connects 'home culture with school culture', 'makes the literacy of technology outside the school part of school literacy', and 'makes sure that all literacy tools are used for students' success' (Kolb in Engel 2009).' Due to the affordable and portable technologies like the mobile phone, the lack of infrastructure in developing countries would not be taken as an impediment in the path of 'quality assurance through blended learning'. But, the mobile phones cannot be proved a successful learning tool without 'technology leaders' and 'risk takers'. There is a need 'to understand the relative advantage of the technology, to know its compatibility with current classroom practice, to know the complexity of the technology in its use and implementation, and to be able to experiment with the technology through trials (Rogers in Engel, 2009). However, in the field of education, the use of mobiles has been a debatable and problematic topic for educationists. Keeping in view these points, the paper will try to explore some of the strengths and weaknesses of mobile phone as an educational tool in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). Along with this, it will also be interesting to discover and discuss some learning activities with the help of the frequently used features of mobile phone for learners.

As far as the use of mobile phone in the ELT classroom is concerned, it might prove to be a useful learning device. Some convenient and useful ways to use the mobile for ELT are given below:

Electronic Dictionary: There are different kinds of dictionaries on mobile devices. These are available as apps for smartphones and tablet computers like Apple's iPad, the BlackBerry PlayBook, and the Motorola Xoom. With the help of electronic dictionaries, a learner can check spellings, give examples of word use in sentences, find meaning and synonyms of words, and have translations of words from English into another language. Nowadays, handheld dictionaries or PEDs (pocket electronic dictionaries) are also very popular with full keyboards and LCD screens. In comparison to mobile phones, they wholly concentrate on all the features of good e-dictionaries approximately.

There are also a number of online dictionaries which are accessible via the Internet through a web browser. Each of them has its own flavour with a particular focus. There are also participative websites in which subject related data or media can be contributed by individual users of a website. Some noticeable online dictionaries are given below:

- Oxford Dictionaries Online
- Cambridge Dictionaries Online
- Dictionary.com (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,* Fourth Ed.)
- Ask Velazquez (*Velazquez Spanish and English Dictionary*)
- Longman
- Macmillan
- Merriam-Webster OnLine
- Oxford University Press
- Wiktionary(a collaborative project run by the Wikimedia Foundation)
- Reference.com (Word and language tool portal)
- Free On-line Dictionary of Computing
- Logos Dictionary (Free online with additional premium content)
- Online Etymology Dictionary
- Pseudodictionary (Dictionary of user submitted made-up words)
- Smart Define (Word definitions and thesaurus)
- Urban Dictionary (Dictionary of slang)
- WordNet, a word database.

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A Chinese scholar writes that such kinds of dictionaries are more favoured by students of English language than teachers and researchers. He also finds that these dictionaries do not have sufficient and updated information as the students expect. Nevertheless, the purpose is not to condemn the modern invention, but to urge improvement in technology as well as lexicography. In order to be positive to the e-dictionaries, he suggests that learners should have 'sufficient knowledge to distinguish useful dictionaries from bad ones, or know clearly about different functions of different dictionaries.' At the same time, 'teachers' instructions on how to select and use dictionaries are very necessary (Chen 2006).' However, keeping in view the concept of blended learning, the use of e-dictionaries in mobile phones may be useful in ELT in developing countries like India.

Mobile Game: A video game on a mobile phone, smartphone, tablet computer, etc. is called a mobile game. Handheld video game should not be taken as a mobile game. In 1997, it was Nokia which launched the first world's most popular mobile game *Snake* on its selected models. The website of *Interment Software Association* reports that there are a number of entertainment software which can be utilized as teaching devices. More than just play, these software are helpful in imparting knowledge, developing life skills, and reinforcing positive habits in students of all ages ("Games: Improving Education" 2012). As far as word games in mobile phones are concerned, there are both types of games, online word games accessed via web browsers and offline games. No doubt, the games are useful for ELT. But, wherever English is taken as a second language especially in developing countries like India, there is a need for specific cataloguing of such games keeping in view the age of learners as well as their level of understanding. It is also necessary to develop such new word game software which might be beneficial from second learners' viewpoint.

Learning and Practice of Cyber English through SMS (Short Message Service): In the age of Information and Communication Technology, it is truly difficult to overlook the use of E-mail and SMS in our day-to-day lives. In such correspondences, a new kind of language, i.e. Cyber English, is used with the purpose of communicating promptly and effectively within a short period of time. Unawareness of the language is generally taken as computer illiteracy. In order to bridge the gap between computer literate and illiterate, a mobile user can easily learn and practice the precise, informal and intimate style of correspondences with the help of SMS like facilities available on mobiles. Here, an example of this kind of correspondence and a list of basic abbreviations are given below:

```
Dear Aunt,

I hope UR fine. I went to the book
fair =0 to find so many titles! I
bought Lord of Flies. Talk about F2F,
BTW. Took up a summer job! RU LoL?
Sorry, I did not write earlier >: O?

TTFN.BCNU

-NITIN
```

ABBREVIATIONS

BTW	= By the way,
BCNU	= Be seeing you (embarrassed),
BRB	= Be right back (used while chatting),
B4	= Before,
FAQ	= Frequently asked questions,
FYA	= For your action,
FYI	= For your information,
F2F	= Face to face,
HRU	= How are you,
IMO	= In my opinion,
IMHO	= In my humble opinion,
IMNSHO	= In my not so humble opinion,
FWW	= For what it's worth,
LOC	= Laughing,
LOL	= Laughing loudly,
/......@	= A rose,
=0	= surprised,
>:-0	= Angry,
TIA	= Thanks in advance,
ROTFL	= Rolling on the floor laughing,
WTG	= Way to go,
TTFN	= Tata for now, etc. (Chandra 11-12).

Some Other Uses of SMS in ELT: In order to reinforce vocabulary learning, the Short Text Messaging (SMS) feature can be taken as a useful device. After having a discussion on difficult words in an ELT classroom, a teacher can send the words in order to encourage learners to review them outside the school context at spaced intervals (Thornton & Houser 2003).

Hayo Reinders suggests some other uses of the SMS feature in ELT. He writes that usually students take writing in the school context as a boring assignment. But, they enjoy writing in the form of textual communication which might be seen on social networking sites. It means that students can practice with shorter texts to develop

their writing skills. In this regard, he suggests an activity:

> One activity is *circular writing*, where students create a story together by contributing one text message at a time. Each student writes a sentence or two and then sends this on to the next student, who adds another message, and so on until the story is complete. The teacher is copied and has a record of the story as it emerges. You can experiment with different text types such as narratives (as in the example above), or shorter forms such as news reports, instructions, and warnings. (22)

Mobile Phone Memory: Mobile phone memory can be used to distribute listening and reading materials related to English language among the students. Audio books, e-books, syllabus, data, etc. can be downloaded from useful websites, and transferred to the students' mobile phone memory card.

In the same way, other features like camera, voice memo recorder, notes, calendar, etc. can be used to support the teaching and learning of English language. Proper planning of the ELT activities with a mobile phone can prove to be a powerful learning tool, and interesting and creative forms of collaboration, discussion, sharing of new ideas, and ways of learning can be evolved.

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Using Literature for Developing Language Skills

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"**Two roads diverged in the wood and I took the one less travelled**"

- Robert Frost "The Road Not Taken"

Teaching of language through literature is like taking the less trodden path. Language and literature are like twins—fond of each other and jealous as much; dependent on each other and independent as much. Can language skills actually be honed by using literature as a medium? Isn't language more technical and literature a dreamy affair? Aren't they poles apart or are they like the railway line– sharing a distant togetherness? Is the use of literature to amplify and simplify the matrix of language justified? The answer is

definitely in the affirmative.

Go down the memory lane and try to recall the kindergarten days—'Twinkle Twinkle little star'; 'Jack and Jill went Up the Hill', 'Humpty Dumpty Sat on a Wall' etc. is what comes to our mind. A, B, Cs were no doubt taught but the emphasis was more on these rhymes. Why? Simply because this was the best way to set the language in the hearts and minds of young souls. Let us take another example. 'She is Rita. She is a girl. He is Sam. He is a boy.' What is this? This is but a strategy to teach language by means of a simple story (literature). If this was not so, why did we have (and still have) both literature and language/Grammar paper in school? Do you remember the English Readers—the first books we used to lay our hands on? The Cinderellas, the dwarfs, the Kings, the Princes, the Frogs all brought us closer to the language. And how can one forget the exercises at the end of every chapter—the word-meanings, fill in the blanks, make sentences, antonyms-synonyms etc. This was literature being used as a tool to learn language. Hence, one can safely conclude that the use of literature in the field of language is not a new concept. It was always there but both existed as separate entities oblivious to their own complimentary and symbiotic nature. It is only recently that its importance in the field of language has come to the forefront. Undoubtedly, this less trodden path if taken may provide a new perspective to not just the teaching of language but also honing the language skills. It is a different story altogether that though much is being said but not much is being done in the field practically. Hence, the reference to Robert Frost's famous line. As mentioned earlier, the liaison of literature and language is an age old one. Now the question that arises is why and how it can be used efficiently particularly at the advanced levels—a time when usually students/learners tend to underestimate the value of literature as a tool for enhancing language skills.

Basically when we talk about learning a language or earning proficiency in one, we refer to its four main aspects—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All four play a significant role when it comes to commanding a language. But if one were to categorise these in the order of their importance then it would be—speaking, writing, reading and listening (obviously this is my criteria and the reader is welcome to differ). The teaching of English language to general students or the ESL/EFL learners will require the teacher to equip them adequately in all the four areas. The most common approach would be to begin with phonetics and the grammatical structures or by first introducing the students to some very common English words like those used in greetings. But then do you think this approach has been successful? May be in the past, yes, when the swish of the rod and word of the teacher were enough to keep the students hooked and booked to the seat, the classroom and the text—a one way traffic. In the present world the things have changed rapidly and so has the *Guru – Shishya* relationship. Now it's not just about hammering the structures and rules of English language in the heads of students. It is also about making the teaching-learning process an interesting journey by adopting holistic approach and innovative techniques which also incorporate equal participation and contribution on the part of students/ESL/EFL learners. Use of literature, thus, for developing language skills can be a point of departure from the usual run-of-the-mill kind of approach.

In fact, Collie and Slater too are of the opinion that literature should be utilised in the language classroom as it not only provides valuable authentic matter but also encourages personal engagement while enriching the cultural and linguistic apparatus of the reader. In order to achieve this, they assert, teachers will have to make use of relevant and interesting course material, ensure an active participation of the learners by way of activities, reader response, and a strong amalgamation of language and literature.

I still fairly remember my brief stint with the French language just after post-graduation. As usual the first lecture began with the general greetings in French—bonjour, bonsoir, merci, etc. The second lecture was a formal introduction to the technical world of the language, that is, conjugations, reminding me of the painful hours spent in school mugging up the *Lakaars* and the *Roopavalis*. Conjugations were taxing and boring but the stories came like a whiff of fresh air. But when the teacher, perceiving our difficulty and certain amount of disinterest, began teaching the language through the stories, even conjugations became interesting. Akyel and Yalçin cite reasons valid enough for the use of literature by teachers in English teaching practices:

- To introduce the learners to the classics of literature and hence broaden the scope of their thought process;

- To enhance their cultural awareness;

- To fuel the creative and literary spirit of the learners and imbibe in them a sense of deep understanding and admiration for literature;

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- To introduce the learners to British and American masterpieces as a creative, imaginative and a learning experience, and at the same time pull the learners out of the well, bringing them closer to the world outside.

It would be worthwhile to mention the three models proposed by Carter and Long justifying the use of literature.

- The Cultural Model
- The Language Model
- The Personal Growth Model

Michael G. Hines' overview of these models would be a befitting description keeping the paucity of space in mind:

Cultural model

- Based on the notion that literature is the expression of:
  - * Socio-cultural attitudes.
  - * Aspirations of individual societies.
  - * Mythic and universal values.
- Text is regarded as finished product.
- Associated with teacher-centered approach

Language model

- Literature is taught for the promotion of:
  - * Vocabulary
  - * Structure
  - * Language manipulation
- Puts students in touch with the subtle and varied creative uses of language.
- Emphasizes language observation.
- Student-centered methodology.

Personal growth model

- Concerned more with student's:
  - * Maturity as individuals
  - * Progress as individuals through reading
- 'Literature for life' approach
- Promotes individual evaluation and judgment.
- Learner-centered approach.

What is literature? Brumfit states that any work of literature, "is a language act which exploits the resources of the time and place in which it is written." (Brumfit: 116). This appears to be a widely accepted definition in that literature is somehow enduring and not ephemeral. This definition adequately emphasises the role that literature can play in the instruction of English language.

The two basic aspects of language, written and spoken can certainly be honed by the appropriate use of literary texts.

The Written Aspect

Murat Hişmanoğlu in his paper "*Teaching English through Literature*" refers to Sterne's (1991:333) three types of writing taking literature as the model: Controlled Writing, Guided writing and Reproducing the model. Keeping these in mind a teacher can take a nice short story as these are short, crispy and time saving. Students may be asked to gather information about the author, the age and the context of the story or to go through it and rewrite it in their own words (Controlled Writing) or to summarise (Reproducing the model) it or to change the end of the story in the manner they like or give it a suitable title or replace some of the words with their synonyms or antonyms and change the context of conversation altogether or answer the questions at the end (Guided Writing). Teacher may also take a passage or two from the text, make some grammatical errors, remove the punctuation marks, write incorrect spellings, and play with its cohesion and structure in a manner that makes it a humorous reading. The students may then be asked to rewrite it at the same time mentioning the reason for the change. Alternatively a poem may be taken and students be asked to paraphrase it or some words omitted and the students be asked to fill in what they feel would be suitable. Drama can be a more interesting choice. Teacher may take a play and the students can be asked to change the dialogues of the characters or rewrite the entire plot or a character may be asked to write a letter to another character. While doing so the teacher will get the opportunity to also explain the formal and informal usage of language.

The Spoken Aspect

Literature has a role to play here as well. The teacher may take a poem and ask the students to recite it or a story may be taken and students be asked to narrate it. Alternately a debate may be organised on various issues/themes discernible in the text. Declamation and extempore may also be used to the same effect. Drama would be a more suitable genre for honing this skill by means of play acting or role play exercises. The teacher may divide the characters among the students and ask them to enact their respective parts or the students may be encouraged to change the basic traits of the character itself and influence the outcome of the play. Such activities shall also enable the teacher to throw light on and the students to understand the supra-segmental

structures (phonemes) of language like stress, pitch, intonation, tone, rhythm etc.

Though literature offers ample scope on its part there are also some reservations held against its use in the area of Language Learning. Faruk Turker (1991) lays them down very clearly. Firstly, he says the main aim of Foreign Language Teachers is to teach the grammatical structures of a language and literature because of its peculiar structure (complex) and language does very little towards this. Secondly, literature showcases a specific cultural perspective making it somewhat difficult for the language learners. Lastly, the study of literature will not serve the intended purpose.

Notwithstanding what Turker and others have to say but application of literature in language building can't be underestimated. Gone are the days when literature was thought to be the paradise of Fools having little or no affinity with the temporal world owing to its impracticability. Today it is making its footfalls not just heard but seen in the practical world and its use in the arena English language is just one of its many aspects. For those who felt that "Never the twain shall meet" the rendevouz of language and literature is a welcome surprise.

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'On His Blindness' and Theirs:
A Language-based Approach to Poetry Interpretation

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Abstract
This paper advocates the use of language-based teaching tasks in the teaching of poetry to non-native speaking undergraduate learners of English. The usual practice in most poetry classes in EFL contexts is that teachers believe, or would like to believe, that their students already know how to read a poetic text and so proceed to discuss, or 'recount', the thematics of the work in question. The students are 'blinded' to everything else in the text except what they are 'told' to see in it. John Milton's "On His Blindness" is taken up in this paper in an attempt to demonstrate how attention to language can open up students' minds to the ways in which poetic meanings are made and help students become independent of their teachers and critical notes.

Introduction
This paper is concerned with using awareness of linguistic organization to develop awareness of the organization and signification of poetic structures. The usual practice in most undergraduate poetry classes in EFL contexts is that teachers believe, or would like to believe, that their students already know how to read a poetic text and so proceed to discuss, or 'recount', the thematics of the work in question. The students, who have not been taught how to read a poetic text, are baffled by the text and can only reach out for help. When the help does not come from the teacher, it comes from the ready-made 'Notes' which have flooded the market. The outcome is very discouraging indeed – the original text remains unexplored and the students keep groping in the dark. They have not

really 'learned' anything. Clearly, something is not right.

The paper is concerned with teaching undergraduate students how to learn to read poetry, as a precondition for subsequent study. The paper advocates the use of language-based teaching tasks and argues that attention to language can train students in the discovery of literary significance and the making of individual interpretations.

The benefits that can be obtained from language-based approaches to poetry reading have been amply demonstrated by many publications. This paper extends this trend by offering practical suggestions for English poetry teachers in tertiary contexts.

The Pedagogy

On His Blindness is taken up in this paper in an attempt to demonstrate how attention to language can introduce new perspectives in students' minds about the ways in which poetic meanings are made and boost their confidence in their ability to make sense of poetic texts without the assistance of teachers or critical notes. This particular poem of Milton is very popular among students and its 'meaning' is well known, and these are precisely my two reasons for choosing it. I would attempt to show how teachers can use linguistic clues from the text to guide students towards making their own meanings instead of 'injecting' them with a 'sacred' meaning that will blind them to all other potential readings of the text.

The pedagogical procedure proposed here is in three stages: experience of the poem, response to the poem and accounting for the response. Each stage adopts a number of teaching tasks which aim to promote a defined set of reading skills. The overall objective of the three-stage pedagogical procedure is to promote learner autonomy. Constant practice under guidance will ultimately sensitize learners to the way poetry is structured and the ways of inferring the significance of these structures.

In order for the proposed pedagogy to be successful, the teacher must have carried out a detailed stylistic analysis of the poem. The stylistic analysis will make clear to the teachers which areas of language organization are exploited by the poet in order to communicate the poem's thematic concerns. The teaching tasks are then designed to sensitize learners to the way language is exploited in order to communicate meaning and effect. The stylistic analysis of this poem has been carried out by the researcher but is not provided

here for considerations of space and relevance.

Stage One: Experience of the Poem

The aim of this stage is to arouse the students' curiosity about the poem and make them want to continue reading. This aim is achieved by asking questions that involve the students in the poem's theme(s) and relating these to the students' life experiences and content schemata. The skills to promote at this stage are scanning and skimming. The set of questions asked include the following:

1. .What is this poem about?
2. Do you know anyone who is blind? How do they feel?
3. Close your eyes. Describe in two adjectives the life you see now.
4. How does Milton, in this poem, describe his life now? (hint: first three lines)
5. If you became blind, would you lose interest in life? Would you be angry with God?
6. Is Milton angry with God?
7. Do you think the blind can also contribute something to life and society?
8. Do you think God rewards the blind? What does your religion say on this point?
9. How about people like us who are not blind? Will God question us on how we have used the gift of eyesight?
10. What does your religion say about this aspect?

Stage Two: Response to the Poem

The aim of this stage is to create an awareness of how poetry communicates meaning by sensitizing the students to the significance of lexical choices and structural organization in the expression of meaning. This aim is achieved by designing tasks that encourage students to read for those linguistic features that are of literary significance. The skill to promote at this stage is integration (integrating textual elements into an interpretation of whole lines or stanzas, or the full text). The set of questions that can be asked include the following:

11. How many voices are there in the poem and which lines are said by which voice?
12. This poem is a sonnet. Does the poem provide a thematic break at the end of the octave? Does the thematic break correspond with a change of voice? (The sonnet form and its structure should be explained to the students if they are not familiar with it)
13. The part said by voice 1 (the octave, lines 1-8) is one sentence which contains a number of adjuncts (In grammar, adjunct means 'a

clause or phrase added to a sentence that, while not essential to the sentence's structure, amplifies its meaning, such as *for several hours* in *We waited for several hours' <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Adjuncts>)*. Identify the adjuncts, take them out of the sentences and re-write the basic structure of the octave (hint: two-clause sentence and one subject).

14. Which of the following four alternative interpretations of the octave is the best? Defend your choice of interpretation against the writer's lexical, structural and other choices in lines 1 – 8.

    a. The speaker is despondent over his loss of eyesight.

    b. The speaker feels helpless but is determined to use his poetic talent.

    c. The speaker regrets that he cannot serve God due to his disability.

    d. The speaker argues that he should not be asked to do his duties because God has denied him the gift of eyesight and the talent of writing poetry.

15. The part said by voice 2 (the sestet, lines 8-14) is composed of two long sentences which also contain adjuncts. Identify the adjuncts and re-write the sestet in full sentences leaving the adjuncts out.

16. Suggest a possible thematic significance of punctuating the octave and sestet with all these adjuncts.

17. Which of the following is the best reformulation of the sestet? Defend your choice of interpretation against the writer's lexical, structural and other choices in lines 8 – 12.

    a. The speaker remembers that God does not need Man's work because He has thousands of angels to serve Him all the time.

    b. The speaker's dissatisfaction is dispelled by Patience's assertion of the kingly state of God who should be served without a murmur.

    c. The poet is interrupted by Patience and assured that the God can be served not only by doing but also by the intention of doing.

    d. Patience stands up to the disrespectful poet and reminds him of the magnitude of God.

18. List the words and pronouns that refer to God in the octave and the sestet and decide which part of the poem contains more references. Does that signpost any attitude of the speaker toward God in the two parts of the poem?

19. List the verbs in both the octave and the sestet. (hint: the octave contains four active finite verbs and three passive verbs while the sestet contains ten active finite verbs and no passive verbs). Students are asked to suggest an implication of the concentration of active verbs in the sestet and passive verbs in the octave.

20. Consider the possible referent(s) of 'They' and 'who' (Line 14).

Stage Three: Accounting for the Response

The aim of the stage is to sharpen the students' perception of the ways language is used in the expression of different perceptions of shared reality. Students learn to base their interpretations on textual evidence. This aim is achieved by designing tasks that demand an examination of textual clues and their role in bringing about a particular perception of reality. The skill to promote is taking responsibility for one's views.

21. Attempt a prose reformulation of the content of the poem. Does your paraphrase contain compromises and defects in comparison with the original?

22. Given below is some biographical information about Milton. Does this information make you adjust your answers in any way? (Christian; spoke English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek and Hebrew; totally blind by 1652; wrote his best known poems after he was totally blind).

23. Which of the following sentences can be said to describe the mood of the poem? Provide textual evidence in support of your choice.

    a. The poem opens with grief and closes with quiet joy.

    b. The poem opens with rejection and closes with acceptance of life in blindness.

    c. The poem opens with disrespect and closes with apology.

    d. The poem opens with doubt and closes with assurance.

24. Why is the poem entitled On *His* Blindness and not On *My* Blindness? Relate your answer to the dialogue between the voices in the poem.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Poetry teachers in tertiary contexts need to be clear about the distinction between learning

and studying poetry. Equating the two may misinform the teacher's pedagogical decision.

2. Poetic pedagogies should not presuppose ability to read poetry. They should instead aim for promoting it.

3. Students in the third world come from cultures that respect authority. If a teacher tells the students his own interpretation of the text, all students will be driven into conformity.

4. Teacher should not stress a single interpretation because that will blind the students to all other potential readings.

5. Students should be given a more active role in the classroom. Classroom tasks aim at promoting learner autonomy.

6. The ultimate aim of any poetry pedagogy is to create interested and independent readers. The success of the teacher is judged by how redundant his help is at the end of the course.

7. Students should be discouraged from interpreting the text as one whole. It is always advisable that students read the text line by line, or section by section, and then integrate the parts into a general meaning. Classroom tasks should reflect and promote this text-attack strategy.

8. Teachers should not lose sight of the students' learning objectives at any stage.

9. Poetry will remain unwelcome if it is not shown to contribute to the language development of the learner.

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The Use of ICT-enabled Classroom in Facilitating the Teaching and Learning of Literature

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ABSTRACT

The system of imparting quality education has tremendously changed. In this techno-savvy age it can be difficult to analyze the evolving roles of teachers. The modern mantra is that teachers must be ICT literate and give up the traditional methods of imparting knowledge. This cannot be the final verdict of course; rather, teachers must keep their traditional devotion to students alive and at the same time learn how to navigate this 21st century tech-savvy world to form a successful partnership between the teacher and the learner. The mushrooming of foreign universities is alarming because they lure and tempt our students with latest technology know-how. To stall the mass exodus of students into foreign grounds, teachers must initialize a system, wherein, the students are motivated to learn and at the same time keep up with the changing teaching trends. For this the teacher has to evolve along with the evolving times. The present paper will make suggestions on how we, as teachers, can cope up with the use of latest technologies in imparting knowledge.

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become, within a short span of time, one of the most important aspects of modern society. Many countries now regard mastering the basic skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education. They are powerful enabling tools which cater to educational change and reform. When used appropriately, different ICTs are said to help expand access to education and raise educational quality and help make teaching

and learning an interesting, active process connecting the cyber world to the real world.

The new age has ushered tremendous change in lifestyles and the field of education has been touched by the changing trends. In keeping up with changing trends, we teachers will need to adapt to these new methods and technologies. The age old image of a teacher in dhoti-kurta with an umbrella in tow has faded far into the recesses of human mind. Today he has to be tech-savvy to survive the challenges of the new world. Trying to cope with the new vistas in knowledge we should also realize that the effective integration of ICTs into the educational system is a complex process that involves not just introduction of technology but also changes in curriculum, taking into consideration institutional readiness for the change, teacher competencies, and long-term financing, among others.

The ultimate aim of a teacher is to help the students grow up to be effective critical thinkers and become socially and morally responsible citizens of the world, and be successful in whatever endeavors they undertake. In order to achieve this and cope with changing times, the teacher has to take in her/his stride the insistence on the use of technology in teaching methodologies, and become computer savvy. If technology in teaching is the need of the day, teachers have to take the call. With the use of ICTs, teachers in the 21st century have access to a labyrinth of profound information that can be applied to their class room teaching. Thus teachers should make an effort to be knowledgeable and acquire skills, and at the same time should be willing to apply such methods to their classroom. But as teachers and as mentors we owe a certain responsibility towards society in building up minds competent enough to face the challenges of the present world. With the inevitable proliferation of ICTs in the classroom, the role of the teacher has to change to keep up with the changing trends in teaching methodology. This paper makes an attempt to chalk out reasons as to why teachers need to redraft their teaching techniques in order to keep up with the new technological world. The present paper will analyze how the teaching of a Shakespearean text in a B.A literature class can be enhanced by using one particular mode of ICT methodology, that is, the screening of films as a pedagogical tool for teaching in the classroom.

The question may arise as to why films should be used in an undergraduate literature class? Films can be used in a literature class to facilitate learning and the students can become more familiar with the text. Thus, they become more confident in the analysis of the text. Moreover, films facilitate a receptive and informed learning environment. The first step is to introduce the students to the context of the text and then expose them to the visual representation of the same. At the same time, students attending the film in a group will create an atmosphere uniquely conducive to reflection and sharing. This experience is absolutely different from a solitary reading of a text. After viewing the film, discussions can be held among the students to hear their comments and reflections by the teacher. The practice may include a follow-up evaluation which is very important, since additional insights into the texts may emerge as a result of students' ongoing reflective process. The practice will also involve the importance of integrating critical analysis of the print and text format. The students would learn to compare and contrast the written text with the film. They can learn the similarities and the differences in representation of the story both in the text and film medium and widen the horizon of their knowledge.

My contention is this that the project of reading Shakespeare with the aid of films makes the text and its subtexts more accessible to the Indian student in a literature classroom. Let me cite the examples of Vishal Bhardwaj's Hindi films *Maqbool* and *Omkara*. While *Maqbool* is an adaptation of Macbeth, *Omkara* is that of Othello. In both films Bhardwaj brilliantly succeeds in transposing the periodicity of Shakespeare's plays to match the locale and milieu of contemporary India. Although the plays are reworked in a different medium (film), language (Hindi/Urdu/Bhojpuri), time and setting (Mumbai underworld and Hindi heartland), they remain faithful to Shakespeare's essential vision.

When Shakespeare is read through films in the classroom, a number of striking moves happen together. First, a classic literary text is received through its transposition into popular cinema, complete with its apparatus of love, romance, tragedy etc. The rendering of a canonical text into a Bollywood representation spiced with its masala helps the teacher and the student to overcome pedagogical and ideological gaps. By pedagogical gap, I mean, the erasure of form and meaning that takes place when the teacher and taught try to decipher a classic but alien text from a position of 'otherness'. Often what is witnessed in the Indian classroom is the passive and uncritical response that students show to a teacher's own clichéd textual explanations, a mere page-by-page paraphrase. Now, the teacher can help students to read the text through film and

show how the adaptation is both an imitation and a reworking. Moreover, by using hit Hindi films as the interpretive agency of racial and imperial subtexts within the colonial text, the teacher enables students to face and overcome their inferiority complex and thus remove ideological gaps present in the discourse. In doing so, the literature classroom is made highly engaging for the teacher as well as the taught. Thus, not only does the teacher perform better but the student also reads well.

Bharadwaj's *Maqbool* and *Omkara* work their retelling of Shakespearean tales by interpellating a range of contemporary political and cultural associations that makes the understanding of Shakespeare's history and politics easier for the teacher and the taught. The conflict of Shakespeare's characters caught in the grips of their own emotions, racial prejudices and societal mores is better understood when their adaptation in Hindi films take up problematic issues of class, caste and gender of today's times. The pedagogical strategy that can be adopted by the English teacher in the classroom is to first screen the film, a *Maqbool* or an *Omkara*, without any textual references, and then move on to the original text to uncover all its signifiers.

Such a strategy has several advantages. The film-to-source rather than source-to-film approach enables the teacher to direct the student from the known to the unknown. By adopting this reverse technique, the teacher also prepares the student to cast away received notions about the 'literariness' of a text conditioned in him by the traditional ways in which English texts have been taught in school. The teaching and learning Shakespeare in this manner, twice removes the reader from its hallowed universal truth making both the teacher and the learner challenge the orthodoxy of pedagogical practices of Shakespearean studies.

Screening films in the classroom will necessitate the use of ICT in the classroom and bring about a certain element of technological marvel which by itself may lead to an increase in the levels of student interest and student attention. Today's student generation are as it is tech-savvy showing a high degree of compatibility with information communication systems like computers, internet, mobile phones, i-pads and play stations. Therefore, when such students find that their learning activity in the classroom also simulates the world of gadgetry to which they are accustomed, their keenness to learn and to participate becomes higher.

What infrastructural facility and technological equipment would the teacher require to transform his class into an ICT-enabled one? First, a high resolution LCD projector with wall-mounted collapsible screen will be required. The class may be split into groups of 25 students and the film shown to each group either in its entirety or by selection of key scenes to which the actual textual reading can be related at a later stage. Such a technique will enable the teacher to bring in a number of issues for student discussion, making it both topical and interesting. For example, the teacher can moderate a lively discussion with his students on how radical are the alterations made by Bhardwaj, particularly his transformation of Macbeth's tragedy of ambition to Maqbool's tragedy of passion, what complex maneuvers are involved in the changeover of the source text, and whether the constitution of the spectator-as-subject differs from that of reader-as-subject, especially when the Western text-as-Indian film is being read in an Indian classroom. Such an enunciation of the text becomes easier for its Indian interlocutors when the approach is made through Bollywood rather than Hollywood. And the whole act of reading Shakespeare through Vishal Bhardwaj makes the teacher-student activity in the literature classroom lively and entertaining.

Other resources that would be required are:

- CDs and DVDs of films adapted from the written text.
- LCD screen
- Computer along with a projector
- Movie-viewing hall

The Methodology would involve taking a text of the B.A literature class, for example *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar* or *Macbeth*. Generally after an introduction, we begin with the actual text. Our students, especially those coming from vernacular medium, find it difficult to grasp the text at its first reading. The explanation should be simple keeping in mind their vocabulary and after the text is dealt with, one can show the visual representation of the same movie. Or, as I have already mentioned in my paper a reverse technique can also be tried out. This helps in the immediate grasp of textual details, its geographical significance, the historical context of the play, the costumes etc. Students' interest is generated and they derive a better understanding of the text.

An ICT enabled interface in the classroom between films and literary texts is expected to yield several startling results that will of course benefit both the teacher and the taught:

It would help in bringing about a comparative

analysis wherein the students can compare the written text with its film adaptation.

The students can learn the literary techniques wherein they can examine the motifs, symbolism, parody, characterization, costumes, geographical background etc.

Students will respond more effectively to dynamic visual representation.

Study of a literary text along with its visual representation can make the study less formidable.

Students learn the text better through questions that demand discussion, critical analysis, decision making, and evaluation thus fostering independent thinking.

Students can improve in their writing skills and analysis by writing reviews of the movies for the newspapers or magazines.

Lectures by theatre personalities can also help students.

Conclusion

The role of a teacher is not merely to impart knowledge just by sticking to the content of the text. It is very important for teachers to encourage and develop critical thinking skills, promote information literacy, and nurture collaborative working practices to prepare students for the new world which is becoming more competitive by the day. What my paper has tried to highlight is to take a specific problem faced by the English teacher in the teaching of Shakespeare's

plays in a literature classroom, and show the transformative capacity of films as a technological aid to motivate student learning process. The use of Hollywood and Bollywood films that are cinematic adaptations of Shakespearean plays can considerably facilitate the teaching-learning activity in the classroom. Such a pedagogical strategy, as I have demonstrated can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in multiple ways. Also, the transformation from a chalk-and-duster traditional classroom to an ICT-enabled modern classroom generates a host of interesting and innovative teaching strategies and learning techniques that can easily be integrated and customized with the prescribed syllabus. In this way, mindless rote-learning by students in a literature classroom can be completely eliminated, replacing it with a critical and imaginative discourse between the teacher and the taught. Classroom teaching as a dialogic and play way activity can only be possible when teachers no longer fight shy of using modern and user-friendly technological tools and show willingness to use ICTs in the classroom. Ultimately, the use of ICT by the teachers will enhance the learning experiences for the students, helping them to think and communicate creatively. ICT will also prepare our students for successful lives and careers in an increasingly demanding technological world.

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Literature in Classrooms:
Practices and Reflection

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Literature is one of the most important components of language teaching. It is really difficult to design a quality language programme without the inputs of quality literature. Teaching literature is important because it helps not only in developing language skills but also in developing aesthetic stance and creative thinking.

If literature has such great potential then it is extremely important to select such pedagogy practices which can do justice with the essence of literature. Hence, it is important that literature must be taught in a way in which a student can get the opportunity to relate with the characters, feel about the situations and reflect on the context. Literature teaching can become meaningful only when the students get the space to express and

discuss. Provision of expression is the utmost requirement of meaningful teaching of literature.

While reading literature, it is extremely important to establish connection with the text. We can enjoy literature only when we are able to empathize with the characters and understand the text through our own experiences. The importance of connecting with text was emphasized greatly by Louise Rosenblatt. She focused on the need of bonding with literature the freedom of expression. Rosenblatt (1980) discussed about two types of reading - Aesthetic and Efferent. She emphasized that a reader interacts with texts for different purposes, which fall along the aesthetic - efferent continuum. While efferent reading is just related with 'taking away' information, aesthetic reading

is related with experiencing the literature. This difference is clearly mentioned by Rosenblatt (1980:38) as "Efferent reading will select out the desired referents and ignore or subordinate affect. Aesthetic reading, in contrast, will fuse the cognitive and affective elements of consciousness-sensations, images, feelings, ideas- into a personally lived through poem or story.". She stressed that literature teaching should be mainly aesthetic in nature. Literature must be taught in a way that will encourage students to reflect and establish connection with the text. This kind of connection will be possible only when teachers do not impose one standard interpretation of the text on the students and provide space to students to form their own interpretation.

For developing students' interest in literature, it is important that good quality literature must be accessible to students. Students must be provided time and space to read literature freely. Kumar (1992, 1996) has also focused on the use of literature in the classrooms for meaningful language teaching. He advocates the allotment of one separate period for the 'story telling' as stories encourages good listening , provides training in prediction, extends child's world and give meaning to words. He strongly suggests that literature must be used in the class and students must be provided freedom for expression. Kinzer and Leu (1987:297) also stressed on the importance of good literature. They believed that 'Good literature captures students' attention and increases their interest in reading'. Literature makes students' independent readers, provides emotional support and enables them to learn realities of life. Hence, opportunities must be provided for interaction with quality literature.

Our Indian classrooms, however, have always remained indifferent to this vision of literature teaching. In our context, literature is approached in a highly conventional and mechanical style. A common literature teaching class will involve choral / one by one reading of the chapter followed by detailed explanation of each line and every word by the teacher (Sinha, 2009). Focus is given on extracting moral teachings from the story and forwarding it to the students. After completion of story, exercises such as underlining difficult words and copying question answer from the board or guide book are usually done. The questions asked are entirely memory based leaving no space for expression and creative ideas. Questions based on memory testing are encouraged, such as "What is the moral of the story?" "Where did the monkey live"? "What excuse did the monkey give to the crocodile"?

"Which fruit was given to the crocodile"? Such types of questions typically dictate literature classrooms across primary, elementary and secondary grades. No space is given to the students to relate with the story and develop empathic bonds with the characters. Students are just expected to read the story as 'information text' and scan the text for the required answers. These pedagogy practices, in reality, end the essence of literature and convert literature reading into a tedious task for students. Students too read literature not for pleasure but for scanning answers for the textbook questions. It is a pity that even when students are asked questions such as "what is their view about the story or a specific character?" they prefer to approach guidebooks. It is so because we make our students believe that their views are not important and they cannot read and reflect on their own. It happens because literature is taught in our classrooms in a highly "efferent": way and students are not allowed to form their own interpretations. No scope is provided to readers for aesthetic reading. Rosenblatt (1980) too shows concern towards such type of literature teaching which converts aesthetic text into efferent and ends the opportunity for engaging deeply with the text.

Literature teaching is important as it helps students not only in mastering the language but also in developing reflection, creative thinking and sensitivity. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) has also highlighted the importance of literature teaching. The document clearly promotes the teaching of literature and specifies that 'Stories, poems, songs and drama link children to their cultural heritage, and also give them an opportunity to understand their own experiences and to develop sensitivity to others' (p. 38). It further focuses on the importance of stories as 'storytelling is appropriate not only for pre-school education, but continues to be significant even later'. As a narrative discourse, orally told stories lay the foundations of logical understanding even as they expand the imagination and enhance the capacity to participate vicariously in situations distant from one's life. Fantasy and mystery play an important role in child development. (p.41). The document encourages teachers to teach literature in aesthetic way and design exercises that will encourage students to think and imagine. It suggests that 'After hearing a story, poem or song, children can be encouraged to write something of their own. They can also be encouraged to integrate various forms of creative expression' (p.38)

The above discussion has clearly highlighted the

importance of literature. Now, the questions which arise are how should literature be taught in class to make it engaging for the students and what type of activities can be designed so that students get an opportunity to express and explore. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) mentions that, 'Literature can be a spur to children's own creativity' (p.38). Therefore, it is time to think how literature can be taught and how the post-reading sessions need to be designed so that students can creatively engage with the text. Some of the suggestions that can be included are as follows:

1. Space for Expression

It is extremely important for the teacher to create a non threatening environment for the students. It is required that students should be given space to read the literature freely and share their interpretations. It is important for the teacher to encourage students to engage with the text deeply. After reading a literature piece, it is important to ask students' views about that piece of literature. Do ask students whether they liked the story? Why or why not? Respect students' perspectives and ideas. Elaborate class discussions can be conducted where students will have opportunities to share openly.

2. Class Library

A provision of class library is actually required if we want our students to develop love for literature. This will make the literature accessible to students. It will create reading interest in students. Ask students to read specific book and encourage students for peer- discussions where students can share their perspective with each other.

3. Journal writing

It is a very interesting activity which gives space to students to relate with the characters and connect with the story. The type of journal can be modified as per the demand of the literature and the kind of thinking teachers wishes to develop. Some type of journals are Character Journal (imagine yourself as a character and think about the situation), Buddy Journal' (sharing views about the story/poem/drama and exchanging it with friends), Dialogue Journal (writing conversations between two characters of the story in a given situation). Journal writing develops imagination and makes connection between reading and writing.

4. Role play

It is one of the finest techniques to judge the comprehension of the story /drama and to develop creativity of the student. While playing characters of the story, students develop empathic bonds with the characters and are able to understand story from different perspectives. Prof. Krishna Kumar (1999) has also focused on the importance of role play and considered it as a tool for developing 'Talk'. For playing a specific character, student has to understand the perspective of the character and comprehend the plot from that vision. Thus, through role play students try to form their own interpretation of the text. The use of role play is also recommended by the National Focus Group on Teaching of English (2006). The document suggests that the teachers can use 'action rhymes, simple plays, or skits, theatre as a genuine class activity' (pp 7). These activities will provide scope for students' engagement and involvement with the language.

These are some of the activities which can be used by the teachers for teaching literature. One can design similar activities keeping in mind the nature of text and interest of students. However, the basis must be clear and that is, freedom to express and interpret. In a literature class, the restriction on expression can deeply harm a students' interest and damage the essence of teaching. Hence, such barriers must not get access to our classrooms. We really need to create classrooms which are provided with good quality literature and an environment of freedom to share, express and interpret.

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Observation as a Learning Tool:
Experiences and Experiments

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Abstract

Recent years have witnessed a move away from the heavy use of traditional, judgmental approaches to evaluation towards alternative, more inclusive ways of determining what learners know and can do. Indeed, the field of evaluation has known a major shift from summative testing tools and procedures to a more humanistic approach using informal assessment techniques that stress formative evaluation. The paper focuses on how observation in an English language classroom can serve as an effective learning tool. In other words, being an observer in the language learning classroom and learning from the observation of classroom processes as an observer opens up a range of experiences and processes which can become part of the raw material of an English teacher's professional growth. The paper discusses how to use certain experiences to learn more about their own teaching. It aims therefore, to make observation in the classroom a learning experience.

Observation is a multi-faceted tool for learning. The experience of observing comprises more than the time actually spent in the classroom. It also includes preparation for the period in the classroom and follow- up from the time spent there. The preparation can include the selection of a focus and purpose and a method of data collection, as well as collaboration with others involved. The follow-up includes analysis, discussion and interpretation of the data and experiences acquired in the classroom, and reflection on the whole experience. It is important to remember that observation is a skill that can be learned and can improve with practice. Moreover, the ability to learn through observing classroom events is mostly intuitive. Teachers can be guided to cultivate the habit to see with acuity, to select, identify and prioritize among a variety of co-occurring experiences.

Developing the skill of observing serves a dual purpose: it helps teachers gain a better understanding of their own teaching, while at the same time refines their ability to observe, analyze and interpret, an ability which can also be used to improve their own teaching. This paper investigates how the development of the skills of observing is integral to the processes of professional decision-making in which teachers are constantly involved.

Informal observation is an integral part of everyday teaching; indeed, teachers continuously observe their students' use of language during formal instruction or while the students are working individually at their desks. Teachers can observe how students respond to and use instructional materials and how they interact during group work. On the basis of their observations, teachers assess what students have and have not learnt and derive information fundamental to the day-to-day functioning of classrooms. Teachers can then detect changes in student achievement and make decisions about what should follow. Teachers should record the results of their observations to keep track of individual students on the whole group's achievement, progress, difficulties, strengths, etc., and think of remedial work if need be. Below is a sample of a checklist that can be used to assess the learners' productive and receptive oral language skills.

Student's name:

Class:

Date:

Remarks: Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory/Excellent

1 Understands simple instructions.

2 Understands simple sentences.

3 Understands simple yes/no questions.

4 Understands plurals.

5 Understands rapid speech.

6 Understands meaning of different intonation patterns.

7 Pronounces vowel sounds correctly.

8 Uses word stress correctly.

9 Uses sentence stress correctly.

10 Gives one word responses.

11 Produces simple questions.

12 Gives descriptions etc…

Understanding an observation task

An observation task is a focused activity to work on, while observing a lesson in progress. It focuses on one or a small number of aspects

of teaching or learning and requires the observer to collect data from the actual lesson such as the language a teacher uses when giving instructions or the pattern of interaction that emerge in a lesson.

What to observe:

- Teaching behavior and learning behavior
- Patterns of interaction
- Different learning styles
- Concentration spans
- Patterns of group dynamics

Sometimes what is happening is very overt - when a student asks a question and a teacher responds directly; sometimes it is far more covert, such as when one student generalizes from another's utterance and echoes an error.

Fanselow (1990:184) has a beautiful image of classroom observation as a journey towards discovery and self-knowledge. It places the teacher-as-learner at the centre of the experience:

> *Here I am with my lens to look at you and your actions. But as I look at you with my lens, I consider you a minor. I hope to see myself in you and through my teaching. I hear my voice, I see my face and clothes, and fail to see my teaching. Seeing you allows me to see myself differently and to explore the variables we both use.*

The Role of Language - Meta-language:

Language is the medium in which the teacher corresponds in the classroom. The Meta- language is used to mean different things. It is used to allow the various classroom processes to happen, that is, the language of organizing the classroom. This includes the teacher's explanations, response to questions, instructions, giving of praise, correction, collection of assignments, etc.

The language of questions:

Language teachers ask a lot of questions. They are the commonest type of utterances in the discourses of classrooms. Questions can have different purposes, for example, socializing, scene setting, checking vocabulary, checking learning and seeking opinion. While teachers often plan their questions in terms of the lesson's content, they seem to lay less emphasis on the patterns of cognitive and linguistic demands emerging on the side of the learner. The task discussed below helps the teacher to collect some questions from a language lesson. The data is later clarified and analyzed.

Procedure of the task:

Before the lesson / Pre-classroom

- Arrange to observe a lesson
- Read right through this task

During the lesson:

- Listen carefully to the teacher's questions. Collect around ten in a roughly chronological order.
- Listen for same teacher- question-student-answers-'sets'. A set denotes the exchange between student and teacher initiated by the teacher's question.
  - Simple exchange: teacher questions and student answers
  - Complex exchange: teacher questions + teacher reformulation + student response + another student response.

Post-classroom

1. Observe the ten questions you have collected. Write down a sample response for each.

2. Categorise the questions. Examples of types are as follows:
   - Yes/ No questions. For example, Here is a picture of a woman. Have you seen this before?
   - Short answer/retrieval style questions: For example, What did she say about the film?
   - Open ended questions: For example, Whom could he have telephoned?
   - Display questions: For example, What is the color of the pen?
   - Referential questions: For example, What did you study at the university?
   - Non-retrieval/imaginative questions. For example, What do you think the writer was suggesting by making the central character an animal?

Analysis

Consider and observe the questions carefully. Consider the notion of difficulty from the learner's point of view. Order the questions from an easy to difficult order. Is there any correlation between the type of questions and the complexity of answer/ response elicited?

Result: Using this observation as a mirror of one's teaching, consider how questions can be designed and approached. Explore other aspects of teaching skills that can be related to this task.

The language of feedback to error:

This refers to the responses given by the teacher to what learners produce in the classroom. Most teachers are aware of feedback in terms of its motivational value; the values of positive feedback and the disadvantages that negative feedback could create.

Feedback, according to Brown (1986:16) has to be genuinely responsive, "It means allowing learners to experience the effect of what they produce as a guide…in their future effects." Brown believes that feedback must be more than encouragement, as 'empty and automatic encouragement is often pointless' (ibid). A genuine response from the teacher provides some indication to learners of the effectiveness of their utterances.

Similarly it is said (Zamel1981) that the information component of teacher feedback is crucial to the learner's learning process. According to Zamel, feedback is most effective when it:

- points out critical features of the language
- gives information that allows the student to discover on her own the rules and principles of language
- reduces ambiguity of choice for the learner

The teacher can follow the same procedure implemented for 'language in questions' tasks and categorise feedback and observe them.

As a result of observation and analysis of the task it is confirmed that the language learner is an active and selective information gatherer who acquires and interprets new information on the basis of the rules already stored in the brain. (Smith 1971).

This is a cognitive rather than a behaviouristic view of the learner: students have their own 'criterial sets', their own understanding of how the language of feedback is organized. Each production of language is testing out of internal hypothesis. Feedback from the teacher may result in a slight adjustment of the original hypothesis.

Observation on learning patterns:

A learner focuses on the class when she is relaxed, comfortable, unstressed, interested and involved in what is going on and motivated to continue. However, there are no hard and fast definitive lists of what makes an environment conducive to learning.

Task for observing learning environment:

A teacher in order to observe the learning patterns emerging out of a particular environment has to assume the role of an outsider in a class, in the presence of another teacher.

Pre-classroom:

Arrange to observe a lesson. Try to avoid lessons with a heavy emphasis on reading and writing as there might not be much to observe.

During the class:

Seat yourself in a place where the view of the classroom is clear and factors such as ambience in the classroom, like the acoustics, temperature, comfort, seating, visual attraction of the room, the quality, tone or volume of the teacher's voice is all notable.

Take about 10 minutes to observe the student's reaction while the teacher speaks. Make notes, if possible, diagrams/ graphs to denote the concentration level of the learners.

For example, teacher's question, students doodling on the paper, student gazing out of the room, student copying notes from the board, etc.

Post classroom:

Now considering the factors that affected the ambience of the classroom, what general patterns or tendencies have emerged? Look at the graphs/ notes you have made of student's reaction and observe the levels of concentration and response.

Analysis:

Does the teaching style adopted by the teacher affect the external factors of concentration? How does concentration change when the language of the teacher changes? Language of questions, language of feedback, etc. do you identify any patterns emerging? A brief analysis of these observations can be of great help once the teacher becomes conscious of it. The same task procedures can be modified to suit the requirements of observation in various aspects like speaking, especially in teaching presentation skills.

Another purpose of an observational task is using it to evaluate the motivational levels of the students. Learners are motivated in two ways – instrumental and intrinsic. In order to understand why a learner has to learn a language, a teacher has to understand how and how much she is motivated. In order to gauge this, a simple observational task can be carried out:

Task Objective:

This task encourages the teacher to know about the learners from the point of view of motivation for learning.

Pre-classroom

Arrange to observe a class of learners whom you

know well. Choose around five to six learners with whom you are familiar enough to know their motivation for learning the language. Prepare a table containing the following columns and mark a high or low.

During the Class

Consider these students' reaction in the class and the degree to which they synchronize and co-operate with the teacher. For example, consider the students' response to the teacher involvement in tasks, willingness to ask when uncertain, tolerance of other students, etc.

Student's name	Motivation	Learning Behaviour	Comment

Post-classroom

After considering and correlating the linkage between columns 2 and 3, the teacher has to analyze how assumptions can influence teaching methods. The following factors contribute in determining a teacher's decision and approach regarding motivation for learning a language.

- Planning to use the language for travel
- Cultural value attached to learning another language
- Needs related to current or future study or work

Analysis:

The task assists the teacher to understand the reason for learning which can help him/her in designing a suitable lesson plan for the particular class.

Similar tasks can be prepared for understanding the learner as a performer and also to evaluate the learner's level of comprehension in a language.

As a conclusion, one observes how the learner becomes a potential resource to the teacher. This is especially important in the field of language teaching where the danger is that because one learns to use a language by using it constantly, learner passivity and non-involvement will in fact affect the outcome. If the prescribed tasks actively engage the learners, then a more positive outcome is assured. Traditionally, we think of the classroom as the place where the teacher 'knows' and the students 'don't know' and their reason for being there is to 'find out.' This model of education invests a great deal of power in teachers, many of whom assume that classroom power as well as the responsibility for learning success is fixed in their hands (Deller 1990; Leather and Rinvolucri 1989). In recent years this approach has been viewed with less and less favour by language teachers as they experiment with learner centered teaching and skill-based learning.
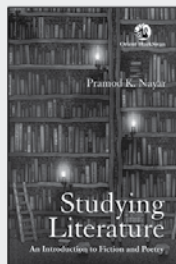
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To Teach Literature is to Teach Language

In conversation with Professor Jonathan Gil Harris

Gitanjali Chawla and Prem Kumari Srivastava

Professor Harris specializes in the literature and culture of early modern England, particularly the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as European travel narratives about the early modern orient and the Americas. He is interested in early modern understandings of globalization and the foreign, and how these have helped shape our knowledge and experiences of bodies, disease, commerce, travel, religious difference, material culture, and temporality. He is especially interested in things in motion: infectious diseases, foreign commodities, moveable stage properties, Shakespeare relics, and all sorts of other unexpected travelers in space and time. The author of five books on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, he has additionally edited a collection of essays entitled Indography: Writing the "Indian" in Early Modern Europe. His current book project, The First Firangis: How to Be Authentically Indian (forthcoming from Aleph Books, 2014), examines the experiences of European, African, and Asian migrants to India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Professor Harris is also the associate editor of Shakespeare Quarterly. Professor Harris is keenly interested in pedagogical implications of teaching literature in English language.

Prem Kumari Srivastava: You have been in India for some time now and have had extensive interactions with varied student groups of universities in India. Would you like to comment on your experiences so far?

Jonathan Gill Harris: I have been visiting India for many years, but this is the first time I have lived here for an extended period. It's been an exhilarating 14 months. I've been a visiting fellow at Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Jadavpur University in Kolkata, and I've taught graduate classes in English Renaissance drama at each of them. I've also given talks at several undergraduate colleges in Delhi, as well as co-taught a course (on "Shakespeare and the World") for the Young India Fellows Programme. During my time here, I've met an astonishing array of students from all over India. While many of them have come from relatively well-off Anglophone families, some are from much poorer, non-English-speaking backgrounds. Indeed, a number of students I have taught are not just the first members of their families to go to university; they are the first literate members of their families. It puts the task of teaching English literature in stark perspective when I hear from my students that they've been busy teaching their parents how to read and write.

While there are predictable infrastructure problems that have coloured my classroom experiences – not least power outages that have halted ceiling fans, raised temperatures, fogged brains, and turned me into a dripping mess – I have very much enjoyed working with the students here. After teaching for close to twenty-five years in New Zealand and the United States, I can now say that Indian students tend to differ in two crucial respects from their counterparts in the West, and in a way that might at first seem paradoxical. First, they are much more respectful of what they believe to be the professor's high status: I don't think I will ever get used to being called "Sir," which to me seems like a relic from *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. But, refreshingly, I have found that they are also much more inclined to argue with me – at least at the graduate level. Amartya Sen's "Argumentative Indian" is clearly alive and well in the ranks of India's MAs, MPhils, and PhDs.

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When I gave a lecture at JNU, the first comment in the Q and A period came from a student who said to me: "Sir, I am deeply grateful to you for your informative and thoughtful presentation. But I must take deep and passionate issue with its theoretical premises." His remark didn't feel hostile: it was born of a desire, not to flatten, but to engage my argument. I have had many similar responses from my graduate students in the Young India Fellows Programme. It makes a welcome change from my experience in the comparatively conflict-averse US classroom, where vigorous disagreement, no matter how principled, is often regarded as a big no-no.

Gitanjali Chawla: While interacting with students in India, has there been a conscious or subconscious shift in your pedagogy?

JGH: Some of the shifts may have been subconscious, but at least one has been quite deliberate, and it is in direct response to the wide range in English language ability that I have encountered in the Indian classroom. When I taught a course at JNU, I was startled to find that even MA students in India's top graduate English programme struggled with the task of writing a conventional literary critical paper. Quite a few of them were not native speakers of English, and they had difficulty expressing themselves in a language made doubly foreign to them by the demand that they emulate the specialist jargon of academic English scholarship.

I was shocked but not surprised, therefore, when a significant number of the students ended up plagiarizing all or part of their papers. This spate of plagiarism was also motivated, I suspect, by a saddening assumption: that there is one "right" way of speaking about Shakespeare, that this "right" way is completely disconnected from their own cultural and linguistic horizons, and that one must therefore copy the words of wise people in Britain and the US in order to speak with any authority about Shakespeare. I decided the problem was not really the students, who had been consistently terrific in class discussions, but rather the kind of writing assignments I was giving them. I needed to engage the students' specific abilities, and their local contexts, more effectively. And so I realized I need to devise quite different writing assignments.

GC: Can you elaborate through an example of a text that you have taught in India?

JGH: When I next taught a graduate course, at the Young India Fellows Programme, I came up with a radically different syllabus. I taught

a well-known work by Shakespeare – *The Tempest* – which I supplemented with creative re-imaginings of the play and its characters by playwrights, poets, filmmakers, and performance artists from around the world (the Caribbean playwright/politican Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, the US Cold War film *Forbidden Planet*, Suniti Namjoshi's lesbian-themed poems about Caliban and Miranda, Lemuel Johnson's African Calypso Caliban, the Mauritian Creole playwright Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufan*, the Samoan choreographer Lemi Ponifasio's *Tempest Without A Body*). This syllabus impressed on the students that any interpretation of Shakespeare's play is not simply an attempt to arrive at the play's "right" meaning (as if there were such a thing!). It is also a creative intervention that inevitably transforms the play from the vantage point of the interpreter's social, cultural and historical position.

The final written assignment was designed to underscore the positionality of all interpretation. Instead of writing a conventional literary critical paper, each student produced a creative re-imagining of *The Tempest* that drew on his or her own experiences. The result was stunning: I received profoundly thoughtful engagements with *The Tempest* that re-imagined it through the prisms of caste violence, honour killings, the myth of "India Shining," Naxalite struggle, farmer suicides, etc. And best of all, the students came away from the course feeling they could *read* Shakespeare – not as passive recipients of his timeless wisdom, but as critical collaborators in the production of meaning.

PKS: Very often, students tend just to read a writer. How do you bring alive a writer like Shakespeare in the classroom? How do you transform a student, and I quote, "from no idea about Shakespeare" to "in love with Shakespeare"?

JGH: I'm not sure I can make anyone fall in love with Shakespeare – that's up to the student. But I can give my students basic tools with which to make sense of Shakespeare's English. For most Indian university students, even native speakers of English, Shakespeare's language can be intimidating in its foreignness. Not only are they daunted by his unfamiliar words, syntax, and rhetorical devices; they also tend to encounter Shakespeare exclusively on the page, where the machinery of scholarly editorial labour – rigid margins for prose passages, mysterious line breaks for verse passages, reams of explanatory footnotes and paratextual glosses – makes the task of reading particularly difficult, not to mention

distracting.

To read Shakespeare's plays as if they were novels, silently and in the privacy of one's own room, is usually a recipe for frustration and misunderstanding. Instead I stress to the students that Shakespeare's plays, even his lyric poems, were written to be heard. They should therefore be read out loud in company: indeed, the ear can hear meanings in the sounds of Shakespeare's language that the eye can't necessarily decipher from the page. Even in the US, where students are much more familiar with Shakespeare, they tend to be baffled by his language until they read it out loud. Here in India, I've found it particularly useful to get students together out of class to do a staged reading of any play they are about to study. That way, they can hear what Shakespeare's language is doing – and pause to make comments and ask questions. They may not understand everything about the play after reading it out loud with their classmates. But they certainly understand a lot more than they would have otherwise.

PKS: Do you think there is necessarily a need to align literature and language pedagogy? Many researchers are of the opinion that teachers of literature tend to lose sight of the fact that those teaching literature teach language as well and texts can be used to enhance language skills. How would you engage with the students in class keeping the above factor in mind?

JGH: On the one hand, to teach literature is to teach language. After all, literature is the artful use of language: it may also entail revolutionary ideas and powerful aesthetic experiences, but these are of necessity mediated by, and in, language. I strongly believe that, to read Shakespeare at all critically and effectively, one needs to have at least a basic grounding in prosody – it is important to know that the witches in *Macbeth*, for example, sound so eerie because Shakespeare has made them speak in an unusual rhythm (trochaic tetrameter) that deviates from the speech patterns of the other characters. Indeed, Shakespeare's supposed brilliance in creating vivid and memorable characters has a lot to do with his ability to deploy the acoustic properties of language in distinctive ways. And it's useful for a student to be able to account for his or her gut response to a character by being able to identify how exactly Shakespeare's language has in large part shaped that response.

On the other hand, I don't believe that literature and language teaching should or can be fully

collapsed into each other. Teaching the mechanics of literary English language – be it Shakespeare's dramatic verse or Jay-Z's hip-hop lyrics or Salman Rushdie's Hinglish prose – is an altogether different challenge from (say) teaching language to TOEFL/ESL students or teaching academic writing to engineering and business students. Each requires different skills. In the United States, English, Writing, and ESL departments are increasingly separate entities. And I think that's a welcome development. Professors of writing have usually been trained in rhetoric and composition – the arts of communication, persuasive argument, and technical writing – and so they are much better equipped to teach students across a range of disciplines how to write in various specialist forms of English. Similarly, professors of ESL are much better equipped to teach students about the grammatical rules and nuances of spoken and written English. I think this more capacious, multi-pronged model is one that Indian universities will adopt, and adapt, in the coming decade.

GC: Professor Harris, we have been a bit of a peeping Tom and had a look at some of your students' comments on your Facebook page. The enthusiasm and excitement that you have generated is contagious and we are curious to know what exactly did you do in the classroom?

JGH: Ha! To be honest, I'm not sure I remember exactly what I "did" in the classroom. And that's because, even when I am lecturing to a large group of students, much of what happens in my classes is spontaneous and unscripted. For the classes I teach in India, I do prepare Powerpoint presentations that spell out some of my main points, accompanied by various images and passages from the set texts. (I've been suspicious of Powerpoint in the past, but I've found it to be an effective tool in the Indian classroom where some of my students struggle to make sense of the language of the texts I'm teaching and even my accent.) But the Powerpoint presentation is more a supplement to, than the main event of, the class. And that is because I expect the students to be active participants. To that end, I send them questions in advance of each class meeting, which I expect them to engage at length in the class discussion. I often make deliberately provocative, even outlandish, statements that are designed to get them thinking and talking. I also ask them to debate with each other. I strongly believe that real learning cannot happen in a classroom where students are simply passive recipients of what the teacher and the set text have to say. For the

learning experience to be effective, the student has to become a maker of meaning too. Thinking out loud, playing with new ideas, engaging in the thought-experiment of "what if this counter-intuitive proposition were true" – all are important parts of what happens in my classroom.

GC: On the issue of showing slides of Shakespeare in Boxers, as you have done, some conventional pedagogues might consider your approach trivial and extraneous. But the interest that you have elicited seems to belie this. How did you weave slides of Shakespeare in Boxers into your pedagogy? Was this a conscious part of your pedagogical strategy?

JGH: The instance to which you are alluding has a very specific context. The day before my last class in the Young Indian Fellows Programme, a student emailed me to say that, as it was (apparently) International Boxers Day, she and her fellow students would all be coming to the next day's class wearing boxer shorts. I was tempted to wear a pair myself, but thankfully I desisted. Instead, I started my Powerpoint presentation the next day with an image of Shakespeare holding a skull – a la Hamlet with Yorick – all the while wearing boxer shorts. I followed it with a second slide, in which the same image was now accompanied by the caption: "*Haai, Yorick bechara. Main usko acchi tarah jaanta tha. Boxers mein*." Shakespeare does sound so much better in the original Hindi, don't you think?

There's been a long tradition of treating Shakespeare's canon as a secular, literary version of Scripture, to be treated with quasi-religious reverence and devotion. I had an English teacher at high school who would simply read out Shakespearean lines to us as if they were divine writ, and then he would stare at us imperiously until we nodded wisely and said things like "brilliant!" or "how true!" Of course, we never understood a word of what Shakespeare was actually saying. But by learning to nod, we had been successfully indoctrinated into that horrid cult that George Bernard Shaw so rightly called "Bardolatry." It is the epitome of anti-intellectualism, the kind of passive self-effacement that I seek to disable with my pedagogy. You don't love a distant god: you respect and fear him. To really love Shakespeare, one has to be able to talk with – and even back to – his texts. And that often means adopting a pose of strategic irreverence. When we're irreverent to Shakespeare, we are less likely to treat him as a god before whom we must fawn and more likely to regard him as a partner with whom we

can do things – for instance, dress him in boxer shorts, but also creatively re-imagine his words in our modern-day contexts. In sum, when we are irreverent, we are more likely to take intellectual risks.

PKS: What are you currently working on?

I'm writing a book called *The First Firangis: How to Be Authentically Indian*, which is based on a series of articles I wrote for the *Hindustan Times* last year. It's about nine migrants from Europe, Africa and Asia who settled in India before the age of British colonialism. Despite being foreigners, these migrants became *desi* in ways that had a profound impact on what we now consider indigenous Indian culture. Amber Malik, a slave from Ethiopia, served as the regent of the Nizamshah dynasty of Ahmadnagar and founded the city that was to become Aurangabad. Thomas Stevens, a dissident Catholic priest from England, wrote one of the classic Marathi Puranas. Augustin Hiriart Hunarmand, a jeweller from the Basque region of France, served in Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's courts and probably designed the legendary Peacock Throne of the Mughals. Dara Shikoh's spiritual advisor Sa'id Sarmad died revered as a Sufi saint and a Hindu yogi, but he was born as a Jew in Armenia. These four people, and the other men and women I examine in *The First Firangis*, complicate what it means to be "authentically" Indian – and reveal the extraordinary cosmopolitanism of the subcontinent's pre-colonial history.

Like the nine migrants of my book, I am a foreigner, but I also am not: my time in India has transformed me, changing how I speak, how I think, what I wear, what I eat, the music I listen to. Slowly but surely, like the word *firangi* itself, *main Hindustani ban raha hoon*. This book is an extended meditation on that process of becoming as it has unfolded for me, and as it unfolded for nine others at a time when the violence of three centuries of British colonialism was yet to happen. It's impossible to disavow that later history. But we also need to think against and beyond it in order to imagine alternative, unexpected forms of cross-cultural contact. And in the process, we might begin to recognize that what we think of as authentically Indian has so often been the product of transnational migrations and mixings.

PKS: Many thanks Professor Harris for sharing your valuable classroom experiences of India with us. They are specifically useful in the light of the innovative pedagogy used by you to initiate a dialogue between language and literature teaching.

Sample English Language Proficiency Test

Compiled by **Tulika Prasad**

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Basic* level

READING

Task 1

Look at the text in each question. What does it say? Circle the correct letter: **A**, **B**, or **C.**

1. Wait for the lift doors to close before pressing the button.

   A. Press the button after the doors close.

   B. Press the button while the doors are closing.

   C. Press the button to close the lift doors.

2. *Fatima to Husain*

   Did I leave a scarf in your house? The problem is it's not mine - I borrowed it and I must give it back.

   What does Fatima want Husain to do?

   A. Return the scarf he borrowed

   B. Lend her a scarf

   C. Look for the borrowed scarf

3. *Message:*

   Your English class is on Friday evening this week instead of Thursday, starting 15 minutes earlier than usual.

   English class ..

   A. Will not be in the evening this week.

   B. Will be a day later than normal.

   C. Will no longer be on Thursday.

4. Throw away any remaining medicine after one month of opening this bottle.

   A. This bottle contains enough medicine for one month.

   B. You can use this medicine up to one month after opening it.

   C. Unopened bottles of medicine must be thrown away within one month.

5. Never leave any luggage unattended.

   A. Do not let someone else look after your luggage.

   B. Remember your luggage when you leave.

   C. You must stay with your luggage at all times.

Task 2

Read the text and then circle the correct answer, A, B, C or D.
The first sentence has been done as an example:
(0) A us   B them   C they   D we

Answer: (0) A

Deep Sleep

Deep sleep is important for **(0)** ....**A**........ . The actual **(1)** .... of sleep you need depends **(2)** .... your age. A young child **(3)** .... to sleep ten to twelve hours, and a teenager about nine hours. Adults differ a lot in their sleeping **(4)** .... For most of them, seven to eight hours a night is **(5)** .... , but some sleep longer, while others manage with only four hours.

For a good night, having a comfortable **(6)** .... to sleep is very important. Also, there should be **(7)** .... of fresh air in the room. A warm drink sometimes helps people to sleep, **(8)** .... it is not a good idea to drink coffee immediately before going to bed. **(9)** .... you have to travel a very long distance, try to go to bed earlier than usual the day before the **(10)** .... This will help you to feel more rested when you arrive.

1.	A size	B number	C amount	D sum
2.	A on	B to	C in	D of
3.	A could	B ought	C must	D should
4.	A ways	B habits	C manners	D actions
5.	A few	B well	C less	D enough
6.	A point	B place	C position	D part
7.	A plenty	B much	C many	D several
8.	A because	B as	C although	D even
9.	A Since	B Until	C After	D If
10.	A journey	B voyage	C call	D visit

Task 3

Your friend suffers from travel sickness. He is about to leave on a long bus journey. Read the following advice "**Avoid travel sickness!!**". This note is followed by 6 questions. Put a √ or a X in front of each question on the basis of your reading of the note.

Avoid travel sickness!!

Even those used to frequent travelling sometimes fall victim to travel sickness.

There are a few things to bear in mind if you are in the habit of feeling sick when you travel. Here are some tips on how to avoid travel sickness. Read it.

Travel on a relatively empty stomach. Don't eat large meals, avoid fried food and alcohol. Have food well before embarking on a journey.

In a vehicle, select a seat which transmits the least motion, for instance, in a plane the seats alongside the wings are the most comfortable for travellers.

Open the windows in a car or bus. Try to avoid crowded buses.

Recline in your seat and fix your gaze on a distant object.

Avoid reading.

Take prescribed anti-motion sickness medication before you travel.

Try not to have a nap as this can worsen your problem.

1. You offer to get your friend a plate of fried rice and curry from a nearby restaurant so that he doesn't feel hungry on the bus.

2. Tell him he should try and sleep now and then when he feels dizzy.

3. You buy him a book to read on the way so that he won't get bored.

4. You find him a seat just above the wheels.

5. You find him a window seat so that he can keep the window open.

6. Make sure that he doesn't take any medicine before he leaves.

WRITING

Task 1

Read the notice that has been put up on the college notice board. After the notice was put up, Sarla, the Principal's PA, received a phone call from Oxford Book Store that suggested changes to the programme. She has noted the details of the changed plan in her note pad. She now wishes to leave a complete message for the Principal. Write the message.

On the Notice Board

> **Amrish Puri**
> (Oxford Book Store)
> Will speak to BA students about
> **The Computer Business**
> **Monday 10 November, 2: 30 PM**
> **College Auditorium**

Sarla's notes

Date: 8 November.	
Name of the person: Suresh Kumar instead of Amrish Puri.	
Arrival: 1:30 PM	
Meeting Principal: 1: 30 PM (PA to accompany)	
Talk: 2 PM	
Subject of his talk: Same	

Sarla's message for the Principal:

(Complete the message below)

Madam,

The Oxford Book Store was to send .... for a talk in the college on

10 November at 2: 30. But now ....

....

....

....

....

Task 2

Sudhir has lost a library book and has written a letter to the librarian apologizing and offering to pay for it. He also makes a request for a new library ticket. Complete his letter to the librarian. You need not use the entire space provided.

To,
The Librarian
Arts and Science College
Delhi University, Delhi

21 November 2008

Sir,

I regret to inform you that ....
....
....
....
....

I would be grateful ....
....
....
....

Thanking you

Yours truly,
Sudhir Kumar

Task 3

Read the newspaper advertisement given below:

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Passengers! Better say 'No' than repent later
Food and drinks can be used to damage you………. Rob you.
Passengers are requested not to buy or accept any food items/drinks from strangers. These may contain harmful drugs/intoxicants, which will make you drowsy or unconscious.
Watch your belongings!

Your cousin Swati is coming to Delhi from Jaisalmer. This is the first time she is travelling in a train and you want to warn her against making friends with strangers who might cause harm to her. Write a letter to her cautioning/warning her about strangers on the train. (100-120 words)

(Don't copy sentences given in the advertisement; use the ideas to write the letter. Keep to the word limit.)

Dear Swati   17 March 2012
                                               New Delhi

....
....
....
....
....

Yours affectionately
....

*Basic means the threshold level of language proficiency amongst adult learners.

FORTELL Members Make Their Presence felt at the 10th Asia TEFL International Conference

Shatarupa Sinha

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TEFSOL India, in association with English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, and supported by The British Council, India, hosted the 10th Asia TEFL International Conference on "Expanding Horizons of Language and Communication: ELT Issues, Challenges and Implications" at Hotel Leela Kempinski, Gurgaon, from October 4-6, 2012. The Conference Chair, Prof. Ravinder Gargesh, University of Delhi, gave the Opening Speech while Prof. Hyo Woong Lee, President, Asia TEFL, extended a warm welcome to all dignitaries present. The Inaugural Speech was delivered by Mr. Oscar Fernandes, Chairman, Parliamentary Board on Human Resource Development. Prof. Dinesh Singh, Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, made the Presidential Remarks.

The Keynote Address "English Language Teaching in Asia: Issues and Challenges" by Anjani Kumar Sinha, retired Professor of Linguistics, University of Delhi, set the tone of the three-day conference. His presentation provided the historical background of English language in India and analysed how English language has become the language of wider communication in recent times, both in India as well as globally. The conference included six plenary speakers, eight featured speakers and six special speakers besides several workshops, colloquia, poster presentations, demonstrations and more than six hundred paper presentations, which focussed on a wide range of issues pertaining to teaching, problems in teaching, use of English in semiotics and stylistics, methodology and practice of English Language Teaching across Asia. The conference brought together scholars and teachers from different countries and diverse cultures, especially from Asia, to interact and exchange views with each other on various language and ELT issues.

The British Council hosted a panel discussion on "ELT Issues, Challenges and Implications across Asia where representatives from the participating countries shared their perspectives on what they saw as the main issues, tends and challenges facing the Asian ELT, in relation to their own local contexts.

Several *FORTELL* members made their presence felt at the conference by way of attending, making presentations, conducting workshops and participating in colloquia. These incorporated an array of issues involving the challenges and implementation of English Language Teaching primarily in the University of Delhi. The most interesting aspect of these discussions was the fact that most of the presenters chose to provide examples and experiences from their own classroom teaching.

A colloquium on the different aspects of ELPC running at different centres of Delhi University titled "A Leap from the Margins: Bridging the Gaps of Language Proficiency" was presented by Shashi Khurana, Tulika Prasad, Tasneem Shahnaaz and Amrita Mehta. Shashi Khurana spoke about meeting the challenges of teaching heterogeneous learners and focused on the innovative pedagogical techniques adopted in the ELPC classroom. The materials developed and used in ELPC was the focus of Tulika Prasad's presentation. Tasneem Shahnaaz addressed the subject of assessment while Amrita Mehta talked about success stories and the challenges facing the ELPC.

Expanding further on the necessity and significance of ELPC was Mita Bose's "Heartbreak to Breakthrough – Critical Account of my Experience with Teaching ELPC (English Language Proficiency Course) at Delhi University." She iterated that all interactive and group ELT activities and strategies need to be subsumed under a framework of quantified and

graded course content. Anita Bhela's presentation also focussed on ELPC, with special reference to teacher feedback and student observations, in "Evaluating a Language Learning Course through Feedback." Her paper laid special emphasis on the learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of the course.

Prerna Malhotra and Alka Dutt examined the methodology of teaching grammar in "Why Grammar for Our Students?" in the context of ELPC offered by Delhi University. Prerna Malhotra also presented a paper on "Technical Writing: A Specific Genre of ELT" which was an elaborate study of the various nuances of writing, specific to technical writing. It particularly focused on a specialized course of study in the Delhi University undergraduate curriculum.

Pradip Sharan's paper on "In-Service and pre-Service Training of Teachers of English in India – A Challenge" discussed the various possible ways of training English teachers in India and its necessity as a policy matter. He suggested the inclusion of methodologies of teaching English in EFL/ESL situations, material production, testing, psycholinguistic research findings etc. in the course content of teacher-training in ELT. In "A Generous Approach towards Those Not Specializing in ESL," Devika Khanna Narula elaborated on how in our universities innovative methods of teaching English ought to be implemented in order to help the majority of students who do not have fluency in the English language. She emphasised on the need of a practical approach, with emphasis on testing language and communication skills, which requires to be adopted while teaching these students.

Sabina Pillai raised a very pertinent question regarding assessment in the teaching-learning cycle in her presentation titled "Isn't it Time We Called it the 'Teaching, Learning AND Assessing Cycle?'" Her presentation included examples of assessments presently carried out in General English courses at Delhi University and suggested the scope for further improvement and innovation in assessment for an apt feedback. Effective implementation of multiple modes of delivery, such as print, audio, visual, mobile technology and ICT, was discussed by Anju Sehgal Gupta in "Implementation of an ELT Course Using Multi-modal Approach." She referred to the multimodal approach required by distance-mode education and highlighted the innovative approaches in this field adopted by IGNOU, especially for their course in Functional English.

Ruchi Kaushik, Prem Kumari Srivastava, Mukti Sanyal and Gitanjali Chawla conducted a workshop titled "Are You Listening? Innovative Listening Texts and Practices in the Indian Tertiary Context," aimed primarily for teachers of English, demonstrating innovative e-learning modules on listening skills, which has traditionally been accorded the least priority in language teaching and assessment of English in India. The workshop laid special emphasis on e-learning as a modern pedagogical strategy for ELT, and offered some hands-on methodological innovations through the use of e-tools and Information Technology.

The conference ended on a positive and happy note of gaining fresh, innovative insights and perspectives into language teaching and learning process in varied cultural contexts, and of meeting at Manila for the next conference event.

Boo, Katherine. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers.* (2012).

Penguin Books, India. Pp 252, Rs.499/-

Cringe though we might, yet again we have a foreigner, who has lifted the tarpaulins of our urban ghettos and invited us to open our squeamish eyes and look. But for these nosy outsiders, the urban elites would refuse to acknowledge this other India that exists *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, as Katherine Boo's mockingly titled book reminds us. Boo has painstakingly researched and raised pertinent questions about an urban reality of hopelessly poor slum dwellers of the "Annawadis" in Mumbai, trapped in crushing poverty and condemned to be forever the victims of India's cruel and corrupt political system.

Slums in India are inevitably unauthorized human settlements created by migrant rural families and mired in sewage and sickness, and Annawadi the slum is similarly squatting on land near Sahar Airport encircled by five luxury hotels with shiny glass fronted facades. So what's new, one might say - yet another foreign journalist has taken upon herself to mock our switch over to global market capitalism. But putting our cynicism or outrage

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aside, we could well do with a compelling read and acquire some truly refreshing insights into life in the undercity of Mumbai.

By observing closely the real lives of her subjects from November 2007 until March 2011, Boo documented the experiences of the residents with written notes, video recordings, audiotapes, and photographs. She brings the reporter's journalistic capability for mining facts and researching her material with a passion and what follows is a truly insightful treatment of poverty as a social reality, a profound look into the juxtaposed inequality which is the signature fact of so many cities in India.

Remarkably each character in the book is real as are their names in real life, and as reality betters fiction we watch their dark lives play out in a throw back to starkly Dickensian times. The business of young Abdul, a sorter of waste material, is prospering with rising scrap prices till his family is embroiled in a quarrel with a jealous neighbor the one legged runt Fatima, who is the Annawadi whore. A one legged Hindu, she was married off to a Muslim and was close friends with Meherunnisa, Abdul's mother till she feels spited and decides to set herself on fire to teach the Muslim family a lesson, but eventually succumbs to her burns. That brings in the police, and drags Abdul into a case of false charge of murder. Then there is Asha, unscrupulous and ambitious, a karyakarta in the Siva Sena Party who is also a slumlord and works the system to realize her own benefits from government's schemes designed to uplift the disadvantaged. Sunil, Kalu and Rahul are rag pickers, who dodge the fast moving traffic as well as the security around the Airport wall as they go about collecting recyclable scrap for Abdul. For comic relief they have the voyeuristic compensations of peeping into hotel parties and recounting stories of dancing white guests and rich Indians and mimicking film stars, who as they grow tipsy can behave as funnily as their own elders in the slums. That many of these kids drink rat poison and abuse drugs and make light of their maggots, boils and orange eyes is the grim other story of their lives as the cops who encourage thefts from the airport dumps and then claim their cuts from these scallywags and juveniles.

The book could have turned into yet another obituary on the undercity except that it records every episode of life, death and hope in Annawadi as it occurs - the police beatings and shaving heads of young 'thieves', police taking cuts from sale of stolen goods, callousness of doctors in Cooper hospital, extorting money to administer "imported injection" after death, fabrication of official documents by education officials to clear payments to fictitious trusts. That "official India" has not reacted to Boo's revelations is amazing - a sign of indifference or a decision to leave the work alone as it is hardly the stuff of best sellers?

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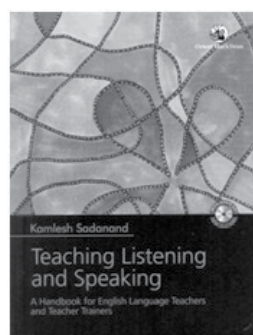
Sadanand, K. (2012). *Teaching Listening and Speaking: A Handbook for English Language Teachers and Teacher Trainers*

Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan. Pp 189, Rs 210/-

Acquisition of first language is so natural that it happens to a normal human child effortlessly. Human children are hardwired to learn language in their immediate environment as they are all born with the species-specific ability namely, language acquisition device, to acquire language (Chomsky 1965) In this process, we do not get to learn the factors responsible for learning language, in other words the components of what Chomsky (1986) calls 'Knowledge of Language (KoL)'. Therefore, teaching/learning second language becomes harder as we do not know what to put into it. There is a huge volume of research in the area of second language acquisition (SLA) to bridge this gap of 'acquisition' and 'learning'. *Teaching Listening and Speaking* by Kamlesh Sadanand is a pedagogically important addition in the materials on teaching and learning English as a second language. Learning language is a specialized skill. It is imperative that pedagogical texts are grounded in relevant findings in SLA research.

This work presents insightful details that fill up the gap between pedagogical materials and research in the area of second language acquisition. In short, it meticulously deals with teaching/learning how to speak the target language. In order to make one speak English effectively, it brings out the importance of listening.

There are two broad parts of this book namely, listening and speaking, in addition to the

solved answers and notes for both the sections. The first part of this book deals with required listening skills. The units cover a wide range of topics which are consistent with the idea of 'comprehensible and meaningful input' of Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis of learning theory. The requirement for authentic and contextually grounded materials for teaching language gets highlighted in this book in a big way. In the first part, the book underlines a very significant distinction between listening and hearing. It emphasizes the necessity of listening to the main idea of the message and facts carefully for better understanding of and the use of the target language. It clearly argues that this exercise has huge impact on the output in form of the effective use of the language.

The second half of the book elaborates on how to do well with sound speaking skills. It suggests that the understanding of social and relevant context is crucial for appropriate use of language. This happens to be a sociolinguistically grounded idea of 'communicative competence' along the lines of Hymes (1972). In other words, the book seems to be drawing upon the existing theoretical understanding of language and catering to the requirements of pedagogical gaps. The study materials are very interactive in nature particularly with the help of recorded CDs. The role of society and in learning language and better production are two driving forces behind the quality of this book.

The approach discussed in this book could be more successful if the teacher with the help of customized lessons and activities uses creativity. Language learning and teaching require creativity with the text and available teaching materials. To conclude, *Teaching Listening and Speaking* is an important resource for teachers and trainers. It deals with the two significant skills namely, listening and speaking, for the purpose of learning language. It is imperative that the author suggests the priority of good listening skills for better output as effective speaking. With a variety of activities, the book aims to charge teachers and trainers with the purpose of listening and speaking in the context of English language learning. Like a nice companion, the book offers a nice guide in form of extensive notes and solved answers.

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Khanna, A.L. and Gupta, A. S. (Eds.). (2012). Essential Readings for Teachers of English: From Research Insights to Classroom Practices.

New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Ltd. Pp 342. Rs 395.

ISBN 978 81 250 4668 4 (PB)

The introduction of the book asks a pertinent question – 'Who is this book for?' The answer is, if the title is anything to go by, 'for the practising teacher' with an interest in and commitment to her work. To this, I would like to add, that this book is also for the new/novice teachers of English and teacher trainers as well. Any teacher who is excited by the challenges and endless possibilities of teaching and learning will find this book extremely helpful and useful. This book is about English language acquisition teaching learning

process and written by teachers of English for English teachers. It guides its readers through theory and practice of language teaching/learning which are well illustrated by relevant examples.

The book has been thoughtfully divided into sections which explore different aspects of language acquisition and classroom practices. In the first section, which deals with theoretical perspectives, M. L. Tickoo argues against the practice of "either-or" concept in viewing 'essentials' (whatever that means) and instead advocates being open to a 'this and that' pedagogical mindset which will result in increased learner outcomes. He gives examples of terms like 'authentic' and 'autonomous' whose strait jacket/limited meanings have precluded the usage of rich and supportive language resources like good dictionaries or thesauri. R. Agnihotri and Mangla believe that an equitable and just social order can be reached by empowering children belonging to the marginalized, underprivileged sections of society. This can be done by using the multiple languages that these learners speak and

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their cognitive abilities as a learning resource for language acquisition. Shefali Ray's article on 'The Role of Input' is a seminal one which advocates using the English we hear/see/use every day in different contexts in the form of billboards, TV, road signs, public announcements etc. Iqbal Judge makes out a case for using bilingual materials (in L1 and L2) for language teaching/learning. Anandan uses the constructivist perspective to critique rigid language teaching theories and methodologies. This approach implies a paradigm shift from using the skill based methodology to a discourse oriented pedagogy. However, there appears to be an underlying assumption that basic skills of LSRW should be present in the learner if s/he is to create/construct discourses. It is also important for learners to be able to analyze discourses critically. Rajneesh Arora weaves together the concept of using critical pedagogy with the idea of creating a just order by empowering the marginalized with increased critical reading skills.

The next section moves towards a more practical aspect of how to develop language skills in the post-CLT era. Gupta and Mathai deal with improving reading skills. The next article by Yasmeen Lukmani focuses on a workable and practical top-down approach to teach writing while Surabhi Bharati suggests ways of developing listening and speaking skills in a second language by making oral communication a part of the curriculum and providing ways of assessing them. Using a constructivist approach Anju Sahgal Gupta makes out a strong case for teaching/ learning grammar as integrated into 'meaningful activities' (p 160) of skills such as speaking and writing, instead of teaching it as isolated, discrete units of learning.

The two important ingredients in the process of language teaching and acquisition – materials and evaluation – are the focus of the third section. Though there are many foreign published materials available in India, it is best to use materials suited to the target group of learners. While Kirti Kapur sees a connect between knowing theories of language teaching and the practical use of language for the production of learning rich materials, A. L. Khanna is more concerned with outlining practical definitive steps for creating language materials. He raises some important and relevant questions like 'Why should Indians Learn English?', 'What should the nature of materials be?' and etc.' He answers them by describing the specific steps to be taken for making/creating materials suitable for learners at different levels. The ultimate goal of language teaching/learning is to make learners responsible and take charge of their learning and life, develop sensitivity and critical thinking skills.

Once teaching materials are developed, can assessment be far behind? Rama Mathew recommends using the portfolio as an assessment tool, not only of learning but also for learning. She locates this practice within the formative assessment framework and defines it as 'a purposeful collection of students' work collected over a period of time' (p 206). This will include student participation by way of selecting its contents, deciding guidelines for choosing particular content and providing a rationale for it. Mamta Agrawal discusses the CCE component of the CBSE assessment criteria as a way of improving learning through feedback rather than ranking or certification. Thus the role of a teacher becomes crucial in this case.

In the next section, Pushpinder Syal, Mona Sinha and Richa Kaushik engage with the pedagogical question of how the teaching of different genres of literature like poetry, fiction etc., enhances language acquisition as well as sensitizes students to social issues like gender, caste etc. This, I believe, is a very important aspect of learning and education. If underprivileged learners are empowered by developing critical thinking skills along with the sensitivity and sensibility to understand the unequal social arrangements around them, they can stand up for their rights and fight against injustices. So far, the thrust of the writers has been to empower learners in different ways. This challenge is taken up by presenting innovative ways to achieve this.

However, the book does not end here. Teachers of English have to be enterprising enough to deal with gen next learners. Using digital inputs in language teaching has led to learner-centered and learner-friendly classrooms. Vandana Lunyal takes up the example of WebQuest and Jagtar Chawla discusses a functional collaborative project like the CCBC as instances of the benefits and flexibility of using web technology in language teaching and learning. Roseliz Francis favors animated technology like cartoons for building vocabulary of young learners. It is time India started making such programs in the Indian context.

This book showcases the art of the possible with regard to language teaching/learning. It offers fresh insights and innovative ideas in different areas like theory, pedagogy, materials creation, assessment or use of technology. It also demonstrates how authentic materials can be created or taken from television programmes, the web or literary works/pieces and used in different classroom contexts. Essential Readings is a must buy for all teachers and libraries.

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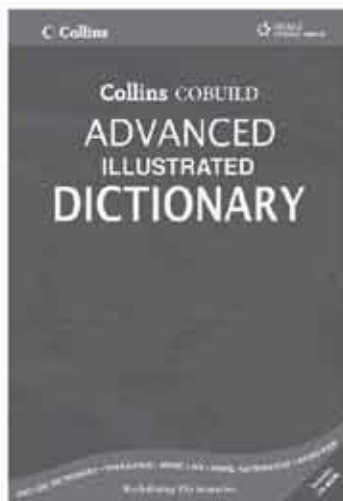
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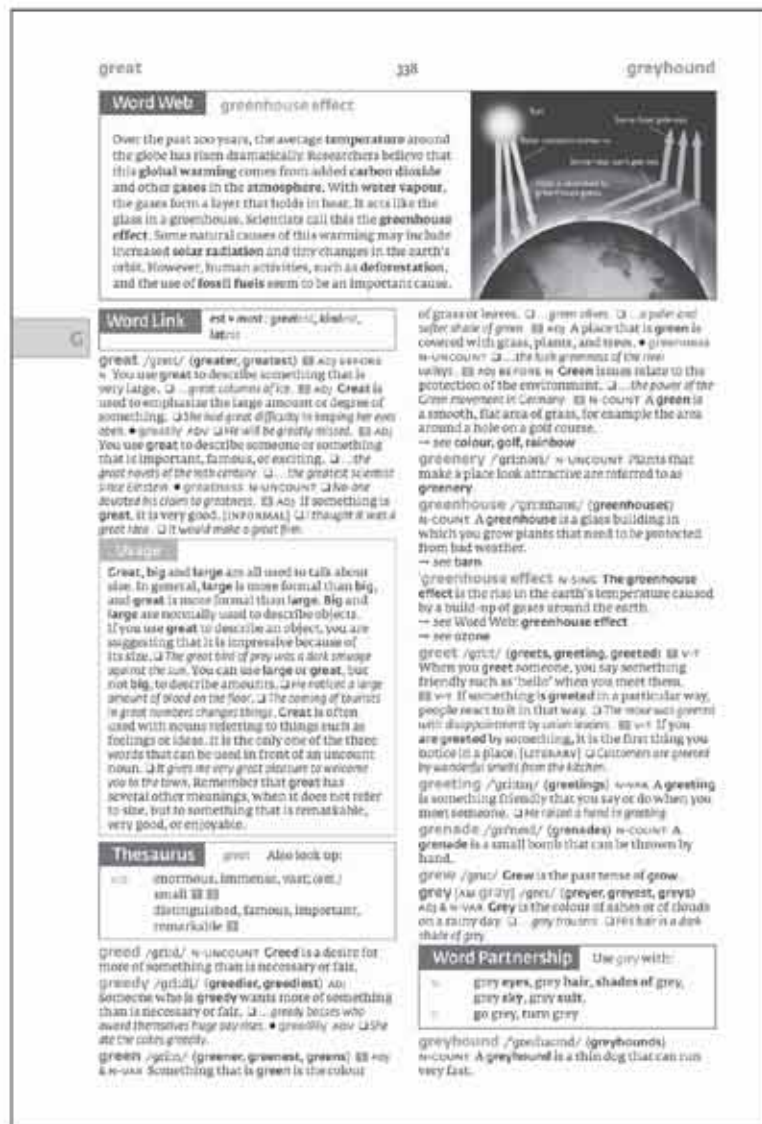
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Teaching Sita Ram Conversational English

*R.W.Desai, formerly Professor of English at the University of Delhi. He has contributed articles in National and International journals. His publications also include Sir John Falstaff, Knight;Johnson on Shakespeare;Romeo and the Politics of Gender in Romeo and Juliet; Frailty, Thy Name is **W** O Man.*

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R.W. Desai

Over two decades ago when the lure of lucrative employment offered by out-sourcing, call centres, and computerisation in all walks of life spread across the country, I felt it might be an interesting experiment to expose my *mali* (gardener), Sita Ram, to conversational English. Sita Ram's roots were in western U.P., though he had spent his entire adult life working in Pusa Institute, Delhi. Between 50 and 55 with a luxuriant moustache and a rugged countenance, he was both shocked and amused when I suggested to him my wish to teach him conversational English. Further, when I assured him that he already had a fairly large English vocabulary, he laughed loud and long and slapped his thigh in total disbelief. I asked him whether he knew how to ride a *cycle,* whether he knew the way to the *station,* the *market,* the *petrol pump,* the *bank,* the *bus stop,* whether he had time to *polish* my car and then open the *gate,* whether he had checked the *brake* of his cycle, whether he knew how to repair a *puncture,* whether he took his daughter to *school* on his cycle, etc. When I told him that these were English words that had been assimilated into Hindustani, his curiosity was aroused and he promised to devote 15 minutes extra time to conversational English during each of the three days of the week when he came to tend my garden. Such a regimen, I felt, would not tax him (or me) unduly, and we could increase the duration of our lessons later, if necessary.

Accordingly, I began by asking him questions pertaining to the English words he already knew, and made him repeat after me both questions and answers.: "Can you ride a bicycle?" "Yes, I can ride a bicycle." "Is the brake working?" "Yes, the brake is working." "Where is the market?" "The market is near the station." This was a slow and tedious exercise, and after 15 minutes both of us were exhausted. Sita Ram's pronunciation was, understandably, almost unintelligible, but I was not fastidious – so long as it was understandable. After all, if Geoffrey Boycott's Scottish accent and pronunciation of 'runs' as 'ruuns' or 'out' as 'ouut' is acceptable, even charming(!), why should there be an objection to Sita Ram's pronunciation?

After a week of drilling him with questions and answers centered on *cycle, brake, puncture,* etc. I went on to imaginary situations like shopkeeper-customer, bus conductor-passenger, railway booking clerk-traveller, policeman-tourist, teacher-pupil, waiter-diner, cook-memsahib, autorickshaw driver-passenger, etc. Sita Ram entered into the spirit of the game enthusiastically, and I soon realized that the lessons would have been yet more interesting had there been a class of three or four learners, rather than just one. I did not hesitate to use Hindustani words if we hit a speed-breaker, and I gradually enlarged the scope of our imaginary situations by shifting the venue from an urban context to a rural one. Thus, I included conversations on the weather, the seasons, animals, farming, etc.

After reading Professor A.L. Khanna's recent article in *FORTELL May 2011, issue no. 21, pages 4 – 6* "To Teach or Not to Teach Grammar," I decided to introduce my pupil to some of the more elementary principles of grammar, like *nouns* being words that describe objects that can be touched or seen, and *verbs* being words that describe actions. I was pleasantly surprised to find Sita Ram quick to comprehend the differences between the two categories, so I went on to include adjectives as well: *a big box, a dirty cloth, a foolish boy,* etc. He was intrigued by this dissection of language and quickly understood the wide range of communication that such descriptive words opened up in terms of precision and accuracy.

I had intended to move on to *This,* and *That*: 'This girl', 'That boy', etc., but our lessons were cut short by the tragic death of Sita Ram's wife while sitting in a tonga that was hit from behind by a rashly driven lorry in Rai Bareilly. Sita Ram was following the tonga on his bicycle and was a witness to the accident. Thereafter he took premature retirement from the Pusa Institute and left Delhi for good. My experience of the effectiveness of using the direct method in teaching Sita Ram conversational English finds corroboration in Professor G.K. Das's article in *The Critical Endeavour* of January 2011, p.26.

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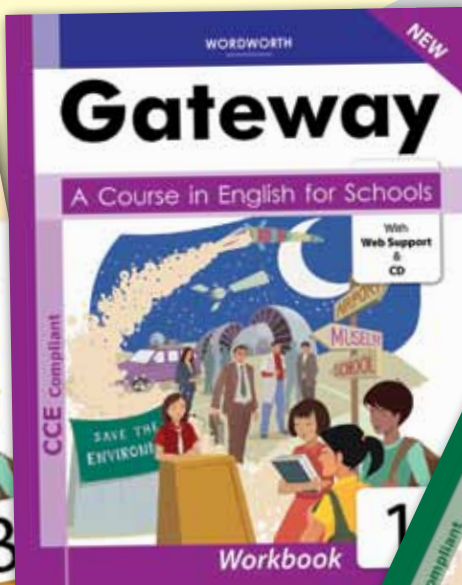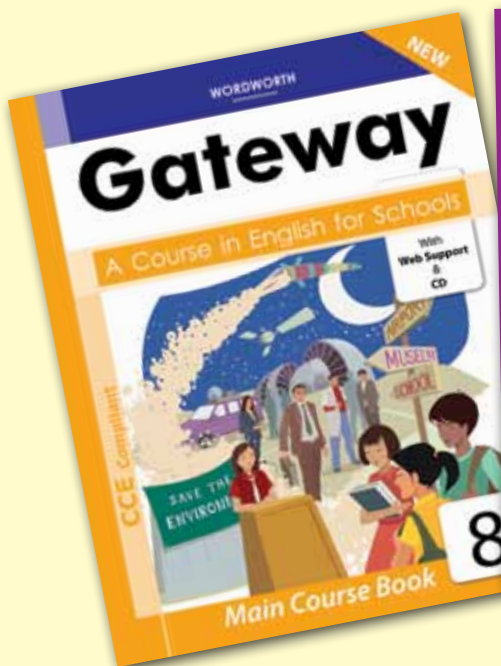Ms. Mona Sinha

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