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An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Academic Speaking Skills

An Experiment with Engineering Students

Santosh Kumar Mahapatra

Introduction

As the current study concerns teaching of academic speaking skills, I find it necessary to define what they are and how they are different from speaking skills in general. Academic speaking skills have the following features:

- They are used in academic contexts.
- They can be general as well as specific in nature.
- They can vary from one specialized area like engineering or business management to literature to another.

Though it is necessary to teach academic language skills to students specializing in disciplines like the ones mentioned above, many researchers have reported that academic language skills are often neglected in technical institutions in India. Furthermore, speaking has been found to be one of the most ignored areas (Indira, 2003; Neelavani, 2005; Venkatraman & Prama, 2007; Pradhan, 2010). This is precisely why I have chosen to experiment with speaking. Then, there is very little research on the lack of transfer of language skills from the subject to the classroom subject. More than other areas, ELT in engineering colleges has been a matter of great worry. It has been reported that engineers lack basic EL skills required to function effectively in specific purposes (LSP) and make use of students’ academic contexts. They can be general as well as specific in nature and they can vary from one specialized area like engineering or business management to literature to another.

The integration of content and language across curriculum is not new to ELT. Mohan’s (1986) ‘knowledge framework’ was one of the earliest attempts to systematically integrate subject knowledge with language skills. This interdisciplinary approach gained in popularity in the field of ESP. This kind of approach balances the power relation between the teacher and the learner really well. It lets the student lead in content areas whereas the language teacher is required to play a second fiddle. It is good for learning and supported by constructivists like Vygotsky and Bruner. According to them, learning should be an act of knowledge construction to be jointly done by the student and the teacher. However, the teacher can always decide the level at which the mixing of content and language should happen (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, 2011).

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

- How effective is a content-based approach to teaching academic presentation skills to B.Tech students?
- How do students respond to such an approach?
- How do students respond to such an approach?

Research Design

The study follows a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design. It has two groups of students: one experimental and the other, control group. The following diagram presents the design:

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In the light of the above background, this study tries to examine the impact of a content-based approach to teaching of academic presentation skills to engineering students on their ability to make academic presentations.
Participants
A group of sixty B. Tech. (first year) students studying in a women’s college in Hyderabad participated in the study. The age group of students was between 18 to 22 years and almost all of them belonged to lower middle class social background. They were randomly divided into two groups with students with even roll numbers forming the experimental group and those with odd roll numbers comprising the control group.

Data Collection Methods

The process of data collection started with the pre-test. The kind of questions asked in the pre- and post-tests were very similar in nature. Also, one set of assessment criteria was used during both the stages of data collection. It is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content (C)</th>
<th>Organization (O)</th>
<th>Fluency (F)</th>
<th>Vocabulary (V)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Less Prof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs a lot of improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needs a lot of improvement</td>
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A content-teacher (engineering) was trained to evaluate ‘content’ and the rest was evaluated by the researcher. The topics which were used for assessment and teaching purposes were related to students’ core course areas and included AEROPLANE, DYNAMO, TELEVISION, RADIO, NEWTON’S LAWS, COMPUTER, MOBILE PHONE, GRAVITY, SUN, DESERT, BLACK HOLE, SOAP, MOTOR, etc.

Pre-test
The students had been familiar with the teacher before the pre-test as he had been their English teacher for a while. Though they did not know that they were being tested, they were promised some prizes in the form of songs, movies and free study materials for developing spoken English. Thus, almost all of them took interest in making presentations. Each student was allowed 1 hour to prepare on one of the above-mentioned topics and 5 minutes to make the presentation. They prepared for the pre-test together in the library.

Intervention

During the intervention, which lasted for twelve hours spread over 45 days, the researcher used science-related topics known to and often suggested by students to teach different linguistic aspects of academic presentation skills to the experimental group students. Video-clips containing good academic presentations were also used for providing sample to the students. The researcher invited some of the students to the class and took their help in preparing presentations. Apart from providing individual feedback to students, he encouraged peer-feedback during all the sessions.

In the control group, the prescribed textbook was used for teaching presentation skills. The suggested topics were mostly very general in nature. Though video-clips and peer-feedback were part of the teaching, science-related topics were never part of the discussion during the sessions.

Post-test
The post-test was very similar to the pre-test and followed a similar course. The content-related difficulty-level was kept similar for questions used during both the tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean (%)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>31.1333</td>
<td>12.78733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31.1333</td>
<td>12.78754</td>
</tr>
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Interviews

A semi-structured interview schedule comprising open-ended questions was used to elicit information from students about their response to the content-based approach to teaching academic presentation skills. Five randomly chosen students from the experimental group were interviewed in a group. Most of them reported that they had fun making presentations on their ‘own topics’. They found it easy and interesting. However, they were not sure whether their spoken language could actually improve in such an approach was continued.

Data Analysis

The pre-test data were analyzed statistically and intergroup comparison was made. The mean score for the control group was 31% and for the experimental was 31.133%. As shown below, the difference was not significant.

In the post-test, however, the difference was statistically significant.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>36.1333</td>
<td>14.50456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>47.4667</td>
<td>13.9421</td>
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For the control group, the development was around 5%. In contrast, the experimental group recorded an average increase of around 16%.

Findings and Discussions

Although the content-based approach to teaching was found to be more effective than a general approach in the ESP setting, it was also found that the students who had better language skills at the entry level liked this approach more than others. The students with low proficiency level had some difficulty in handling the dual challenges of content and language in a single class. However, the researcher followed the students’ (experimental) presentations in their content classrooms, the effectiveness of this approach could have been found out even more clearly and stronger generalizations could have been made. It was also realized that the language teacher has to be ready to accept the challenges involved in taking up this approach. Some amount of basic understanding of scientific concepts and interest in the field of science can certainly help the teacher use this approach successfully in ESP classrooms.

Intervention

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Interdisciplinarity in Research

Deepthi Bhardwaj

As comparative literature once was, it is currently ‘fashionable’ to delve into interdisciplinary areas of study in teaching and research by exploring and pushing at boundaries. Despite the fact that it is quite difficult to do justice without the required expertise of different disciplines, more and more people are getting attracted to such an approach. This essay is an attempt at self exploration with regard to interdisciplinary studies wherein I try to enumerate the reasons why there is a love-hate relationship with interdisciplinarity, especially in spheres of language and literature.

Widening the horizon: Interdisciplinarity is liberating as it widens our horizon and allows us to experiment with techniques that were earlier ‘taboo’. By breaking the stereotypical expectations of a disciplinary approach, right from the selection of study area to the methodology of research, the output can be the most original concoction. However this extraordinary freedom requires constant self-checks so as to maintain depth of study.

Promise of some new findings: What attracts a researcher the most to this approach is the end of the tunnel, a search towards creation of new knowledge. For the literature scholar, analyzing and critiquing texts is not the easiest of tasks and yet parting with one’s grounding is not easy. Most interdisciplinary studies require a departure from one’s training to self groom towards the vision of a new territory.

Connects to the real world: One of the arguments I would like to furnish in favour of interdisciplinarity is that it connects us to the
real world. It is not a realist depiction, nor a discussion on reality but a real time engagement that inspires and demands interdisciplinary approaches. For without literature there is no reflection, but without statistics there is no need for reflection. Literature enhances, replays, and immortalizes reality but it arises from archives.

Bridges the gap between criticism and activism: Interdisciplinary studies bridge the gap between criticism and activism. By giving a different definition to productivity and job satisfaction, each of these sections tend to touch critical issues and problems. Since many literary and critical works result from activism, it is interesting to see the two working in tandem with each other.

My Research
I am currently researching on Chandni Chowk studies Delhi in the transition period between 1912 and 1947. The time period and the area covered in my research provides me scope to explore the following: communities and families, old and new Delhi, spaces that transformed over these years and the collectibles I will try to gather from people and places.

As I looked up literature produced about Delhi I noticed that the city has been studied from different disciplines like history, geography, sociology and literature. Historical works like Historic Delhi: An Anthology (Kaul, 2004) and Delhi Between Two Empires (1803-1911: Society, Government and Urban Growth (Gupta, 1981) are devoted to historical narration of Delhi as a place of power creation and the narratives use the standard resources for historical retelling. Kaul anthologizes essays from the ancient to the Mughal Delhi. Narayani Gupta charts out the growth of Chandni Chowk and another area covered by the British to the inauguration of their vision of it. Her historical parvival allows a panoramic understanding of the city’s evolution.

However I wish to problematize and explore the notion of ‘historical deficit’, by exploring family histories and life writings. Let me briefly talk about the works of Chatterjee and Burton as my research problem is located at the intersection of their points of view. Indira Chatterjee’s Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia (2004) takes up the cause of introducing family as a quotient poorly related as opposed to many others like peasants, women and environment in the study of colonialism. As a historian, her analysis identifies lacunae as she and environment in the study of colonialism. As opposed to many others like peasants, women of introducing family as a quotient poorly related to disciplinary divide that inspires me in this direction. Prasad uses surveys, interviews and published articles to elaborate on her subject. She charts from a half-century of family life that women endured. She places her understanding of the evolving Indian family within the Indian feminist movement. At the cusp of being part literary, paratextual distortions of Delhi. Singh and Mukherjee’s ‘splendid volume enables the reader not just to understand but to witness almost the transition of a hot, dusty plain, through the vicissitudes of colonial, drawing, mementos, clearances and construction embalmed into a majestically living reality’ (Verghese, 2012). Similar studies that depend on visual representations are Narayani Gupta and Dilip Bobb’s Delhi Then and Now (2007) and Vijay Govt’s The Emperor’s City: Rediscovering Chandni Chowk and Its Eviscerous (2003). In these works Delhi is captured in various photographic moods and frames to drive home the essence of Delhi. While the former performs a study in temporal shift, the latter brings together the grandeur of the city. Serving more like coffee table books they enamour pictorially rather than intrigue thematically.

With regard to sociological studies on Delhi, I may say that they are not just limited but also dated. B. R. Ghosh in ‘Changes in the Size of People, weights and Composition of the Household Brought About by Urbanisation in Delhi Area’ (1974) picks Narain as his subject of scrutiny and statistically depicts the changes in the area. Saroj Kaptor’s Family’s and Kinship Groups Among The Khalits of Delhi (1965) is a small study focused on Delhi region and the caste Khatri. These rare studies come very very close to the proverb might well be upon it. While interrogating the very definition of an archive Burton suggests life writing from the private sphere. She picks up three women writers as a crucial medium to determine an alternate value system is a constant subject of scrutiny. Johnson’s ‘Sex and the City’ makes an appeal to as— as an archive from which a variety of counter histories of colonial modernity can be discerned. I want to emphasize, in other words, the importance of history as a historical archive and for a very real political figure in an extended moment of historical crisis’ (Burton, 2000, p. 5). Her study suggests that the archive, like the home, is always in the process of vanishing.

The historical deficit pertaining to family history as Chatterjee points out can hence be filled in by life writing. Family archives can explore certain not so explored contexts better. Some of the more gripping works like Malvika Singh and Rudragnish Krichher’s New Delhi: Making of a Capital (2009) brings to the reader a panorama of Delhi as it took its present form over the years. Backed by a serious documentation research and pictorial representation it is a study in the architectural and urban history of Delhi. Singh and Mukherjee’s ‘splendid volume enables the reader not just to understand but to witness almost the transition of a hot, dusty plain, through the vicissitudes of colonial, drawing, mementos, clearances and construction embalmed into a majestically living reality’ (Verghese, 2012). Similar studies that depend on visual representations are Narayani Gupta and Dilip Bobb’s Delhi Then and Now (2007) and Vijay Govt’s The Emperor’s City: Rediscovering Chandni Chowk and Its Eviscerous (2003). In these works Delhi is captured in various photographic moods and frames to drive home the essence of Delhi. While the former performs a study in temporal shift, the latter brings together the grandeur of the city. Serving more like coffee table books they enamour pictorially rather than intrigue thematically.

The proposed work will strive to bring together resources and sources that can be referred to in our understanding of this particular time period which is seen as an overwhelming political time zone where the personal has been ignored. It is only a literary study of this period that can allow space to a critique of the private actions, thoughts and existence. Very often this private was complacent and comfortable; the proposed study is a possible measure to come closer to what seems like a distant romanticized past that can be best retrieved from a literary cultural perspective.

1. To study archives of life writing and personal documents, preferably, undiscovered, unrecognized, unpublished family records that can help formulate respective family histories of families that lived in the city of Delhi for at least a hundred years. These archives exist as form of diaries, biographies, religious chronicles, calendars, and accounts supplemented by oral records, visual material, portraits, photographs, albums, songbooks that I have begun to examine in detail.

2. To study Chandni Chowk’s past and present state of being, through the prism of these family histories that can narrate a world order concealed in the contested loyalties of households and private experiences that might also reflect on the alteration in community loyalties, structures and therefore the alteration in this part of Delhi of various stages of Delhi’s current facet.

3. To take cue from the family histories and try to uncover micro narratives and texts (literary and non-literary) and contexts that might also reflect on the alteration in community loyalties, structures and therefore the alteration in this part of Delhi of various stages of Delhi’s current facet.

4. Bring together multiple kinds of memory, impressions and reflections with archival detailed information and read into the properties of a people and places we inhabit.
In my PhD research I am seeking to explore the lacunae that exists in the study of Chandu Chowk in the late colonial period. Most existing studies are from ‘strict’ disciplinary perspectives of history, sociology or literature. I attempt to draw from skills and findings of different disciplines and also bring in the crucial missing area of family histories. In trying to uncover micro narratives of family documents, my study not only helps me to widen the scope of my discipline but also connect research with the real world.

References

In recent times, there has been a lot of academic brouhaha about interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary pedagogical practice allows the teacher to cross the traditional boundaries of discipline centred teaching by drawing from two or more academic disciplines to approach the text. Though the term has been in currency for a long time, in the Indian context it has gained popularity only recently.

The very discipline of English literature demands an active awareness of other disciplines. In a largely North Indian milieu, lot of students have at least one grandparent or great grandparent who has a personal partition story. In teaching the text, class discussions often move beyond the macro politics of formation of nation(s) to individual life stories, of history from above and below. A realisation of the pain of losing one’s homeland, of suddenly being plucked from your roots and being transplanted to a new country, are all seminal to understanding Bishen Singh’s pain. It is difficult, if not impossible to delve into disciplines that go beyond mere appreciation of language or idioms.

In dealing with Partition, the teacher brings in an interdisciplinary approach and Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan is often evoked. The text gives a detailed historical and cultural account so that even a person unfamiliar with the Partition would be able to understand the text. The rituals of the Sikhs, the Hindus and the Muslims are presented as part of the narrative. It is almost as if history were being brought alive through the human characters depicted in the novel. Political events, and their effects on the common people form the basis of the novel. Politics, sociology, geography and history form the bedrock of any interpretation of the novel and the text cannot be treated solely in terms of its literary aspects.

Train to Pakistan depicts the human aspect of the political and historical event. The human angle presents a very compassionate picture of the horrors of partition. The story revolves around a Sikh village goon, Jugga who loves a Muslim girl, Nooran. The tensions between the Sikhs and Muslim are pointed out early in the novel, ‘According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped.’ (Singh, 2012, p.1) Khushwant Singh does not allow the reader to blame the violence on any particular ethnic group. He makes it clear that all were affected by the situation they found themselves in. The residents of Mano Majra lived a peaceful existence until the village money-lender Ramal is killed, and Jugga is held as a prime suspect. Whether it is the regional magistrate Hakum Chand, Jugga or Iqbal, the social reformer, Singh shows how each of them is held responsible for the events that unfold. In a largely North Indian milieu, lot of students have at least one grandparent or great grandparent who has a personal partition story. In teaching the text, class discussions often move beyond the macro politics of formation of nation(s) to individual life stories, of history from above and below. A realisation of the pain of losing one’s homeland, of suddenly being plucked from your roots and being transplanted to a new country, are all seminal to understanding Bishen Singh’s pain. It is difficult, if not impossible to delve into disciplines that go beyond mere appreciation of language or idioms.

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Khushwant Singh does not allow the reader to blame the violence on any particular ethnic group. He makes it clear that all were affected by the situation they found themselves in. The residents of Mano Majra lived a peaceful existence until the village money-lender Ramal is killed, and Jugga is held as a prime suspect. Whether it is the regional magistrate Hakum Chand, Jugga or Iqbal, the social reformer, Singh shows how each of them is held responsible for the events that unfold. In a largely North Indian milieu, lot of students have at least one grandparent or great grandparent who has a personal partition story. In teaching the text, class discussions often move beyond the macro politics of formation of nation(s) to individual life stories, of history from above and below. A realisation of the pain of losing one’s homeland, of suddenly being plucked from your roots and being transplanted to a new country, are all seminal to understanding Bishen Singh’s pain. It is difficult, if not impossible to delve into disciplines that go beyond mere appreciation of language or idioms.

In dealing with Partition, the teacher brings in an interdisciplinary approach and Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan is often evoked. The text gives a detailed historical and cultural account so that even a person unfamiliar with the Partition would be able to understand the text. The rituals of the Sikhs, the Hindus and the Muslims are presented as part of the narrative. It is almost as if history were being brought alive through the human characters depicted in the novel. Political events, and their effects on the common people form the basis of the novel. Politics, sociology, geography and history form the bedrock of any interpretation of the novel and the text cannot be treated solely in terms of its literary aspects.

Train to Pakistan depicts the human aspect of the political and historical event. The human angle presents a very compassionate picture of the horrors of partition. The story revolves around a Sikh village goon, Jugga who loves a Muslim girl, Nooran. The tensions between the Sikhs and Muslim are pointed out early in the novel, ‘According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped.’ (Singh, 2012, p.1)
Like ‘Toba Tek Singh’, Train to Pakistan raises issues of displacement and migration. The Partition is the hugest and saddest episode of mass migration in the history of the Indian subcontinent, and interesting debates stirred in class. Most Muslim students, several of whom come from the walled city, still have relatives in Pakistan. They shared experiences of meeting relatives from across the border and the problems faced by families due to political differences among the two countries. Sikh and Hindu students too had stories of their grandparents’ experiences to narrate. Multiple and contrasting histories emerged in class from students due to their differing religious sensitivities. A student interestingly compared Jugga’s selfless sacrifice to Meenakshi Iyer’s decision to save Raja Choudhary in the movie Mr. and Mrs. Iyer by claiming that he was her husband, and therefore a Hindu.

The oral telling of personal histories became an integral part of the classroom experience for this text. Oral narratives recalled through memory complimented the historical and literary texts, reiterating a complex relationship between culture and memory. The memory of the dislocation caused by the Partition continues to shape the psyche of the people. The drawing from different disciplines and recounting of life histories gave the students a greater insight into the text as well as the historical period it is set in. Although hackneyed, it is true that all literature is a product of its age. With this in mind, it is of utmost importance that teachers of English literature contextualise the literary text within its historical, social and political milieu.

Most teachers at University of Delhi employ interdisciplinary pedagogical practices in their classrooms, however this does not happen in a structured fashion and the onus seems to lie solely in the hands of the individual teacher. Perhaps it would be useful to have workshops or seminars at intra-college level to begin with to allow students and teachers from different disciplines to exchange ideas and readings to help them synthesise insights from across disciplines. Such platforms would provide opportunities to discuss and analyse areas from beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries and perspectives to a wider holistic approach that will help dissolve boundaries between different academic streams of study.

References


Method overshadows materials because the latter is seen as an outcome of the former. Developing ‘textual and related materials by commissioning eminent scholars in the disciplines of knowledge’ (NCFTE, 2009, p.91) is the established policy. The continuing inefficacy of the ‘methods perspective’ in SLTE, however, opens the way for a new perspective on materials, not as the product of methodical expertise, but as a process directly correlated with it. This radical ‘materials perspective’ enables a new critical focus on lesson-planning. The traditional plan-practice-reason perspective is restructured to include reflection on materials, or more precisely, on method through materials-in-process, as outlined in the present paper.

Teaching Skills / Proficiency

Method
Materials

Fig 1

Autonomous, learner-centric teaching

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) first envisaged the ‘self-directed teacher’ who, instead of passively receiving and implementing methods, actively develops materials, classroom activities and assessment procedures (Nunan and Lamb, 1996; Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001; Nunan, 2004). This self-directed approach moved away from the ‘methods concept’ as its ineffectuality became evident (Richards, 1998).

Many teachers trained in innovative pedagogical methods in workshops revert to their pre-training teaching method almost immediately afterwards. Few participants actually implement new methods and materials in their classroom practice, and with varying degrees of success. This is mainly because the generic structure of training workshops does not replicate specific classroom conditions (Richards, 1998). Instead of ‘importing ideas from elsewhere’, it is better to directly study the classroom scenario for methods and materials that work in common for good teachers everywhere (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Nunan, 1989). The methods bias of action research in the CLT era, hence, shifted to materials with the advent of TBLT (Ellis, 2003).

Language skills for life

English language skills and life skills education may be integrated across the CBSE curriculum through TBLT focussing on self-awareness, empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, creative thinking, critical thinking, coping with emotions and coping with stress (NCF, 2005). It should be noted, however, that the average teacher still teaches the Communicative English text through lecture method instead of focusing on language skills.

Task-framing for teacher development

In this prevalent grassroots scenario, the text-as-product could gradually be replaced with TBLT or the task-as-process in the ‘materials perspective’. This hypothesis is based on frequent teacher statements that textual syllabus (materials) decides their method. TBLT materials created by experts indicate that professional development is causatively linked with effective materials. The present paper, however, reverses this causative link from materials to professional development, by focusing on teachers framing language tasks
to understand how this process can structure their teaching method and enhance their teaching skills. Innovation in method or TBLT is thus expected as an outcome of task-framing.

Case study on MI-RBT-TBLT

The basic guidelines for framing learner-centric language tasks are provided by three major theoretical sources:

1. TBLT (Ellis & Ellis, 2007)
3. Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

In the present study, a group of seven primary level English teachers of a CBSE school were oriented in the application aspect of MI, RBT and TBLT. MI inputs stimulate various learner intelligences, thus catering to individual differences (Armstrong, 1994). The five cognitive levels of RBT: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation and Creativity, set the learning objectives in language tasks (Armstrong, 1994). These teachers framed language tasks with MI-RBT inputs complementing the NCERT textual units.

One such task, framed by a participant teacher during the study, is analysed here vis-à-vis the comparison of strategies elicited by the two versions of task performance (Table 1).

3. Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)


5. TBLT (Ellis & Ellis, 2007)

Able to frame the task (Fig. 2) revealed four stages of task-framing:

a. She first diagnosed the need for her learners to improve their writing skills through rough drafts, revision and writing, which they usually avoided. This formed the learning objective.

b. She next linked writing with physical-kinesthetic Intelligence, as young learners love physical activity. The writing theme of ‘Tasty, yet healthy tiffin’ was borrowed from ‘Nutrition’ in their Environmental Science syllabus, thus linking learning with real-life and enabling vocabulary development in another subject.

c. The initial draft of the task (Fig. 2) required learners to try out the snack and write down the recipe. The learners however, copied out the first draft of the recipe without revision or editing. Observation and reflection helped identify and correct the mismatch in RBT level between task-outcome (Application) and planning learning objective (Evaluation) in the first implementation of the task.

d. The improved version of the task (Fig. 3) included MI-RBT inputs for note-taking, revision, editing and peer-feedback.

An interview with the teacher who framed this task revealed four stages of task-framing:

5. Rubric:

• (One star and Two Wishes): The Ingredients are incomplete or the amount is not specified. The Method is confusing and incomplete. There are more than five spelling and grammatical errors.

[MI: Logical, Verbal, Kinesthetic, Interpersonal; RBT: Application, Evaluation] Fig. 2

• (Three Stars): The Ingredients are complete and in correct amount. The Method is complete, with all the steps written in correct order. The garnishing adds to taste and visual effect. The Hot Tips are interesting, amusing and useful. There are no spelling or grammatical errors.

• (Two Stars and a Wish): The Ingredients are complete and in correct amount. The Method is complete, but one or two steps are not in sequence. There are one or two spelling and grammatical errors.

6. Collect the 3-star recipes in your class to compile your own Tasty Tiffins for Class 5 book.

[MI: Logical, Verbal, Kinesthetic, Interpersonal; RBT: Application, Evaluation] Fig. 3

The sections Messy Notes in the Kitchen; Ingredients; Method; Garnishing and Hot Tips from the Cook enabled note-taking, revision, redrafting and editing through the Verbal-linguistic and Logical Intelligences of learners. The ‘stars-and-a-wish’ system enabled constructive peer-feedback, as suggestions for improvement (wishes) were balanced by appreciation of effort and achievement (stars). The addition of sub-tasks like comparing and grading recipes also raised the final task-outcome to the cognitive RBT level of Evaluation. The task process thus elicited all the sub-skills of writing and the task-outcome met its learning objective.

Indirect (video) observations of the two lessons, examining the written products, administering a strategy inventory of 62 items (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995), and teacher and learner interviews provided quantitative and qualitative data for the comparison of strategies elicited by the two versions of task performance (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy type</th>
<th>Instance of Strategy Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory (4 items)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive (35 items)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensational (12 items)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Direct Strategies</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Indirect Strategies</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Strategies Used</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

This comparison indicates that the incidence of strategies deployed by learners increases from 45 in the first version to 215 in the improved version of the task. Rewriting from memory led to 25 instances of memory strategies in the first version but only 17 instances in the second version of the task. Affective and Social strategies, not observed in the first version, increase to 27 and 32 respectively in the second version, due to collaborative-learning. Cognitive strategies associated with writing sub-skills increase in the second version of the task. More Metacognitive and Compensation strategies are also deployed in the second version.

In this case study, a distinct improvement in learning outcome or method results from task restructuring proving that teaching method may evolve through reflection on material. The MI-RBT-TBLT framework enables reflection on individual needs and task-outcomes to fulfil learning objectives. Accessing content from across the curriculum, moreover, can incorporate domain-specific language and life skills and motivate teacher-collaboration. MI-RBT-TBLT thus increases professional efficacy.

Conclusion: method in materials

The MI-RBT-TBLT method may be outlined in a Cycle of Noticing where teachers:

- Identify learner needs that decide the language-learning objective
- Plan MI inputs to suit the learning objective
- Set the RBT level of the cognitive task
- Observe incidences of learning skills and strategies during task implementation
English for Rural Development: Providing Proficiency in English to Rural Youth

Sarika Khurana

In International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and in similar other tests of English, is any indication. Cambridge IELTS is conducted by the British Council and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (UCLES) for the benefit of those seeking to go abroad. As proficiency in English happens to be an essential requirement for issue of visa, even a student visa, a large number of candidates appear in these tests of English with a view of going abroad. There are many reasons why people from developing countries seek to migrate to developed countries but for the majority the biggest motivation is economic and social benefit that such a move brings to the individuals and their families. Most of these migrants happen to be young people who have just finished schooling or are pursuing graduation. But amongst them are also a sizable number of youngsters who are degree holders in the Humanities, Commerce, Sciences and Social Sciences. Some also have technical and vocational qualifications such as pharmacists, bio-technologists, nurses, teachers, tutors, accountants, engineers, I.T. professionals, beauticians, hotel management graduates and dentists. These are people who wish to migrate to improve their future and so they all apply for a student visa ostensibly to get admission to some kind of professional course from a European country as a convenient route to migrate. Back home, quality professional education is beyond their reach and moreover it is difficult to get admission in government institutions and private institutions are very expensive. Migration sometimes causes hardships to the individuals and their families, yet it also benefits them, families, community and ancestral village, as is evident from studies done on the contribution of the NRIs to the rural Punjab.2 Migrating to the developed West perhaps has never been easy for the rural youth but it is much more difficult now with increased competition from urban youth in India and in other developing countries and also from the European Union. Moreover, a certain level of proficiency in English language is now required by almost all western countries as a pre-requisite for issuing visa, even a student visa. This is an added obstacle; an average youth from rural India who has had schooling and vocational training through the regional/ vernacular medium finds it an uphill task. This lack of communicative English also proves an obstacle in their migration to other cities within India to take up better paid jobs. A large number of coaching institutes have sprung up in all parts of the country, more so Punjab, and coaching for IELTS preparation has become a big business. But even after months of coaching and training and repeated attempts, the band score of rural youth in English proficiency remains low.

The plight of students from regional medium rural schools in other parts of the country is no different and unfortunately these young men and women happen to be those who cannot afford expensive private English-medium schools. In many states over the past few decades, many projects for teaching of English even with foreign collaborators have been taken up in addition to the efforts of English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad (formerly CIEFL) and various Regional Institutes of English without much perceptible improvement in the teaching of English in our rural areas. This is evident from the band scores obtained by the candidates from these areas. The present system of teaching English in government schools in rural areas holds no ray of hope even in the near future. We must therefore devise new ways of giving our rural youth proficiency in English language if we want to help them benefit themselves and their communities.

We can think of two solutions. One is to devise ways and means to impart English Language Proficiency to adults seeking to migrate abroad for jobs or for further education. This will require training rural youth in skills and strategies to tackle tests of English. This coaching can be in the nature of ‘training’ rather than ‘education’ as the two terms are distinguished by Widdowson (1983). Centres for this kind of coaching having specialised faculty for this purpose need to be set up around cluster of villages outside the regular school system for achieving this objective. These ELT coaching centres must be properly regulated and monitored to maintain quality.

The second solution pertains to effective planning to improve the teaching-learning of English in schools in rural India as a long-term solution. For this purpose the socio-economic background of these learners must be taken into account while planning a syllabus for them. Besides being first generation learners of English, they have poor facilities of learning English inside the class and none at all outside the classroom. Moreover, majority of the rural youth remain predominantly monolingual not only in their formative years but also till secondary school unless they move out of the village to nearby towns and cities where people of other communities also reside. In rural Punjab, for example, most of the learners’ mother tongue is Punjabi which also happens to be the regional language and is used profusely in their community. They speak, read, write and listen to this single language day in and day out – road signs, signboards, radio and television programmes, advertisements, newspapers. The fact that Punjabi is the sole linguistic medium that they come in contact with throughout their formative years. They have little experience or exposure to social interaction in real life situations in any other language. Not a single word or phrase from English – except a few words such as tractor, TV, radio, car or cricket for which there are no equivalent words in Punjabi - is used in the target language by people around them unlike those living or studying in towns and cities. Punjabis,
particularly the rural Punjabis, feel a deep sense of pride in using their regional language and thus, are inclined to transmit it to their offspring consciously or unconsciously becomes a de-motivating factor in their learning of the target language. Research has also shown that monolingual learners have difficulty in learning a new language and so this has an important bearing on their learning of English language effectively. It is only when we have a clear understanding of these learners and their learning environment, the objectives we want to achieve, and the challenges that hinder the attainment of these objectives that we can devise a suitable curriculum for these learners.

The materials for teaching English produced for students studying in city schools and belonging to a different social environment cannot be suitable for these learners. ‘One solution fits all’ will not serve the purpose. Each state or region perhaps needs to bring out a different set of instructional materials and adopt instructional techniques using their culture and traditions and a judicious use of their own regional language for its learners of the English in the countryside. The emphasis must also shift from teaching and testing of content to imparting skills in the target language. One thing is clear that any English language syllabus will have to provide for teaching and learning of speaking and listening skills, in addition to reading and writing skills, which at present are neither taught nor tested in our schools. Investment in giving English language proficiency to young students in the rural areas of the country can go a long way in empowering them to communicate with the outside world and thus help them bring prosperity not only to themselves and their families but also to their community and the village at large as the examples of Kharauti, Brahampura and other such efforts in villages in Punjab show. Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh (2007). We need initiative and will to create an English-speaking ‘talent pool’ to reap socio-economic benefits of giving adequate proficiency in English language. Those young men and women from rural parts who fail to migrate or do not want to migrate can easily participate in the opportunities being thrown up by the emerging economy in urban India and thus develop themselves and their society.

Notes
1 Out of the nine test centres that the British Council has in North India, five are located in the Punjab region and more than 85 per cent of the candidates who appear at these centres are from rural areas. In addition, IDP Australia also conducts this test.
2 See Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh (2007) and Shipra Saxena (2005). References

Competence in English: Struggles and Alternatives
Nidhi Kunwar

National Curriculum Framework (2005) quotes, ‘English in India is a global language in a multilingual country’ (p. 38). Today no one can deny the reality of this statement. Whether it is the corporate world or the government sector, the value and importance of English language is widely acknowledged. Due to its increasing importance every person aspires to be fluent in English. English proficiency is important but it is also true that every year hundreds of students struggle to achieve mastery in this language. People do not hesitate to spend money and invest time for gaining competence in the English language. The proof of this is the continuous increase in the number of institutes which offer to train proficiency in English in just magical 90 or 120 days! A lot of help books are sold as well in the name of making students competent English language users. Several schools claim ‘English enriched environment’ as one of the main components of their school curriculum. Parents too struggle hard to admit their children in those schools which can make their children masters of this language.

Competence in English as an achievement is widely acknowledged. Due to its increasing importance every person aspires to be fluent in English.”

References

Notes
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2 See Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh (2007) and Shipra Saxena (2005). References

Notes
1 Out of the nine test centres that the British Council has in North India, five are located in the Punjab region and more than 85 per cent of the candidates who appear at these centres are from rural areas. In addition, IDP Australia also conducts this test.
2 See Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh (2007) and Shipra Saxena (2005). References
of our Indian education system. We are so concerned with telling students about their errors that many a times we do not let our students experiment with the language. Unless and until students themselves try to frame hypothesis about language structure, it is difficult for them to understand the basics of language. Students must be allowed to commit errors in the process of learning. Errors must be seen as an attempt towards language learning. Excessive focus on errors can destroy students’ desire to write and share (Calkins, 1986).

- Freedom of expression

Language is a medium of expressing one’s thoughts, views and ideas. However, it is also true that our classrooms offer extremely limited space to students to use language in a functional way. We hardly provide any real opportunities of engaging with the language and whatever opportunities we provide are distorted by our exclusive focus on errors. If we want our students to become fluent users of the English language, then we need to take-off the pressures, fears and anxieties related with language use and encourage students to interact freely with the language in writing or speaking.

- Communication in class

If we want our students to learn the language, then it is essential that English must become the medium of communication in the class. The teacher must talk to students in English and students must also be encouraged to speak in English. Acceptance must be given to attempts of the students, even if, those are not grammatically perfect. The problem is whenever students attempt to communicate in English, we tend to focus more on the structure of the language, than the message he/she wishes to convey. These repeated mistakes by teachers finally force students to avoid interaction in the class. Students do not want to be pointed for their errors and finally decide to withdraw and stay safe.

- Meaningful feedback

It is extremely important for a teacher to provide meaningful feedback to her students. In our traditional system, we only evaluate students by marking them or putting red marks on students’ work. This mode of correction never tells students what their strengths are and how they should overcome their weaknesses. We only communicate to students ‘this is wrong’ or ‘that is wrong’ but not ‘what is their strength’. Nancie Atwell (1987) considers ‘meaningful response’ as one of the important factors for developing students as writers. Kumar (1996) has also advocated use of meaningful feedback for students. He remarks, ‘Apart from correcting the child’s mistakes or putting an approval sign, the teacher must write something expressing her response to the child’s writing.’ (p.62). Such kind of meaningful response by the teacher will undoubtedly encourage the students to read and write more.

Making provisions of the above mentioned conditions can make a classroom environment appropriate for language learning in a functional way. Language becomes meaningful when students use it for communication and expression. We must understand that one cannot learn anything if one’s mind is loaded with tension, fear and anxiety of being ‘wrong’. It is only students’ engagement with the language in active form which can enable them to learn and master English language. So, as teachers, we need to create such a classroom environment for our students that it offers opportunities, encourages risk-taking, provides scope for errors and accepts hypothesis.

References


1. Introduction

There is a requirement for qualified and capable business professionals who can sustain India’s economic growth. This is perhaps the reason that the number of students seeking admission to the MBA (Masters in Business Administration) has escalated over the years. According to a report by MBAuniverse.com, the number of MBA seats in India has grown four fold, from 94,704 in 2006-07 to 35, 2571 in 2011-12. While there is no dearth in the number of management graduates in the market, employers claim that only a small percentage is actually employable. A survey of 2,264 MBA graduates carried out by MeritTrac, an Indian Assessment and Testing Company in 2012 showed that only 21% were employable. Graddol observes that ‘a part of the unemployment problem emanates from the mismatch between the skill requirements of the market and the skill base of the job seekers’ (Graddol, 2009, p.106).

In a multi-lingual country like India, English has evolved to become the language of the workplace. MBA graduates are expected to possess excellent communication skills in English. It is taken for granted that they are fluent in English because the MBA selection criteria include examination of their linguistic skills in English. Since English is the medium of instruction in Indian business schools and management institutes, it is thought to contribute to the development of their English language skills.

2. Participants

Fifty (50) MBA graduates from various Indian business schools/management institutes who had been working for more than a year were chosen for the study. They were all working in organizations located in Delhi and Gurgaon, India. The sample consisted of 23 females and 27 males. English is the second language for all the participants.

3. Procedure

Interviews with the respondents were recorded which were analyzed to determine their proficiency in Spoken English. These interviews were evaluated by the experts based on a five point scales adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) handbook.

4. Evaluation of Spoken English Skills

According to the evaluation by the experts more than half the respondents (54%) have Above Average Spoken English skills. However, about 30% have been rated as having Average Spoken English skills. Though many respondents appear to be quite fluent in English, they make errors, which are discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Vocabulary

Table 1 depicts some of the errors in vocabulary made by the participants.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect Vocabulary</th>
<th>Correct Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Schooling and college”</td>
<td>“Schooling and college studies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I get so engrossed in my thinking…”</td>
<td>“I get so engrossed in my thoughts…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“our clients need to shell off money for us.”</td>
<td>“our clients need to shell out money for us.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Then you have to manipulate yourself…”</td>
<td>“Then you have to adapt yourself…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My training was unrealistic for 8 months.”</td>
<td>“My training was prolonged for 8 months.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Men, when they get angry, just start blasting on you…”</td>
<td>“Men, when they get angry, they vent it out by shouting…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Somebody would have done MBA and would have entered bank.”</td>
<td>“Somebody would have done MBA and would have joined a bank.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These errors were identified during interviews of MBA graduates which were conducted to evaluate their English skills.
Several respondents used ‘very much’ instead of ‘really’ and ‘much’ in sentences like ‘I am very much interested…’ and ‘We felt very much disappointed after getting a response like that’. It was also seen that some respondents introduced themselves in a manner which showed strong mother-tongue influence, for example ‘Myself…’ Arvind Kumar Singh’.

4.2 Pronunciation

The respondents displayed many errors in their pronunciation. This again reflects a strong influence of their mother tongue. Some of the errors are listed below in Table 2.

A common tendency to pronounce ‘Opportunity’ as /ˈɒpərɪtjuːni/ was noted. Several participants used /ɪ/ instead of /z/. Many mispronounced ‘realized’ as /ˈrɛlɪzid/.

Several respondents used ‘very much’ instead of ‘very’. ‘I want to become a Chartered Accountant’ was noted. Several respondents used ‘very much’ instead of ‘very’ in sentences like ‘I want to become a Chartered Accountant’.

4.3 Prepositions

In their Spoken English the participants showed errors in the use of prepositions. Table 3 shows errors in the insertion of unnecessary prepositions in Spoken English. Table 4 displays the wrong use of prepositions in speech.

4.4 Tenses

Some of the participants made use of wrong tenses in their speech. Table 5 displays some instances when they made such errors.

4.4.1 Articles

Several respondents used ‘very much’ instead of ‘really’ and ‘much’ in sentences like ‘I am very much interested…’ and ‘We felt very much disappointed after getting a response like that’. It was also seen that some respondents introduced themselves in a manner which showed strong mother-tongue influence, for example ‘Myself…’ Arvind Kumar Singh’.

In their Spoken English the participants showed errors in the use of prepositions. Table 3 displays the wrong use of prepositions in speech. Table 4 shows the examples of omission of articles in their sentences. The examples of omission of articles are given in Table 6 below. Table 7 shows the unnecessary addition of articles while Table 8 displays the wrong use of articles in speech.

4.5 Articles

In their Spoken English the participants showed omission of articles as well as addition of unnecessary articles in their sentences. The examples of omission of articles are given in Table 6 below. Table 7 shows the unnecessary addition of articles while Table 8 displays the wrong use of articles in speech.

4.6 Subject-Verb Agreement

Table 9 displays errors in their speech which show a disagreement between the subject and the corresponding verb.

5.0 Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that there were various errors in both pronunciation and vocabulary. More focus should be given to practical application during class as most of the respondents felt they had understood the subject well in the theoretical part of the study.

Table 3

Insertion of unnecessary prepositions in speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I joined with Standard Chartered’...</td>
<td>‘I joined Standard Chartered’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I report to the group manager’...</td>
<td>‘I report to the group manager’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I directly joined into my MBA program’...</td>
<td>‘I directly joined the MBA program’...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Wrong use of prepositions in speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘My parents were not very keen about my following that’...</td>
<td>‘My parents were not very keen about my following that’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I was not very keen on computer jobs’...</td>
<td>‘I was not very keen on software jobs’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I want to become Head of the Department to one of the organizations’...</td>
<td>‘I want to become the Head of the Department in one of the organizations’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...makes me get involved into various sectors’...</td>
<td>‘...makes me get involved in various sectors’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Recession is on its peak’...</td>
<td>‘Recession is at its peak’...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Errors in the use of Tenses in speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I done my primary education’...</td>
<td>‘I did my primary education’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘At our time we didn’t find that’...</td>
<td>‘At our time we didn’t have that’...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Omission of articles in Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘...meet the top guys at the job’...</td>
<td>‘...meet the top guys at the job’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...as a professional...’</td>
<td>‘...As a professional...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...you get worried all the time’</td>
<td>‘...you get worried all the time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...after that I didn’t get a job’</td>
<td>‘...After that I didn’t get a job’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Here I got a job’</td>
<td>‘Here I got a job’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...my father got a job here’</td>
<td>‘...My father got a job here’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...from other parts of the country’</td>
<td>‘...from other parts of the country’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...such large pool of knowledge’</td>
<td>‘...such a large pool of knowledge’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

Addition of unnecessary articles in Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘...that way the role the challenging for me’...</td>
<td>‘...that way the role has been challenging for me’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘You are one of the persons...’</td>
<td>‘you are one of the persons...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...while I was doing the B.Com...’</td>
<td>‘...While I was doing B.Com...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘men and women both do hard work’</td>
<td>‘men and women both do hard work’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Its a helpful a lot’</td>
<td>‘It is very helpful’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The more the senior they are the more humble...’</td>
<td>‘The more senior they are the more humble...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Insertion of Wrong Article in Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘...meet the top guys at the job’...</td>
<td>‘...meet the top guys at the job’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...as a professional...’</td>
<td>‘...As a professional...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...you get worried all the time’</td>
<td>‘...you get worried all the time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...after that I didn’t get a job’</td>
<td>‘...After that I didn’t get a job’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Here I got a job’</td>
<td>‘Here I got a job’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...my father got a job here’</td>
<td>‘...My father got a job here’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...from other parts of the country’</td>
<td>‘...from other parts of the country’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...such large pool of knowledge’</td>
<td>‘...such a large pool of knowledge’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

Errors in subject-verb agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Lot of politeness are expected from the clients’...</td>
<td>‘Lot of politeness is expected from the clients’...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘...many different are there...’</td>
<td>‘...So many differences are there...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Women bring a lot substance to the workplace’...</td>
<td>‘Women bring a lot substance to the workplace’...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 Word Order
A few respondents used words in a confusing and sometimes meaningless manner. Table 10 shows some examples of wrong word order:

Table 10
Wrong word order used in speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘…your work of style,…’</td>
<td>‘your style of work’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…that is the creativity more I feel,…’</td>
<td>‘I feel this is real creativity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…everything keeping in mind we used to do the advertisements,…’</td>
<td>‘We used to do the advertisements keeping all this in mind,…’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8 Collocation
The participants used some deviant collocations such as the following:
1. ‘…huminly feasible,…’ instead of ‘humanly possible.’
2. ‘Many take a back step,…’ instead of ‘many take a back seat,…’

4.9 Repetitions
Some respondents showed a tendency to use certain words repeatedly during the conversation, even though these words served no purpose to the discourse. They would also use words such as ‘like’, ‘thing’, ‘fine’, and ‘umm…’ as fillers when they failed to find the appropriate words. Some examples are given below:

1. Basically:
   a. ‘Basically, of course in these days smart work is essential to manipulate things according to your requirements basically.’
   b. ‘You get a lot of freedom basically… there is… when you… basically the main purpose of our job is dealing with clients.

2. 2nd:
   a. ‘Companies coming for interviews and all…’
   b. ‘I gave my MBA entrance exams and all…’
   c. ‘…to get into job and all’
   d. ‘His classes, though he was very good and all…’
   e. ‘That is a flaw in my education which I did in Gulf and all.’

3. Probably:
   a. ‘We probably could take a lot of decisions at our end incredibly, you know, counter that act.
   b. ‘…which probably has actually been shelved and we probably are recruiting…’

4. You know:
   a. He used to give us, you know, how to write letters and how to, you know, do communication.

4.10 Use of ‘to’

I can explain you…

How to, you know, do communication.

I need to listen them very patiently.

…which I have accustomed now.

She has to listen all that.

If there is an action, you’d definitely react it.

5. Conclusion
The purpose of this analysis was to show that there is much room for improvement in the Spoken English skills of MBA graduates since some of them from the best Indian B-schools have been found to make several grammatical and syntactical errors. Business schools do not think it necessary to focus on the grammar and vocabulary, as they expect students to have that mastery over the language. Besides this, the packed schedule of the MBA leaves no room for developing their language skills. The respondents reiterated these facts in their interviews as well. Their inability to communicate effectively will also impact the smooth functioning of the organization. Proactive measures need to be taken to develop the Business English skills of these graduates otherwise it will hamper their professional growth.

References
ANNOUNCEMENT

Conference on Interrogating English Studies in India

The Department of English, Bharati College, University of Delhi is pleased to announce its collaboration with FORTELL for a forthcoming two-day Conference on Interrogating English Studies in India on 5-6 February 2014.

The details of the Conference can be seen here: http://englishconferencebharaticollege.blogspot.in

Many important debates took place during the late 90s and 90s on the challenges faced by the discipline of English Studies in India. This Conference is aimed at reassessing our disciplinary and pedagogic goals and challenges in contemporary times.

Papers are invited for the following sub-themes:

- English Literary Studies in India: Objectives and Review
- English and/or Literature?
- Changing Social Profile of Students: Pedagogic Strategies
- Reviewing Syllabi: Is the whole greater than the sum of the parts?
- Disciplinary goals and boundaries and/or interdisciplinary?
- Challenges and Opportunities of Digitalization for English Studies
- Multilingual Literary Archives: Bridging the English-Bhutea Divide?
- Pre-theory, theory or post-theory?

Papers may also be accepted on related themes that may add value to the Conference. An abstract of no more than 250 words may be sent along with a brief bio-note to conf. eng.bc@gmail.com by 16th January 2014. Travel and accommodation expenses will be borne only for select invited speakers.

Call for papers

for FORTELL, ISSN no. 2229-6557, July 2014, issue no. 29

Special issue on ‘Disability and Pedagogy’

The need for pedagogical alternatives and innovations in relation with disabled students in Indian classrooms is a long standing one. When it comes to language teaching, the current models of pedagogy fall drastically short in coping with the challenges that students with varying disabilities face. Also, with the trend of mixed classrooms to integrate the disabled with the other students, the task of a teacher is two-fold: addressing shortcomings in the system for a disabled pupil and integrating the latter with the rest of the class. This issue of FORTELL seeks to identify and raise crucial challenges in language teaching to the disabled suffering from hearing impairment, visually challenged or dyslexics and intellectually challenged.

The papers could address themes including but not limited to the following areas:

- Challenges in ESL teaching to the disabled
- Assessing curriculum on sensitivity towards disability and the disabled
- Innovations and alternative pedagogical methods to address lacunae viz a viz disabled in present teaching models
- Pedagogy and the discourse of inclusion and human rights of the disabled
- Role of tools and technology
- Problems regarding infrastructure
- Research issues

The Guest Editors for the issue will be Nisha Singh and Manjari Chaturvedi.

The last date for receiving contributions for this issue is April 30, 2013. Along with articles on the above mentioned theme, general articles are invited as well.

Note for the Contributors:

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Guidelines for submission

Soft copies of articles/research papers (not exceeding 2000 words), reports, book reviews, (300-350 words) and letters to the editor (100-150 words) should be sent along with a photograph and a brief bio note in about 25-30 words to Dr. A.L. Khanna, Coordinating Editor at amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com. The contributors should clearly indicate their name, email ID and phone number. Contributions should conform to the sixth edition of the APA style sheet in format, citations and bibliography. Contributors should give a declaration that the paper is original and does not violate the copyright law and has not been published elsewhere before. Please look up the website www.fortell.org for Guidelines for submission of the manuscript. Contributions from the members of FORTELL are solicited.

An Interview with GJV Prasad,

Professor at Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Rachna Sethi

Prasad, discusses life and literature at Nehru University, where he is Professor of English. His major research interests are Contemporary English Literature, Dalit Literature, Language, and Translation Theory and he has extensively explored these areas. He is also a first and translator. His novel A Clean Breast was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize. The book offers insights into the challenges of the region in 1994. He is the editor of JLS, the Journal of the School of Literature & Culture Studies, JNU, and Vice President of the Indian Association for English Language and Language Studies. In this interview he talks about interdisciplinary approaches in action with focus on English studies.

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Articles

we need networks to encourage interdisciplinarity. Apart from research projects, certain programmes on campus like the North East India Studies programme and sector for education require expertise from different departments.

Also one notices an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary push not just in JNU but across the country by policy makers. The ministry has picked up these terms and there may be more funding and opportunities for younger colleagues in interdisciplinary areas. Today there is no funding in universities for humanities but some for social sciences and that is also the reason for more collaborative seminars and research projects.

RS: Interdisciplinarity is often viewed as being central to reading and understanding of literature. What is the direction that English Studies has taken in India in view of changing academic needs of crossing disciplinary boundaries?

GJV: English departments, along with perhaps history and sociology to some extent, are unique in understanding the fuzziness of boundaries. English departments in India could have gone in two possible directions. One way would have been to specialise in language teaching, to teach English as a language that will be useful to participate in the wider affairs of the world and as a link language across India. However this has not been very successful as language teaching is often looked down upon in universities. A hierarchy prioritising literature over language exists in university spaces.

The second direction that English departments could have taken was to explore the ‘Englishness’, prioritising literature over language exists in universities. A hierarchy prioritising literature over language exists in university spaces.

The difference between then and now is being able to speak of other disciplines with a sense of ease, sometimes even contemptuously. We were actually trained by historians and history just didn’t come into the literary class. When we attended history and philosophy classes we had a sense that these were aligned disciplines but different disciplines nonetheless. Literary studies always had interdisciplinarity, now I think there is a feeling that you don’t need to learn history from historians, psychology from psychologists, philosophy from philosophers, as if the literary scholar is all in one.

RS: So instead of improving on skills one is drawing from multiple disciplines without being trained in them. Don’t you feel that the biggest drawback of interdisciplinarity is lack of grounding in any discipline while trying to be ‘a jack of all trades’?

GJV: Yes, that is a problem. When you hear and read people with firm grounding in the discipline, a literary scholar who knows his text well, you value his merit as an intellectual and critic. I don’t want to sound old fashioned because I love this excitement and enjoy the kind of research young scholars can today undertake. However we need to be conscious and cautious of learning from other disciplines and not pick up ideas without being aware of where they come from.

RS: Interdisciplinarity then shouldn’t lead to a superficial research that lacks substance and depth.

GJV: Absolutely, also since our work is part of literary department, our reading of literature should be central to what we do, otherwise it is just a peg to hang other things. Otherwise the same kind of work can possibly be done in a history or a sociology course.

RS: So we make literature central to our project in English department and then use tools of other disciplines. But how do we ensure that these tools are used for synthesis of ideas, for advancement of knowledge? What methodology should the teacher employ to equip students in interdisciplinary work?

GJV: Let me push it further, today I have a tool kit rather than methodologies that I provide my students with. The tools may come from different disciplines, drawing from what I have learnt from these streams over the years. I fail in my responsibility as a teacher if I don’t train my students in understanding the functions and impacts of tools and how they are to be used for analysis of texts. They should be able to decide the appropriate tool for the unpacking or decoding of a text. Research methodology is about putting together of a tool kit. As I said earlier, it doesn’t mean you lose humility and pretend or think that you know all, but instead as language teaching is often looked down upon in universities. A hierarchy prioritising literature over language exists in university spaces.

So we make literature central to our project in English department and then use tools of other disciplines. But how do we ensure that these tools are used for synthesis of ideas, for advancement of knowledge? What methodology should the teacher employ to equip students in interdisciplinary work?

RS: Thank you Sir for sharing your views on the area of interdisciplinarity. I am sure your insights will be thought provoking for our readers.
the board. Encourage students to fill in their manual and write at least three more in each column along with a friend.

### My Healthy Living Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Phrases/ idioms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fitness</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>jogging</td>
<td>Health is wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Alertness</td>
<td>energetic</td>
<td>exercising</td>
<td>An apple a day keeps the doctor away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Prescribed Health Plan to be followed for a week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat small meals at short intervals; eat green leafy vegetables and a lot of fruits; avoid heavy and oily food. Say no to sweets and cold drinks.</td>
<td>Walk briskly for half an hour twice a day; climb stairs instead of using a lift; do mild physical activity throughout the day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There can be several versions of this activity based on slightly different variations of the same theme depending on which particular skill needs to be enhanced and at which level.

### Variation 1

If the skill focus is on developing analytical, critical thinking and writing skills of the students, the following activity may work.

#### Level: intermediate

#### Time required: 40 min

#### Objective: To develop students’ critical thinking and creative writing skills

#### Material: Any anecdote/short article on stress/anger related health problems and another on the benefits of meditation

#### Procedure:

1. Let the students read the anecdote/article on stress or anger. Break them in pairs to discuss how modern lifestyle causes stress/anger and in what ways can it be overcome.
2. Share some responses in class.
3. Now make students read the short piece on meditation. Again ask students how they would define meditation (is it praying; deep breathing; self-introspection etc) and do they perceive it as an effective stress-buster/anger management technique but this time round encourage them to offer their viewpoints in the form of a debate/discussion by giving them topics such as Meditation is only a temporary state of happiness and satisfaction on Meditational practices have no scientific basis.
4. Ask students to describe the ill-effects of stress/anger using humour. Encourage them to present their ideas creatively through a comic strip/ anecdote/interesting dialogue etc.
5. Have volunteers present their work to the class.

### Politics of Visuals in decoding Visual Culture

### Gorvika

By Richard Howells & Joaquim Negreiros


Pp 346, Price: Rs 1752

ISBN-10: 0745650708


Our world is full of images, pictures and visuals. We see them daily, on roads, in museums, on TV, in films etc. Have we ever thought what do they mean? How are they affecting us? Are they innocent as they look? Is there any politics behind them? Are they conditioning us in certain ways or affecting our thought process? This book sets you thinking by engaging with such questions. The revised, updated, expanded, second edition of this book, like its predecessor aims at visual literacy which tries to decode the hidden meanings behind the images and how they get transmitted in our culture and consciousness. It is a book which analyses the visuals by using the theories of different disciplines. The whole book revolves around the ‘reality’ around us and its representation through visual art.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section, named ‘Theory’ uses six theoretical approaches to visual analysis in the chapters titled ‘Iconology’, ‘Form’, ‘Art History’, ‘Ideology’, ‘Semiotics’ and ‘Hermeneutics’. The first chapter is about symbolism in the image, the second focuses on the form of the visual art; the third historicizes the individual art form and emphasizes on Art history; the fourth discusses the ideology of art; the fifth uses the Structuralist and Post-Structuralist theories and reveals the world of signs and symbols; and the sixth delves into the discourse of cultural studies and the relation between images and our culture.

The second section of the book explores the relation between different art forms and reality. While the first section of the book deals with the art forms theoretically, the second section is about applying these using the historical and contemporary art forms. This section titled ‘Media’ includes chapters on fine art, photography,
Articles

Articles

Basics of Academic English
A.L. Khanna

Basics of Academic English, 1 and 2
By Deepta Achar, Rajan Barret, Santosh Dash, Charul Jain, Sachin Ketkar and Aarati Majumdar.
Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi 2012, 2013
Price: Rs 70, Rs 85, pages: 96, 120

The set of Basics of Academic English, 1 and 2 are textbooks written for the Foundation Course in English under the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) introduced for undergraduate students of arts, commerce and science in Gujarat. This set of books is skills-based meant for students of semesters 1 and 2, and they aim to build on the knowledge acquired in semesters 1 and 2 through English for Academic Purposes, Books 1-2 (published by University Granthamnand Board, Gujarat, 2011).

The aim of this set of books is to develop the communication skills required in academic situations through practice exercises and activities done by students from diverse backgrounds. The set shows a distinct shift from the traditional practice of treating the learners as passive recipients to active participants. Most of the themes, contexts and sample texts in the books are drawn from everyday life which help students to adapt, consolidate and actively make use of what they learn on their own from outside the classroom.

The basic assumption on which these books are based is the fact that students have a high degree of motivation to learn and are exposed to English in their day to day living in the world around them. Another assumption guiding these materials is that they cater to students who may have low motivation and inadequate control on English grammar and pronunciation but have the ability to communicate in English. The emphasis therefore in these books is to help students to understand the meaning of what they listen to and read and express what they mean while speaking and writing.

The books aim at developing the following five abilities in the students in semesters 3-4: to read and understand a range of written texts, especially those central to academic studies; to use varied strategies for reading that are appropriate for given purposes and discourse types; to listen and understand spoken English as encountered in classrooms, seminars and public lectures, informal and formal social settings and TV or web-based programmes; to express one’s ideas clearly to specific audiences in class discussions, seminars, social interactions, etc.; to express ideas in writing in varied forms, especially in academic assignments and examination responses. The books are carefully designed building on the prior knowledge of the students and the existing practices of teaching. Each unit is preceded by the unit outline, preview and objectives. The tasks are centred around situations that students are likely to encounter in their day to day life and gradually lead towards building the objectives of the course.

The units included in Book 1 are: Reading skills, Approaching writing and Academic writing. Each unit includes interesting and authentic tasks aimed at building the specific sub-skills. Book 2 includes: Approaches to writing, Revising the written draft and Language through literature. Both the books are accompanied by the detailed syllabus, model paper and detailed structure of marks for each semester.

The books are fairly comprehensive in building academic proficiency specifically in the skills of reading and writing.

English Language Education in South Asia: From Policy to Pedagogy
Reviewed By Shreesh Chaudhary

Farrel, Laksy, Singh, Udaya Narayana & Giri, Ram Ashish (Eds., 2011)


Except sporadically, India has never been one “political” country. During various periods of its history, India has indicated, with some variations, different land masses called Aryavarta, Jambudweep, Bharatvarsh, Hindustan, India, etc. For some years now, this land mass, comprising all countries from Afghanistan to Burma and Tibet to Sri Lanka, has been called South Asia (SA). All of these countries have a shared history of problems. One of the shared problems is the problem of English language education (ELE), which has come to signify almost the only language education worth having. No other sector of education in recent years in this sub-continent has attracted greater investment. A volume on issues related to ELE in SA, being the first of its kind, is, therefore, most welcome. As Khurana says in his foreword, “The editors of this volume have admirably taken yet another step by crossing the borders of divided South Asian states by providing the resource for a comparative understanding of South Asian English”, (p.xi), and, will, hopefully facilitate “a serious exchange of ideas” (p.xii).

The book is, therefore, a valuable contribution to the problem of English language education in SA. Some recent works have given historical background to ELE to India. But we have hardly enough information about the specific nature of the problem in these countries. Bianco’s (Pp.36-60) description of the development of language conflict, and, therefore, of the ethic conflict in Sri Lanka is well documented. At the heart of this conflict lay the inexflability of political masters in Sri Lanka. Had they heeded the warning of the saner voices, recent history of Sri Lanka would have been so incredibly different. Colvin de Silva, then leader of opposition in the Sri Lankan Parliament, had wisely cautioned, “One language means two countries, two languages mean one country”. But it is in the nature of governments leading their nations to doom that they would not reconsider their position. Closing the debate on Official Language Act, 1956 in the Parliament, Prime Minister Bandaranaike proudly announced, “Sinhala
only in 24 hours”. Luckily, India was led by wiser people at a crucial point of time in its history.

Articles on ELE in Afghanistan (Thians, Pp.103-122), Bangladesh (Chowdhury & Farooqui, 147-159), Bhutan (Giri, Pp.89-102), and Nepal (Awasthi, 73-88) are informative and insightful. Some of these countries, such as Bhutan, for instance, have taken a progressive attitude to ELE in spite of its orthodox history and geographical isolation. In some places, such as in Afghanistan, fundamentalist forces have offered violent objection to ELE, but popular wisdom has found ways to get across and invest time and resources in ELE. A refreshingly different piece in the volume is one on the teachers associations’ role in and contribution to ELE in SA (Khamma, 160-69).

Sailaja’s piece (Pp.61-72) on education commissions in India is comprehensive and finds the common thread and theme through their reports, even when spread over a relatively long period of time. The subject certainly deserves a more detailed treatment.

Many other pieces are short on research and long on theory. Following the popular superstition, beginning of ELE in India is attributed to Macaulay (Giri, P2) whereas a number of recent works have shown that ELE in India began in spite of the British’). But, on the whole, the book is a valuable contribution to the literature on ELE in SA.


Op Cit Rainbow School, Janak Puri in collaboration with FORTELL conducted a workshop on ‘Developing Speaking Skills’ on December 14, 2013. The resource person for the workshop was Ms.Falguni Chakravarty, a Cambridge ESOl. CELTA trainer who has published many course books for ESOL and KET examinations of Cambridge University and also provides in-service teacher training to primary and secondary school teachers.

Ms. Falguni Chakraborty started the workshop with an ice-breaker activity that set the tone for the day. She explained the basics of developing speaking skills for students and demonstrated a wide range of classroom activities such as tongue twisters, grammar chants and word stress through syllables. She explained how these activities can help the students in improving their reading skills. She also laid stress on giving students unspoken opportunities to speak and practice the language through prompts. She emphasised that peer learning can help students to overcome their inhibitions. She opined that the students should be allowed to speak and not be corrected while they are speaking, and later their mistakes can be individually corrected. This approach is likely to help the child to overcome hesitation and develop fluency over a period of time. She explained that teaching students to break words into syllables at elementary stage helps them to improve reading and spellings. She reiterated that drills, grammar chants and recitation are important for students. These exercises develop the interest of students towards language. She explained the role of structured conversation practice for students to teach them to speak within the given time frame. She introduced interesting board games based on grammar to teachers and all participant teachers enjoyed and appreciated these games. She encouraged the teachers to develop new games for their classrooms and give opportunities to children to freely express their views. Everyone including the teachers, the Principal and the Chairman found the workshop stimulating and expressed the desire for more such workshops to develop and enhance language skills of students.

ELT Workshop

Zahra Ramish Rizvi

An English language teaching workshop on ELT methodologies with a special focus on CCE was organized on October 26, 2013 at Tulips International School by FORTELL. The invite was sent to about 10 nearby schools and 20 teachers teaching classes 1-V attended the workshop. The resource person was Ms. Payal Khatri, a certified CELTA Trainer from University of Cambridge and Jolly Phonics, U.K. She has been teaching and training since the last nine years and works in the ELT panel of Macmillan.

It was a two hour ‘hands-on workshop’, which included a number of activities that teachers can use in their class rooms with special focus on handling large classes. Activities like ‘Running Dictation’, ‘Silly Stories’, ‘Imaginative Stories’ (based on grammar topics like prepositions) and TPR (total physical response) were taken up. Teachers attending the workshop were convinced that these activities, especially TPR would be useful in the class. TPR activities would help students to enhance their control over language for better communication skills. It is important for children to learn to interact and work in groups in view of interdisciplinary assessments.

Another activity that was appreciated by the teachers was ‘Running Dictation’, an activity in which a text was pasted on the wall or display board. It requires the students to be divided into groups of 4-5. One child from each group is designated as the ‘writer’, the others take turns to go to the pasted written material, read a line

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Zahra Ramish Rizvi

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and get back to the ‘writer’ to dictate it. Once the passage is over all students take their seats and the teacher reads out the passage or displays it on the smart board and students check their mistakes.

Talk on Literary Translation

Manjari Chaturvedi

A talk on ‘Literary Translation’ for the students of the Applied Language Course, ‘Translation and Interpreting’ was organized under the Lecture Series of Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, in collaboration with FORTELL on September 26, 2013. Ms. Kalyanee Rajan, co-author of Foundational Concepts of Translation and Assistant Professor of English at SRCC, University of Delhi, addressed various facets involved in the act of translating a text.

The workshop was a learning experience for the teachers attending it. They were all of the view that such activities should be taken up regularly to be effective.

Ms. Mona Sinha from the department of English, MAC established the context for study of translation theory and practice in the current curriculum. The talk covered a wide range of topics: multilingualism, types and theories of translation, problems of equivalence, the role of the translator and the different types of translations. Emphasis was laid on understanding cultural and literary barricades that translation involves. The students experienced practical hiccups while attempting translation of Bollywood songs and Shakespeare’s sonnets, underscoring the nuances of practicing translation. Teachers, who are teaching the course in college, shared the common errors made by students and their own experience of attempting translation. The event emphasized the need to sensitize the students towards multilingualism as it exists today, both at home and abroad impinging on both personal and professional facets of our life.

By breaking the monotony of a theoretical and text-book bound approach to the area, the talk brought translations into the domain of everyday life. It was much appreciated and found helpful by the students and faculty of the Department of English for bringing ease and lucidity to the course.
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