Rao’s “Revisiting the ‘Modern’ Telugu Debate A Century Later”. It is a graphically moving account of how the convictions, actions, strategies of a single votary of modern spoken Telugu—Gurajada Appa Rao and his ‘Minute of Dissent’ took one hundred years to become the voice of the popular demand. It is a heartening narrative of how logicality, conviction, sincere efforts and perseverance pay!!! It is an essay I have returned to several times.

Similarly, Probal Dasgupta traces the role of Haraprasad Shastri who had been mentored by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and commended the efforts of Rabindranath Tagore to modernize Bangla which was being vehemently opposed by the traditionalist. Linguists theorize the dichotomy of an archaic written standard and a popular spoken variant as diglossia. What emerges forcefully is the role that groups of opinion makers in the public space had in the process.

Part three is of special interest to understanding the evolution of language pedagogy in India. The processes of anglicization, sanskritization and vernacularization are too intricate to go into a short book review. It needs serious perusal. I will end with Shreesh Chaudhury’s observation that the kinds of methods and books that were used ensured that in India “English did not end as a pidgin like in African and many Pacific islands” (p. 162).

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Reviewed by Nupur Mittal

The first quarter of 2020 was marred by the outbreak of Coronavirus which rapidly metastasized into a global pandemic causing widespread disruption across all sectors, especially in the field of higher education. Public health mandates forced face-to-face (f2f) classes and non-
academic university work to be conducted online and this transition to virtual teaching was paved with hastily devised policies and guidelines. *Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education During Covid-19*, a timely anthology of thought-provoking essays compiled by R.Y. Chan et al., documents and examines strategies adopted by teachers, students, and administrators to conduct effective teaching-learning transactions during the pandemic, the issues and challenges that emerged in the process, and the potential structural impact that is anticipated in the global higher education sector.

The contributors of the volume are all teachers, university administrators, and scholars affiliated to higher education institutions (HEIs) in different parts of the world. They are all from diverse disciplines, and have employed distinct research methodologies to arrive at and present their findings. Relevant aspects of regional socio-economic, educational, and cultural context—including the authors’ professional affiliations and areas of specialization—are clearly defined in each chapter, along with research methods, to make it easier for the reader to navigate the book.

The 17 chapters of the book are thematically grouped into three sections. Part I is titled ‘Innovative Forms of Online Teaching, Learning, and Assessment during Covid-19’. This section notes that onset of the pandemic, gave limited time to teachers to redesign their curriculum, medium of instruction, and assessment systems. Scant training, if any, in the use of unfamiliar technology and software for teachers and students, resulted in cognitive overload. Strategies, technologies, and software adopted by teachers to overcome these challenges and achieve learning objectives, are documented in these chapters. Pedagogic strategies to suit the new model of learning were developed through trial and error, introspection, informal interactions among colleagues. The growing relevance of informal social media teachers’ communities for professional development is highlighted (Chapter 3). A key message that emerges, and is well articulated by Chapter 2, is that university policies and teaching strategies need to be sensitive to external challenges—such as health concerns, private setbacks, infrastructural and competency challenges—being experienced by teachers and students alike.

Part II, titled ‘Impacts of Distance Education on Students, Social Inclusion, and Access’, underlines factors that adversely impact efficacy of online education for students from marginalized communities, such as: lack of access to technological apparatus required for unhindered
class participation, lack of stable connectivity and private space to study, and lack of access to on-campus facilities and support services. These challenges are exacerbated by challenging socio-economic circumstances, public health scares, and familial responsibilities and distractions. Further, universities with access to superior technology, resources, and funding, navigated the vagaries of remote functioning with greater ease. Chapters 8 and 9 particularly make compelling arguments about the pandemic situation having laid bare pre-existing socio-economic and cultural inequalities in the higher education sector, which need to be addressed to improve the quality of education.

The final section, titled ‘Covid-19 as a Catalyst of Change—Lessons for the Longer Term’, draws on teachers’ and students’ experiences and on existing literature about distance and online education, to reflect on the potential structural transformations that pandemic-time remote education will bring about in HEIs. Most contributors note that while online and distance learning have existed for a few decades, they haven’t replaced f2f courses as the preferred model of delivery owing to cultural bias towards f2f learning and lack of widespread digital alternatives to on-campus support services, extra-curricular activities, and facilities. However, with the sudden shift from offline to online teaching, resistance to exploring and adopting digital technologies and software to support teaching-learning transactions has been overcome. Most teachers have adopted innovative online solutions to meet course objectives, and have found themselves to be more adept at embracing technology than expected. Further, certain merits of online teaching have been underlined, such as flexible scheduling, reduced emphasis on appropriate attire and appearance, increased class participation by reticent students thanks to possibilities of interacting through chat boxes. The pandemic presents an opportunity to study issues that need to be addressed to make online teaching and learning processes more effective.

Well established, legacy systems are typically only challenged and assessed in the event of a major upheaval. Thus, some of the findings that the writers arrived at have implications for the post-pandemic period as well. The need to develop greater sensitivity towards social, cultural and personal contexts of learners is recognized. Certain aspects of the higher education experience which were taken for granted earlier, such as importance of sense of community, friendship, and belonging,
have now been brought to the fore and are explored by quite a few chapters in a bid to highlight certain shortcomings of online teaching, and the need to find alternatives for select experiences in the form of technology (Chapter 7). There are structural recommendations, in particular, the urgency to bestow greater autonomy to teachers in the form of policy determination given their understanding of pedagogic styles best suited for their discipline (synchronous versus asynchronous delivery of instructions, choice of platform, assessment modalities), and awareness of the challenges experienced by their students. The largely ignored impact of the pandemic on teachers’ well-being was also highlighted, particularly in Chapters 3, 5, and 16, with the last one drawing a spotlight on the experiences of contractual teachers in the pandemic-time e-learning landscape. This book is a relevant—and a highly recommended—read for all stakeholders in the global higher education sector. It’s a commendable effort to bring forth a panoramic view of an evolving crisis. The editors have deftly woven together experiences and insights of educators across the world in a tapestry which reveals broader patterns and trends in pandemic time teaching-learning transactions and the institutional policies that steer them.

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Rosy Yumnam, Culture in English Language Teaching: The Use of the Puyas in the English Language Classroom. Mittal Publications, 2021, ISBN 978-9390692-17-0, Rs. 650

Reviewed by I. Amenla Changkija

The book makes for a challenging reading in the sense that the study is based in Manipur in Northeast India where ELT is much hyped about but materials and strategies of teaching often face impediments in terms of contextualized learning and teaching in reaping maximum benefits. This is more so because of complex multilingualism in the state where