

Language and Language Teaching

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母亲 <i>Mother</i>	父亲 <i>Dad</i>	奶奶 <i>Grandma</i>	爷爷 <i>Grandpa</i>
儿子 <i>Son</i>	女儿 <i>Daughter</i>	兄弟 <i>Brother</i>	姐妹 <i>Sister</i>
姨妈 <i>Aunt</i>	叔父 <i>Uncle</i>	表亲 <i>Cousin</i>	朋友 <i>Friend</i>
孙子 <i>Grandson</i>	孙女 <i>Granddaughter</i>	侄女 <i>Niece</i>	外甥 <i>Nephew</i>



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Editorial

Language and Language Teaching has been concerned primarily with building bridges between theory and practice, the researchers and classroom practitioners. Though we have succeeded to some extent, we have a long way to go. We are very happy with the kind of feedback that we have been receiving both from the researchers and practicing teachers and are making all efforts to address the issues and concerns of language teachers and researchers in the form of articles, landmarks, interviews, book reviews, language games, etc.

In this issue, there is a major focus on Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In the Landmark, Amritavalli outlines the development of research in SLA starting from Corder's suggestion that "the processes of acquiring the mother-tongue and the learning of a second language" may be similar. She moves on to Selinker's concept of *Interlanguage*, an important stage in SLA. She shows how insights from the domain of SLA can lead to better pedagogical practices. Yasmeen Lukmani in her interview calls for the need to get rid of grammar and instead have task-based and contextualised teaching of language in classrooms. She emphasizes the need for teacher training as a crucial component in tackling the challenges of teaching in general.

Mukhopadhyay in her paper examines how ESL and EFL level of text coherence in writing can be successfully assessed through tasks namely cloze-based and free summaries task. Vineetha and Kumar in their paper emphasize the need to differentiate between the first language acquisition and second language acquisition on the basis of the role of cognitive filters in acquiring language and draw the attention of language practitioners to these filters and their relevance for language teaching. Sinha lists a number of word games for the teacher to improvise upon to facilitate vocabulary learning. Sibila Ramakrishnan interprets the texts in Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* books through their delightful characters in terms of learning and development of thought and language in the framework provided by Piaget and Vygotsky. Sengupta and Karmakar address the issue of multilingual classroom particularly 'linguistic imbalance' in their paper by examining how existing educational practices are incorporating or creating space for multilingual education at primary education in West Bengal. Sinha and Malshe examine the graphic novels and comics as potential instructional materials to teach ESL learners in Indian classrooms. Lukmani in the second part of the three-part series on Summary Writing introduces in her paper the Bottom-Up approach which is concerned with using both syntax (grammar) and lexical patterns of the passage, and not just the ideas of the text, to form the basis for the summary. This method of summary formulation is different from the Top-Down approach discussed earlier in *LLT 9*, January 2016. Jayaraj provides an account of one teacher's attempt to make the learners of Class I independent readers in a rural government upper primary school in Kerala in his paper. The paper gives an insight into how assessment should be carried out in a classroom. Sultana in her paper shows how both the teaching of grammar and the teaching of reading is aided by the use of Urdu inside the classrooms that eventually helps students learn English. Her observations are based on 10 classrooms in *madrasas* in Hyderabad. We also publish as usual some book reviews, classroom activities and workshop reports.

Recent research has focused on the role of peer group interaction in the processes of language learning. In the forthcoming issues of *LLT* we propose to invite some articles on this topic and also publish a review of Sato and Ballinger's edited book on *Peer Interaction and Second Language Learning* (Universidad Andres Bello, McGill University, 2016).

Graphic Novels as Pedagogical Tools in the Indian Classroom: Teachers' Opinions

Madhulika Saxena Sinha and Milind Malshe

Introduction

Graphic novels and comics have been considered mostly a medium for entertainment for children and adults. However, considering their strong impact, this medium may very well serve as an educational tool (Gretchen, 2006; Mallia, 2007; Tatalovic, 2009). In this paper, we will report the findings from interviews conducted with middle school English teachers to assess their awareness, opinions and willingness regarding the use of graphic novels as instructional material to teach ESL learners in Indian classrooms.

Twenty female English teachers from three schools in Mumbai affiliated to three different education boards (SSC, CBSE and ICSE) were interviewed. An analysis of their responses revealed that the majority of them had several concerns regarding the use of graphic novels in classrooms. These included lack of familiarity, proper training and integration of graphic novels into the existing traditional syllabus. Also, they had never used graphic novels as a teaching tool; however, most of them were positively inclined towards using them in the classroom. Other concerns raised by these teachers included managing syllabus completion deadlines, handling a large number of students in the class and lack of resources, among others. In order to encourage the effective use of comics and graphic novels in the Indian ESL context, policy makers and teacher educators need to address these concerns seriously.

Evolution of Comics and Graphic Novels in India

India has a long tradition of aided learning, the earliest reference being the stories of *Panchtantra* composed around 3rd century BCE, which were used for teaching politics and leadership to the heirs of the king. In the last three decades, comics have become popular reading material for children albeit not in a very serious manner. *Diamond Comics*, *Amar Chitra Katha*, etc., have created vast distribution networks throughout the country and are read by thousands of children in various languages. As a corollary, the graphic novel has emerged as a good variant, both for children and adults alike by incorporating a variety of themes, including popular classics.

Graphic novel is defined as: “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud, 1993). Orijit Sen's “River of Stories” in 1994 was recognized as India's first graphic novel. However Sarnath Banerjee's, “Corridor” in 2004, became India's first commercially successful graphic novel in English. Since then, the popularity of graphic novels has augmented vastly. “The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers” (2007), “Kari” (2008), “Private-Eye Anonymous: The Art Gallery Case” (2008), “Hotel at the End of the World” (2009), “Moonward” (2009), “A Gardener in the Wasteland” (2011), etc., are some of the famous Indian graphic novels.

The field of Indian graphic novel publishing has also widened exponentially during the last few years, with the entry of new exclusive comics publishers such as Vimanika Comics (2008), Campfire Graphic Novels, Holy Cow Entertainment (2011) and others. Campfire Graphic Novels that came up in 2008 publishes graphic novels based on Indian mythology, biographies, classics and other original stories. Girija Jhunjhunwala, Director, Campfire Graphic Novels informs in an article in the *PrintWeek* magazine¹, “Today, almost 15-20 of our titles are a part of the CBSE extra-curriculum study list. Thus, the books are not just recommended in schools or picked up by teachers; they are also recognized by education boards like the CBSE”. She adds that 12 of their titles have been picked up by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, an autonomous body under the Government of India. Titles such as *Mother Teresa: Angel of the Slums*, *Conquering Everest: the Lives of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay*, *Sundarkaand: Triumph of Hanuman*, etc. are part of both the CBSE and Kendriya Vidyalaya recommended list. The graphic novel employed for our current study, “Oliver Twist” by Charles Dickens, is also a Campfire Graphic Novels publication from its classic genre. It is used in one of the Kendriya Vidyalayas (location of the study) in Mumbai.

The popularity of this genre has led to a new trend of comics cafés and libraries in India, especially in cities such as Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. The first Annual Comics Convention organised in India in 2011 was dedicated to creating unique events and giving fans, exhibitors and partners of this medium a platform to celebrate their everlasting love for comics and pop culture. Since then, this convention is organised every year. Considering the strong impact of comics and graphic novels on children and adults, this medium may serve

not only as a means of entertainment but also as an efficient educational tool.

Graphic Novel as an Instructional Tool

“The affective role of instructions is to the fore in comic strips: their aim being to attract and motivate less-able learners...” (Hartley, 1994, p. 87). Comics/graphic novels are considered an enhancement to enjoyment and an inducement to the utilization of other elements that would then help cognition (Mallia, 2007). Many researchers feel that comics serve the purpose of decoration (Bell & Gower, 1998; Goldstein, 2008; Hill, 2003; Prowse, 1998; Romney & Bell, 2012; Viney, 2006); by attracting students and motivating them to read. Research has revealed (Liu, 2004, p. 226) that presenting students with a visual representation of words can help them overcome comprehension difficulties (Gyselinck and Tardieu, 1999). In fact, use of images to support reading comprehension is common in many classrooms. The positive effect of multi-modal texts on comprehension can be explained by Paivio's dual coding theory (Liu, 2004, p. 752). According to the Paivio, human cognition consists of two subsystems that process knowledge simultaneously, with one processing verbal information and the other dealing with visual information (Sadoski & Paivio, 2001). Presenting students with a written text accompanied by graphics as opposed to a written text alone, allows readers to activate and integrate both the visual and the linguistic systems, and this interconnection helps readers generate inferences about the text (Sadoski & Paivio, 2001).

Gradually, comics and graphic novels are becoming a more accepted form of literature. However, research regarding graphic novels vis-à-vis its pedagogical use is still in its infancy in the context of India. Nevertheless,

using them as supplementary materials in the classroom can add variety to the existing textbooks and encourage self-reading. Moreover, reluctant readers will find them easy to comprehend. Let us now explore Indian teachers' opinions on the use of graphic novels in the area of language teaching².

Methodology

In addition to assessing teachers' awareness, opinions and willingness to experiment with a form of text which is different from the usual prescribed texts, namely graphic novels, in their classrooms, we also wanted to find out whether this popular medium of entertainment is being currently used for language teaching. We will also look at the support the teachers may require in using these materials in their classroom teaching.

The field work for our study involved informal, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the teachers of the schools selected for the study. The data received was analysed to examine the beliefs of the participants regarding the use of graphic novels in the classroom. The specific details of how this study was carried out have been discussed in the following sections.

Twenty female English language teachers from Mumbai (India) participated in this study. The teachers belonged to the age group of 28-54 years with a school teaching experience ranging from 4-29 years. All the teachers were teaching in middle school, i.e. they all taught at least one or more of the Classes VI, VII or VIII, or all of them. All the teachers had postgraduate degrees in English and 15 (75 per cent) also had a B.Ed. degree. The teachers were from three schools, each affiliated to the three main boards in the city, namely CBSE (Central Board of Secondary

Education), SSC (Secondary School Certificate) and ICSE (Indian Certificate for Secondary Education).

The questions for the interview had 16 pre-determined questions. These included information about the grades taught by the teachers, their teaching experience, academic qualifications, age, and their views on the existing materials used in the classrooms and the learners' responses towards these materials. Questions regarding existing teaching and supplementary materials used in the classrooms, teachers' familiarity with graphic novels, their views on using graphic novels for language teaching in middle school, etc., were also asked. In addition to the pre-determined questions, other questions also emerged during conversation with the participants. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Teachers' Opinions

The existing school textbooks have stories and poems with very few illustrations and very limited colours. Regarding the prescribed materials (main reader and workbook) used in the class and the learners' response to them, 90 per cent of the teachers mentioned that they were boring and that the learners' response to them was largely unenthusiastic. One teacher stated that textbooks should be more colourful since colours impact children of all ages. About 60 per cent of the teachers mentioned that the learners feel bored in the class since the book looks very dull. They emphasized the importance of having pictures in the textbooks to help learners engage better with the text; their current textbooks lacked relevant pictures. Another 25 per cent of the teachers suggested that their students preferred to read short stories over long story

books; also they were more interested in watching film adaptations of famous novels rather than reading them. Only 20 per cent teachers said that the current textbooks were good enough.

On being asked what could supplement the prescribed materials, most teachers chose films (78 per cent) followed by power point presentations (60 per cent) and activity based learning (45 per cent). Only 20 per cent of the teachers said that graphic novels could be used. This response was not surprising as most teachers were not familiar with the graphic novel genre: out of the 20 interviewed, only 5 teachers (25 per cent) were familiar to some extent with the idea of a graphic novel. Only one teacher had read a graphic novel (*“Maus: A Survivor's Tale”* by Art Spiegelman).

Participants were asked whether they had ever used graphic novels as part of a lesson plan or class activity. While 85 per cent of them had never taught using a comic strip, 15 per cent of the teachers pointed out that they had taught a lesson in the Class VI CBSE book - this was in the form of a comic strip. Some reasons provided by the teachers for not using graphic novels in the classroom include: unfamiliarity with the genre, lack of awareness of the availability of these novels in the market and lack of training in using graphic novels as tools in the classrooms. Some of the teachers expressed the need for readymade materials for teaching, such as text books in graphic novel format with comprehension exercises and other related activities. A practical concern with regard to the use of graphic novels in the classroom was related to their procurement for the entire class as these books are not a part of the prescribed syllabus and most parents would

be reluctant to pay for them. The teachers also felt the need for guidance on how to choose relevant graphic novels to suit the prescribed syllabus for different grades. Two of the teachers said that they had never thought of teaching through graphic novels.

The responses of the teachers who had taught the lesson given in comic strip format reiterated the motivational and instructional advantages of the medium. They reported that the learners were actively involved in the lesson and enjoyed the activities constructed around it. Teachers were asked whether they would like to have graphic novels as prescribed texts. Out of 20 teachers, 18 (90 per cent) felt positively inclined towards the idea. They felt that graphic novels would be more effective teaching materials than textbooks. They were of the opinion that the current textbooks were very dull and so the use of comics and graphic novels might get struggling learners interested in learning and encourage them to speak about the characters and illustrations of the comics. Gradually, this medium could become useful for language teaching. Some teachers suggested that out of the two books prescribed in the school syllabus, the supplementary reader could be in graphic novel format since visuals definitely worked better than text alone. They also proposed that graphic novels be used to facilitate language skills through dialogue-writing, indirect-direct speech, subject-verb agreement, etc.

However, several issues were raised by the teachers, which need to be kept in mind before using graphic novels in the classroom. They are:

- Lack of time to introduce innovative tools such as graphic novels as there is immense pressure to complete the syllabus on time.

- Students of Class VIII and beyond consider themselves too mature for comics and prefer to read serious literature over comics for fear of being considered childish.
- Owing to the “simple language” used in comics, the level of English of the students might go down.
- It might be better to provide the students with something more challenging than comics since comics involve illustrations and the students' imagination may take a back seat in playing a role in learning.

Overall, though the teachers were open to using graphic novels as supplementary materials along with the regular textbooks, they were not in favour of replacing the regular textbooks with graphic novels. They also felt that certain aspects of English could not be taught through comics or graphic novels; for example, they expressed doubts as to whether poetry could be taught through comics and insisted that only a textbook would be appropriate for teaching poetry.

Discussion

The findings of the present study clearly indicate that a large majority of teachers, at least in urban areas such as Mumbai are open to the idea of using comics/graphic novels as instructional materials. A vast majority of teachers were not happy with the existing materials and felt that there was a scope to bring in supplementary materials in the form of films, power point presentations and activity based learning. Even though some teachers saw graphic novel as a potential motivational tool for students, other pedagogical benefits of graphic novel also needed to be understood and the teachers trained accordingly.

In order to address their concerns presented earlier in the paper, the teachers felt that pre-service and in-service training were required to address these issues. The school administration also has to play a key role in imparting training to the teaching staff on the effective use of graphic novels in the classroom. In addition, educational policy makers should encourage teachers to use the graphic novel medium by including it in the syllabus either as supplementary reading or at least by converting some lessons into graphic medium.

The present study has a few limitations. We have taken a small sample size belonging to the same sex from just one place and there is no involvement of other stake holders such as parents, educational policy makers, administrators and of course the learners. With a larger group from diverse backgrounds our findings would have been more comprehensive. Nevertheless the present study gives us an insight into the beliefs of a section of teachers.

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modality of presentation in both mediums where picture and text both are presented sequentially to convey meaning.

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Endnotes

¹ <http://www.printweek.in/features/telling-stories-graphics-20953>

² Words “graphic novels” and “comics” will be used interchangeably in this paper as the focus is on the

Word Games

A.K. Sinha

While helping learners of English as a second language, the teacher is often confronted with the task of increasing their vocabulary. Which words to focus on is often determined by the lexicon used in the prescribed textbooks. However, ideally, it should be decided on the basis of two factors:

- (I) What are the needs of the learner?
- (ii) Which words are needed to carry on everyday conversation in colloquial English?

A book on corpus-based analysis of English could help us in getting ready for the task.

The classical *The General Service List of English Words* compiled by Michael West (1953) was based on manual frequency counts of written works. Charles Ogden's (1930) *Basic English* was another attempt in this direction. Now we have several general corpora based on computer-generated frequency counts. Some of these include: *The British National Corpus* (BNC), the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), the *Brown Corpus*, the *COBUILD English Data Base*, the *Lancaster/Oslo Bergen Corpus*, etc. A comparison of these corpora has enabled pedagogues to identify which words are used most frequently.

Broadly speaking, we can divide the lexicon of English into two groups: *function words* and *substantives*. Function words are better known for their grammatical functions than for their literal meanings. For instance, in the sentence: *Did you come here yesterday?* *Did*

carries the tense of the main verb *come*; its position indicates that the sentence is interrogative. The most frequently used function verbs are *be* (with its various forms, *am, is, are, was, were, been* and *being*), *have* and its other forms (*has, had, having*) and *do* (along with *does* and *did*). Auxiliary verbs such as *will, shall, would, should, can, could, may* and *might* are also function words. Prepositions, such as *in, on, at, of, to, for, by, with*, are most frequently used and so are conjunctions, such as *and, or, that, if, but* and *which*. Negative markers such as *no* and *not* are function words and so are the determiners *a, an, the, this, these, that, those*. Personal pronouns such as *I, we, you, he, she, it, they* and *their* in their various case forms may also be treated as function words.

Among the substantives are nouns such as *man, woman, people, boy, girl, child, time, day, night, year, life, thing, world, government, number, system, case, group, party, family*, etc.; adjectives such as *new, old, good, bad, great, big, small, high, low, full, empty, able, different*, etc.; and verbs such as *say, tell, know, come, go, get, see, make, give, take, use, become, begin, find, ask, help* and *seem*. The combinations of these verbs with some prepositions (which are then considered as particles) give us many more verbs. Many of these words are usually included in elementary textbooks but some are not. On the other hand, they may use words such as *well*, which are not used in everyday conversation.

Teachers may organise word games which involve frequently used words. This will help students in getting familiar with such words, including their pronunciation and spelling. At a later stage, games may be improvised which involve the use of these words in sentences. The word games that can be easily played are *antakshari* (chain spelling), *anagram*, *synonyms*, *antonyms*, *scrambling*, *scrabble* and *puzzles*.

Antakshari

In a modified form of *Antakshari* which we may call “chain spelling”, the teacher gives a word which a student has to spell, emphasising the last letter of its spelling. The next student then gives another word which begins with the last letter of the previous word and emphasizes the last letter of its spelling. The next student gives a new word beginning with the last letter of the previous word. The game goes on until all the students have had a turn. For instance,

Teacher: man...n
 1st student: number...r
 2nd student: read...d
 3rd student: day...y
 4th student: young...g
 5th student: great...t
 6th student: time...e
 7th student: end...d
 8th student: do...o
 9th student: old...d
 10th student: dog...g
 11th student: good...d
 12th student: dark...k
 13th student: kid...d
 14th student: down...n
 15th student: near...r

Another modified form of *Antakshari* can be played between two or more persons. In this form, the teacher speaks out two lines of a poem. One student identifies the last sound or letter of the cited word and responds by reciting one or two lines of the same or another poem beginning with the same sound/letter. Another student picks up the last sound/letter of the poem just recited and speaks another one or two lines of the poem beginning with that sound/letter. This process continues for as long as the players/participants want. Here is an example of such an exchange of lines based on nursery rhymes.

X: The queen of hearts,
 She made some tarts...s
 Y: Solomon Grandy
 Born on Monday...y
 Z: Yes sir, yes sir
 Three bags full...l
 A: Little Tommy Tucker
 Sings for his supper...r
 B: Rain, rain, go away,
 Come again another day...y
 C: You may get there by candle light,
 If your hearts are nimble and light...t
 D: The king of France came down the hill,
 And never went up again...n
 E: Nine, ten,
 A big fat hen...n
 F: N was a nut,
 So smooth and brown...n
 G: N was once a little needle,
 Needly
 Tweedly
 Threadly
 Needly...y

H: Y was once a little yew
Growdy, Grewdy
Little yew...

Anagram

Anagram involves the rearrangement of the letters of a word in such a way that a new, meaningful word is formed. For instance, if the teacher gives the word *but*, the only possible anagram is *tub* because all other combinations (*utb*, *ubt*, *tbu*, *btu*) are meaningless. If somebody says *name*, the response could be *mean* or *mane*. *Mane* is not a frequently used word but, given the rules of anagram, it is a correct response. Efforts should be made to start the game with simple, frequently-used words, for instance, *on-no*, *not-ton*, *life-file*, *pit-tip*, *from-form*, *part-trap*, *case-ease*, *end-den*, *what-thaw*, *time-mite*, *tea-eat*, *charm-march*, *pan-nap*, *war-raw*, etc. Children may be allowed to use whichever word they can handle provided its letters can be manipulated to have another word.

Synonyms

Finding *synonyms* of a word is also a good exercise; it means finding another word which has a similar meaning. For instance, if a student says *right*, another may respond by saying *correct*. He/she uses the word *large*, to which the response is *big*. Similarly, we can have *able-fit*, *new-fresh*, *sharp-bright*, *gifted-talented*, *fair-just*, *fresh-new*, *cold-chilly*, *warm-tepid*, *correct-right*, *crazy-stupid*, *deny-refuse*, *fix-set*, *friend-buddy*, *make-create*, *many-several*, etc.

Antonyms

Another game could be organised to ask student the *antonyms* (opposite) of a given word. For instance, the teacher could say

good to which a student responds by saying *bad*. Similarly, we can have antonym sets such as *bright-dull*, *high-low*, *right-wrong*, *young-old*, *sweet-sour*, *large-small*, *full-empty*, *same-different*, *able-unable*, *fit-unfit*, *push-pull*, *give-take*, *light-dark*, *cooked-raw*, *nice-bad*, etc. The students can take turns giving opposites. The game continues until every student has had a turn. The teacher will intervene only when a student is unable to come up with an appropriate antonym. Another form of this game is as follows: The teacher gives two columns of words. In the first list, some words are given and in the second set their antonyms are given in a jumbled manner. The student has to link the word to its antonym. For example, we may have the following sets of opposite words, which the student has to put in matching pairs by linking them with lines.

strong	take
small	go
close	weak
dark	full
before	after
much	open
good	light
empty	large
give	little
come	bad

Scrambling Words and Sentences

To *scramble* means to make something jumbled or muddled. A word is a conventionally agreed systematic arrangement of sounds. If they are not systematically arranged, they are merely a collection of scrambled sounds. As a word game, scrambling begins with a jumbled collection of letters which can be transformed into a word if the letters representing the

sounds are properly arranged and this has to be done quickly. For instance, if they are given a jumbled sound *evig*, they should be able to arrange it as *give*—a meaningful word. Some other examples are: *work* from *krow*, *give* from *vige*, *large* from *gerla*, *year* from *reay*, *help* from *pleh*, *case* from *sace*. The teacher writes down a scrambled word on the board and one student gives the correct answer. If one student fails, another may try. The teacher may scramble the words students are familiar with and encourage them to put them in the correct order as promptly as possible.

Another form of scrambling may have the scrambled word followed by its meaning, which helps the student in recollecting the correctly spelt word quickly, as in the following:

[oekj]: what someone says for amusement (joke)

[vilajo]: cheerful and friendly (jovial)

[kunj]: old or discarded articles that are useless (junk)

[tisser]: a girl in relation to other girls or boys of the same parents (sister)

[seohu]: a building in which people live (house)

[gema]: a form of sport played according to rules (game)

[poson]: an implement for serving or eating food (spoon)

Another word game involves putting words in a scrambled *sentence* in the correct order. The teacher may write a scrambled sentence on the board and ask the students to put them in order correctly as in the following cases:

From came school she back late home.

(She came back home late from school.)

Homework waiting was her for her.

(Her homework was waiting for her.)

Tired was she sleepy and.

(She was tired and sleepy.)

Snacks had she fell and asleep.

(She had snacks and fell asleep.)

Up she woke night late at.

(She woke up late at night.)

She speaks very well English.

(She speaks English very well.)

Opposite the school a new building they are proposing.

(They are proposing a new building opposite the school.)

All we felt very hungry.

(We all felt very hungry.)

I would not probably see you tomorrow.

(Probably, I would not see you tomorrow.)

She is late always.

(She is always late.)

She is on time never.

(She is never on time.)

She gave to me a book.

(She gave a book to me.)

Scrabble

Another word game is *scrabble*. In a simpler form of scrabble, some letters of the words are given and students are asked to fill in the missing letters, as in the following. The meanings of the words are also given to help the students.

d		y
---	--	---

'opposite of wet' (dry)

		v		r
--	--	---	--	---

'at no time' (never)

l y

'on all occasions (always)

e l f l

'able to improve particular situation' (helpful)

k t l

'a container with a lid, handle and a spout, used for boiling water' (kettle)

i d l

'the part of something that is at an equal distance from all sides' (middle)

r r t i n

'change that makes something more accurate than it was before' (correction)

In this kind of scrabble, clues are provided in the form of the empty blocks and the meaning of the word.

In another type of scrabble, the meaning is not given. The empty blocks on the board have to be filled using the letters in the given words as in the following cases:

a e

'apple'

g p s

'grapes'

m n o

'mango'

r n e s

'oranges'

p a t s

'peanuts'

u a a s

'guavas'

o o u s

'coconuts'

a e m l n

'watermelon'

o a n

'woman'

o o l l

'football'

e o p e

'people'

Crossword Puzzle

After practising scrabble, the students are ready to solve simple crossword puzzles. In this game they have to fit words into spaces across and downwards in a square diagram. The level of the puzzle is determined by the level of the students and the stock of vocabulary they are supposed to have. Here is a simple puzzle.

1		A		E
2				
3				
4	E		E	
	1	2	3	4

Left to right

1. A story full of action. (tale)
3. To prepare something. (make)

Downwards

1. What is measured in minutes, hours, days and years? (time)
3. A large area of water that is surrounded by land. (lake)

Solution

T	A	L	E
I		A	
M	A	K	E
E		E	

Another puzzle

1			L	A	S			K
2			O			O		
3	M	O		T		R		S
4			T		L		S	S
5	S			O				
6	S		O	R	E			
7			R					
8				L	O		S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Left to right

- Coming after all others in order (last)
- Greatest in amount or degree (most)
- Of lower mark or importance (less)
- A place where something is kept for future use (store)
- The state of no longer having something (loss)

Downwards

- That which cannot be recovered (lost)
- Spoken rather than written (oral)
- Pulled something apart into pieces (tore)
- To touch someone with the lips to express love (kiss)

Solution

1			L	A	S	T		K
2			O			O		I
3	M	O	S	T		R		S
4	I		T		L	E	S	S
5	S			O				
6	S	T	O	R	E			
7			R	A				
8				L	O	S	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Discovering Words

This is an interesting game in which the student has to guess the correct word. The teacher describes an entity and asks the students to name it. For instance, the teacher says,

A flexible container in which students carry textbooks, paper and other items to school is called _____; to which a student replies by saying *school bag*. Items familiar to the students can be described in this manner. For example:

- A book that teaches a particular subject and is used in school is a _____. (*textbook*)
- The work that is given by teachers to students to do at home is _____. (*homework*)
- A task that a teacher gives students to do as a part of studies is an _____. (*assignment*)
- A pen with a very small metal ball at its point and that rolls ink onto the paper is a _____. (*ball point pen*)

- A small piece of rubber that is used to remove the pencil mark from paper is an _____. (*an eraser*)
- An activity that needs physical effort or skill and is usually done in a special area according to fixed rules is a _____. (*sport*)
- A sport in which teams or individuals compete with each other is a _____. (*game*)
- A small meal that is usually taken in a hurry is a _____. (*snack/tiffin*)
- An electronic machine that can store, organise and find information, do calculations and can control other machines with its help is a _____. (*personal computer*)
- A short text that is written as a school exercise is a piece of _____. (*composition*)
- The act of speaking or reading so that one can write down the word is _____. (*dictation*)
- A period of teaching that involves a discussion between an individual student or a small group of students and a teacher is a _____. (*tutorial*)

Word Search

This is a game which consists of letters arranged in a square. The square contains several hidden words that a player has to find.

There are other word games as well which can be improvised and used.

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Assessing Coherence through Cloze-Based and Free Summaries: A Study of Adult EFL Learners

Lina Mukhopadhyay

In EFL/ESL classes, writing takes centre stage. The syllabus includes genres such as descriptive, narrative and argumentative texts, and interpersonal communication based texts such as letters, emails, notes and memos. While each text type has its own set of structural and linguistic features, at the heart of every composition lies text coherence. However, very often learners seem to struggle with this sub-skill of writing. In this paper, I will look at tasks that can be used to teach and assess ESL/EFL learners' knowledge of coherence in writing.

While a free composing task such as writing an essay requires one to develop content, a task such as summary writing helps to focus more on coherence. While summarizing, one needs to look at both macro (paragraph) and micro (sentential) levels of coherence in order to build "texture" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976)¹. In this paper, I will show that summary tasks can be used to assess the knowledge of texture or text coherence at both levels. I will also assess the effectiveness of these tasks based on evidence from an exploratory study conducted on a group of adult EFL learners enrolled in a short term English proficiency course in an Indian university.

To summarize a text, a learner needs to have a whole text representation and needs to be able to do the following—first to

select the key ideas, second to identify the links between the ideas, and third to construct a new text by joining the links between the ideas by paraphrasing them. In the absence of any of these skills, the quality of summary writing is likely to be negatively affected.

Writing free summaries may pose to be a challenge for EFL learners who are struggling with the language. This is because they have to express coherently through written expression and their expression can be negatively affected if their proficiency in the target language is poor. One way out of this problem is to use cloze-based summary tasks to assess text coherence as it eliminates the struggle of composing the text. For instance, a summary cloze task can help a learner to identify the links between ideas crucial for whole text comprehension, by blanking out the cohesive ties in the text.

The Study

This study was undertaken to understand whether cloze tasks can help learners better identify micro-coherence and whether this can serve as a precursor to building coherence while writing free summaries.

Hypotheses

For the purpose of the study, it was hypothesized that:

1. Knowledge of micro-level text coherence is dependent on task type.
2. Accuracy of use of cohesive ties is not uniform across all sub-types.

Participants

The participants comprised twenty-three adult EFL learners of English, with a mean age of 32.2 years ($sd=2.1$) (female 10; male 13). They were enrolled in a twelve-week proficiency course in an Indian university and were found to be at B2 level of proficiency based on their performance in a placement test administered at the beginning of the course. They were found to be fairly proficient in expressing themselves in the target language when they joined the course. So, as a part of the writing syllabus, they were trained in summary writing - an advanced academic skill which requires comprehension, analysis and synthesis of knowledge. They were also made to practice writing summaries of various text types - expository, narrative and argumentative. At the beginning, the learners were instructed to write free summaries. But their performance revealed that for argumentative texts, they were not able to identify the micro links between the key and supporting ideas. As a result, the summaries they wrote did not cohere well. So cloze tasks were designed to give them context support whereby the key ideas were paraphrased and the links were left out as blanks to assess micro-level coherence.

Tasks

Mid way through the course, the participants' knowledge of text coherence was assessed through a free as well as a cloze-based summary of an argumentative

text titled "Enjoying Ballet" by Mary Clark (as cited in Richards & Eckstut-Didier, 2003, p. 22). The free summary task helped to assess learners' knowledge of both micro and macro coherence. The cloze task presented a summary of text and elements of micro coherence or cohesive ties were left as blanks. Five sub-types of cohesive ties were to be supplied - *additive* (4), *contrastive* (2), *exemplification* (2), *sequence* (2) and *resultative* (2). So, the cloze task assessed only knowledge of micro coherence².

A week's gap was maintained between the two tasks so as to eliminate the effect of task familiarity on performance. The free task was done prior to the cloze task. The ballet text was made available to the learners while they were doing the tasks.

Findings

In the free summary task, fifteen summary propositions (SPs) were identified³. For the presence of each SP and its appropriate link to the corresponding SP, a score of one was awarded. So the total score for the free summary task was 15. In the cloze task, for filling each blank with the appropriate cohesive tie, one score was awarded and the task had a total score of 12.

The first finding of the study was that the Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney test shows a significant difference in performance in the two tasks ($n=23$, $p<0.05$); the performance on the cloze task is significantly higher and more uniform ($m=9.08^*$; $sd=1.71$) than the free summary task ($m=8.30$; $sd=2.57$). The finding further revealed that in a task such as cloze summary, when the learners do not have to develop content, they can focus on text coherence. This explains

their higher performance in the cloze task. So a sub-skill of summary writing—text coherence—becomes easier when done in a context-embedded manner through the cloze task.

The second finding was that the correlation between the two performances is low and not significant ($r = .21, n.s.$). A low correlation implies that knowledge of cohesion can be used to moderately predict the ability to write free summaries. The two findings prove the first hypothesis—knowledge of text coherence is dependent on task type—to be valid at a moderate level.

The third finding of the study was based on the knowledge of cohesive ties in the two tasks and they are:

(I) in the cloze task, the following order in accuracy was found:

exemplification (96%)>resultative, sequence, additive (72%)>contrastive (67%)

(ii) in the free summary task, a slightly different pattern was found:

additive, contrastive, exemplification (68%)> resultative, sequence (32%)⁴

These findings provide evidence for the second hypothesis: Accuracy of use of cohesive ties is not uniform across all sub-types.

In sum, learner errors in the free task exposed the bottlenecks during text comprehension, especially in micro-coherence. Furthermore, the findings of the summary cloze test helped us to conclude that the task served a dual purpose: one, it served as a diagnostic for the knowledge of the sub-skill of coherence (cohesion), and two it was a scaffold to identify the links between the main and supporting ideas. The pedagogical benefit of the cloze task

was confirmed through an informal interview with the learners post the tasks, where they stated that by doing the cloze tasks they were able to 'notice' the structural organization of a summary text and selection of key ideas.

Discussion

Let us now attempt to answer the question: Why did performance in the two tasks differ? Writing a summary involves three cognitive steps: (i) *selecting* the main ideas; (ii) *cohering* the ideas; and (iii) *constructing* a summary (that represents the original text). The two tasks we used were of differing levels of cognitive complexity in relation to the presence (or absence) of these three steps as shown in the following Table 1:

	Free summary	Cloze-based summary
Selection	LEAST problem	X
Coherence	some problem	YES (fewer as only micro)
Construction	more problems	X

In the cloze task, knowledge of grammar and semantics was required to fill in the blanks with the appropriate cohesive ties of five kinds: additive, contrastive, exemplification, sequence and resultatives. However, selection of key ideas or construction of a new text was not required. So, a sub-skill of summary writing—text coherence—becomes easier when done in a context embedded manner through the cloze task. Higher success in the cloze task proved that the learners had knowledge of “texture” to a certain extent⁵.

In the free summary, all three steps were required along with knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and semantics. When learners

needed to attend to all these three features, text coherence suffered and was not as high. Let us now look at performance in the free task more closely to understand the bottlenecks in coherence.

Performance in the Free Task

Table 2 represents the frequently occurring SPs found in the free summary texts:

Text parts	Summary Propositions (SPs)	Comments
<i>Introduction</i> (SP1-SP2)	Ballet is a unique dance form but not popular because misconceptions about the dance form exist	mostly present
<i>Body</i> (SP3-SP7)	Reason 1: wealthy/royal people patrons; so, common people did not find it enjoyable Reason 2: style, costumes and difficult training of the dance form made people think that they cannot understand it	
<i>Body</i> (SP8- SP12)	Effect 1: Like sports or gymnastics people do not find ballet appealing Effect 2: They do not express opinion on this art form as readily as they do for sports	mostly absent
<i>Conclusion</i> (SP13-SP15) ⁶	Author's suggestion: enjoy this dance form, its beauty Untrained appreciation is better	mostly present

It was interesting to note that the learners were able to represent the key ideas from the introduction, a part of the body and the conclusion but they left out a part of the supporting ideas of the body. What did they leave out? They identified the main idea that ballet as a dance form is not popular as (i) it used to be historically patronized by the rich and (ii) the dance form involves complex style, costumes and training. So, most people do not enjoy ballet and do not have an opinion around it even though it is a visual art form. The learners understood that the author was nevertheless appealing to the masses that this dance form should be appreciated for its

beauty and for that one need not have any training in it. So, the learners left out the part that says that most people do not talk about ballet and that one can enjoy the beauty of ballet without being trained in it. This resulted in a lower performance on the free task than in the cloze task. However, the salient parts of the text were included in the summary. This shows that the learners were mentally able to hold the summary structure with the links between the key ideas. Some additional or supporting ideas were left out, but this did not change the meaning of the original text. It also indicated that the learners had the general skills required for writing summaries; they only needed to include more supporting details to fine tune their knowledge of summarizing more accurately and add to text coherence.

Conclusion

The findings of this study may be applied to the ESL writing classroom. Teachers can help to enhance whole text comprehension and coherence by using summary tasks in a sequentially graded manner as shown in Figure 1:

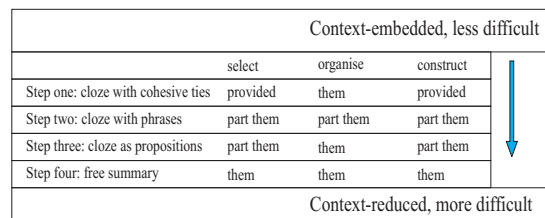


Figure 1: Graded summary cloze tasks

The degree of complexity of the tasks can be gradually increased by adding one more component to the previous level⁷. Thus, sequentially graded summary tasks can be used to teach and assess coherence across different text types.

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Endnotes

¹ Texture refers to the property of 'being a text' or establishing the unity of a text based on linguistic-semantic features that bind parts of a text together (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.2).

² We use the term "context support" as meaning the same as the Cumminian concept of "context embedded" (as opposed to "context reduced") (1986).

³ A summary proposition (SP) is the sum of sentences in a sequence to form an orthographic paragraph or a part of the orthographic paragraph indicating a topic shift (Taylor, 2013, p. 95-100).

⁴ This count was based on percent accuracy of use according to the type-token ratio estimated in the free summary texts.

⁵ It is important to draw attention to the fact that in the cloze task, the processing demands were lowered to a certain extent as the learners had already processed the text while doing the free summary task. So, success on the cloze task can perhaps be attributed to less processing demands made through prior text familiarization and to less task complexity, as it tested only one sub-skill of coherence.

⁶ These 15 SPs are the ones that were identified by the assessor to assess the free summary task.

⁷ For a full discussion on sequentially graded use of cloze-based summary tasks in the ESL writing class, refer to Mukhopadhyay, 2015.

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Filters in Second Language Learning: Findings from a Six-Year Study on Language Acquisition

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Introduction

First and second language acquisition differs mainly in the cognitive filters acting at different levels in the process of acquiring language. Dulay and Burt (1977) proposed the affective filter hypothesis which was later included by Krashen (1985) in his five input hypotheses. According to this hypothesis, motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence constitute affect. Higher affective filter translates into lower second language learning and vice versa, which accounts for the differences between first and second language learning (Du, 2009). This affective filter is not present in first language acquisition. In this study, we aim to identify and understand these filters and their relevance in current language teaching trends and how they can be effectively employed in the classroom.

Method

We used an interdisciplinary approach to explore the differences between first and second language acquisition. Between February 2010 and February 2016, we studied language acquisition along different lines using a mixed methods approach (Östlund, Kidd, Wengström, & Rowa-Dewar, 2011) namely:

- 1) Systematic review of literature (since February 2010)

- 2) Non-participant observation (as physician) of neonates, infants and toddlers for 3 months in a tertiary care hospital in 2012
- 3) Participant observation for 6 years (between 2010-2016) as students of French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Hebrew and Russian
- 4) Teaching (French and Spanish) for five years (since 2011)
- 5) Conducting in-depth interviews with language learners; and key informant interviews with psychologists, language teachers and researchers
- 6) Informal interactions with students who reported problems in second and foreign language learning

A systematic review of existing literature was done using established databases—Eric, PsycINFO, PubMed, and Google Scholar—to examine previous studies on filters in language learning. Preliminary findings pointed towards the affective filter hypothesis of Krashen which indicates that in spite of having voluminous comprehensible input, a learner can limit his second language learning and may fail to reach the competency of a native speaker.

Between March 2012 to May 2012, we conducted a non-participant observation of 3126 subjects (742 neonates, 1561 infants, 823 toddlers) to observe how they acquired language. Field notes were also taken and analysed.

From February 2010 to February 2016, a participant observation study was carried out to look at how the following second languages were acquired: French (500 hours), Spanish (432 hours), Italian (200 hours), Portuguese (200 hours), Hebrew (80 hours) and Russian (80 hours). Field notes were taken and analysed.

In addition, we taught French and Spanish for five years (since 2011) and in the process observed over 548 students of French and 390 students of Spanish. Simultaneously we conducted in-depth interviews with language learners (n=67), key informant interviews with psychologists (n=13), language teachers (n=33) and researchers (n=11); and informal interactions with students who reported problems in second and foreign language learning. All interviews were conducted in Chennai. Field notes for observation were developed and data collected and analysed.

Analysis

All data was qualitatively analysed using NVivo10. We conducted interviews and observations until we reached a point of saturation, beyond which the data became repetitive. The responses were recorded in writing while conducting the interview and/or observation. After the collection of the data, it was transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was carried out to look for consistencies in responses. Similar descriptive data was colour coded and then grouped under sub-categories. Similar sub-categories were inferentially grouped to form categories. Similar categories were then reduced to two broad themes—first language acquisition filters and second language acquisition filters.

Results

The studies revealed that there are cognitive language filters in the brain which facilitate and/or hinder language learning. In first language acquisition, there is a selective absorption filter which facilitates the learning of native language with ease. This filter is also instrumental in differentiating between human language and other auditory inputs. Our observation of neonates, infants and toddlers revealed that the subjects are able to differentiate between human and non-human sounds and pick up only those words that are from human sources. The sounds from toys or dolls do not make any impact on children whereas human voice evokes a response.

Filter in First Language Acquisition

Selective absorption filter helps to distinguish human voices from other sounds. This explains why children pick up only the language of human beings and not of other living creatures.

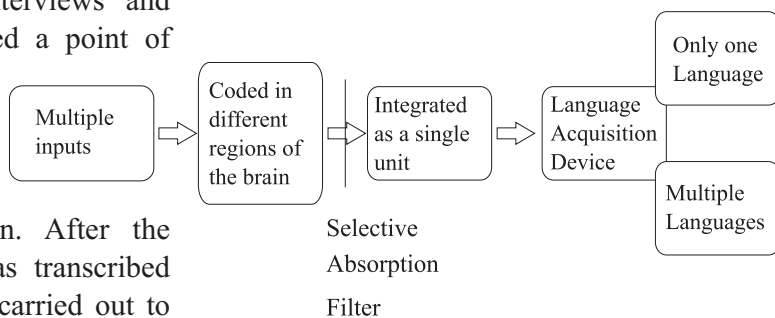


Figure 1. Filters in first language acquisition

In second language acquisition, there are five filters namely: conscious learning filter, previous language learning experience filter, motivation and attitudes filter, life skills filter and language skills filter.

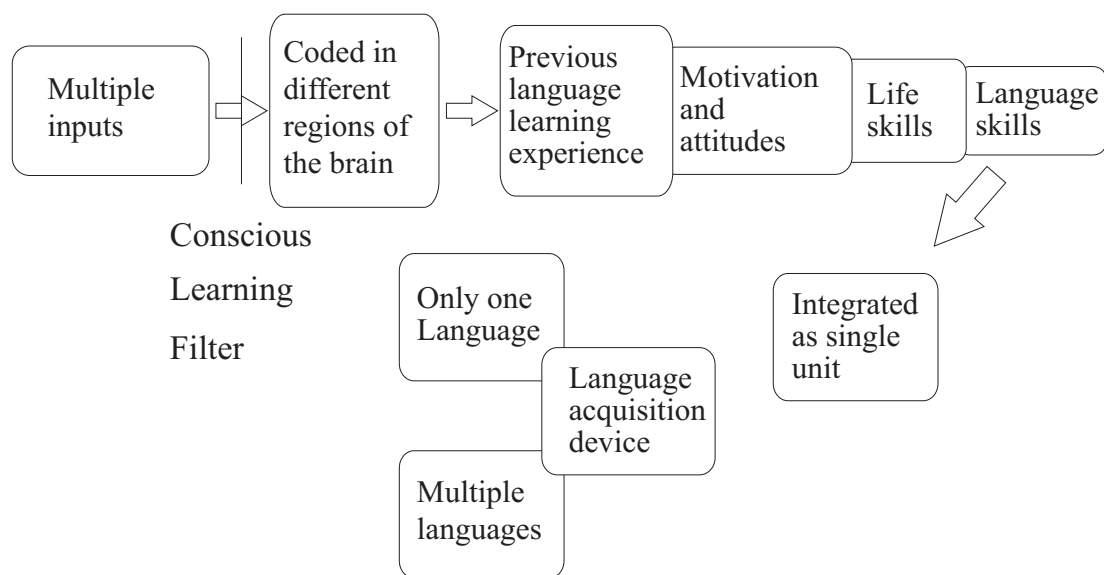


Figure 2. Filters in second language acquisition

Each of the above filters may be explained as follows:

A) Conscious Learning Filter: This filter decides whether the additional language can be acquired or not. If this filter rejects language learning, the language is never acquired.

“I decided to learn the language (Russian) looking at various offers at the United Nations for people who speak Russian.” (In-depth interview with a student from the Russian language classroom)

“Why should I learn this language (French) when there is no purpose in it, I want to settle in USA....” (In-depth interview with a drop out from the French language classroom)

B) Previous Language Learning Filter: Based on past experience in language learning, a previous language learning filter either facilitates or hampers language learning.

“I was never good at languages in school, so I don't think I can do well here (Russian language classroom)” (In-depth interview with a student from the Russian language classroom)

“I always pick [*sic*] languages faster.... I lived in Japan for 3 months.... And I picked [*sic*] Japanese very well.... I guess Italian will be easier as I can easily read the script contrary to Japanese....” (In-depth interview with a student from the Italian language classroom)

C) Motivation and Attitudes Filter: This filter is the strongest and it overrides every other filter.

“I am a poor learner at school but the fascination of learning fashion in Paris drives me to learn French faster....” (In-depth Interview with a student from the French language classroom)

D) Life Skills Filter: Some of the participants who did not have enough life skills had a

tendency to acquire language to a lesser degree or at a slower pace.

“I am generally an introvert.... I don't mix with people easily.... And that affects my language learning.”
(In-depth Interview with a student from the Portuguese language classroom)

E) Language Skills Filter: Some of the participants reported that they had poor (perceived) communication skills which hindered their language learning.

“I am very poor at listening, so I think that affects my language learning too.... And I think that's why I could not learn anything in my level one.... I am slowly changing that.” (In-depth Interview with a student from the Spanish language classroom)

These filters are the reasons why there is a difference between first and second language acquisition.

Discussion

Second language teachers need to understand how these filters impact learning as they are not mutually exclusive but are interdependent. For instance, a student with a positive previous language learning experience tends to have higher motivation levels, and this in turn affects the conscious learning filter. In the case of such a student, the decision to learn the language is taken quickly compared to a student with a negative previous language learning experience. Also if a student has good life skills, language skills, may be acquired easily leading to a positive language learning experience; however the inverse also is possible. These skills therefore help in acquiring an additional language more easily and quickly. The following diagram depicts how different filters impact each other (it can be both positive and negative).

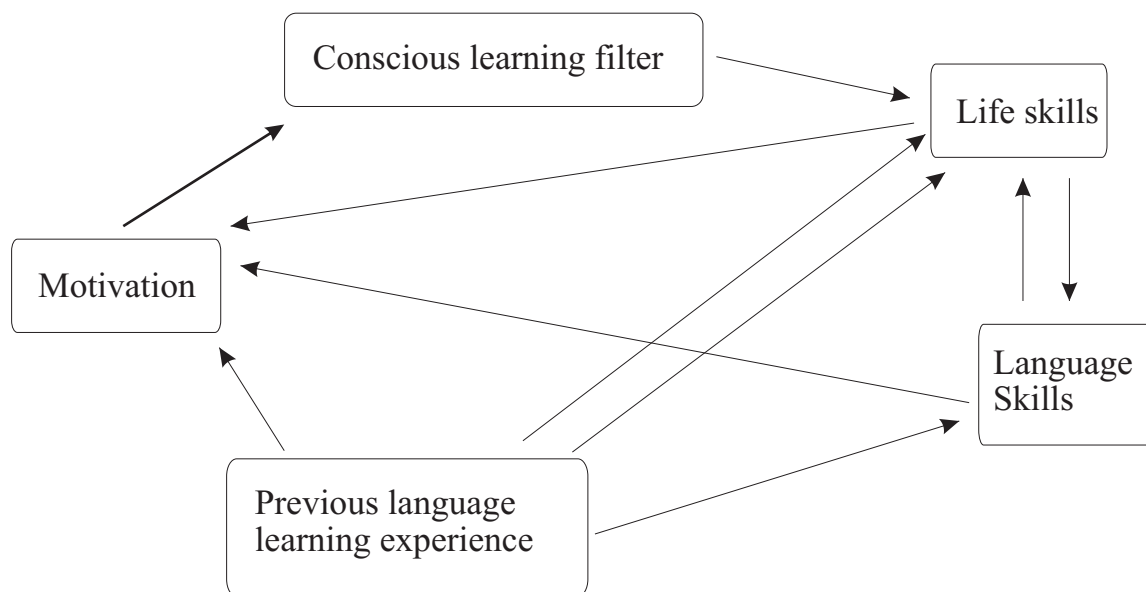


Figure 3. Language filters

If a student decides to not learn a language, then the conscious learning filter does not allow any amount of teaching or instruction to have any effect on language acquisition. So every classroom must have an activity that helps the student overcome this filter. Giving them a reason to learn or in other terms, a purpose-driven learning system is the solution for such students.

In a foreign language classroom about 70 per cent of the students (n=657) of the second language learners of French and Spanish in this study have had an experience of learning languages before. If the learning had been a pleasant experience, then they tend to show more openness to learning the new language than students whose previous language learning experience had been unpleasant.

The third filter “motivation and attitudes” is very important and can override every other filter. If adequate motivation to learn the language is given, then any student can learn the language irrespective of other filters provided there are no cognitive impairments. Every second language teacher should therefore understand the psychological advantage of motivation and structure their classes to focus on adequate motivation.

Life skills and language skills filters require special mention. Most of the students we interviewed reported that these skills are neglected, which hampers the acquisition of the second language. Students who have problems in life and language skills should be given activities and exercises to learn these skills prior to the actual teaching of the language. In case that is not possible, these skills should be integrated into the language course.

Conclusion

This understanding of the filters can be effectively employed in language teaching.

In fact, all language teachers should design and execute their classes based on these filters. Adequate motivation and exercises that facilitate language and life skills are essential for second language acquisition. Second language teachers should also understand the conscious learning and previous language learning filters to handle learners who find it difficult to acquire a second language, provided other learning disorders are ruled out. However, further research is required to understand the pedagogical implications of these cognitive filters.

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The Story of Independent Readers in Class I

P. K. Jayaraj

Introduction

“Shhhh...! Do not disturb. The First Graders are being transported to the ecstatic world of reading!”



I have often thought of hanging a board with this message on the door of a classroom. The usual scene in any classroom may have children reading often especially when the art of reading is newly acquired and the excitement of having mastered this skill shows on their faces. It is interesting to look at their intense expressions. Sometimes they read aloud, muttering under their breath, or glance at an attractive picture with their probing eyes. One wonders—are they trying

to find in the text what they are looking at in the picture, or are they simply trying to reinforce what they have read with the help of the picture? I do not have a clue!

They insist on books with attractive pictures. In fact, they look at the pictures first and start reading only after they have had a good look at them. With some books they start with a bang. However, often they do not make much headway and get stuck, failing to make sense

of what they are reading. They feel they have bitten off more than they can chew. Then they come running to the teacher. “Miss, please read this for me!” they plead. They pester the teacher till she reads it out to them.

It turns out, and I learnt that only later, that the teacher gives them challenging books on purpose. She does not want all the readings to be a cakewalk for the children and therefore the books are not meant to be all that easy! The teacher believes that the children ought to go to grown-ups for help when they find the going tough. That is the only way for them to go up to the next level in reading.

The Learning Story

The following learning story is an example of a teacher's persistent attempt to make the learners of Class I independent readers. She teaches in a rural government upper primary (UP) school, GUPS Kanathur, Kasaragod district, in Kerala. Her attempts ultimately culminated into a comprehensive reading programme for Class I. Not only did the programme promote genuine interest in reading among the Class I learners, it also enhanced their literacy skills and confidence.

Overview

Ms. Santha¹ of Kanathur Government Upper Primary school stated:

The training I attended in 2012-2013 was really an eye-opener. The programme DISA, developed by DIET Kasaragod, intended to be used in Class I, had specific processes for promoting early reading as a habit among the students. I also understood that if children acquire reading skills very

early, it would make them independent learners of all subjects. As an elementary teacher from a remote school, I decided to implement the insights derived from DISA into my teaching-learning processes.

This conviction of Ms. Santha led to the genesis of the reading programme to develop Class I learners into independent readers of Malayalam. The teacher further believed that by implementing this programme in her class, every learner in her classroom would be able to develop:

- reading skills
- writing skills
- listening and speaking skills
- confidence in learning.

The Context: The School and the Learners

GUPS Kanathur in Kasaragod district is a small school under the Muliya Panchayath. It has 10 divisions, 11 teachers and 200 students. The learners hail from different communities such as the upper class, other backward communities and scheduled castes and tribes. Kanathur is situated inside the government reserve forest. People of this area are basically farmers and agricultural labourers. Most pupils are second or third generation learners. Malayalam is the mother tongue of most of the people in the area. However, people belonging to the scheduled tribes speak Tulu at home. The parents wish to give quality education to their children. People belonging to the higher social strata have access to newspapers and TV. There is a library in the village but students have no access to it.

People by and large seem to believe that it is the duty of the school to cultivate the habit of reading among the pupils. So the students are

generally not in the habit of reading books at home. Hence, school is the only place where they get the opportunity to read books. The people of Kanathur expect the school to provide good education to their children.

The Process: Good Practice in Detail

Ms. Santha visualized, planned and implemented a number of strategies to transform her learners into good readers. In the first phase of the process, she introduced the students of Class I to the world of books.

Phase 1: Introducing students to the world of books

The teacher planned and implemented several strategies during the month of June. As a result of these processes, the students became very confident in picture reading and retelling stories with the help of pictures. These strategies included the following:

- Story telling with appropriate gestures and body language
- Reading stories from illustrated story books, thereby enabling the learners to retell the story with the help of pictures
- Compiling classroom generated texts, pictures and students' writings into big books
- Enabling learners to read books by asking relevant questions
- Introducing and familiarizing the learners with the different parts of a book—title, name of the author, cover pages, inner pages and pictures
- Re-reading the books in different ways—reading out to the whole class, reading out to groups and reading out to individual students

Phase 2: Revealing the world of letters to the learners

Some of the strategies used in the first phase continued in Phase 2 as well. Additionally, in the second phase the teacher decided to integrate books that were relevant to the themes and concepts given in the Class I text book. For example, the first unit in the Malayalam text book was about rain. The teacher identified seven books related to rain that were appropriate for the level of the learners. However, she could get only four books from the school library. So she bought some of the books and collected the remaining from other teachers and friends. Essentially, the teacher's focus during the second phase was to enable the children to read books and make meaning out of them. The classroom processes and strategies used in the second phase were:

- Reading pictures and making predictions about the content/story of the book
- Reading by correlating the words and pictures
- Modelling different reading strategies, such as asking questions, making tone variations, making children respond through prediction, speaking like a character, etc.
- Enabling the learners to do different tasks based on reading, such as drawing and labelling, drawing pictures and making a collage, making word and sentence webs, role-playing incidents and characters, retelling a story and continuing the story from where it ended, etc.
- Retelling and rewriting the stories in any way that the students wanted
- Compiling students' compositions (words, sentences and pictures) into big books
- Creating a reading corner in the class

During this stage, the learners acquired the ability to read words, phrases, sentences and simple texts. They also learnt to respond to what they were reading by drawing pictures, speaking, writing and performing individually as well as in groups.

Phase 3: Making learners independent readers

The strategies used in phases 1 and 2 continued during this phase too. In addition to that, the teacher used some more strategies for reading, comprehending and responding to the text. She used books with pictures that were appropriate to the level of the learners and of interest to them. She also included a few books that were just a little above the learners' level and therefore a bit challenging. The books included stories, small plays, small poems, descriptions, biographies and autobiographies. The teacher made note of the different reading styles of the learners. Some of them liked to read loudly, some of them silently. One of the students in particular, Gopika, had “a Gopika style” of reading. Gopika liked to cover the parts of the page that she was not reading. There were some learners who liked to look at the pictures before commencing reading. Some learners began reading in grand style, but after some time they found it very difficult to continue because the book was beyond their level. They would then go to the teacher and request her to read the book for them.

The following are some of the strategies used by the teacher in this phase:

- Enabling learners to retell the story in the form of a summary
- Making learners identify the characters and their features
- Making learners identify the character

they liked the best and asking them to give reasons for their choice

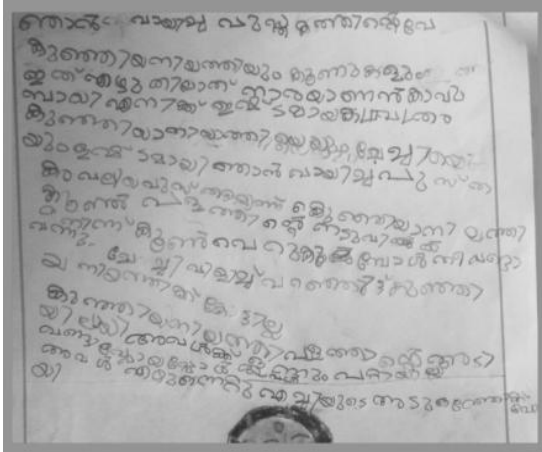
- Getting the class to perform the story as a drama in groups and the class as a whole
- Writing about the story
- Presenting book reviews in front of the class
- Compiling the learners' writings into big books

The Changes after the Strategies

Towards the end of the academic year, the students of Class I had become independent readers of Malayalam. They were also able to do the following:

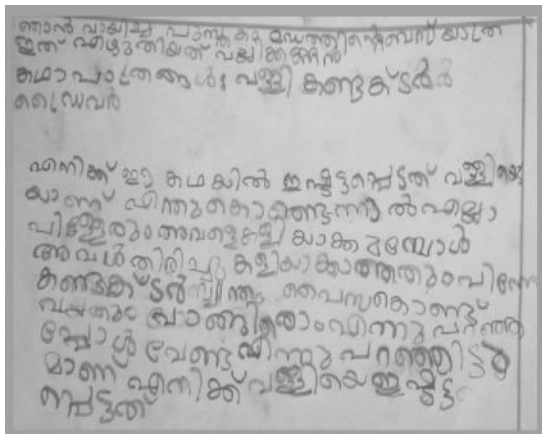
- Ask and answer questions on the key details of a text (with prompting and support)
- Retell stories and understand the central message of the text (with prompting and support)
- Describe characters, settings and major events in the story
- Identify words and phrases in the story and predict their meaning
- Differentiate between different types of books such as story books and books that give information
- Identify who is telling the story at various points in the text
- Use illustrations and details from a story to describe characters and settings
- Identify the reasons why they liked or supported a character
- Compare and contrast the experiences of the characters in stories
- Read prose and poems of appropriate complexity for Class I (with prompting and support)

The following are some of the samples of the book reviews written by the students in Malayalam. Gopika even added a note of appreciation.



Here, Gopika has retold Tolstoy's "Little Sister and Friends". She has summarized the story in a few sentences, written the name of the book and a little bit about the characters in the story. What is noteworthy is that she has not made any grammatical errors in her writing.

Below is a note written by Athulya. She has named the book and the characters in it. She has also written that she likes the central character of the story, Valli, very much. She likes Valli because Valli is a strong character and does not want the help of the conductor. This is a very good character study indeed!



Going through the writings of children, it is clear that they had achieved the following by the end of the three phases:

- improvement in their vocabulary.
- ability to write a brief summary of what they had read.
- ability to analyse the incidents and the characters.
- ability to identify which character they liked and why.

Furthermore, students developed the ability to write the main ideas of a story as well as the supporting details. They also improved their handwriting and the mechanics of writing such as use of full stops, commas, etc. They acquired better understanding of grammar and usage too.

How the Change Took Place

While Ms. Santha independently developed a programme of action, she also had the whole-hearted support of the School Resource Group (SRG) and other teachers. All the teachers helped her in arranging the reading corner and collecting and displaying the books in the class. The teacher acquired a lot of conceptual clarity in the classroom processes during the planning. The help rendered by Mr. M. M. Surendran, one of the teachers in the school, was invaluable in planning the lesson and documenting the students' responses. He also demonstrated a very good example of peer mentoring. He was able to help by offering the following:

- Academic support for planning the classroom processes
- Documenting the main processes the teacher had used on the school blog
- Periodic assessment of the processes and mid-course corrections

- Motivating other teachers to take up similar programmes in their classes.

In the Class PTA meeting, the parents expressed their happiness that their children had become independent readers. They added that their children showed increased interest in reading at home. Some parents even bought books for their children. One parent donated a table to the reading corner to display books. The teacher helped the students present their newly-acquired skills such as story-telling, dramatization, reading aloud, etc. in front of the parents in the meeting.

The story of Ms. Santha and her students does not end here.

These students are now in Class II and Ms. Santha is still with them as their class teacher. She has already created a reading corner in the class and has started distributing books with interesting pictures and stories for the kids. She says, “I am an ordinary teacher. The training I got, the support I received from my colleagues and the expectations of the students' parents enabled me to undertake this programme.”

Assessment: The Very Heart of Teaching and Learning

This account of one teacher's classroom practice shows how assessment is integral to all areas of the curriculum and teaching-learning process. In this example, the assessment process provided the teacher with all the information she needed to make important decisions about the teaching-learning process—selecting curriculum objectives, identifying appropriate teaching methodologies, designing learning activities, choosing suitable resources, differentiating learning, and giving feedback to children on

how they were doing. These everyday activities place assessment at the very heart of teaching and learning. It is therefore part of what the teacher does on a daily basis in his/her classroom.

What is the purpose of assessment?

Assessment is about building a picture of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning, across the school curriculum over a period of time. Information about *how* the child learns (the learning process) as well as *what* the child learns (the products of learning) shapes this picture. The teacher uses this information to identify and celebrate the child's current learning, and to provide him/her with appropriate support for future learning.

What does assessment involve?

For the teacher, assessment involves gathering information to understand better how each child is progressing at school and using that information to further the child's learning. Assessment therefore goes far beyond just testing. It concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and each child that includes moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions. Assessment is the process of *gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting* information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes. These aforementioned tasks are performed even when the teacher is questioning and listening to children, observing children working on a task, or using the results of a weekly test to inform his/her own teaching and learning. These activities can happen within a few seconds or, in contrast, over a period of days or weeks

depending on the purpose of the assessment and the methods used. The information gathered enriches the teacher's understanding both of what and how the child learns. The teacher can use that information to plan learning experiences based on objectives from the curriculum, and bearing in mind the child's previous learning. Through assessment, the teacher can construct a comprehensive picture of the short-term and long-term needs of the child and plan future work accordingly. Using assessment information in this manner, the teacher can support and extend the child's learning.

Endnotes

¹ Ms. Santha teaches Malayalam, Maths, EVS and English of Class I of Govt Upper Primary school, Kanathur, Kasaragod, Kerala. She uses an integrated approach in teaching first graders.

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Learning through A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh Books

Sibila Ramakrishnan

In writing *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, even though A. A. Milne's intentions are didactic, he plays along with the child in them, i.e. his son, and his intentions get concealed in the pleasure of storytelling. The resultant literature leaves space for interpretations of the text based on the child's cognition and learning because of Milne's realistic portrayal of children's minds through his characters. One of the possible explanations for the origin of the Pooh books is that Christopher Robin, as a child actually, fully or partially, lived these tales during his playtime, and his tropes and games with his toys were thematically represented and narrated by Milne. He explains this in his autobiography, *It's too Late now*:

The animals in the stories came for the most part from the nursery. My collaborator (his wife) had already given them individual voices, their owner by constant affection had given them the twist in their features which denotes character, and Shepard drew them, as one might say, from the living model. They were what they are for anyone to see; I described rather than invented them. Only Rabbit and Owl were my own unaided work. (Milne, 1964, p. 9)

The child in these stories has animal toys which interact with him, which means that the child made up these stories, gave roles to his toys and then played out those roles to amuse himself. A closer look at this would

explain how the ground is prepared in the child's brain to build up his rationale. A story or a play essentially comprises a set of characters, a plot and a setting. In the context of the Pooh stories, Christopher Robin and his toys were the characters and the Forest, the Hundred Acre Wood, was the setting. Christopher Robin invented a plot which involved a series of events with a central motif that was developed during the course of the story. Such ideas generally originated either from a real life experience—personal or otherwise—or an acquired idea.

Essentially, the child selected what he was interested in from his environment, and applied his creativity to it. So if one story is about a bear and some bees, the next one is about say, Woozles and Wizzles, or a Heffalump hunt, or an expedition to the North Pole, or a flood, and finally, even parting from friends features as a motif in the stories. Many of these topics are clearly inspired from introduced ideas rather than ones noticed or chanced upon by the child himself. The factors that go into the molding of these ideas into stories reveal the mechanism involved in a child's cognition.

The works of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky gave the researcher the framework for explaining the story-making and the character-building processes in the Pooh books. It is evident that in addition to Christopher Robin, the other characters such as the toys are also considered as children and interpreted on the same level.

In the essay “*The Social Origins of Self-Regulation*” jointly written by Rafael M Diaz, Cynthia J Neal, and Marina Amaya-Williams, Lev Vygotsky’s development theory is used to describe how basic, “biologically determined processes” transform or develop into “higher psychological functions” (1990, p.135). They find that:

According to the theory, the human child is endowed by nature with a wide range of perceptual, attentional, and memory capacities, such as the capacity to perceive contrast and movement, the capacity for eidetic memory, and arousal or habituation responses to environmental stimuli, to name a few. Such basic processes (also referred to as by Vygotsky as “biological,” “natural,” or “elementary”), however are substantially transformed in the context of socialization and education, particularly through the use of language, to constitute the higher psychological functions or the unique form of human cognition. (1990, p.135)

In the story “In Which Pooh and Piglet go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle”, Pooh and Piglet were presumably tracking the paw marks of a Woozle, but they came to know at the end of the story that they were in fact tracking their own paw marks (Milne, 1977, p. 54). The initial hunt thus happened because of a lack of familiarity with themselves as they could not identify their own tracks, which were a part and extension of their identity. The way in which they learn the truth about the marks illustrates the progressive stages in learning—from simple biological processes such as perception through the senses (vision, in this case) to higher psychological processes (understanding or learning).

Vygotsky stresses on the importance of language in the cognitive development of a human being. According to Vygotsky, beyond a point, language for children is not just a means to communicate, but it helps to “guide, plan, and monitor their activity” (1990, p. 135). From this initial stage where a child studies his surroundings using language (although just for labelling), he reaches a stage where language or speech starts to precede the activity of the child thereby enabling him to plan his activity. In the story, “In Which Piglet Meets a Heffalump” Pooh explains to Piglet his plan to catch a Heffalump by trapping him in a “Very Deep Pit”. Piglet replies that it was a “cunning trap”. The ensuing conversation shows that here the characters are thinking strictly in line with the spoken words and not about the practical success of what they are planning to do. The following passage illustrates the “sequential processing” of independent elements required by speech, as opposed to the integral processing of independent elements in a visual field during visual perception (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 33):

Pooh was very proud when he heard this, and he felt that the Heffalump was as good as caught already, but there was just one other thing which had to be thought about, and it was this. *Where should they dig the Very Deep Pit?*

Piglet said that the best place would be somewhere where a Heffalump was, just before he fell into it, only about a foot further on. (Milne, 1977, p. 80)

Pooh and Piglet made this plan sequentially, processing it only in terms of speech, and not in terms of a visual space and hence failed to figure out a strategic place to dig the pit. Thus for Pooh and Piglet, language becomes a tool of thought that enables them to plan their activity.

An example to demonstrate meaning-making process in Winnie the Pooh is the broken wooden board outside Piglet's house which says "Trespassers W". Piglet explains the words on the board saying that they were the names of his grandfather and uncle respectively. Jonathan Tudge, in his essay "Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development, and Peer Collaboration: Implications for Classroom Practice", said that Vygotsky had indicated of "a seemingly teleological view of the developmental process, a process in which children come to be socialized into the dominant culture" (1990, p. 157). For the English, to have a display board with one's name in front of the house is a common practice. Piglet obviously explained the board in front of his house in the Hundred Acre Wood on the same premise, thereby normalizing a broken board that held his address. He also justified having two names by pointing out that Christopher Robin also had two names. "Thus language, a tool of immense power, ensures that linguistically created meanings are shared meanings, social meanings" (Tudge, 1990, p. 157).

Ronald Gallimore and Ronald Tharpe in their essay, "Teaching Mind in Society: Teaching, Schooling, and Literate Discourse" state that "Word meaning is the stuff of verbal thinking. It also resides in the community of language users," (1990, p. 193). They further elucidate the term "word" as explained by Vygotsky:

It refers to both vocabulary and discourse competencies, which develop in the context of social use in joint activity... these signs and symbols take on new and shared meanings, as they are hallowed by use during joint productive activity. The social meanings of words are internalized by individuals through self-directed

speech, taken underground, and stripped down to the lightning of thought. (1990, p. 193)

In the story "In Which Rabbit has a Busy day, and we Learn What Christopher Robin Does in the Mornings", Milne deals explicitly with the theme of learning to read and write. The note that Christopher Robin leaves on his door when he goes missing from the Hundred Acre Wood in the morning says:

GON OUT

BACKSON

BISY

BACKSON

C.R. (Milne, 1956, p. 42)

The word "Backson", misspelt by Christopher Robin was actually "back soon", but Rabbit and Owl assumed that Backson was a person or something with whom Christopher Robin had gone away. Once he returned to the forest after that day's lessons, he changed "Backson" to "back soon". This can be read in relation with Tudge's observation, "Words that already have meaning for mature members of a cultural group come to have those same meanings for the young of the group in the process of interaction" (1990, p. 157).

A major part of the research done by both Piaget and Vygotsky strongly suggests that "children come to learn adult meanings, behaviours, and technologies in the process of collaboration" (Tudge, 1990, p. 156). One of the most widely recognized and well-known ideas of Vygotsky—the zone of proximal development (ZPD), introduced in his *Mind in Society*—is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem

solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (1978, p. 86).

By considering the characters in the stories as peers, the point about problem solving with the help of more capable peers can be explained. In the story “In which Tigger comes to the Forest and has Breakfast”, Tigger comes to the Hundred Acre Wood one morning with not much knowledge about himself. Although he believed that Tiggers eat everything, it turned out that he did not like honey, haycorns or thistles, all of which were offered to him by his peers Pooh, Piglet and Eeyore to help him figure out what he could have for breakfast. Eventually, he had the extract of malt, which was Roo's strengthening medicine and he decided that's what Tiggers like (Milne, 1956, p. 29-30).

Piaget in *The Language and Thought of the Child* explains how exchange of ideas between a child and his/her peers occurs mostly through conversations. Since this is made possible through language, this becomes an easily observable and understandable learning process in children. According to Piaget, “the egocentric child assumes that other people see, hear and feel exactly the same as the child does” (1955, p.113-114).

Children, while telling a story or giving an explanation for something, seldom convey it in the right order. They assume that the order of events in the story is somehow understood by the listener beforehand or by default (Piaget, 1955, p. 122). To illustrate this, a scene from “In Which Eeyore has a Birthday and gets Two Presents” will be helpful. Pooh visits Eeyore on his birthday, and finds him in a very gloomy state. Their conversation goes:

“Why, what's the matter?”

“Nothing, Pooh Bear, nothing. We can't

all, and some of us don't. That's all there is to it.”

“Can't all *what*?” said Pooh, rubbing his nose.

“Gaiety. Song-and-dance. Here we go round the mulberry bush.”

...It sounded to him (Pooh) like a riddle... (Milne, 1977, p. 102)

Eeyore does not bother to put his thoughts in order for Pooh. He talks in bits and pieces and expects Pooh to put them together coherently and Pooh actually thinks of it as a riddle. The explanation given for this by Piaget is that the explainer in such cases speaks for himself rather than for the listener, an effect of egocentrism.

Inventing is an important part of conversation-making and understanding in children because very often they depend on this method to fill in “the gaps by inventing in all good faith” (Piaget, 1955, p. 139), both when they communicate and when they remember something elaborate. Piaget links this phenomenon with ego-centrism to reach the conclusion that:

It is because he is still egocentric and feels no desire either to communicate with others or to understand them that the child is able to invent as the spirit moves him, and to make so light of the objectivity of his utterances. (Piaget, 1955, p. 139)

In the story “In Which Pooh and Piglet go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle”, Piglet invents an animal named Woozle since they are unable to identify the original animal whose pawmarks they were tracking. Pooh even goes on to ascribe a mysterious trait to the Woozle saying that one never can tell if it's a Woozle simply by looking at the pawmarks. Later when they find a different

set of pawmarks going alongside the first set, Pooh invents another animal named Wizzle. In this way, both of them try to fill in the missing pieces in their story to complete their adventure.

While investigating certain aspects of the Pooh stories through this paper, I got an insight into how imagination works in children and how a base is built for the development of language in a child. I also observed that narratives in the form of stories and poems were excellent tools for imparting knowledge. Personalized stories give children an added advantage by helping them to expand their horizons by filling their mental world with more details.

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Multilinguality in Classrooms: Looking at Primary Education in West Bengal

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Multiplicity of forms is inherent to human language and culture. The world has witnessed an unequal distribution of power, especially in connection to language. Education is one such crucial domain in which the effect of this unequal distribution of power as a result of language can be seen. This linguistic imbalance in the field of education has caused much anxiety and tension. However, human societies have always been multilingual and multicultural, and education systems of different ages have always accommodated these differences. In the 21st century, there has been a renewed vigour and interest in educational alternatives that create space for multilinguality in schools. Mother tongue based multilingual education has become the main model of education to ensure equal access of education to all and quality education for all. But can we really hope to implement practically what we talk about in theory?

In this paper, our main objective is to look at primary education in West Bengal and to examine how existing educational practices are incorporating or creating space for multilingual education. We will try to look at the problems faced by primary school teachers, the central educational surveys, and finally, the language of the textbooks. In our argument, we will take the cue from three main resources: 1) The 7th and 8th All India School Education Survey (AISES) Report, 2) Eighty-eight short articles written by primary

school teachers on the linguistic problems faced by them in their classrooms and published by Pratichi Institute (2012), and 3) A brief critical analysis of a chapter from a Class III first language textbook, *Patabahar*; this book is used in the primary schools under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education.

Since an educational system is likely to be shaped by socio-political intentions, any type of analysis presupposes a basic understanding of the ground itself. The geopolitical area we have concentrated upon is West Bengal, where the majority of the primary schools are Bengali medium schools, with a few Hindi, Urdu, Santhali and Nepali medium primary schools. In urban and sub-urban localities, there are many expensive private English medium primary schools. However in the rural areas, government schools are often the sole place for primary schooling. The rural population of West Bengal includes 38 notified ST communities. Out of this only Santhali speakers have a provision for mother tongue education. The other communities have no choice but to enter into a non-mother-tongue educational system which comprises mostly Bengali or Hindi medium schools. However, other than Kolkata and its surroundings, especially in many rural belts, the regional varieties of Bangla are so different from the standard variety that for many learners, “mother-tongue education” is just an official declaration, not a real one. As a consequence,

the performance in the educational sector is extremely poor. The Educational Development Index (EDI), NUEPA (2012-13) gave West Bengal an EDI score of 0.527, ranking it at number 31 out of a total of 35 states and union territories. The dropout rates among the social groups in West Bengal are: SC – Primary: 15.1%; Upper-Primary: 32.4%; ST– Primary: 20.7%; Upper-Primary: 38.3% (NUEPA, 2013).

It can be assumed that mother tongue education and multilingual education protect the linguistic human rights of a child, but often inter-language discrimination is given more importance. In fact, very little attention has been paid to intra-language discrimination, popularly known as “language-dialect” discrimination (Blommaert, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2001) and its impact on education. Not only has this discrimination had a long drawn impact on the educational system, but it has also raised some very fundamental questions about linguistic human rights, such as whether textbook language and classroom interaction in a particular standard variety of a language provide “vernacular education” or “mother tongue education” to a child from a remote rural place. A look at the educational scenario of West Bengal confirms the validity of the question. The regional varieties of Bangla are often very different from Standard Colloquial Bengali (SCB). For the speakers of these regional varieties, being “Bangali” (Bengali speaker) is just a political identity. The long history of the demand for a separate linguistic identity by the Rajbanshi people (Rajbanshi language is often identified as a dialect of Bengali) is perhaps the most politically prominent example of the standard language-dialect conflict in the context of West Bengal. However, as primary level classrooms are not open to multilingual practice in the teaching-

learning process, neither any minor language, nor any regional variety of Bangla finds a place in education.

With this understanding, let us now move on to see how multilinguality is actually finding its place in the primary classrooms across the state.

Data I: Official Accounts of Multilingual Practice in Primary Schools

a) The following pie chart shows the numbers of schools of West Bengal that use one, two and three or more languages as the medium of instruction as per the 7th AISES report. It is clear that there is an unequal distribution of monolingual vs. multilingual schools in this state.

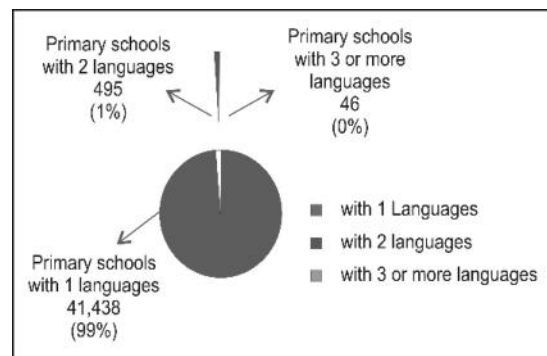


Figure 1. Schools using one, two or three or more languages as the medium of instruction (Adapted from the 7th AISES report).

b) As per the 8th AISES report, versus the 7th survey, there is a 5.42 per cent reduction in the number of primary schools across India that use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Though there is an increase of 1.37 per cent in the number of schools with multiple mediums of instruction (13.51 per cent in the 8th survey versus 12.14 per cent in the 7th survey), these figures still show disparity between monolingual and

multilingual schools, as is seen in the 7th AISES report.

Data II: Teachers' Perception on the Language Issue

In 2012, Pratichi Institute, the research wing of Pratichi (India) Trust, conducted ten workshops involving 348 teachers from 8 districts of West Bengal. In these workshops, there was no specific module or list of variables on which the teachers were expected to comment; instead they were asked to share their personal experiences. All of them accounted in writing the problems they faced every day while teaching—the challenges faced by the students of rural and sub-urban schools as they had noticed, the lack of resources and funding, the effect of poverty and illiteracy of the parents, administrative problems, and problems regarding teaching-learning materials. From these accounts, Pratichi selected 88 writings and published *Kalamchari*. Despite being quite predictable, the outcome was linguistically intriguing. In 54 out of the 88 writings, language was identified as the zone of discomfort for both students and teachers. It was also one of the major reasons behind the academic failure of rural, especially tribal students.

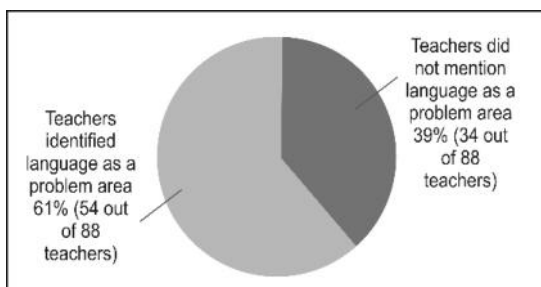


Figure 2. As per *Kalamchari* report, the percentage of teachers who identified language as a problem area of learning.

However, the problem of language is not restricted to students belonging to tribal groups with no infrastructure of mother tongue education. The report also indicates that it is also faced by Bengali speaking students, both rural and urban.

Data III: Language Preference of Textbook and Exercise

In the present mainstream educational practice of our country, textbooks are the most crucial tools in the teaching-learning process. They are often also the only tangible educational device that students can carry home and in which they can search for prescribed knowledge beyond the domain of school. However, textbooks continue to be standard language-centric and monolingual in spite of their drawbacks as pointed out by the teachers, and continue to contribute to academic failure and dropping out of school among rural and economically challenged first generation learners. To support this point, we would like to present a brief linguistic analysis of a chapter from a Class III language textbook *Patabahar*. The text “*Nijer Hate Nijer Kaj*” serves as an example where, apart from being a strictly monolingual text, the vocabulary has a high occurrence of less frequently used sanskritised words. These words are known as *tatsama* or *sadhu* words in Bangla. The word *tatsama* is composed of two units, *tat-*, meaning “his” and *sama* meaning “same as”. Hence, *tatsama* refers to the words that are the “same as his”, i.e. the words of the Sanskrit language. The word *sadhu* means 'pure or sacred'. Both words actually refer to the sacred position of Sanskrit. Many *tatsama* or *sadhu* words have more frequently used alternatives in colloquial Bangla. But in praxis, textbooks do not often

opt for such commonly used words. In the text from *Patabahar*, 13 per cent of the total words are from less frequently used sanskritised vocabulary (Figure 3), which can be easily substituted. This point can be elucidated with an example from the text. Let us look at the following sentence from page 14, line 3:

tāi tini kulike ṣeke tār hāte paysā dite gelen pāriśramik hisabe.

[tai tini kulike ṣeke tar hate pṣeṣa dite gelen parisromik hisabe]

“Hence he called the porter and offered him money as his compensation.”

In this sentence, the word *pāriśramik* [parisromik] “compensation or fee” which is a *tatsama* word can be replaced with *majuri* [mojuri], its colloquial counterpart as both words indicate the same meaning.

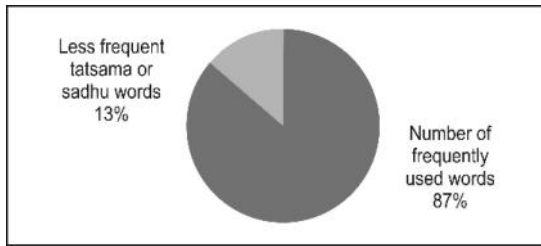


Figure 3. Percentage of less frequent *tatsama* or *sadhu* words in the text.

A look at the exercise reveals that 40 per cent of the questions are related to the 13 per cent sanskritised words (Figure 4).

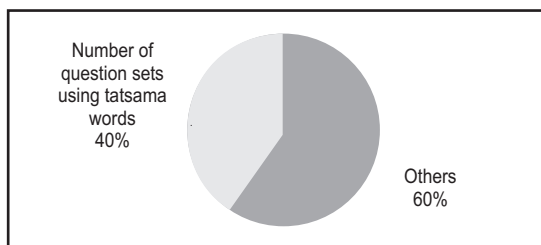


Figure 4. Percentage of drills based on *tatsama* or *sadhu* words in comparison to others.

The over fascination for sanskritised words increases gradually in the following chapters. This unequal distribution of interest in the sanskritised versus non-sanskritised division may be seen as a search for the sacred genealogical past of Bangla that binds it with Sanskrit.

What do we get from the Data?

The accounts of the teachers, given in Data II place the learners in different zones of linguistic discomfort that affects their academic performance. This discomfort is caused by a lack of understanding of the textbook language and the language of classroom interaction. The reasons for this have been theoretically addressed from various angles:

- 1) Inter-language discrimination faced by students from different minority language groups and migrant communities.
- 2) Intra-language discrimination, an issue often less discussed also has an impact on the learning process.
- 3) The difference between restricted and elaborated code (Bernstein, 1971) that plays a major role in academic achievement.

A close observation reveals a common thread in all the approaches—possession of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in one group over others. These “others” are different in nature and hence their heterogeneity has provided them with different kinds of access to “the language” required for academic achievement. The linguistic challenges faced by them cannot be defined solely on the basis of language; socio-economic factors become crucial here. To understand these factors, we will

try to present a broad categorisation of these students based on their socio-economic, regional and linguistic backgrounds that can be co-related with linguistic understanding of the learning materials.

1.	Urban and suburban, upper middle class and upper class, third or at least second generation learners from families where adult members have a good understanding of written and spoken SCB.
2.	Urban and suburban, lower middle and lower economic class, first and often second generation learners from families where adult members have an understanding of spoken SCB but minimal exposure to written texts.
3.	Rural, middle and lower economic class, mostly first generation learners from families where adult members have a minimal understanding of SCB.
4.	Rural, first generation learners belonging to various scheduled tribes.

The distance between 1 and the rest is deliberate, as it symbolically represents the distance between the academic achievements among these students. The children belonging to the first group mainly go to English medium schools. Very few of them, if any study in government or government aided schools. These children have a very poor understanding of written Bengali; but the reasons for this lie in the anglophile attitude that our country has inherited from its colonial past. However, our present paper is mainly concerned with the students of government and government aided primary schools of West Bengal. For them, the language of the textbook and classroom interaction becomes a challenge in different degrees. If we compare the above categorisation of students with the level of difficulty in understanding the language of textbook and

classroom interaction, we will get the following levels:

- i. Students belonging to the first group, who chose to opt for English medium primary schools, have good to fair understanding of sentence construction and vocabulary.
- ii. Students belonging to the second group have a fair to moderate understanding of sentence construction. They can also understand classroom interaction better than the other two groups (group 3 and 4). But they face problems in the vocabulary level, especially in *tatsama* and semi-*tatsama* words. Lack of comprehension often results in a lower standard of writing than expected in their answer scripts.
- iii. From the third group onwards, academic failure becomes alarmingly severe. With special guidance from the teachers most of these students are reported to have moderate to minimal understanding of sentence construction and vocabulary, but production skills (speaking and writing) are a real challenge for them. The lack of ability seen in their language production often points towards a lack of comprehension. For these students, “mother-tongue education” is merely a declaration. Prolonged experience of academic failure due to the inability to understand textbook content and classroom interactions often breaks the confidence of these students, pushing them further into the culture of silence.
- iv. We can clearly predict the level of understanding with regard to textbooks and classroom interaction of the students belonging to the fourth group; and it is virtually “no understanding at all”. This is because in the primary schools of West

Bengal, there is no provision for bi/multilingual educational practice. As a result, students belonging to language groups other than those in the primary schools do not have the linguistic support required to bridge the gap between the first language and the language in educational practice for non-mother tongue speakers. While linguists talk about the practice of coordinating bi/multilingualism in primary level education to protect the linguistic rights of students, there is no provision even for transitional bi/multilingualism to facilitate the learning process of these students.

The statistics given in Data I reveal that here is a preference for monolingual practice in the educational domain over multilinguality. Hence, for most of the students, monolingual schools are the only places for formal schooling. From Data III we can conclude that these “mono” or “lone” language textbooks written in SCB, along with the frequent use of uncommon sanskritised words, only cater to the students belonging to group 1. For the rest (who are actually the majority), the level of understanding continues to decrease. The myth of a homogenous “mother tongue” for all learners residing in a geo-politically defined area squeezes them under the umbrella of an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) on the basis of language. In spite of an increasing number of talks on the positive impact of multilingual education, its theory and practice is marked with considerable differences. Moreover, educational practice shows a decreasing space for multilinguality. This assumption is reaffirmed by data from the 5th, 6th and 7th AISES reports (see *Table 1* below), which show a decline in the number of languages in the list of “the medium of instruction in schools”.

Stages	Fifth Survey	Sixth Survey	Seventh Survey
Primary	43	33	26
Upper Primary	31	25	23
Secondary	22	21	20
Senior Secondary	20	18	18

Table 1: Medium of Instruction (number of languages), Adapted from 7th AISES

The above data sets off alarm bells. A decrease in the number of Indian languages used in the classroom has a direct impact on the individuals' right and is a gross violation of the constitutional provisions proposed to secure the rights of individuals. However, the issue is not restricted only to the teaching of Indian languages in schools; it also involves the effective use of Indian languages in dispersing knowledge in Indian classrooms. There should be enough provision to teach and learn topics of different disciplines in all Indian languages. Therefore, an effective policy should pay attention to the considerable increase of the functional load of Indian language. Indian languages restricted only to the domain of literary studies cannot help us to secure the goal we are looking for in this highly technocratic world. For the part of the learners, being unable to study a subject in one's own language creates severe problems of incomprehensiveness, resulting either in poor academic performance or in the increasing rate of dropouts from schools.

The central problem in this issue is the lack of text book materials in local languages. Those

who are interested in solving the problem express their frustration at not having enough teaching learning materials (TLM) in local languages. Others, who are interested in an English-only-model, express their blind faith in the inability of the “vernaculars” to express modern knowledge. In one way or the other, both groups agree on the point that Indian languages are of hardly any use in teaching and learning due to the lack of TLMs. However, this is not a new or recent view. In 1915, Tagore also spoke of this issue in his work on education. What seems to be of interest is Tagore's response where he clearly argues that TLM will never develop in Indian languages until and unless teachers show creative capacity in delivering the content in local languages. To us, this creative act is not merely an act of translation; it also includes a process of situating the global appeal of knowledge in a local context.

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Teaching of Grammar and Reading Skills in English Classrooms: A Case of Madrasas in Hyderabad

Sajida Sultana

Introduction

The inclusion of English as a subject in the curriculum is fairly recent in some madrasas and an established practice in others. The present day madrasas are making an effort to modernize their education system by including mainstream subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, and Computers in their curriculum, thereby combining both contemporary and religious subjects.

In this paper, I will look at how grammar and reading are taught in the English classrooms in madrasas. I chose to study the teaching of grammar and reading skills because these were the two most frequently taught skills in the 10 classrooms that I observed across 5 madrasas in Hyderabad, India. The two skills mentioned here are specific to the madrasas that were visited during the study. The teaching of English may vary in other madrasas depending on the language requirements of the students. I would like to state here that investigation into the various methodologies of teaching English in madrasas is seldom reported. Stern (1992, p. 48) mentions that research into the study of language teaching contexts needs analysis, and evaluation, and selection of the curriculum content. These contexts need to be carefully analysed for effective planning of language courses and could be collected using linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, historical, sociological or literary documentation.

The teaching practices of English in a madrasa depends on factors such as the organization of the madrasa, the views of its management on English, the availability of resources and the motivations and attitudes of the students towards the language. These teaching practices may help in the understanding of the discourse on teaching styles of differently circumstanced schools. To reiterate, the information presented in this paper is specific to the madrasas visited and cannot be generalized for other madrasas. I have used the term differently circumstanced schools (West, 1960) because the teacher, as is also the case in many other schools in the country, is challenged in terms of space for teaching, arrangement of classrooms, availability of materials, varied levels of learner proficiency in English, and the changing need for learning the language. In madrasas, teachers spend a minimum of 30–60 minutes per day per group on teaching English. They may not hold a certificate in education or in the teaching of English, but best efforts for teaching and learning under the circumstances in spite of the challenges mentioned can be seen and this situation needs to be recognized and appreciated.

Canagarajah (1999, p. 174) believes that there must be a “third way” of using the discourses and the grammar of English according to the needs and contexts of the periphery communities¹. English must be pluralized to adapt to the needs and discussions pertaining to different cultures so

that the subjects of the periphery are appropriately represented, thereby making them agents of using the language in a creative and critical manner.

Before I move to the details of the paper, it would be helpful to understand the general practices of English teaching in the five madrasas that were part of the study. The teaching of English in these five madrasas happens in a step-by-step manner, irrespective of age of the learners. The teaching of the English alphabet, simple words, grammar, reading, spoken English, and examination preparation are some of the features of the classrooms observed. The teacher writes the letters of the alphabet in the students' notebooks and the students copy the same on the entire page. It is possible to write in the notebooks of all children because the size of the class is usually small; it varies from five to nine students. Once the students gain knowledge of the alphabet, the teacher moves to the next level—teaching simple words and sentences, followed by reading longer sentences and using the textbook.

Teaching Grammar

Grammar was taught according to whichever method the teacher felt was suitable for the level of the students and as per the plan that s/he had devised for the class. For better understanding, I would like to roughly divide the observed grammar classes into two categories—“occasional” grammar classes and “continual” grammar classes.

In “occasional” grammar classes, the teacher planned a dedicated session on grammar, separate from the textbook sessions. In this session, the teacher mostly began with the definitions of the parts of speech. This was followed by the study of a specific grammar concept in each class. Relevant examples

were provided and similar concepts in Urdu/Arabic grammar were also discussed. The teacher usually asked the students to give examples and wrote them on the blackboard. In the case the students were unable to come up with examples, the teacher provided the same, along with explanation in Urdu. The blackboard was always used for such activities and the teacher gave enough time to the students to copy from the board. In both the “occasional” and “continual” classes, these classes were regarded as writing skills classes. This tells us that the teaching of English still revolves around learning the parts of speech. This may be due to the fact that languages such as Arabic are taught with a strong focus on grammar as a separate class and textbooks exclusively prepared for the purpose.

In contrast with “occasional” grammar teaching, in “continual” grammar classes, grammar was taught while reading sentences from the lesson. The teacher would ask the student to state the present form of a word or describe the usage of apostrophe. In case the student did not know the answer, or responded incorrectly, the teacher asked another student and also made them revise the concepts or check in their notebooks. Teachers who followed this approach believed that teaching grammar separately was time consuming and would not yield the desired result of making the students speak English in a natural manner.

A similar view is held by trainers of spoken English classes, where they make the students speak and write in English after discussing the topic. These trainers focus on usage rather than on the rules of the language. In the following example, the teacher makes use of Urdu that is spoken by a majority of people in the old city of Hyderabad.

Teacher: *Chalo aaj past tense karenge...kaise poochna past tensef* (Come, let us study past tense today...how do you say past tensef)

Students: “did” *lagaake* (using “did”)

T: *Haan...did you...when I use did, main “past” mein gaya...*(Yes...did you... when I use did, I refer to the “past”)

It can be said in the context of madrasas that the teaching of grammatical rules/structures cannot be disregarded, whether learning English or Arabic. The teaching of grammar is however dependent on the teacher's perspective. Even if a teacher conducts formal grammar classes, his/her aim is to see that when the need arises, his/her students perform correctly and naturally.

Teaching Reading

Just as the practice of grammar teaching is specific to each madrasa, the practice of teaching reading also varies from one madrasa to another. Most of the students in the five madrasas observed joined these institutions with English proficiency levels of basic beginners. For this reason, the process of reading at these madrasas began only after a student had acquired the basics—alphabet-word-simple sentence. That is to say that when the student was able to read and recognize words, the teacher introduced the relevant texts for reading. During the reading of a lesson, the focus was on comprehension of the text, correct pronunciation, and meanings of the new/difficult words. This relates to what West (1960, p. 20) calls the “triple impact” i.e., meaning & sight & sound.

During reading sessions, the teacher would ask questions from the text after reading two or three sentences or sometimes after a whole

paragraph was read. Sometimes, the teacher made the students read and at other times, the teacher him/herself read the text. In some cases, to begin with the teacher asked the students to read, but after a point took up reading in order to complete the text.

West (1960, pp. 18-19) suggests separating reading and speech skills because the vocabulary of the two skills are different. In the context of the study, we found that there was a focus on correct pronunciation in the hope that when the students came across words, they would be able to pronounce them correctly. This could be an influence of the education imparted in religious texts, where correct articulation of each letter and sound is stressed to convey the right meaning. In some madrasas, the teachers tried to separate the reading and speech skills because they felt that the words that the students engaged with in the lesson must also be useful to them in learning the language. Also the pronunciation of complex or higher level words was not stressed upon during the reading of the lesson.

While reading, the students followed “Eye-mouth reading” (West, 1960, p. 22) because of the training in reading religious texts. We could say that the teachers' approach of frequent question-answers was a strategy to ensure that the students did not follow eye-mouth reading. It was evident from the interaction with the students (and by looking at their notebooks) that they had a fair understanding of reading (and writing) Urdu. The transfer of skill from Urdu, the primary language, and Arabic, the default language of religious texts, could be emphasized for better reading ability.

An important and common practice followed by all the teachers of the madrasas observed was to explain in Urdu each new or difficult

word that appeared in the text. When the students read the text, the teacher assisted and corrected them wherever necessary. Sometimes, the teacher of the madrasa would ask the students to repeat the words in chorus; at other times the teacher would make the students write the difficult words identified during the reading of the lesson in their notebooks or maintain a separate notebook to serve as reference notes. An example from the class is provided as follows:

Teacher: Evil *ka matlab hai* (means) *burai*, demon *shaitan hai* (is), storm *ka matlab* (means) *toofaan*, native...*uss jagah ke rehne waale* (those who reside in a particular place/region). What is your native [place]f

Students: Hyderabad

Teacher: You can also say some district of Telangana...Huts *ka matlab* (means) *jhopdi*...*Qur'an mein kya likha hai* (what is written in the Holy bookf)...

Students: *Doosron ki madad karna* (to help others)...

Teacher: God helps those who help themselves...Kashmir *mein kya hua?* *Kisko maloom hain?* (what happened in Kashmirf Who knowsf)

Students: Floods *aaye the* (came)...

A point to note is that English classrooms were the only place where the students could practice reading, and the teacher was the only person who helped the students to acquire the language. Given the context, the teacher found this style of teaching most appropriate. This practice of teaching according to the needs and level of the students in order to help them construct simple, grammatically correct sentences is also seen in the teaching

of grammar presented earlier in section on teaching grammar.

The practices observed in the madrasas reiterate the need for English language education to be made more appropriate to the social requirements of the students and the educators. One also needs to consider the manner in which language teaching fits into the given educational environment. Holliday (1994) tried to understand the social context of English language education to achieve appropriate classroom methodologies. According to him, a culture-sensitive approach could provide an understanding of the societal factors that influence English teaching activities such as syllabus design and its implementation. Holliday talked of three methodologies namely, teaching English in the classroom, designing and managing English language education (writing textbooks and examinations), and collecting information about the social context in question (Holliday, 1994, p. 1). He further added that more attention needed to be paid to social needs so that the methodology of teaching, the designing and implementation of curricula projects, and the education of teachers, would be beneficial to the people who used it.

Conclusion

To summarize, the teaching of English in the five madrasas observed was modified according to the level of the students. The decision to prescribe a textbook for the course rested with the management. There was a new trend where the teachers were trying to make students speak in English using different situations, i.e. the focus was shifting to oral skills, but this is happening at a slow pace. Further, classroom data revealed that teachers were trying to have simple

conversations with students, but there was some amount of strain on the students when they were asked to use English. Most students switched to Urdu for these conversations. Having said this, it is equally important to mention that most of the English classroom activities involved making requests and commands, asking questions to elicit responses from the text, acknowledging and praising students, conducting games and activities, and using the blackboard. The use of the two languages was fairly balanced when the teacher linked the lesson to religious knowledge, eliciting responses outside the text, and giving constructive feedback. It was interesting to see that the use of Urdu to translate words and phrases into English occurred mostly during teaching.

From the details presented, it is evident that the madrasas in the study had their own style of language teaching-learning principles that were specific to their location. The framework followed was “theory neutral” and “method neutral” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 32). The teaching of English in the madrasas is an example of going beyond the confines of the language in the personal and educational environment of the students.

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Endnotes

¹ By periphery, I refer to those institutions that do not form the mainstream educational institutions and that function in different/difficult circumstances.

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Summary Writing: Part II*

The Bottom-Up Approach

Yasmeen Lukmani

Why is summarization such an important component of any school curriculum? No language course is complete without it, even though the skills it requires are considered to be beyond the ability of the pre-adolescent student. We do not realize how difficult a task summary writing is (particularly, in the form of a *précis*), and make no attempt to bring it within the range of the learner's ability and mental maturity.

It is of course true that the ability to write a summary is essential for one's cognitive development. A summary is required in any intellectual venture where different views have to be coalesced, and different aspects of a situation (in say, a discussion, speech, article, etc.) have to be combined or differentiated and brought together in a concise form. Also, in a job, where disparate matters have to be brought together and different strands of information have to be separated and put under various categories, the skills involved in summarization are indispensable.

The ability to summarize signals a mind that is in control, and one that can see the larger picture from which to draw elements useful to the context; a mind that knows how to combine and differentiate, and ultimately to give rise to an organised and coordinated structure. It is something every boss requires in order to take an informed decision. It is also a skill every student (above a certain level) needs to acquire.

It is necessary to understand the complex mental activities involved in summarization. These include:

1. Distinguishing between the general and the particular, such as the larger whole and the specific contributing ideas, or between abstract and concrete examples;
2. Classification into categories, to combine features of a situation into one category or differentiate them into several categories. Here the skills of comparison and contrast are essential.

Not only do these mental skills have to be mastered, but appropriate language resources also have to be developed to express the ideas being put together. It is not at all necessary to reword all the points from the original text. However, clear textual signals are needed for an unambiguous statement of ideas, and relationships have to be forged between preceding and succeeding ideas by signposting information through appropriate lexical and cohesive devices.

Bottom-Up Approach

Here, I shall introduce another method of summary formulation that I have devised, which I call the Bottom-Up approach. This is completely different from the top-down pattern I had put forward earlier in "Summary Writing: Part I", in *LLT*, January 2016 (Volume 5, Number 1, Issue 9).

This approach is concerned with using the building blocks of language, i.e. both syntax (grammar) and lexical patterns of the passage, to form the basis for the summary, rather than simply writing the ideas contained in the text. In this approach, grammatical signals such as the main clause help us to focus on the informationally central parts of the sentence. Lexical signals help us to focus on the inter-connections in the text through: a) cohesive links (since, however, etc.) and b) repetition of words and their substitutes (pronouns for the name of an object or individual, or a similar word or phrase relating to the name). Both or either of these methods (grammatical and lexical) could be employed in the Bottom-Up approach to summarization¹.

To illustrate the difference between the two approaches to summary writing (Part I and II), we will use the same passage so that a comparison of the methods is easily possible. The passage used in Part I is given here for easy reference:

Passage for Summarization

(S1) The disturbing effects of the technological revolution may be felt in all fields. (S2) Oil tankers with unlimited capacities are built without considering the consequences of accidents. (S3) Detergents foam on our streams and lakes. (S4) Automobiles outrace safety standards, urban noises challenge our eardrums, and hidden eyes and ears invade our privacy.

(S5) Before answers can be found to these problems, it is necessary to understand two characteristics of the technological revolution—that it is mindless and that it is neutral. (S6) It is mindless because pure science is simply a desire to know, to

uncover the facts, to unlock the secrets. (S7) A mind must be super-imposed onto it if it is to have any limitations. (S8) The technological developments described above are inevitable unless man actively decides to stop their development. (S9) Scientists will continue learning how to unwind the intricacies of DNA, transplant organs, and implant electrodes in the brain as long as there are unknown areas and as long as they are not specifically forbidden to do so.

(S10) It is neutral because the changes, in themselves, brought about by the technological revolution, are neither good nor bad. (S11) They acquire a value only by the way in which they are used. (S12) Science can tell us what we can do but not what we should do. (S13) It can tell us how to do something but not if we should do it. (S14) The possibilities for good and evil of many of the developments described above stagger the imagination and recall the use of atomic power.

(S15) Because the revolution challenging medicine and mankind is mindless and because it is neutral, mind must be imposed on it to control it and determine its values. (S16) The present failure to do this has created a wide gap between man's technological and his humanistic imagination. (S17) Mindless technology threatens to become a monster, destroying its creator: the visions of the future could become ghosts. (S18) This is a warning being sounded increasingly often by thoughtful men, the warning asked editorially, by *The New York Times* on the morning after Hiroshima had been bombed: "Can mankind grow up quickly enough to win the race between civilization and disaster?"

Application of Bottom-Up Approach:

Application of Insights from Syntax (i.e. Grammar) for Summarization

Let us consider how to apply the Bottom-Up approach to summarization. This approach is based on the use of grammar and uses clause analysis to aid in the separation of ideas. The major information in a sentence is carried by its main clause, with the less important information being relegated to its subordinate clauses. For this reason, this process of summarization starts (wherever possible) by isolating and focusing on the main clause and removing the subordinate clauses, unless they happen to be crucial to the meaning. Next, the adverbial or other less important phrases within the main clause may be removed if they are not essential to the central meaning. It then remains for all other unnecessary words to be removed in order for the bare bones of the text to be revealed. Once this is done, these can be connected by adding the appropriate linking words, conjuncts and subordinators. An intuitive sense of what constitutes a topic sentence and which sentences convey important meaning also plays a part.

Let us work through the given passage to eliminate all but the most relevant information. We shall proceed sentence by sentence.

Paragraph 1: S1 reads like a topic sentence, so provisionally, it is retained in its entirety. The rest of the paragraph consists of examples of which any one example may be kept.

Paragraph 2: S5 again reads like a topic sentence, and so, is retained fully. S6 needs to be made brief so we cut out the restatement, i.e. the 2 subordinate clauses); it would now read thus: "It is mindless because pure science is simply a desire to know." S7, S8

and S9 deal with a further development of this point with the help of examples. These sentences can be condensed, by adding to the previous line of the summary given above: "...without any limitations based on ethical considerations, e.g. in organ transplants." This has the required summarization of the main idea of S8 and S9, retaining only one example.

Paragraph 3: Again the first sentence (S10) sounds like a topic sentence and so is retained in its entirety. The other sentences in the paragraph amplify and draw out the implications of the first, so they would require summarization. Perhaps S11 can be retained without any truncation.

Paragraph 4: The first (S15) and second (S16) sentences seem to convey the gist of the paragraph and should be retained in their original form.

Stage 1 of the summary based on the above steps would then read like this:

The disturbing effects of the technological revolution may be felt in all fields, e.g. detergents foam on our streams and lakes. Before answers can be found to these problems, it is necessary to understand two characteristics of the technological revolution—that it is mindless and that it is neutral. It is mindless, because pure science is simply a desire to know without any limitations based on ethical considerations, e.g. in organ transplants. It is neutral, because the changes brought about by the technological revolution are in themselves neither good nor bad. They acquire a value only by the way in which they are used. Because the revolution challenging medicine and mankind is mindless and because it is neutral, mind must be imposed on it to control it and determine its values. The

present failure to do this has created a wide gap between man's technological and his humanistic imagination. Mindless technology threatens to become a monster, destroying its creator.

Application of Insights from Lexis (or Vocabulary) for Summarization

It may also be possible to approach the summary through insights from lexical patterns, or use both syntactic and lexical cues. The close lexical relationships that exist within text can be used to supplement the structuring of ideas.

Notice that the stage 1 summary consists of the following sentences from the text: S1, S3, S5, S6, S10, S11, S15, S16 and S17. Of these, the following can be considered as topic sentences: S1, S5, S6, S10, S15. Of the rest, S3 provides an example, and S11, S16 and S17 consist of the development and drawing out of the consequences of the topic sentences.

The topic sentences themselves are very closely inter-related in terms of their lexis. S5 is connected to S1 because of the word "problems" which links with "disturbing effects" in S1. Though this relationship is explicitly stated here, it need not be so stated and instead be just implied. It also creates a bond between the two sentences by repeating the phrase "technological revolution". By referring to "two characteristics of the technological revolution", the sentence suggests that it is a development from S1. It then brings in the words, "mindless" and "neutral" which become the basis of S6 and S10. S15 also picks up "revolution" and "mindless" and "neutral", which link it closely with S1, S5, S6, and S10. Again, S15 brings in the word "values", which links it with S11.

Students could be asked to look for the words that occur three or more times in the text (cf. Hoey, 1991), through i) straight repetition, e.g. "revolution", ii) reference, e.g. "it", iii) substitution, e.g. "these problems" which can stand for S1 or even for the whole of paragraph 1. The larger the number of repetitions of a word, whether through straight repetition, reference or substitution, the more important that word is to the text.

If asked which word/ phrase they found most central to the passage, the chances are that students would say "technological revolution". This is fine because this is, in fact, the topic being dealt with. It occurs in S1, S5, and S10 (three of the topic sentences identified earlier). "Technological developments" occurs in S8, "the developments described above" in S14, "the revolution" in S15, "man's technological and humanistic imagination" in S16, "technology" in S17. The identification of this phrase as central to the passage leads to the isolation of the topic itself, as well as of the topic sentences, or sentences crucial to the passage.

Other words considered essential to the text would be "mindless" and "neutral", with their correlates "mind" and "values". As the passage seems to concentrate more on the problem than the solution, "mindless" and "neutral" seem to be more central to the text than their correlates.

These words could be identified in their order of importance to the text because they were foregrounded through repetition. Their repeated use made for a clear indication of the topic as well as the development of the topic.

In the above Stage I, the summary was arrived at by focusing on the sentence grammar in relation to the ideas within the text. The ability to identify topic sentences was also required, along with picking out

relevant points. In another kind of passage, we could make more use of the main clauses for focusing on the important points and supplement them with lexical cues, or the lexical cues could take a lead role.

However, in order that Stage 1 summary becomes readable, one has to go over it carefully, removing any instances of repetition, and adding markers of cohesion so that it reads smoothly. Stage 1 therefore deals with the isolation of the ideas and Stage 2 with the polishing of the language, if required, which is not reported here. The two stages together result in an adequate summary.

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Endnotes

¹ For further information see Winter, 1977 and Hoey, 1991.

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Interview

**Jennifer Thomas (JT) talks to
Dr. Yasmeen Lukmani (YK)**

Dr. Yasmeen Lukmani, noted linguist, was Professor and Head of the English Department at the University of Mumbai. She completed her Master's in Applied Linguistics and the Teaching of English from the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1977, she pioneered the "Communication Skills in English" course for the undergraduate programme at the University. She also introduced innovative courses in Applied Linguistics at the B.A. and M.A. levels. She devoted herself to training teachers in how to handle the new language courses, holding more than 30 training programmes. She is currently writing a book on teacher training.

JT: You've had a remarkable journey in the area of Applied Linguistics and ELT. Could you take us through your early days as a student of Applied Linguistics and later as a teacher of ELT in India?

YL: My basic training was in English literature. It was only after my first teaching job at Elphinstone College, Bombay that I became aware of the magnitude of the problem of English language learning in India. I realised that there was little point in teaching English literature when the vast majority of even English literature students didn't know the language sufficiently well. People, it seemed, were in fact desperate to learn the language for a variety of reasons, but they didn't know how to set about doing it. I realized that knowing English was a goal in itself and far more important than being only a hand-maiden to literature.

I was helped in arriving at these views while still at Elphinstone, by Dr. R. B. Patankar, my guru at the University English Department. He was very keen on getting someone to set up linguistically-oriented courses, so I decided to go off and study the field of English Language Teaching.

Luckily, I went to the best place for this field, the University of California at Los Angeles.

One of the major teachers there was Dr. Evelyn Hatch, who is my other guru. I came back full of hope that I could set up something which could make a difference. And very soon I did get into the University, the prime place from where to initiate change. I was offered a post in the Linguistics Department at the University. Through my close association with the University English Department and with the active support of Dr. Patankar and like-minded colleagues like Professor Vispi Balaporia and Dr. Margarida Colaco, we set up an English Language Teaching Cell.

JT: You spoke about how you got into Linguistics through language teaching. How are the two connected and how should that connection be used for training English teachers?

YL: Linguistics is usually taken to mean grammar. Some theoretical knowledge of this area helps, but teacher focus on it, unfortunately, has the opposite effect and can actually be detrimental to learning. In the teaching-learning process, I am basically for language as a form of use, rather than as a formal system, and in fact I think the less one focuses on formal grammar, the better the learning is likely to be. Learning requires that

the mind be alive and tuned in. This is so much easier if you are dealing with topics students are interested in, or involving communication with others, rather than dealing with abstractions like the rules of grammar. That's what language is. Off-shoots of formal linguistics such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics are of course of crucial importance in enabling teachers to understand and foster the learning process.

JT: You were the Head of the English Department of the University of Mumbai. How did you transmute your insights of language learning into actual courses?

YL: The ELT Cell which had been set up in the department was the start of my work on instituting changes in the teaching of English. A two-paper optional course in Applied Linguistics was introduced, dealing with issues such as teaching and testing methodology, sociolinguistics, error analysis and the processing of text. Next, I changed the compulsory course on “The Structure of English” to a course in “Linguistic/Stylistic Analysis of Text”, geared to the analysis of literary texts. It was in fact a hands-on approach to literature, for instead of discussing theoretical models, actual literary texts were linguistically analysed in order to see how meaning was created. At the B.A. level, I was instrumental in introducing a course in “Grammar and the Art of Writing”, which employed knowledge of grammar to create better writing abilities.

JT: The “Communication Skills in English” course introduced in the First Year B.A. programme in your university was a landmark departure from existing language teaching practice. Could you speak about this briefly?

YL: We introduced the program in 1977, in response to a forceful move by educationists at the University to remove English as a compulsory subject at the First Year B.A. level. They claimed that it had done no good whatsoever, as they were focused only on the final goal of the M.A. in English literature, and that it must be removed from the B.A. programme. They asked why such a course was made compulsory for a student of say, Economics or Psychology. All these other teachers admittedly had every right to protest, but Dr. Patankar managed to convince them that his team would provide an English course with a difference, one that was focused on the educational needs of students of all subjects. That was the start of the “Communication Skills” course. It was because of this promised focus, and only because of this, that English with was difficulty retained as a compulsory subject. This has to be remembered; nobody even knows now that English as a compulsory course of study could easily have been scrapped at this point at Bombay University.

There were various considerations in setting up a good compulsory English course. First of all, the goal of training people to think (while they developed their language skills). This was a major focus and one of the ways in which we felt we could achieve this was by doing away with a prescribed textbook. This was a major decision. The moment you have a textbook, teacher exposition sets in, and students proceed to just mug up texts; they cease to think, they cease to approach the text on their own.

Another important consideration was the nature of the test. We wanted to ensure that the test required students to think when answering the questions. The next point was how do we develop these tests, for which there was no precedent?

Dr. N. S. Prabhu, arguably the greatest applied linguist that India has produced, was called in for support and guidance. At the British Council, Madras he had set up a highly innovative language teaching project, which was a trendsetter not just in India, but on the world's Applied Linguistics stage. He was of enormous help in the project. The other outsider who helped was Professor Jacob Tharu of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad. Dr. Prabhu came up with the brilliant and unprecedented notion of introducing the concept of levels in the test format. The student population, running into thousands in about 100 plus colleges, included what is currently Goa University as well as rural parts of Maharashtra. So the students ranged from those who spoke the language as a native to those who did not even know the alphabet. They were all necessarily, by virtue of belonging to the same University, to be given the same course and the same examination in First Year B.A.

The course focused on the skills of reading, writing, summarizing, and only to a small extent, listening and speaking (because of practical difficulties in dealing with a huge population). We decided on equal marks for reading and writing, i.e. 40 marks each. Note-making carried fifteen marks. In reading, we had three levels and in writing, two levels. At the lowest level of each, we hoped that the average learner of the language would improve sufficiently over the course to get 50 per cent of the allotted marks and thus would be able to pass. The others could legitimately earn better marks at the intermediate level, and even more at the advanced level, by doing progressively more difficult tasks, and genuinely earning their marks.

The reading questions demanded factual comprehension, interpretation, inference and

evaluation on unseen texts. The tasks, even those in note-making, were broken into small and manageable parts, and the writing tasks had some amount of guidance built into them. So, it was possible for even the lower level student to answer the Level I questions.

JT: What evidence do you have that this course, based on a no-textbook policy, worked?

YL: We did a year-long course evaluation programme (something which is never done) under the aegis of the British Council 10 years later, with Professor Alan Davies of Edinburgh University, and found that the level of English reached by "Communication Skills" students was very much higher than the comparable control group we got in S.N.D.T. University, Bombay. In addition, the difference between the entry level of "Communication Skills" students and their exit level at the end of the year was quite remarkable. It was reassuring that same year, at a conference in Ratnagiri, mainly for teachers from rural colleges, there was a unanimous demand for more courses of this type.

We gave colleges whatever support we could. Writing the test paper being a very challenging task, the ELT Cell made available the preliminary and terminal exam question papers for ten years. We brought these papers out as university publications, and for years they were used as teaching material. There were of course no prescribed textbooks, but teachers had to have some material to use in the classroom. They increasingly began using these question papers for teaching.

Other texts were also used, predominantly Bhasker and Prabhu's *English Through Reading*. Many teachers objected very

strongly at the beginning to the lack of a textbook. It meant much more work not just for teachers but for everybody—the students, the test writers. In colleges where it was well taught, the results were staggeringly good, even where the initial English level of the students was poor. Of the wide range of colleges surveyed, a very large proportion of students and teachers were in support of the course. To help initiate the teachers, we had over 30 teacher training workshops spread out over many years, so that fresh entrants to teaching could get proper exposure.

JT: In the light of this, would you say today that we have come a long way from the Grammar-Translation method?

YL: I don't know, frankly. But it seems to me, the way in which people are setting major national tests, they are still focusing on tiny matters of etiquette like the difference between “can” and “may”. There are so many more fundamental things to be dealt with. It appears that what we should be more concerned with is the connection between sentences, rather than grammar within the sentence, and primarily with clarity in statement of the message. The indoctrination that we have always had about correct sentence construction, however, is so great that it is very difficult to get out of that mould.

Recently, I was very impressed with how task-oriented the new *Bal Bharati* textbooks in Maharashtra are. I hope the teaching is in tune with this trend. But one does not readily see teachers who have the English to deal with it. There is also much talk of Communicative Teaching, but little evidence of it.

I have to say that the craze for introducing English at the first standard does not help. It is useless introducing it at that level when

you don't have adequately trained teachers to teach it, or often, even teachers who at least know the language. Naturally, students do not learn, regardless of the class in which English is introduced. To be honest, it's incorrect to say that they have not learnt anything. What they have learnt is that they cannot learn. They have got this message so deeply within them that learning for them is impossible. I think that is a dreadful message for the educational system to convey. So we need to make people perform with whatever materials are at hand—games and drama, or anything that stimulates and excites. Let them speak, read, write. Let them make mistakes.

After all, we do not lose hope with a child learning its mother tongue, with a whole series of stages of error. Why are we not able to absorb that notion into English teaching? This is the crucial idea all English teachers should have, that learning takes place through practice and making errors.

It was in the post-Chomsky phase that new views on the nature of language learning were developed, particularly the notion that people should be allowed to learn at their own pace. In mother-tongue learning in every language, certain things are learnt earlier and certain things later, different learners have different learning agendas, even though there are certain similarities in general patterns of learning. As teachers, we should apply this same principle to second language learning and make language do the work that it is supposed to do—which is use in context.

Perhaps the study of grammar does more harm than good. It is very heartening that now task-oriented exercises are being developed in textbooks. Hopefully we will develop teacher training techniques to build towards implementing a task-oriented and contextualised approach.

JT: Yes, I think the missing link is the teacher training component in all of this.

YL: And also the nature of the English test; because that determines the teaching. Unless you are going to be able to develop those kinds of tasks in the test, it's useless putting them in the textbook.

But yes, at least some textbooks have changed. What have not changed are the poor facilities provided in teacher training, and particularly for English competence training in teachers. We have to spend a great deal more money on training.

JT: Let's talk about your 1972 study on integrative versus instrumental motivation of Marathi speakers to learn English. Could you talk a little about this study?

YL: I was trying to find out how one can make a language course work, because if it is to work it must tap [*sic*] the aspirations and motivations of students. I took a representative sample of Mumbai students. My subjects were from an average Marathi-medium school in a middle-class locality where the levels of English were fairly ok. I found that people did want to study English because it gave them opportunities to rise higher in life. In the indirect questionnaire which had a series of traits to tap [*sic*] the deep-seated beliefs of learners relating to themselves in relation to the English-speaking community of Indians, as well as their own community of Marathi speakers. I found that while the students seemed to be grounded in their own community, the features on which the English-speaking community was rated higher were standard of living, and prospects of greater success, both things which lead to a

better lifestyle. However, in their ratings for their own self-concept, they showed that they did not want the modernity and the independence they associated with the English-speaking community. These students wanted to learn English and to lead a better life but were quite prepared to be culturally grounded. They showed a clearly instrumental motivation for learning English, not an integrative motivation which is what all studies done in the US on immigrants had so far shown. This study was published in *Language Learning*, a major Applied Linguistics journal in the US in June 1972, and I was told later that more offprints were requested for this article than any other in that year.

As a matter of interest, I may mention that a book by Lambert and Gardiner, among other things corroborating these findings, based on a study in South-East Asia, came out in December 1972.

Later on, I also did a study on the motivation of English Literature students to study English. The results were much the same. The motivation was instrumental. Students were taking English literature as a means of studying the English language. Why, I would like to ask educators and educational planners, don't we have language courses available for them to do instead?

JT: There is a new education policy in the offing. Do you wish to see any significant or specific changes with regard to language education policy in India?

YL: We need to have much more teacher training, and the training should directly reflect the teaching methodology they would later be following. I would like to train

students to first and foremost, think. I would like them to start off using the language to express themselves, and then concentrate on perfection in sentence structure only later.

I would also like attention to be given to the nature of the tests we provide. They should be challenging and force students to think. Teachers need specific training in how to write tests; and ultimately these kinds of tests can only be written if the process of teaching changes.

I have to end on a sad note. Unfortunately, for all my hopes, the sad story is that none of the courses that we started and which were so successfully run for 15 to 25 years, whether the Communication Skills course at FYBA, or the B.A. course or the M.A. course, have survived. In Communication Skills only the name remains; the course is now textbook-based.

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Landmarks

Second Language Acquisition

R. Amritavalli

...one would expect SLA theories to...use the natural laboratory of bilingual communities worldwide. (Sridhar, 1994)

Some Issues in the Field of SLA

Introduction

There are some things that human beings naturally do, given the mere opportunity to do so. Walking and talking are the foremost examples of such skills. Babies are not born walking and talking, but by the age of three they usually are doing both. Walking and talking occur naturally in the course of a human being's physical or mental maturation; these abilities are not “taught,” or “learnt” consciously. Similarly, we talk of unconscious language *acquisition* by the human infant, rather than language *learning*.

The language or languages acquired in infancy are “first languages”, and infants who have the opportunity to acquire two or more languages grow up as “simultaneous bilinguals”. Any language acquired after infancy (say, after the age of three) is a “second language”. Second Language Acquisition, then, refers to a natural growth in the mind of a “second” language or languages, given the opportunity, i.e. given sufficient “exposure” to the language(s) in question, or sufficient language “input”.

The origins of the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) may be traced to a short (8-page) but seminal essay, “The significance of learner's errors” by S. Pit Corder (1967). Corder notes a shift of emphasis, brought

about by the discrediting of the behaviourist view of language learning as habit formation (owing to the work of Noam Chomsky), from “a preoccupation with *teaching*” towards “a study of *learning*” languages. This in an affirmation of the Humboldtian view that “we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way”. The resulting impetus to the study of first language acquisition, says Corder, “has inevitably led to a consideration of the question whether there are any parallels between the processes of acquiring the mother-tongue and the learning of a second language”.

Corder's thesis is that learner errors, like the child's errors, offer a window into the process of creative construction of a language system. The “systematic error” allows us to reconstruct the learner's “knowledge of the language to date, i.e. his *transitional competence*”.

No one expects a child learning his mother-tongue to produce from the earliest stages only forms which in adult terms are correct or non-deviant. We interpret his 'incorrect' utterances as being evidence that he is in the process of acquiring language...for those who attempt to describe his knowledge of the

language at any point in its development, it is the 'errors' which provide the important evidence. (Corder, 1967, p. 165)

In the section “Inflectional Inconsistency in an Emerging Grammar”, of this essay, I will apply Corder's approach to a case study on second language acquisition of English in India, to suggest the richness of the mental systems that the learner brings to this process. Another seminal idea that stresses the systematicity of learners' grammars is that of *Interlanguage* (Selinker, 1972).

Individual differences in SLA

Corder's classic essay raises many of the questions that continue to preoccupy the field of SLA. He suggests that if the L1 and L2 are acquired in the same way, “the principal feature that differentiates the two...is the presence or absence of motivation.” How “nurseries, streets and classrooms” present dramatically different motivational challenges to the learner was described by Macnamara (1973). Currently, the study of motivation is subsumed under the study of “individual differences” and “affective factors,” i.e. emotional factors, including anxiety, personality, and social attitudes, that influence an individual's ability to learn a new language (Piasecka, 2011).

Input, intake and interlanguage

More importantly, Corder realized that “the simple fact of presenting a certain linguistic form to a learner in the classroom does not necessarily qualify it for the status of input,” because “it is the learner who controls this input, or more properly his intake.” He mooted the idea of a learner's *built-in syllabus*: “The problem is to determine

whether there exists such a built-in syllabus and to describe it.” This idea was further explored in studies on the stages of acquisition of a second language (including a “silent period”, during which the learner develops comprehension, but does not attempt to speak the new language); and on the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes, as compared with a child's first language acquisition data (Brown (1973); Dulay & Burt (1973, 1974a, 1974b, 1975); Bailey, Madden & Krashen (1974); see Krashen (1977) for a review).

But SLA need not progress from one step to the next in an orderly fashion; a learner may use two forms at the same time, as we shall see. This has led to studies on variation in SLA.

Comprehensible input

Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985, 1989) strongly reiterated that a second language is acquired, given “comprehensible input”. What drives acquisition however is input at a stage just beyond the learner's current stage of grammatical knowledge, symbolized as *i* in his “*i+1*” hypothesis. Note that this again implicates a learner-determined syllabus, as against an externally sequenced or ordered syllabus. Moreover, it is the learner who determines what is comprehensible to him. As Prabhu was to say later (1987, p. 66), “The same sample of language can be comprehensible to the same learner at one level and for one purpose, and incomprehensible at another.” Comprehensibility according to Prabhu was therefore a function of the learner, the text, and a “criterion of adequacy.”

Does second language acquisition occur in an instructional context (i.e. in the classroom)? Does the age of the acquirer matter? Do all second language acquirers reach a

comparable level of proficiency (as first language acquirers are assumed to do); if not, why not? Is input sufficient, or is output (or language production) also necessary for success in SLA? These are some of the research questions I will look into in my paper.

Acquisition in an instructional context

The procedural syllabus (the Bangalore Project)

Our experience with English shows that language taught systematically in the classroom is not “deployable” by a learner in real time (Prabhu, 1987). Ordinary language use is fundamentally a “creative”, rule-governed process, that requires an automatic conformity to grammatical norms, and that has no correlation with conscious performance in grammar tests. Prabhu's Bangalore Project demonstrated how a “procedural syllabus” can evolve in classrooms that follow a communicational or meaning-focussed approach (not to be confused with the “communicative” approach, which aims at a “communicative competence”). The syllabus and the language input in the project hence emerged out of classroom discourse, which in turn arose out of the learners' problem-solving activities that engaged them in an effort to comprehend language. Note the implication here that the teacher and the learner set their own “standards” for English. This is pertinent given that learners of English in India necessarily acquire the kinds of English that occur around them; these may range from international and national varieties (e.g. in the media) to local varieties of the language. (See also the discussion of immersion and English medium education in this article.)

Learner autonomy, authenticity, and whole language

If learner-driven processes are central to successful (second) language acquisition, much of what is done by specifying the classroom syllabus, methodology and testing amounts to “interference” with acquisition (Newmark, 1966), and an erosion of learner autonomy (Amritavalli, 2007). Amritavalli found that learners read and understand texts that they choose for themselves with greater success than those that are prescribed or teacher-chosen texts, *even from within the textbook*. Self-chosen texts tend to be shorter, are at the appropriate cognitive level, and include a variety of genres, such as poetry, letters and visual-verbal material. They also allow learners to set their own limits on comprehensibility.

Learner autonomy leads to an authentic learning experience (as against play-acting at learning, for passing examinations). Authenticity is sometimes (mis)interpreted as the mere use of “real” or “occurring” texts; but Widdowson (1979, p. 165), distinguishes “genuine” or occurring texts from authentic ones. He tells us that authenticity is “not a quality residing in instances of language but...a quality which is bestowed on them, created by the response of the receiver”.

The whole language movement is an approach to language teaching that incorporates the essence of many of the ideas outlined above. Presenting language as story reading and storytelling, whether in first or second language classrooms, it ensures age appropriateness, authentic engagement with meaning, and unconscious acquisition of recurring language. It also promotes aspects of language use ranging from punctuation, spelling and paragraphing, to reading and writing multi-lingually. See Mangubhai

(2011) and Jangid and Amritavalli (2011) for a contextually relevant introduction to whole language.

Immersion and “English medium” education

The clamour for “English medium” education in India, and the relative success of “English medium” schools in promoting knowledge of the language, indicates (not unexpectedly) that English is learnt not only in the English language classroom, but from any and every opportunity to learn the language. The Indian experience of “Immersion” programmes (described in Wikipedia as “educational programs where children are instructed in an L2 language” in a “sociolinguistic setting that facilitates second-language acquisition”) thus by far predates the institution of such programmes in Canada. In fact, immersion programmes may correspond better to the bilingual situation in our Kendriya Vidyalayas than the often monolingual situation sought to be promoted in English medium schools. Swain (1991) provides some critical insight into these programmes.

Is there a critical period for language acquisition?

Patterns of recovery from language loss due to brain damage showed that until around puberty, the brain was plastic enough to reorganize language representation into the undamaged brain areas (the “critical period hypothesis,” Lenneberg, 1967). Neuronal plasticity has been a fertile area of interdisciplinary research, and the questions for SLA have become more complex. There may be multiple age cut-offs: e.g., native-like pronunciation is difficult to acquire after age 7. However there is no clear evidence that other aspects of a language cannot be acquired after this age, or after puberty.

Indeed, the study of infant speech perception suggests that infants “tune out” of sound distinctions which are absent from their language as early as the end of their first year, although they are born as “universal listeners”! However, four-year-olds “tune in” again to foreign language sound distinctions (otherwise, children could never “pick up a native accent” after infancy). This yo-yo development in the ability to listen (known as a U-shaped curve in the acquisition literature) is typical of language acquisition.

A path-breaking brain study (Perani et al., 1998) showed that irrespective of age of acquisition, the brain area for L1 and L2 is the same, provided that late acquirers (>age of 10) and early acquirers (>age of 3) are equally proficient in the language. However, this is a chicken and egg situation: we do not know whether some learners acquire L2 better because they use the same brain area for their L2 and L1, or whether, when a certain level of proficiency is reached, the L2 gets represented in the same area as L1.

When people learn a second language, their first language may also change in subtle ways (Chang, 2012; Cook, 2008). This suggests that different languages exist in the mind as related systems, not as separate systems.

Inflectional Inconsistency in an Emerging Grammar

An error-ridden sample

Consider these opening sentences from two paragraphs of 138 and 132 words, written on two topics suggested by a candidate in an M.A, English entrance examination.

- i. Rural childrens can be provided better access to schooling by making their parents aware of the future of their children....Children in rural areas doesn't go to school for the reason that...

- ii. It's a well known fact that “Doctor's are human not God.” But do they ever try to gain the position of even a human. For the doctors money is god and the life of a patient is useless. ... Doctor's prefer to be in big cities for better sattlement (sic) of their life and job ...

If you are a teacher of English as I am, the underlined errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar must have leapt to the eye. It is unlikely that this writer got a good grade.

Now let us look at the same writing with the eyes of an SLA researcher. We see now not just that there are errors, but that errors co-occur with the correct forms in the same sample, sometimes in the same sentence: *Rural childrens, their children, Children in rural areas; Doctor's, doctors, Doctor's*. This is the variability in SLA mentioned in the section “Input, intake and interlanguage”. Why does this happen? Is there a pattern here?

The irregular noun

On the “impaired representation” or “feature-deficit” hypothesis of morphological error, the learner does not mentally distinguish singular from plural; s/he uses these forms at random. But in our sample, the plural is consistently marked, even if it is “wrong”. Bishop (1994) showed that in children with SLI (Specific Language Impairment), errors of commission (where a plural is used instead of a singular) are few or non-existent, whereas errors of omission (singular used for plural) are far more common. This shows the importance of looking at the larger picture, and not only at the errors. Incidentally, research shows that normal Second Language Acquisition (SLA) populations manifest difficulties similar to SLI populations in their L1 (Paradis, 2005).

The “error” *Doctor's* shows confusion in the conventional use of the “apostrophe s”. However, it is the punctuation that is wrong here, not the “grammar”. The error *childrens* is due to an “over regularization” of an irregular plural, a kind of error that occurs during first language acquisition. Looking now at all the nouns in our candidate's sample, we find:

- 29 correctly used tokens of singulars (*aim (2), money (4), disease, life (3), govt. (3), govt. job, private practice, private practise, fact, position, human (2), god, patient, process, oath, beast, school (3)*)
- 20 correctly used tokens of regular plurals (ignoring wrong punctuation) (*check-ups, Doctor's (2), doctors, studies (3), cities, areas (2), fees, parents (4), advantages, brother's, sisters, things (2)*)
- 5 correctly used tokens of irregular plurals (*people (2), children (3)*)

Thus, in a total of 57 noun tokens, there are 54 correct tokens, and 3 errors—*childrens*, *children's*, and *bondages*—hence an error rate of <6 per cent.

The errors are limited to specific words. *Bondage* is an abstract noun that does not pluralize. As for *childrens/children's*, note the absence of a possible error, *childs*. The learner knows the irregular form *children*, but a productive rule of plural formation occasionally overrides it. The over regularization of an irregular form is typical of competing rule and item-based mental representations during acquisition. There is instability in the learners' mental representation of this particular word, interpreted as a positive sign of living and changing grammatical knowledge in this adult learner (age 18+).

The verb do in “do-support”

Turning to the verb error in “Children in rural areas doesn't go to school”, let us now look at this learner's overall use of verbs, constructing a “morpho-syntactic profile”. There are 38 tokens of correctly used verbs, regular and irregular, finite and non-finite; including two correct tokens of *do*. As against this, there are three incorrect tokens of *do*.

Verb, 3rd person singular

the govt. spends

Verb, 3rd person plural

they try to; do they ever try to; in this process they don't even care for; they forget; they wish to; doctors prefer; they know; they provide

Verb *be* (Irregular)

their main aim is (2), It's a well known fact, Doctor's are, money is, the life of a patient is, people are poor and are unable..., those things... which are of

Verb -ed/ -en (regular)

can be provided

Verb -ed/ -en (irregular)

had taken; must be told; must be fed; must be taught; should be given

Verb, infinitive

their main aim is to earn money (2); try to show; by asking to get; wish to do; prefer to be; Try not to be..., but be; have to look after; in order to; must teach; may help them to; must make them

Again, the error rate is a little above 6 per cent. More interestingly, the error is in the use of only one verb, *do*; and again, errors co-exist with the correct form. Let us now compare the correct and incorrect uses of *do* by this learner.

×**agreement** Children...doesn't go to school; they doesn't care for; they doesn't want to...

Ok agreement they don't even care for...; do they ever try to...

The learner's simultaneous use of correct and incorrect forms shows instability in the grammar. What causes this instability? Is the problem specific to the use of *do* with negation? Does the learner sometimes use *doesn't* and *isn't* as fixed forms? There is no instance of *be* with negation in the data, so we must leave this as speculation.

Knowledge of Grammar and Knowledge of Conventions

This mini-analysis suggests a difference between knowledge of language, and knowledge of conventions. For a linguist, the learner described here mainly lacks the knowledge of conventions—of punctuation, of spelling (*practice/practise*), of irregular plurals. There is a very specific problem of agreement when *do*- support occurs along with negation. But the very instability of the learner's grammar argues that the grammar can change, that given better opportunities for input and intake, it will attain normative standards.

In the educational and social context of language use however, conventions matter. So does content, i.e. the argument, and the construction of the discourse. But then, the characteristics of a sound argument and a good discourse construction are again best acquired by exposure to good examples of argumentation and discourse. The sample of learner language discussed here thus both holds out a promise (on the learner's part), and requires a promise (on our part) to continue to provide English learning opportunities to all learners.

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Book Reviews

Interaction and Second Language Development: A Vygotskian Perspective

Philadelphia:
Language Learning
& Language
Teaching 44. Series
Editors: Spada, N.
and Van Deusen-
Scholl, N.

John Benjamin Publishing Company (215
pages)

R. A. van Compernelle (2015)

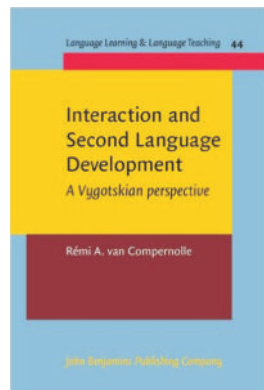
ISSN 1569 – 9471

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Reviewed by: **L. Devaki**

This book re-conceptualizes the link between the role of interaction and second language (L2) development from the perspective of socio-cultural theory. It starts by critiquing the two interactionist traditions—the cognitive interactionist tradition in which interaction is conceptualized as an environmental trigger and the social interactionist tradition where interaction is situated in the external world. A third position is also proposed in which interactionism constitutes the dialectical unity between the external social world and individual mental functioning. This dialectal perspective pervades the book. In fact, the second chapter expands on this perspective by discussing the concept of communicative interactions as a



mediational tool and the notion of internalization and the zone of proximal development in the context of mediated performance. Additionally, the role of micro-discourse analysis is discussed as an approach to understanding interactions and L2 development.

In the subsequent six chapters, the author discusses six different themes of interactions, retaining the emphasis on the dialectical perspective.

In Chapter 3, van Compernelle examines the role of communicative interaction in the L2 development process. He takes the perspective that L2 is not a readymade linguistic system to be acquired, but a process of integrating and gaining control over psychological tools. He is concerned mainly with the bidirectional process of internalization of mediational means. In this sense, communicative interaction is both a source and a driver of the developmental process.

In Chapter 4, the author deals with the relation between interaction and negotiation of meaning. Interaction is seen as a joint activity (as opposed to seeing it as occurring in the external context). Interaction entails negotiation of meaning. Again, negotiation of meaning is not something that happens in an individual's mind. It is co-regulated implicitly as in the case of inter-subjectivity processes and explicitly in the case of seeking appropriate conversational support.

In Chapter 5, the author discusses the role of first language interaction in L2 development. Here, the discussion focuses on how first language serves as an optimal tool, mediating the internalization of L2 meaning. This

position is contrary to the received wisdom that maintains that L2 development occurs when it is used exclusively.

In Chapter 6, the author deals with the roles of participation and active reception in L2 development, with a focus on the classroom and pedagogical context. He highlights how and why communicative events need to be understood in terms of how participants use the resources (language, gestures and objects) at their disposal. The inadequacies of the traditional notions of speakers and hearers for understanding interactions are also highlighted.

In Chapter 7, the relation between interactionism and L2 development in the context of dynamic assessment is explored.

The mediational nature of interaction competence that is co-produced through a variety of tools forms the theme of Chapter 8. The theme addresses the issue of supporting interactions through new mediational means.

In the ninth chapter, the author concludes by synthesizing and providing directions for further research and pedagogy.

In this book, the theoretical, methodological and analytical discussions are directly linked to pedagogical implications in each chapter. It also provides relevant excerpts at various points that help readers to engage with the concept under discussion. The data sessions given at the end of the chapter are useful for practical engagement with the themes. Video clips of a few data sessions (Session Nos.: 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7) are available at <https://benjamins.com/#catalog/books/lllt.44/video>. The questions that accompany the data sessions provide clear analytical directions that are helpful for those who are interested in undertaking an interactional analysis from a socio-cultural perspective. This makes the book extremely useful to a variety of

audience such as researchers working in socio-cultural tradition, scholars working in second language acquisition outside the framework of socio-cultural theory, students working in second language as well as socio-cultural traditions and lastly second language teachers.

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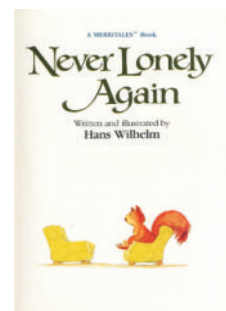
Never Lonely Again

New York, NY:
Random House

Hans Wilhelm (1988)

Reviewed by:

Meenakshi Khar



Stimulating children's literature motivates children to share their experiences with others. The most effective impact is that children learn to resolve their conflicts and issues by relating to them and thinking critically. Children find connections among books, and relate the books to their own lives.

Never Lonely Again is a children's story book, written and illustrated by Hans Wilhelm. The story is presented by Waldo, a shaggy dog who is loved by children. It is a touching story of a squirrel, Chestnut, who has nothing exciting to look forward to in life. He feels lonely because he has no friends. This makes him listless and unenthusiastic about life. The story is a sensitive portrayal of what it means to be lonely, an issue that is generally not associated with young children

because children are thought to be friendly and full of life. Children's books generally do not address the unsaid feelings and emotions one undergoes when one does not have friends. Chestnut therefore represents many young children who suffer from loneliness due to lack of friends.

Through the book, the author very skilfully shares with the readers, his personal experience of loneliness as a child. He further adds that most grown-ups have experienced loneliness in their childhood, but have forgotten their experience because they are so busy in their everyday lives. However, for the author, this is something unforgettable and through this book he has shared it with children.

There are whispers of manifold thoughts in this book. We can be friends with stones, rivers, clouds and meadows. How can one be lonely when one is surrounded by nature? It is a pleasure to read this book for many reasons. Chestnut and Morris are the two main characters who are very different from each other. Morris, the otter, is a lovable character who finds happiness in whatever comes his way, unlike the bored Chestnut. Morris is caring and befriends Chestnut in spite of him being sullen, as he feels sorry for him. He takes Chestnut on a trip around the gardens, rivers and hills, and tells him how they can be friends with stones, flowers and butterflies. Life is full of happiness if one enjoys whatever one has. According to him, happiness is a state of mind and it springs from anything that gives us joy. Chestnut soon has many friends but Morris is his best friend. At the end of the trip, Chestnut becomes emotional and asks Morris if he could become his friend. This is the most poignant moment in the book; and it is beautifully illustrated. Chestnut probably suddenly realises what Auden remarked in

the context of the quality of meaningful literature that “until now, I never knew how I felt...thanks to this experience, I should never feel the same way again.”

The experience narrated in the story will urge children to be compassionate towards others and help them get an insight into their own behaviour and feelings. What makes this book a perfect piece of children's literature is that neither have the concepts of truth and beauty of feelings been complicated by preaching, nor have they been portrayed in a way which makes them go beyond the young reader's ability to understand.

Story Grammar

In keeping with a story grammar, besides the plot and the characters, there is a conflict at the beginning of the story, which continues right through the book and is resolved in the end. The narrator builds up the context of the story in the very beginning when he says that he had experienced loneliness in his childhood, but unlike many adults he still remembers it. The tone of the story is relaxed and spontaneous. The meaning is implicitly woven into the story and readers will be able to not only understand what the words say but also go beyond their meaning. For example, the following lines in the story:

“Then they watched the different clouds going by

The sun was getting low,
and it was time for them
to return home.”

Chestnut and Morris watched the clouds while sitting on the branch of a tree. Actually they saw the shapes of various animals in the patches of the clouds. This is depicted not in words but through the contoured illustration of the clouds. The description of the sun

getting low brings to the mind of the reader an image of the setting sun; it is the time when children are expected to go back home.

Lifelike Illustrations

A good children's book does not only have an authentic story, but the illustrations also contribute in making it a lifelike experience. In fact, illustrations have a significant role in children's literature. They are not just colourful decorations, but are like scaffolding for young readers and help them to comprehend what they are reading. Illustrations are like pedagogical tools for understanding the text and also have an aesthetic value. In this story book, the action and events of the story are depicted through well-defined illustrations. The drawings are not just static pictures; there is mobility in the expressions of the characters and their actions. The colours of the drawings are pleasing and add to the aesthetic dimension of reading. The cover page of the book has an illustration of Chestnut sitting in a sofa chair in front of an unoccupied chair. This illustration can be used for playing guessing games with the children by asking them to guess what the story could be about. The clouds in the shapes of animals heighten the imagination of the readers; it is also an implicitly built lesson to help children recall the animals they have seen or heard about. The silhouettes of a squirrel and an otter on the hilltop and on the branch of a tree are particularly appealing.

A New Beginning

The story ends on a very positive note. Chestnut is excited with his new found friends and he also realises that he has a purpose in life. He hopes the following

morning will bring something new and exciting for him.

“After all, he couldn't disappoint all the friends

Who would be waiting for him!”

Never Lonely Again has an inherent humane touch that young readers will connect with spontaneously. This is said to be the characteristic of a good children's book.

Meenakshi Khar is Assistant Professor, Department of Education in Languages, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi. She is currently involved in developing e-content and research project on implementation of National Curriculum Framework-2005 in states and union territories.

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Lexical Input Processing and Vocabulary Learning.

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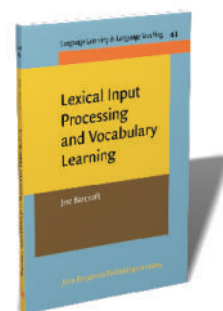
Joe Barcroft. (2015)

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Reviewed by: **A.K. Sinha**



In recent publications pertaining to second language acquisition, much attention has been paid to vocabulary learning. Traditionally, vocabulary comprises a body of words in a particular language. However, these days it includes groups of words used as

a one word unit (e.g. *of course, as well, such and such*), as well as multi-word formulaic expressions (e.g. *I think, you know, in fact, etc.*). How should vocabulary be learnt; should one emphasize receptive input, i.e. reading and listening or productive output, i.e. writing and speaking? Should one concentrate on intentional or incidental vocabulary learning? In his book, Barcroft examines various such problems and analyses and evaluates several theoretical approaches to answer them. His evaluation leads him to decide in favour of lexical input processing (Lex-IP).

In the first unit of the book, Barcroft analyses the concept of *lexical IP theory* to highlight how vocabulary acquisition develops. He looks at how much *input* is converted into *intake* (i.e. the ability to map new word forms onto their meanings correctly). He uses his theory—*Type of Processing Resource Allocation* (TOPRA)—to predict how different types of tasks affect processing resource allocation during L2 vocabulary learning (p. 64). Since TOPRA traces how word forms map out word meaning, it stresses on the *intentional* rather than *incidental* vocabulary learning. If one looks up the meaning of a word in a dictionary, one gets not only semantic but also syntactic and collocational information, which makes the process of mapping incremental. His suggestion on knowing bits and pieces of word forms is acceptable with reference to words such as “*nationalisation*” (nation + al + ize + tion) but his discussion on “*faucet*” in terms of *fau* + *sit* is incomprehensible from the point of view of mapping the word form onto the semantic form (p. 35). His reference to the Spanish word “*fiesta*” and its English equivalent “*party*” is also well taken. A native speaker of English can map “*fiesta*” onto “*party*” only in one sense (in the sense of a group of people taking part in a social event

such as eating, drinking, dancing, singing, etc.). The other meanings of party (i. a political organization, ii. a group of people taking part in a particular activity, or iii. a person (or persons) forming one side of an agreement) cannot be associated with “*fiesta*”. In fact, a Spanish speaking learner of English may not (and need not) acquire all meanings of “*party*” simultaneously.

Barcroft believes that vocabulary learning is neither purely incidental nor intentional; it is a continuum from highly incidental to highly intentional. He refers to six points on the continuum and suggests suitable strategies for each of them, as offered by other scholars. The discussion would have been more effective had he cited difficult examples for them. In fact, the schemata that he offers for his TOPRA model have not been illustrated either. There is nothing wrong in referring to mapping-oriented-processes, but it would have been better to show how they operate. His theory (p. 90) on structural, mapping-oriented and semantic perspective is based on his research reports, which have simply been referred to but not even summarized in the book.

In Chapter 7, Barcroft discusses the effect of output with and without access to meaning, based on the results of copying target words and word segments and choral repetition of target words. All these discussions are reviews of work done by other scholars. Barcroft offers an interesting resource book that inspires researchers to go through these reviews. The book is tantalizing but not illuminating. However, his remark is sound that output with access to meaning facilitates efficient and successful Lex-IP whereas output without access to meaning does not do so. This is a crucial point that pedagogues must keep in mind. He also recommends different types of quizzing to retrieve different sets of words.

Some scholars have simplified the process of language acquisition into two stages—*semanticization* and *consolidation*. The process of retrieval follows consolidation. It includes declarative knowledge of not only individual words, but also that of a network consisting of “nodes” (i.e. cognitive entities) and “paths” (showing the relationship among those nodes (Anderson 1983, 1990)). Within the network, several retrieval paths are possible which strengthen the process of consolidation further. As Barcroft suggests, retrieval opportunities extend to incidental vocabulary learning as well. It not only modifies existing knowledge but also strengthens incidental acquisition.

While talking about the partial L2 word-form learning, the author explains how increased exposure to target vocabulary in the input leads to stronger development of lexical representation and how spacing in the presentation of input leads to better learning than bulk representation at one time.

The author is well justified in discussing the effect of thematic sets, but not while juxtaposing semantic sets against thematic sets because the latter are in fact a crucial component of semantic sets. The use of the expression “clustering” also does not seem to be very appropriate as “clustering” denotes grouping of similar entities whereas different thematic roles refer to the relation of entity with a predicate (e.g. agent, theme, source, goal of an action/event).

The chapter on input enhancement refers to augmenting the significance of a lexical item in the input by underlining or shadowing it, increasing its font size, changing the font, changing the font colour or using some other kind of textual manipulation. Such devices have the potential to draw the reader's attention.

Chapter 13 comprises a discussion on linguistic variability, vocabulary learning and lex-IP. Though language learners do not ignore the acoustic features of speech while assimilating linguistic input, to go into its details is raising another set of issues from which the writer abstains. In Chapter 14, the author discusses the theoretical and instructional implications of the discussions contained in the earlier chapters. In Chapter 15, he suggests the future direction of research involving multiple input processing within the lex-IP frame work.

Though this book is a good source of information on lex IP research, it cannot be used as a text book on vocabulary learning.

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Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Using Words in Context

Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of nouns, adjectives and verbs
2. To help students understand that the usage decides the nature of the words

Level

Upper primary classes

Material

Appropriate text chosen keeping in mind the level and interest of the children. It would be helpful if a text in which nouns, adjectives and verbs occur frequently is chosen. The text chosen here is from the first chapter of the book *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling (given at the end of the activity here).

Board, chalk, notebooks and pencils

Preparation

Select an appropriate text. Identify the categories of words (nouns, adjectives, and verbs) in the text. Think about more examples of such words so that you can provide examples to the students, if required.

Procedure

The activity should be done after the children have read the story/chapter/text at least once. Ask the children to sit in groups of three or four. Make sure that the groups are not very big so that the children can read and discuss the paragraph. Ask them to read the selected paragraph again.

Once they have read it, ask them to identify the nouns, adjectives and verbs in the paragraph. You may help them by explaining that nouns can either be singular if they refer

to only one person, animal, place, thing or event, or plural if they refer to more than one person, animal, place or thing. In other words, we can make plurals from nouns. Also, nouns are preceded by adjectives. For example, in the given text “tail” and “shadow” are nouns because we can make their plurals and they are preceded by the adjectives “bushy” and “little” respectively. Adjectives are words that describe a noun and verbs are action words for example “scratched”, “yawned”. Also, only verbs can take endings such as -ed and -ing, although verbs with these endings can also often be used as adjectives. It would be helpful if you can write these points on the board.

Draw a table on the board, ask the children to draw similar tables in their notebooks and put the words in these categories keeping in mind the mentioned points.

Adjective	Noun	Verb
Bushy	Tail	Scratched
.....

Give the groups some time to discuss and complete their lists. Once they complete the list, ask them to use the adjectives in their lists with new nouns. The new words should not be from the given paragraph. For example, “warm morning”, “warm blanket”, etc. They can do the same with other adjectives on the list. Also ask them to combine the adjectives with the nouns that are on the list. Give them examples such as: cold evening, breezy evening, etc.

Draw the children's attention to the fact that there may be words in the paragraph that look like verbs but act like adjectives. Give them time to think and respond. You can add to their examples with phrases such as:

1. a) I need some **sleep**. "sleep" as a noun
b) I could **sleep** all day. "sleep" as a verb
c) **Sleepy** dog. "sleepy" as an adjective
2. a) Did you watch the **fight**?
b) Do not **fight** with her.
c) Did you see the **fighting** bull?
3. a) **Scratching** in front of others is considered bad manners.
b) He **scratched** himself.
c) The already **scratched** glass pane broke.

Ask the students to look at the list once again and to use the words in the list to try and make different sentences in which the same word appears as a noun, a verb and an adjective. When the students finish the activity in their groups, ask each group to present and write a few sentences that they have created on the board. They may be asked to relate the process they went through to make the sentences. Highlight any specific point that is shared by them. These could, for example, be what they used to think earlier, what they were able to understand while doing the activity, etc. Also emphasize that such categories of words are not rigid or fixed. They can move from one category to another. Sometimes they move keeping their form intact and at other times, there may be a few changes in the form as can be seen in the earlier examples. How the word acts in the text actually depends on the context.

It was seven o'clock of a very warm evening in the Seconee hills when Father Wolf woke up from his day's rest, scratched himself, yawned and spread out his paws one after the other to get rid of the sleepy feeling in their tips. Mother Wolf lay with her big grey nose dropped across her four tumbling, squealing cubs, and the moon shone into the mouth of the cave where they all lived. "Augrh!" said father Wolf. "It is time to hunt again." He was going to spring downhill when a little shadow with a bushy tail crossed the threshold and whined: "Good luck go with you, O Chief of the Wolves; and good luck and strong white teeth go with noble children that they may never forget the hungry in this world."

The Jungle Book

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Activity 2: One Story, Many Skills

Holistic Language Development through Stories: Some Important Observations

1. Stories have the ability to hold a reader's interest, trigger his/her imagination and encompass socio-cultural and historical aspects of the world, which forms the very basis of language development.

2. They provide a powerful anchor for developing language skills.
3. Stories can integrate language with other knowledge areas.
4. They provide an excellent context to cater to the multilingual aspect of our societies and classrooms.

Level

Class II-III (primary grade students who are in the initial stages of reading and writing)

Material

A storybook with simple story structure (story-syntax) and familiar characters (e.g. “*Billi ke Bachhe*” or “*Three little pigs*”), a chalk-board or a big chart paper, and blank sheets.

Objectives

1. To develop recognition of different levels of linguistic organisation such as words, letters and phrases;
2. To develop a sense of story-syntax and event-sequencing;
3. Summarization skills;
4. To provide opportunities for hypothetical thinking.

Task 1

1. After telling the story, the teacher asks the students to recapitulate the story as a group and writes it using small sentences on the board or a big chart paper.
2. Students are then divided into groups and given sheets of papers.
3. Each group is assigned a letter (or set of letters) and they are required to list all the words which start/end with that letter. For instance, in Hindi, the syllable “*ne*” can be taken, differentiating it from the independent sound (/n/ in this case).

Task 2

1. Students are asked to identify the phrases spoken by the teacher in the text written

on the board. For example, in the sentence “Three black little kittens came out of the pipe”, the teacher can ask the students to identify “little kittens” or “out of the pipe”.

2. The teacher can help the learners to locate the phrases by drawing their attention to the sounds and words including the sight words in the phrases. The students can mark these phrases in their books, and the teacher can write them on the board.

[Note: It is neither assumed that the children know the term “phrases” nor is the teacher expected to use this term. She will only “speak out” the phrases.]

Extensions

This is an open-ended activity hence it can have many extensions such as:

- a. Changing the end or some other part of the story by posing questions, e.g.: If the kittens had jumped into a drum of oil, what would have happened?
- b. Summarising the story in a specific number of sentences;
- c. Counting the frequency of words that appear more than once.

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Reports

Rethinking Reading

Anchala Paliwal

Researchers largely agree that reading is not just an aid to acquire learning but it is an important means to facilitate thinking and therefore, enables an enhanced understanding of society and its problems. A holistic notion of education includes the ability to read with comprehension, as a necessary pre requisite. So there is a need to refashion 'reading' as ability and encourage a suitable reading habit. Efforts for the same will make a more profound impact if started at the elementary level of education.

As a remarkable endeavour to achieve this is the Reading Development Cell set up by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The *End-term Survey Report: Mathura Pilot Project 2012-2013* prepared by Early Literacy Programme, Department of Elementary Education, NCERT provides these details.

“NCERT had set up a Reading Development Cell in the year 2007 under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with support of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The creation of this Cell marked the beginning of a significant attempt to focus the attention of policy makers and curriculum designers all over the country on the pedagogy of reading in the early classes.” (p. iii, *Report*)

The highpoint of this programme is that it “emphasizes on using children's literature in the classroom to provide children with an environment conducive to reading.” (p. iii, *Report*) This renewed focus on children's literature is noteworthy.

In order to suggest appropriate and relevant children's literature, workshops on children's literature review are routinely held. Books which explicitly or implicitly convey gender, regional, religion, caste or racial biases through language, themes or illustrations are rejected. Books which promote heterogeneity and offer different worldviews both domestic and international are recommended.

This programme by Reading Development Cell also emphasises on providing 'print-rich environment' in the classrooms. It includes arranging posters in classrooms/ reading rooms/ libraries, exposing children to assimilate the written words with illustrations. It adds to an ambience of reading and promotes a familiarity with written text. It is a beneficial way of increasing the accessibility of reading material.

Reading is understood as an activity in which the reader responds to the complete text. There is a visual impact of the text, particularly for a child reader. So illustrations are as important as the language of the text. Various methods have been undertaken to ensure the availability of good children's literature and to spread awareness among teachers and parents regarding the importance of reading.

The basis of these strategies is that “reading and writing are understood as developmental processes and an early literacy classroom is an unhurried, relaxed space for teachers and students to enjoy the processes of reading and writing.” (p. 6, *Report*) A graded reading series named '*Barkha*' (includes four levels) was created and compiled to introduce and then expand the reading skills of children by gradually increasing the number of sub plots, illustrations and the number of sentences. A

children's magazine "*Firkee Bachchon Ki*" was also published.

It was also felt necessary to design and create a 'Reading Corner' to ensure that reading material is readily available, it is suitably displayed and children are also provided required time to browse through books.

Above all, it was imperative to provide adequate training of such a pedagogical practice to teachers. Five books were produced for teachers to augment their understanding. *Reading for Meaning* includes seminal articles on analysing reading with comprehension. *Padhne ki Samajh* is about early literacy and pedagogical techniques for reading. *Padhne ki Dehleez par* focusses on problems encountered in teaching to read in the Indian context. *Padhna Sikhane ki Shuruvaat* expounds the various dimensions of reading. *Shuruati Lekhan –Ek Samvad* centers on the relation between reading and writing in early literacy. Vigorous translation and vetting workshops were held to make these books available to wider audiences. English translations of all these books will be published.

To further encourage readers, it was proposed that regular book fairs can be organised as a far reaching exercise, to offer children and their parents opportunities to engage with books and interact.

As a further initiative in this direction, the Mathura pilot project was conceived and carried out in 2008 across five hundred and sixty one schools in five blocks of Mathura districts. "The interventions in the project involved providing material for children and teachers, extension programmes, orientations of teachers and monitoring." (p. iv, *Report*) The above mentioned efforts

were executed along with rigorous orientation modules for teachers. Since 2008, this project has been implemented.

To assess the progress of the same, an End-term survey was conducted in forty selected schools in 2012. The survey report bears testimony to the immense success of the above mentioned pedagogical practices and teachers training. It serves as evidence that new and ground-breaking attempts at elementary level can have fruitful impact on the reading ability of children. Teachers must find it motivating to look beyond the conventional methods and incorporate something new, something different. And above all that this is possible.

Once such preliminary efforts are in place, reading becomes an effective process for children. Their levels of comprehension are also improved; they progress from the mere factual to inferential and extrapolative reading and finally are able to be evaluative readers.

Special and unusual methods of teaching to read at the elementary level are very useful in achieving proficiency in languages at advanced levels. There is a current necessity to value reading not only to study but in order to evolve as responsible human beings. Teachers, parents and children must appreciate that we read to discover, to seek new worlds, to imagine, to know, to wander, to situate oneself, to be aware and to think.

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Language through Literature

Nivedita Vijay Bedadur

This is the fifth in the series of workshops on Teaching English to Middle School Learners. Number of Participants: 22 (19 teachers from various private schools, 1 kindergarten teacher, 1 program manager and 1 administrative staff member).

Workshop Details

This was a workshop on enhancing perspectives and pedagogy of teaching language through literature, and literary sensibility through poetry and short stories. On display on the bulletin board were several short stories which the participants took with them. There were also several poems displayed on the bulletin boards. The workshop began with a reading and analysis of the story "Voices" by Anthony Browne, which reflects upon the need to create the space for multiple perspectives and voices. In the discussion that followed, we focused on the objectives of introducing and teaching literary texts in middle school. After a short debate between the participants, a consensus emerged that the objective of teaching literature was not to only to introduce students to different cultures, but also to enhance their cognitive and creative capabilities and to develop their linguistic and literary sensibility. The larger objective of this effort was to get every child to develop his/her own distinctive voice and to give space and respect to multiple points of views in the classroom.

The revised Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* was discussed as the counter point to linguistic and literary

objectives. In order to demonstrate how these can be interwoven, the facilitator analysed two poems on the same theme but from different perspectives in an interactive session. These were: "I Cannot Remember My Mother" by Rabindranath Tagore and "My Mother at Sixty-Six" by Kamala Das. The participants were then divided into groups; each group was given two poems to analyse on the same theme. The presentation of this analysis culminated in a discussion on how comparative analyses of texts can be used to develop higher level thinking skills among students. The linguistic elements analysed were: the kinds of words used, patterning of structures, grammatical elements and breaking of patterns for expressing different moods. The literary elements analysed included symbolism, imagery, rhyme, and alliteration. Comparison was done by analysing the mood, tone and perspectives of the poems and the poets.

The second session began with a film version of the short story, "Winter Cruise" by Somerset Maugham. The participants watched the film and analysed edits plot, characters and story. The character of Miss Reid was evaluated to reveal how she had hidden traits of kindness, tolerance and quiet dignity in the face of the seemingly amusing but cruel joke played by the captain and the officers of the ship, just to get rid of her irritating talkativeness. The actions and character of the men were compared with those of Miss Reid. The nuances of class and the actions of the characters were also explored. The responses of men and women to the problem were compared to reveal how power and dignity played different roles in the characters of the film.

The session ended with a recitation of the poem "The Palanquin Bearers" by Sarojini

Naidu in different emotive enunciations and different voices for choruses.

Reflections of the Facilitator

This was a high difficulty level workshop for teachers as each group had a different set of poems for the same task. This necessitated reading out the poem, but a deeper analysis was difficult without the text of every poem at hand and the time to read it. To comprehend a poem by simply listening to it was difficult for the teachers. Moreover, teachers are not trained to read and analyse poetry and prose from a literary angle. They believe that teaching consists of asking and answering comprehension level questions. They had never analysed literature in the class room. Yet they were able to manage the tasks with an above average level of response, which means they found the engagement with literature fruitful. The teachers had also never analysed the mood, tone or images in a poem before, nor had they carried out a purely literary analysis. Other than examining the literary devices, they had never compared two poems or analysed them.

The film on Somerset Maugham's short story "Winter Cruise" was difficult for some participants to understand, although as a facilitator, I was of the opinion that the movie was very simple and very beautiful and humorous. It also had some elements of insights into the human character. Next time I will provide subtitles for the films if possible or give the teachers the scripts to read along with the film.

I learnt many important lessons from this workshop as well as the four others that I conducted in the series of Middle School English Workshops for teachers through the School Connect Programme of the Azim Premji University. I learnt that private school

teachers need as much help as government school teachers. Contrary to my beliefs, I found out that they also do not read a lot of literature, or academic texts. Their resistance to reading was manifested in the workshop as they seemed to prefer PPTs and videos to reading. They too, much like children, enjoyed challenging activities. They were ready to analyse and discuss theory based on them.

In conclusion, I would say that a good grounding in literary analysis must be included as part of teacher education programs for teachers of both private and state board schools. Reading and the joy of intensive and extensive reading need to once more occupy centre stage in class room processes if we want our children to become competent readers.

Nivedita Vijay Bedadur is Assistant Professor at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. She has taught English in Kendriya Vidyalayas in India and Nepal. Presently, she is engaged in designing courses for teacher educators.

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Seminar on Inclusive Approach to Tribal Education in Chhattisgarh

Mahendra Kumar Mishra

A state level seminar on "Inclusive Approach to Tribal Education" was conducted in Jagdalpur, the district headquarters of Bastar in the state of Chhattisgarh between 22-24 January 2016. The objectives of the seminar were:

- Understanding the policy, programme, constitutional obligations and national goal of education in the context of tribal areas

- Recognizing the issues and challenges of learning difficulties faced by tribal children in primary schools
- Understanding the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding tribal children, their culture, language and society, and the challenges faced by them in teaching tribal children
- Learning from other states of India about tribal education
- Strategies for the education of tribal children
- Implementation of Mother Language Education (MLE) to bridge the gap between home and school language as per the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005
- Strengthening the mechanism for teacher support towards bridging the gap between home and school language
- Undertake linguistic survey and mapping
- Adopt Gondi, Halvi and Bhatra in the school curriculum in DIETs, Bastar.
- Train teachers/BRC/CRC (Block Resource Centres/Cluster resource Centres) on attitudinal aspects with regards to tribal languages
- Engage tribal language teachers in those areas where children need education in their mother tongues
- Conduct community-based programmes from time to time and document local tribal language resources
- Adopt Cluster Approach to tribal education in CRC, Netanar
- Converge with SC/ST development department.

The seminar raised several issues in the context of tribal education in Bastar that need to be resolved jointly by the state government, tribal organizations and the people.

The seminar was attended by nearly 65 participants comprising RtE school teachers from the Bastar block, subject resource group (SRG – Language) members, Dura teachers, representatives from DIET (District Institute of Education and Training) Ambikapur, Kabirdham, Mahasamund, Dantewada, Kanker and Dhamtari. Staff members from IFIG and the district / block education department of Bastar also participated in the seminar.

The following recommendations were made to the state government:

- Bridge the gap between home and school language by preparing textbooks and supplementary readers in tribal languages along the lines of the MLE approach
- Train teachers in language teaching and learning methodology (mother tongue education / second language acquisition)

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Forthcoming Events

Multilingualism as a Resource: The need for Preservation, Cultivation and Enrichment of Sociolinguistic Resources in India

Date: Jan 12-13, 2017

Location: The Asiatic Society, Park Street, Kolkata 700 016.

Further Information:
theasiaticsociety@gmail.com

International Conference on Multilingualism and Multilingual Education (ICMME 17)

Date: May 11-13, 2017

Location: University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

Call for Papers: Feb. 15, 2017

15th Asia TEFL International Conference & 64th TEFLIN International Conference

Date: July 13-15, 2017

Location: Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Theme: ELT in Asia in the Digital

Era: Global Citizenship & Identity

Call for Papers: Feb. 15, 2017

Further Information:
asiatefl2017@uny.ac.id

Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language Policy and Planning

Date: Aug. 24-26, 2017

Location: University of Calgary, Toronto, Canada

Call for Papers: Feb. 28, 2017

Further Information:
OISE.LPP@utoronto.ca

Diversity in Applied Linguistics: Opportunities, Challenges, Questions

Organisation: BAAL (British Association for Applied Linguistics)

Dates: Aug. 31 - Sept. 2, 2017

Location: The Centre for Language Education Research, University of Leeds

Deadline for Receipt of Abstracts: March 31, 2017

Further Information:
<http://www.baal2017.org.uk/>

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Volume 5 Number 2 Issue 10 July 2016

Special Issue on Disability and Language

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'There are many aspects of human emotions and knowledge which cannot find expression in words and must therefore get spaces in 'lines and colours, sounds and movements'.

Tagore



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