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Read-Alouds: Let's Stick to the Story

Stephen Krashen

Introduction

It has been claimed that when readers interrupt stories during read-alouds to point out aspects of print, children make better gains in print awareness, and eventually read better. I question these claims and as well as the usefulness of interrupting stories in this way. Short-term gains are not evident for all aspects of print awareness; comparisons also make gains, and children exposed to print universally acquire print awareness. Also, long-term gains are small and have not been proven demonstrated for real reading for meaning. Finally, interrupting stories to reference print runs the risk of taking the focus away from the story, and disrupting the pleasure and positive impact of read-alouds, which could have negative consequences for literacy development.

The Impact of Read-Alouds

Reading aloud to children with no frills, just focusing on the story, is a highly effective way of promoting literacy. Children who are read to regularly, at home or in school, make superior gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary (Senechal, LeFebvre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996; Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, Marinus, & Pellegrini, 1995; Blok, 1999; Denton & West, 2002; Trelease, 2006).

Hearing stories read aloud is not only beneficial, it is also pleasant. Empirical research confirms what most parents know: the vast majority of children say that they enjoy being read to (Walker & Kuerbitz, 1979; Mason & Blanton, 1971; Wells, 1985; Senechal et al. 1996).

It is therefore no surprise that research confirms that hearing and discussing stories encourages reading, which in turn promotes literacy development. The title of Brassell's paper says it all: 'Sixteen books went home tonight: Fifteen were introduced by the teacher' (Brassell, 2003).

The advantages of read-alouds also extend to second language acquisition: storybooks used in read-alouds provide a much richer source of language and cultural information than textbooks written for students of English as a foreign language (Wang & Lee, 2007).

The suggestion has been made that we can improve on reading aloud to make it even more effective: A series of studies conducted on four-year-old children reveals that if readers direct children's attention to aspects of print, temporarily interrupting the story while reading aloud, the children develop print awareness more rapidly, resulting in better literacy development.

The Results of "Interruption": Studies and some Concerns

Table 1 provides a description of three of the major studies from the series mentioned earlier (Justice & Ezell, 2000, 2002; Justice, Kaderavek, Fan, Sofka & Hunt, 2009). In these studies carried out on experimental groups, adults read to four-year-old children and interrupted the reading in order to point out aspects of print to the children, asking questions and making comments such as, "Where should I read on

this page?”, “Do you know this letter?”, or “This word is ‘danger’”. The comparison groups were read to without interrupting the reading in this way. Each group heard the same number of stories.

Table 1: Three studies of the effect of interrupting reading aloud to focus on print

Study	2000	2002	2009
Reader	parent	researcher	teacher
Size of group	one	1 to 3	class
Duration	8 weeks	8 weeks	30 weeks
Books read	8	8	30
Times read, each book	2	3	4
Sessions	16	24	120

2000: Justice and Ezell, 2000

2002: Justice and Excell, 2002

2009: Justice, Kaderavek, Fan, Sofka, & Hunt, 2009.

Table 2 given below represents the results of the three studies, presented as effect sizes, and calculated as per the procedures described by Morris (2008), which takes the pre-test into consideration (according to common practice, an effect size of .2 is considered to be small, .5 is considered to be medium, and .8 or more is considered as large).

Table 2 : Effect sizes

Measure	2000	2002	2009
Words in print (1)	1.22	1.7	
Alphabet knowledge	0.003	0.51	0.42
Word segmentation (2)	0.26		
Print recognition (3)	0.89	1.05	
Print concepts (4)	0.67	0.91	
Orientation/discrim.		0.02	
Literacy terms		0.6	
Name writing			0.39

For 1 to 4 in Table 2, see below:

- (1) knowing words are separated by spaces,
- (2) knowing how many words are in an utterance,
- (3) ability to pick out print when part of illustrations,
- (4) eg where title of book is located.

The experimental (interrupted) children generally did better than those whose reading was not interrupted, and in some cases the effect sizes are substantial. But there were three aspects of these results that should be noted:

- First, the impact was not seen on all measures.
- Second, the 2009 study lasted much longer, but the impact was not larger than in the previous studies, which may be due to the larger number of children being read to at the same time.
- Third, and most important, all the competencies tested appear to be acquired without instruction by all children who were exposed to print, and they were acquired quite early.

Are there many children in first grade today who do not understand that words are separated by spaces (words in print), or who cannot tell you where the title of a book is located? The concept of ‘word’ is firmly established by grade one (Knight & Fischer, 1992). Justice et al. are clearly interested in children developing these competencies early, even before starting kindergarten, an example of the current enthusiasm to get children to master “pre-literacy” skills such as phonemic awareness and print awareness early because of the belief that they will be behind forever if they do not (for counter-arguments, see Krashen & McQuillan, 2007; Krashen, 2001a, 2002, 2011).

Even if an early start were essential or even advantageous, children in the comparison groups did in fact make progress, often showing improvement in a short time span. This is confirmed in Table 3, which shows the percentage gains for both experimental and comparison groups. Note that the comparison groups do indeed improve. Note also that in many cases the experimental group scored correct only on a few items more than the comparison group, and the difference in percentage terms gained between the groups was modest.

Table 3: Raw scores, gains and percent gains for experimental and comparison groups

Justice et al, 2000	items	pre E	postE	pre C	post C	gain E	gain C	Diff	% diff
Words in print	12	3.6	7.7	3.6	4.9	4.1	1.3	2.8	23%
Alphabet knowledge	20	17	17.6	15.6	16.6	0.6	0.8	0.2	1%
Word segmentation	16	6.9	9.1	7.2	7.4	2.3	0.2	2.1	13%
Print recognition	15	1.5	7.35	1.65	6.15	5.85	4.5	1.35	9%
Print concepts	18	9.7	14.4	9.9	11.5	4.7	1.6	3.1	17%

Justice et al, 2002	items	pre E	postE	pre C	post C	gain E	gain C	Diff	% diff
Print concepts	20	8.9	11.9	9.1	11	3	1.9	1.1	5.5%
Print recognition	20	0.8	5.9	0.3	1.3	5.1	1	4.1	20.5%
Words in print	20	1.5	7.4	2	3	6	1	5	25%
Letter orientation/ discrim.	20	14.9	17.8	13.3	15.5	2.9	2.2	0.7	3.5%
Alphabet knowledge	20	6.7	10.9	6.8	7.8	4.2	1	3.2	16%
Literacy terms	20	7.6	10	7.7	8.6	2.4	0.9	1.5	7.5%

Justice et al, 2009	items	pre E	postE	pre C	post C	gain E	gain C	Diff	% diff
Alphabet knowledge	26	5.7	16.6	1.3	8.2	10.9	6.9	4	15%
Name writing	7	3	5.8	3.4	5.3	2.8	1.9	0.8	11%

preE = pretest experimental group
 postE = posttest experimental group
 preC = pretest comparison group
 postC = posttest comparison group
 gainE = gain made by experimental group
 gain C = gain made by comparison group
 diff = difference in gain scores
 % diff = diff/number of items on test

Does Interruption to Focus on Print Impact Other Aspects of Literacy?

Interruption does not improve performance in tests of sentence structure, word structure and expressive vocabulary when these tests are given immediately after the treatment (Justice et al, 2009, 2010). Piastra et al. (2012) claim,

however, that when tests are given one to two years after treatment, when the children are five to six years old, there is a significant impact on tests of letter-word identification, spelling and 'reading comprehension' (the reading comprehension test used was the Woodcock Passage Comprehension test, actually a

vocabulary and sentence completion test; children are asked “to indicate which of several pictures are related in meaning, and also to select a picture or produce a word that accurately completes a given phrase or passage.” p. 813.)

An inspection of Table 4 reveals that the mean

values for the experimental and comparison groups at the end of year 1 and year 2 are nearly identical. The differences, however, are statistically significant, and the effect sizes, while small, are positive.

Table 4: Results of post-tests given one and two years after treatment

Piastra et al al, 2012 HI-DOSE*	Items	1 yr post: E	1 yr post: C	t/p	ES
Letter-Word Identification	76	20.19 (27%)	21.19 (28%)	2.34 (.022)	0.26
Spelling	59	15.13 (26%)	15.5 (26%)	2.3 (.024)	0.21
Comprehension	47	8.68 (18%)	8.54 (18%)	2.72 (.008)	0.21
Piastra et al al, 2012 HI-DOSE*	Items	2 yr post: E	2 yr post: C	t/p	ES
Letter-Word Identification	76	32.8 (43%)	31.21 (41%)	2.34 (.022)	0.27
Spelling	59	21.23 (36%)	21.17 (36%)	3.19 (.01)	0.31
Comprehension	47	15.84 (34%)	15.64 (33%)	2.28 (.025)	0.26

*Piastra et al included both “hi-dose” (4 sessions per week with reference to print) and “low-dose” (2 sessions per week) treatments. Only hi-dose treatments are included here, as they are more comparable to treatments received by the comparison groups.

ES = effect size, calculated according to Morris (2008)

The reason for this unusual result is that Piastra et al. controlled for pre-test differences on “preschool emergent literacy skills” (p. 816), i.e. phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. Indeed, comparisons were significantly better than experimental children in these areas. But experimentals were better on the vocabulary test,

as shown in Table 5. Had Piastra et al. controlled for vocabulary knowledge, the results would certainly have been different. (Note that the experimental group superiority on the pre-test in vocabulary is equal to the comparison group’s superiority in phonological awareness, both near $d = .25$, and is larger than the comparison group superiority in alphabet knowledge ($d = -.18$).

Table 5: Results of Pre-testsc

	n	Exp.	Comp.	ES
Phonological awareness	400	2.21 (3.36)	3.21 (4.29)	-0.26
Alphabet knowledge	400	7.82 (8.6)	9.38 (9.2)	-0.18
Vocabulary	396	92.77 (15.2)	89.08 (14.3)	0.25

ES = effect size (mean of experimental group – mean of comparison group)/pooled standard deviation.

So far, interruptions have been shown to produce only marginal long-term effects that appear on tests that do not probe real reading for meaning. Moreover, the effects are only visible when researchers control for phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet. Researchers did not control for vocabulary knowledge. Despite claims to the contrary, it is not clear that phonological awareness at an early age is causally related to eventual reading ability (Coles, 2000; Krashen, 2001a, 2001b, 2002).

The Disruption Factor: The Potential Danger of Interrupting Reading Aloud

Justice and Ezell (2000), provide data on the frequency of references to print. As presented in Table 6, comments about print were directed at experimental children about four times per minute (comments, questions and requests about print), while non-verbal references (mostly pointing to print) took place nearly eleven times per minute.

Table 6: References to print per minute

	Exp.	Comp.
Verbal	4.04	0.13
Nonverbal	10.71	4.33

Verbal, eg: comments and questions about print

Nonverbal, eg. tracking print, pointing to print (7.91 for experimentals compared to 3.87 for comparisons).

From Justice and Ezell, 2000, table 3

Combining verbal and non-verbal, references to print occurred for experimental group children about fifteen times a minute, or every four seconds. Verbal references occurred every fifteen seconds. The average duration of each storybook reading was between five to seven minutes (Justice & Ezell 2002, p. 21). Thus, in

each story, references to print occurred on an average of seventy-five to one hundred and five times, with verbal references taking place about twenty to twenty-eight times. In contrast, the comparison children hardly experienced any verbal comments, and non-verbal references to print were made a little more than four times a minute, an average of about twenty to twenty-eight times per story.

Justice and Ezell (2000) were aware that excessive focus on print may take away the pleasure from hearing stories: "... some parents were overzealous in their incorporation of references to print. Although parental use of these strategies resulted in improvement of children's early literacy skills, it is worth mentioning that overuse of these strategies may detract from children's enjoyment of shared storybook reading" (p. 266).

We do not know if referencing print every four seconds is excessive. There was no measure (or discussion) in any of the studies of how the children reacted to these interruptions. Nor was there any discussion, other than the brief section quoted just above, of whether focusing on aspects of print distracted the children from the stories or affected their enjoyment of the stories or interest in hearing more stories. Children's interest in stories and books is a crucial measure for literacy development, as story reading stimulates an interest in voluntary reading, and continued voluntary reading ensures continued progress in literacy development.

In other words, there is sound evidence that reading for enjoyment is the source of most of our literate competence: Those who engage in more self-selected reading develop greater reading ability, better writing style, more vocabulary, better spelling, and better ability to deal with complex grammatical structures (Krashen, 2004). There is also evidence, as noted earlier, that enjoyment of read-alouds is a

crucial step towards developing interest in books and acquiring a reading habit.

Thus, if increasing the amount of print focus does in fact ‘detract from children’s enjoyment of shared storybook reading,’ focusing more on print during read-alouds might disturb the development of literacy.

Conclusion

The gains seen in the studies reviewed here are in competencies that children develop universally even without being interrupted while hearing stories read to them. Also, a clear long-term advantage for interrupting reading with references to print has not yet been demonstrated, and even if it did result in small gains, the treatment runs the risk of disrupting the role of read-alouds in developing literacy.

Based on the series of studies described here, any pedagogical recommendations that story-readers should deliberately interrupt stories in order to reference print, is premature. Therefore, for now, it is advisable that we stick to the story when reading aloud to children.

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Learning to Serve: An Analysis of English Language Training in Call Centres of India

Papia Raj and Aditya Raj

The Context

Thomas Macaulay's design to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" is taking a new turn. We are learning English not only to serve the colonial intent within our nation, but now, also to meet the requirement of the fast globalizing world. The nature of the global political economy demands further learning, or relearning, to serve and survive. In this paper, we present an analysis of English-learning for international call centres. This paper is based on a study of data generated from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with call centre agents and employers across twenty-six call centres located in the environs of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. The fieldwork for the paper was first conducted in 2005. A follow-up was done in 2011 to examine the issues involved in detail. Notes from interview transcripts were used to groom the discussion. All the call centres studied are outsourcing centres for businesses in Europe, Australia and the United States of America.

Training is an essential part of call centre employment. Once an agent joins a call centre she/he has to undergo training irrespective of any earlier similar, employment experience. Many call centres provide this 'on-the-job-training' free to their employees, while a few others 'charge' for it in the form of reduced salary along with loss of monetary incentives. The time period for the training varies from two weeks to two months. By talking to call centre agents and managers, we

gathered that agents undergo both generic (accent, grammar, customer service) and process-specific training (about the products) before they are allowed to take/make live calls. Usually, call centre training is broadly divided into three sequential parts: voice and accent training followed by soft skill training, and finally process training. In this paper we have focused only on voice and accent training, which is the process that forces employees to relearn the English language according to the needs of this industry.

Voice and Accent Training

In call centres, voice and accent training is the first stage of training. A review of the call centre guidebooks available in the market in India provide us with certain guidelines of these training processes. Chadha (2004) argues that this training involves listening to different accents by the call centre agents to get accustomed to, and to better comprehend what the customers are inquiring about. This is confirmed by all the agents interviewed, who reported that they are taught a number of practical techniques to increase their own 'comprehensibility'. In order to achieve this, an effort is made to neutralize the Indian accent as much as possible.

It is noteworthy, however, that in comparison Raina (2004), discussing call centre training in his guidebook for training states that to be in the call centre industry one need not put on a fake accent. He argues that one would be quickly exposed without impressing anyone. He

emphasizes on the importance of being one's real self rather than adopting a different persona. Nevertheless, later in the same book Raina advises potential call centre employees to listen to others and "imitate" anyone whose style of speaking appeals to them. Such contradictory versions of accent training are not only perceptible in the call centre guidebooks but are also evident among the managers, trainers and call centre agents.

Interestingly enough, when asked whether they have to speak with an American or European accent, the vast majority of managers (95 per cent), a significant number of trainers (88 per cent), as well as numerous agents (60 per cent), denied it and reported that they are in fact taught to speak with a "neutral accent". According to Mirchandani (2003) in her study of Indian call centres, the purpose of "neutralizing" the accents is to convert individuals into malleable human resources. During our interviews, two-thirds of the call centre agents stated that in India people often have strong regional accents, commonly known as the Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) in the call centre industry. Agents from all the call centres researched in this study reported that it is very important to overcome these regional accents so that the customers can understand the agents clearly.

In his call centre training manual, Raina (2004) explained MTI as a kind of "muscular laziness" and comfort associated with one's own language. Therefore, even while speaking languages other than the mother tongue, the mother tongue influences are maintained. These are revealed through a set of signifiers and sounds that are not common to the other language(s). For example, many people from the southern parts of India have a tendency to put more emphasis on certain letters like 'h' and 'd'. Therefore, when they pronounce 'water', it may sound like 'wader'. Similarly, people from North India have an inclination towards pronouncing 'w' as 'who', for instance, 'what'

might sound like 'wohat'. MTI is common in a country such as India where dialects change every few hundred kilometres; clearly all of us speak with some MTI. Yet it was argued by trainers and agents alike during interviews that there was a need to get rid of these MTIs in the call centre industry, a process called 'neutralization of accent'.

Gupta (2003) describes a neutral accent as one that is understood globally. Nevertheless, Phillipson (2001), writing on the usage of English language more internationally, notes that 'neutral' in this sense contains a significant regional bias, reinforcing the 'racist hierarchization' implicit in identifying Western English as legitimate and Indian English as illegitimate. Accents are a characteristic of a person's identity, and a person's native region is often identified by his/her accent. The neutralization of accents thus erases such identity markers and homogenizes the agents.

Despite their denial of 'accent learning', all the trainers of the call centres that we interviewed stated that during the training process they teach employees the differences in the pronunciation of the vowels and particular words used in the UK and the USA. Contradictions were thus clearly apparent since learning the pronunciation of vowels is a large part of the accent training, as was evident from a discussion with two-thirds of the interviewees. Almost 85 per cent of the agents stated that they also have to relearn certain words and idioms specific to the country they are calling or receiving calls from. Books are now available on precisely this topic. These books, produced for training prospective call centre employees, provide exercises and CDs that enable one to learn the different pronunciations of verbs for UK and USA.

Gupta (2003) clearly mentions in the preface of his book on call centre training that to make a career in a call centre, it is very important to develop skills in speaking, writing and comprehending an 'American kind of English'.

During our interviews, an example of this USA emphasis was cited by Hiralal, a male trainer in an America-based call centre, "...we teach them how to converse and then some specific details like, you know, in America, like they do not pronounce 'z' (zed) they say 'zee'. They don't pronounce Jose as 'Jose' (pronouncing the 'j') they say 'hosey'. Ironically then, even the trainers are not really aware of American parlance as 'j' is pronounced as 'h' in Spanish and not in American English.

During the training, employees are taught phonetics, pronunciations of alphabets, and words that are different in American and British English. Examples of these words have been given in Table 1 below. A quarter of the employees stated that unlike in India, where the alphabet is taught along the lines: 'A is for apple, B is for bat, and C for cat', they had to relearn the alphabet the American way, which they argued, equated to 'A is for alpha, B is for bravo, and C is for Charlie', and so on. Clearly, it is precisely such training that creates in the minds of these employees perceptions about their customers and the countries they are from.

Table 1: Examples of different British and American words

British	American
1. Fortnight	Two weeks
2. Anticlockwise	Counter clockwise
3. Autumn	Fall
4. Caretaker	Janitor
5. City centre	Downtown
6. Lavatory	Washroom
7. Mobile phone	Cell phone

Source: Selected from Raina (2004: 79-81).

In addition to such training, employees are also educated in speech regulation; for example, to speak slowly so that customers can understand them accurately. Chadha (2003) provides a

'Pronunciation Dictionary' for the agents (some examples are provided in Table 2) to facilitate the learning of various words. At the end of the day, employees have to qualify in the voice and accent training to be eligible for process training.

Table 2 : Examples from 'Pronunciation Dictionary'

Spelling	xx Errorxx (INCORRECT Pronunciation)*	Pronunciation
A Academics	a-KAD-a-mics	Ak-a-DEM-ics
B Bowl	Bowl (sounds like foul)	Bole (sounds like coal)
C Cabin	CAY-bin	CAB-in
D Deliver	DEL-iv-er	dl-LIVE-er
E Emergency	Em-er-JEN-see	im-MER-jn-see

Source: Selected from Chadha (2004:131-54).

* These pronunciations are common amongst Delhi urbanites.

In all the call centres where fieldwork was undertaken, voice and accent training was provided on site. Initially, when the first call centres were opened in India, trainers were recruited from the country of the parent company. However, over the years, the situation has changed and now the call centres also have Indian trainers. Not surprisingly, these trainers have been trained by trainers from the country of the parent company, and are expected to carry out their mandate in the training process of spoken English.

In Retrospect

Over the years, English language in India has acquired its own flavour, and like in all other

places, the language has been influenced by the local dialects, especially the spoken English. Call centres—part of globalized workplaces—require the employees to shed their local flavour in English and give it an international essence. However, spoken English can never be ‘accent free’, even in parts of UK and America. For example, the accent of a person from Wales is very different and clearly distinguishable from that of England. Similarly, people in Texas, USA speak with a different accent from those in New York. In Canada, there are different variants of English from coast to coast.

In India, there is a popular saying that the dialect of a language changes every hundred miles. The homogenization process for only one kind of English, for the international corporate market, will undermine this social diversity. We would like to recognize this process as ‘linguistic deculturation’ (Raj & Raj 2004). In fact, through voice and accent training, call centre agents are asked to *unlearn* their native accent and *learn* (emphasis added) the accent of another geographical region. This is a distinctive example of globalization which tries to erase any/all cultural differences to serve the corporate agenda.

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An Essay on 'Essay Writing'*

Kalu Ram Sharma

Introduction

Teaching writing is perhaps the most challenging task that any language teacher has to negotiate. The domain of writing ranges from sensory-motor controls to word, phrase and sentence; and from there to writing short and long messages, letters and essays whose defining features include, among others, lexical richness, complex sentence construction, cohesion and coherence. Cohesion, which is defined by linkers and grammatical connectedness, and coherence which semantically and conceptually are constitutive of a text, are indeed the most difficult to achieve. And generally, it is these very aspects of cohesion and coherence that traditional methodology of teaching essay writing militates against. In this article I am going to narrate my pains and joys of learning to write an essay.

Early Schooling

It is with a sense of great misery that I recollect my attempts to write an essay during my school days. I remember once in class five, we were asked to write an essay on the 'cow'. The teacher copied an essay from a guidebook onto the board. We were asked to copy it from the board into our rough notebooks. To tell you the truth, we could not even adequately copy what was written on the board. Somehow, we managed to copy a few chunks in our notebook. Our homework that day was simply to copy the essay into our fair notebook. This was even more

difficult because we were repeatedly told by the teacher to write the essay in correct and elegant-looking words and sentences. He told us that there should be no crossing-out in the fair notebook. In the process of achieving this accuracy and neatness, I tore and destroyed several pages of my fair notebook before I could produce a page that would be acceptable to my teacher.

The next day the teacher asked the children to keep their notebooks on his table. He called each child and checked his/her notebook. Every child prayed that his/her notebook would be at the bottom of the pile. Every child was called by the teacher when his notebook was being corrected. The corrections were done in red. Some essays were crossed out from beginning to end, and some notebooks were thrown out of the window. This was indeed a traumatic experience for all of us. When it was my turn, the teacher filled my notebook with red crosses, and asked me to buy a new notebook and copy the essay properly into it. All the children in the class felt demoralized and were left with no interest in learning.

Rote Learning Stage

The next stage was even worse. The teacher asked us to memorize the essay by heart and then emphasized that we should write only what we had memorized. Not only did this make our task even more difficult but it became nearly

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impossible. In our examination, we would forget almost everything we had memorized. There was no space for our personal and emotional experiences. For example, I had a cow in my house and it was a part of my day to day life. I had several personal and memorable experiences connected with the cow but these were not seen as important for writing the essay on the 'cow'. As we moved up from Class five, the method of essay writing changed. In class six, the teacher stopped writing the essays on the board. He started dictating them. Our task was simple—to listen and write. We would simply keep staring at the face of our teacher. Once in a while we would gather the courage to request the teacher to repeat the essay. Sometimes it worked but mostly he snubbed us. Still, if even one of us succeeded in writing the essay, his/her notebook kept doing the rounds of the class. We could not coordinate the skills involved in listening to sentences of variable complexity, process them in our brain and reproduce them with the fairly robust motor skills required for writing them in our notebook.

There was another problem that confronted us in class six. We were speakers of Malvi and even Hindi was a second language for us. We had now been introduced to English and Sanskrit and were expected to write essays in these languages as well. Even though Sanskrit and Hindi are both written in Devanagari script, the word and phrase level constructions of Sanskrit are far more complex and longer than Hindi. It was not at all easy to reproduce them. In the case of English, we were, of course, completely lost. We had hardly learnt to recognize the letters of the English alphabet and have some hold on the basic vocabulary, when we were asked to write an essay in English.

No Space for Personal Experiences

As we moved to higher classes, the topics for essay writing also started changing. For example,

if there was a general essay to be written on 'A fair', we were supposed to write the one that was available in our book or in the guide. Such essays were structured in prefabricated chunks of introduction, content, advantages and disadvantages, reasons for having a fair and conclusions. There was no way we could violate this format. Such a format could never become an inspiration for us to write an essay. We used to regularly go to fairs in our childhood and have a lot of fun there. Fairs were the only occasion when we could see a film, or a magic show, eat lots of sweets and buy toys. Not only that, preparations for going to the fair would start many days before the actual fair. There would be discussions amongst friends and several plans would be put into place. However, all these experiences found no place in the format of the guide-driven essay of the school. In brief, there was no space either for our experiences or for our imagination.

I should point out that in the middle and high school examinations, essays probably carry the highest marks in the language paper. Students are generally given four or five topics out of which they have to write an essay on one. We had to evaluate strategies and tricks to score the maximum possible marks in the essay we had chosen to write on. Students therefore started memorizing at least two or three essays. The teachers were kind enough to identify two or three essays on topics such as 'Independence Day' or 'Jawaharlal Nehru' that we could rote learn. Then they told us a trick. They said that if we were asked to write an essay on some national festival, we could just reproduce the 'Independence Day' essay. If the essay was on a great leader, we could simply reproduce the 'Nehru' essay. Our exclusive aim was to score the highest possible marks in the essay question, and that consumed all our energy so far as language learning was concerned.

Far away from Authentic Articulation

The pressures of examination were immense, and we lived in a chronic state of fear. Before the examination, we spent all our time in rote learning. However, when we entered the examination hall, the level of anxiety was so high that we forgot everything we had memorized. It was not that we did not have thoughts of our own. In fact, our minds and hearts were full of new ideas and emotions but the system of education and examination provided no space for the articulation of these ideas and emotions. There was another problem. We were very scared of making mistakes. We felt we would make mistakes in listening, mistakes in reading, mistakes in writing and mistakes all around. In fact, we felt that we were just bundles of mistakes.

What does it Mean to Write an Essay?

What is the aim of writing an essay? Why should children learn how to write an essay at all? Language teachers and trainers rarely engage with these questions. Since nobody seriously engages with these questions, there is no preparation either on the part of the teacher or teacher trainers to plan a process through which children might become competent essay writers. In fact, the fundamental objective of writing an essay should be to enable children to express their ideas and feelings in a coherent and cohesive way. As Gijubhai says, anyone who can articulate his ideas in an organized fashion should be regarded as an essay writer. He also says that there are two important components of a good essay: the depth of internal thoughts and the clarity of their expression. If we wish to weave our ideas into an attractive network, a specific sequence, coherence and cohesion of words is necessary. It is indeed unfortunate that these aspects do not find any space in our school education system where the focus is almost exclusively on rote learning.

It is equally unfortunate that when children begin to talk among themselves and articulate their own views, their attempts are silenced as noise and indiscipline. The sign of a good class is that it should be quiet, and every individual child's head should be buried in her or his book. Actually, all children should be encouraged to articulate their views and express their opinion on all events. Secondly, we must encourage reading with understanding. This is absolutely critical for becoming a successful essay writer. There is an urgent need to multiply the spaces where children can read what they like, and be able to talk and write about it. They should also have the freedom to write about what they like in a manner they like. All this can be facilitated by the teachers and be subsequently improved to gain greater coherence and cohesion.

An Experience with a Teacher

I was recently in a teacher training programme in Chhattisgarh. In one of the sessions, we asked the participants to write about their experiences of the caste system in India. We asked the participants to reflect on their childhood, and write about a friend who belonged to an underprivileged section of the society. In the beginning, the participants were rather indifferent. We then said that they could write their experience in any language that they liked, and share it with the rest of the class. We told them that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers in this project. They had one hour to finish this task. As the participants reflected over the task, they found that one hour was not enough. We were quite happy to give them another half-hour. It is possible that many participants felt that this was a kind of assessment and the whole ambience of the suffocating examination system seemed to have resurfaced. We then clarified that the essays would not be evaluated or given any marks. We told them that we simply wanted them to share

their experiences. The next day the essays were distributed among the participants. Every participant read the essay of another participant teacher. This was a very refreshing experience. The essays had been written with great sensitivity. As the participants read the essays we witnessed that the workshop had become increasingly lively. We realized that once the fear of making mistakes and being evaluated through marks was eliminated, the level and quality of articulation improved significantly.

As we know from the Kothari Commission Report, unless teachers and teacher trainers are exposed to new experiences, they will continue to follow traditional methods of teaching. We only need to take simple steps if we wish to liberate essay writing from the traditional suffocating approaches described earlier in the article.

(Adapted from the original in Hindi by Rama Kant Agnihotri)

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Virtual Fun: You do not have to be a Techno-Geek!

Roseliz Francis and Anju Sahgal Gupta

Introduction

Beginning with CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in the early 1990's to ICT (Information and Communication Technology) today, there are several media that facilitate the teaching-learning process today. According to Dudeney and Hockly (2012), '...mass access to the internet, the development of Web 2.0 tools and platforms, and the arrival of the social web and mobile technologies now enable teachers and learners to be globally connected and globally educated' (p. 533). In this technology driven environment, it is not enough for the student to merely read the text. In order to ensure the holistic development of the student, it is essential to go beyond the prescribed text.

There are certain pre-requisites required such as a mobile phone and a computer/laptop/notebook with a good internet connection. Today's learners are avid users of mobile phones as well as other PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). Developing activities using the media that they are familiar with is a good way to get them interested in the learning process. In this article, we have suggested how activities can be developed using ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Blogs, WebQuests, TEDTalks and Skype are some of the popular media that can be used to make learning an active and fun process. For this, the teacher needs to have a basic knowledge of computers such as use of Microsoft Office, and the ability to browse the internet.

Premise of the Study

Research has shown that learners do not compartmentalize knowledge into different subject areas, nor is language learning confined to the language class alone. In fact most of the language skills that develop are within other subject areas. It therefore becomes important to expose learners to language tasks which get their input from other disciplines. Moreover, we have to address a diverse learner population with their different learning strategies and multiple intelligences. ICT may provide some answers which may appeal to a learner population that has access to great facility in the use of technology. They are also comfortable communicating in a virtual world driven by various *apps* such as Skype and social media such as Facebook or Twitter. To help students engage with language and content, and become reflective learners sensitive to the environment around them, we need to use those tools that they are familiar with and are an essential part of their daily life.

As an example we have looked at a unit/lesson entitled 'Animal Rights' from one of the IGNOU courses (FEG 1, Block 1). This lesson has an extract from George Orwell's novel, *Animal Farm* in which Old Major, a white boar, gives an inspirational speech which causes the animals in Manor Farm to start a rebellion against the humans. This speech is primarily about how Man has exploited animals in various ways. Based on the extract are reading comprehension questions, as well as grammar, vocabulary and writing activities. In order to supplement the

activities provided in the lesson and to extend its scope to include a cross-curricular perspective, we have made use of ICT.

Hot Potatoes

The vocabulary section in the unit/lesson consists of two activities—‘Picking out the odd word from a set of words’ and ‘Finding the appropriate word to fill in the blanks’. To extend

vocabulary development, we decided to create a crossword puzzle based on ‘Animal’ idioms (Figure 1). This was created using Hot Potatoes, an open source software which teachers can use to create crosswords, cloze tests, match the following exercises and quizzes. Students can access this crossword at <http://uk3.hotpotatoes.net/ex/103226/LITQSOZG.php> and solve it online either in class or at home.

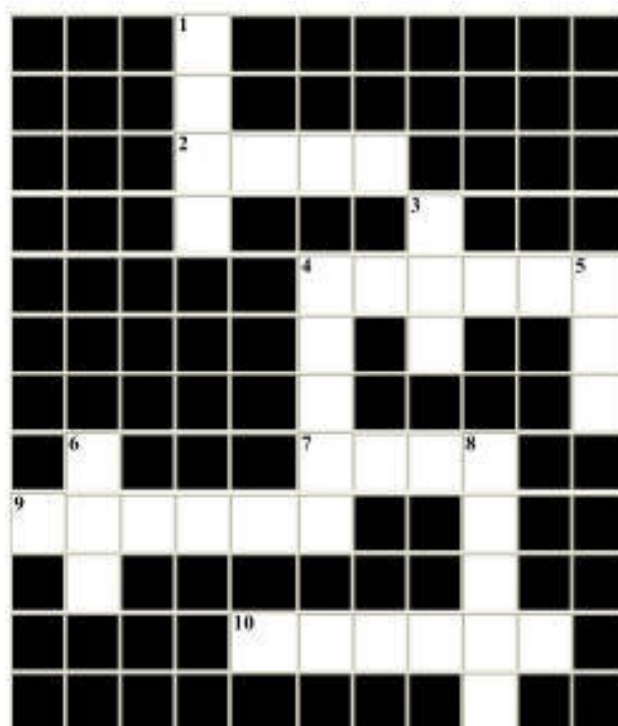


Figure 1. Crossword

Down:

- 1 Take the ____ by the horns: Face a challenge or danger boldly
- 3 ____ nap: A short sleep.
- 4 Kill two ____ with one stone: Getting two things done at once.
- 5 ____ race: Fierce competitive struggle for power.
- 6 Holy ____: Exclamation expressing surprise.
- 8 Black ____ of the family: A worthless or disgraced member of a family.

Across:

- 2 Keep the ____’s share: The biggest portion
- 4 Eager ____: Person who is excited about doing a certain work.
- 7 Raining cats and ____: Raining heavily
- 9 Hold your ____: Wait and be patient
- 10 The ____ work: Hard, boring part of a job or work.

Blogs

Blogging is another medium that can be explored in order to build the writing skills of learners. The teacher can ask the students to view existing blogs such as <http://animaletics.blogspot.in/> and create a similar blog. They can also make blog entries based on the lines taken from the speech such as “Man is the only creature that consumes without producing”, or “All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.” These entries can be in the form of comments, expressing agreement/disagreement with Old Major. Related topics can also be given for blog entries such as ‘The caged love birds in my neighbour’s balcony’, or ‘Experiments on animals for developing medicines and cosmetics’. These entries maybe graded for writing skills by the teacher.

YouTube

The teacher can encourage the students to read the entire novel. For those whose dominant style of learning is Aural, they can access the audio book which is available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky17KPgdsos>. The students can even watch the animated version of *Animal Farm* on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6peo16naLok>. Undoubtedly, these would be appealing to students and would lead to better comprehension of the text. It will also aid the development of Listening skills in English and are particularly useful for students who have spatial intelligence (Gardner, 1993).

Web Links

The extract from *Animal Farm* can also be used to sensitize students to the cause of animals and get them involved in animal welfare. In order to provide a greater understanding of animal rights, students can be directed towards related online resources. For example, a passage from the PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals) website, an extract of which is given here could be used as a starting point to discuss the issue of Animal Rights.

Why Animal Rights?

Almost all of us grew up eating meat, wearing leather, and going to circuses and zoos. Many of us bought our beloved “pets” at pet shops, had guinea pigs, and kept beautiful birds in cages. We wore wool and silk, ate McDonald’s burgers, and fished. We never considered the impact of these actions on the animals involved. For whatever reason, you are now asking the question: Why should animals have rights?

The full text of this passage is available at: <http://www.peta.org/about/why-peta/why-animal-rights.aspx>. Students can be directed to similar passages which can be found at following link <http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/singer01.htm>

Another interesting link on animal rights is available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/rights/rights_1.shtml. While making a case for animal rights, the webpage presents points in favour and against the issue. Here again, the students will not only delve deeper into the matter but also be acquainted with the stylistic and discourse aspects of a debate/an argument. A popular line from *Animal Farm*, “All are equal but some are more equal than others”, can be used as a topic of a debate on animal rights. This may happen within the classroom or in an online discussion forum with classmates or peers from across the world. A teacher can organize Skype conferences and play the role of a moderator. This could pave the way for schools across the country and the world to connect with each other without being physically present, leading to greater collaboration and sharing. Teachers can also observe and assess the spoken English skills of the students as they exchange their views.

Mobile Learning or m-Learning

Another way to generate interest in the welfare of animals would be for students to use their mobiles as a medium to communicate their views on the subject. They can be asked to communicate their immediate reaction to the violation of animal rights via SMS. For this, they will have to create one-line slogans and message it to the teacher and to each other. The best slogan can be voted for by the peers and the winning student can be rewarded. The teacher can provide inputs on the language used in these slogans.

TEDtalks

TEDtalks with its tag line 'Ideas worth spreading' can be a good way to inspire students. This series of talks made by eminent people from various fields lasts for a maximum of eighteen minutes. The teacher may ask the learners to search online for TEDtalks on animal rights. Some examples of TEDtalks on animal welfare/ animal rights can be found at the following links:

- i. *Dyan deNapoli (2011) on 'The great penguin rescue' available online at http://www.ted.com/talks/dyan_denapoli_the_great_penguin_rescue.html*
- ii. John Kasaona (2010) on 'How poachers became caretakers available online at http://www.ted.com/talks/john_kasaona_from_poachers_to_caretakers.html.

Some ideas using TEDtalks, as suggested in kalinago.blogspot.com can be adopted by the teachers. For instance the students can be asked to make a list of new or interesting words related to animal welfare that they come across in the talk. Another activity is to list down the 'wh- questions' on the board- who/what/where/when/why/how. After watching the video students can answer these questions and have a discussion.

Twitter

Twitter, a micro blogging tool, is a useful medium for practicing the target language. Learners can follow animal rights activists such as @ShenitaEtwaroo or @PeterSinger on Twitter. An activity based on a tweet (Singer, 2013) like the one in the box below will help the learner practice his/her writing skills. It will also be an exciting way for the learner to be involved in a social activity:



Peter Singer @PeterSinger

Australian Prime Minister accepts challenge to go meat-free for 2 weeks!
Email her & ask her when she will do it.

T-shirt Posters

Students can design posters, individually or in groups, using software such as Adobe Photoshop or CorelDraw to create awareness about animal rights. The research would require them to do some reading online as well as offline and frame appropriate tag lines for their campaigns. They can use the slogans that they composed during the m-learning exercise discussed earlier. Posters, like the one shown in Figure 2, can be designed and printed on t-shirts, which can be part of a class campaign on animal rights.

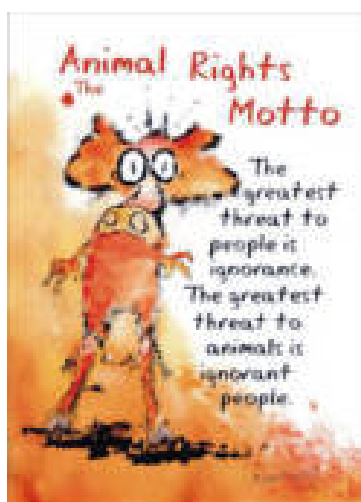


Image courtesy: <http://fineartamerica.com>
 Figure 2. Example of a poster on animal rights.

Search Engines

Since *Animal Farm* is a critique on Communism with an emphasis on the Stalin era, a cross curricular approach can be adopted here. The language teacher can request the History or Political Science teacher to talk to the students about Communism, Socialism and Stalin. Students on their part could read up on these topics on Wikipedia or other websites. This will help them get a deeper insight into some of the major ‘-isms’ that have influenced world history. The students can also be engaged in project work. The class can be divided into groups. Each group can look at different aspects of the issue, e.g., one group could look at the legal aspects of Animal Rights such as anti-poaching laws. Another group could use search engines such as Google to get information on various wildlife sanctuaries and parks in India while another group could be asked to conduct a research on endangered animals.

WebQuests

A WebQuest is a method that facilitates inquiry-based learning by providing a varied research

experience. The learners gather information from resources on the Internet and engage in a variety of tasks online. An example of a WebQuest on *Animal Farm* can be accessed at <http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=153189>. In fact the various activities discussed earlier can be put together in a single WebQuest.

Conclusion

In this article, we have suggested activities that involve media that are used almost every day both by students as well as teachers. The variety provided by these activities and the fun element in them would ensure active participation of the students in the learning process. In addition to developing linguistic skills, the cross-cultural nature of these activities would bring about sensitivity and awareness in the students.

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Linguistic Analyses: Implications for Language Teaching

Rajesh Kumar

Introduction

This paper shows implications of linguistic analyses for teaching of language. In addition, it explores how understanding of language acquisition (a subconscious process) helps learning a language where learning is very much a conscious process and involves formal instructions. The acquisition of a knowledge system and the acquisition of language are related to each other in a significant way in the sense that language is a significant tool for acquiring any kind of knowledge system. To be aware of the conceptual knowledge of language becomes an important concern of educators seeking to develop minds of the future citizens of society. Faculty of Language is a species-specific ability to know, acquire and use language. This ability is biologically grounded in humans only (Chomsky 1986). Every normal human child is hardwired to acquire language. Language grows in the human mind with minimal stimuli. Under this widely accepted notion, linguists have analyzed language. To a great extent, languages of the world have a lot in common, yet they differ significantly from each other. Linguistic theory clearly reveals that the fewer the operations/rules, the better the grammar (Chomsky 1965). Since Panini onwards grammarians have had the notion of simplicity of grammar in terms of fewer operations. To understand the nature and structure of language, we need to look at a whole and then to what lies underneath and not in linear and additive fashion (Agnihotri 2006). The examples in this paper and their analyses show what a child knows about her language. While

doing so, I will relate the implications of such analyses to language teaching. Understanding what a child knows about the structure and use of their language helps us in teaching target languages. This paper has three broad sections dealing with nature and structure of language at the levels of sounds, words, and sentences.

Speech Mechanism and Sounds

This section deals with the mechanism of speech sounds. To understand the sound system of a language, we need to look at the analysis and the mechanism underlying production of sound. In Hindi we find that vowel sounds are represented in terms of their length (short and long) and places of articulation (back, mid, and front) as in (1).

Vowel Sounds

1.

Manners	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long
	अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
	a	aa	i	ii	u	uu
Places	Back	Back	Mid	Mid	Front	Front

Consonant Sounds

Several places in the oral cavity (vocal tract) serve as places of articulation for consonant sounds. Consonant sounds in Hindi are organized as velar, palatal, retroflex, dental, and labial. Their manners of articulation reveal their distinctive features. Let's take a look at their organization. Consonants in first four vertical columns are oral sounds and consonants in the last vertical column are nasal sounds. Among

the oral sounds, first two columns are non-voiced sounds whereas the last two vertical columns are voiced. They alternate in terms of aspiration as in (2).

2.

MANNERS						
P L A C E	-Asp -Voice	+Asp -Voice	-Asp +Voice	+Asp +Voice	Nasals	
		Velar	g	gh		ng
C E S	Palatal	ç	çh	j	jh	ny

Word Formation

Plurals: Number and Gender

Some books describe nouns ending in *aa* as masculine and nouns ending in *ii* as feminine, and the rest as exceptions. Every noun in Hindi must be either masculine or feminine as it has a role in syntax. However, the assignment of gender to a noun in Hindi is arbitrary. The idea of language as a rule governed phenomenon rules out existence of ‘exceptions’ to a great extent. Now the arbitrary assignment of gender to Hindi nouns and a huge number of exceptions that do not follow the above pattern requires explanation. A careful analysis finds a systematic and rule governed pattern. Let us look at the data in (3) for the underlying pattern.

3.

	Singular	Plural	
Masculine	laRkaa	‘boy’	laRke
	ghar	‘house’	ghar
	dhobi	‘washer man’	dhobe
Feminine	laRkii	‘girl’	laRkiyaN
	kamiz	‘shirt’	kamizeN
	maalaa	‘necklace’	maalayeN

Some nouns that end in a vowel sound *aa* turn out to be masculine and others ending in a vowel sound *ii* turn out to be feminine. This is evident from native intuitions. This generalization breaks down with the examples such as *dhobii* (M)

‘washer man’ and *ghar* (M) ‘house’. We find two types of masculine nouns in Hindi; one that end with a long vowel *aa* and the others that end in anything else other than the vowel *aa*. Nouns that end in a long vowel *aa* change to *e* in plural forms. Nouns that end in anything else other than *aa* do not change their forms in plural. Since *dhobii* ‘washer man’ and *ghar* ‘house’ do not change their forms in plural, they are masculine nouns. Similarly, there are two types of feminine nouns; one that end in *ii* and the other that end in anything other than *ii*. Both have different plural forms. Nouns ending in a vowel sound *ii* change to *iyaaN*. Nouns like *maalaa* (F) ‘necklace’ changes its form in plural just like the noun *kamii* (F) ‘shirt’. Both are feminine nouns and both end in anything else other than the vowel sound *ii*. This explanation does not yield any exceptions. This knowledge of underlying pattern helps understand language as a rule governed phenomenon and such a knowledge system becomes handy for teaching language; in this case Hindi.

Nasal Harmony

The most regular phonotactic pattern is CVCV. Both vowels and consonants are required for formation of a word. Vowels are more fundamental to word formation as we find plenty of examples across languages where we have words with vowels alone. There is no word across languages consisting of consonant sounds alone. There are a lot of words that have consonant clusters in them at initial, medial, and final positions. All the consonants have an inbuilt vowel ‘a’ within them. In a cluster, the first consonant loses its inbuilt vowel quality. The following examples in (4) consist of nasal clusters where the first consonant is nasal.

4.

paNkhaa	‘fan’	[प, ङ्, खा = पंखा / पङ्खा]
paNjaa	‘palm’	[प, ङ्, जा = पंजा / पङ्जा]
aNDaa	‘egg’	[अ, ण्, दा = अंडा / अण्डा]
aNdhaa	‘blind’	[अ, ण्, धा = अंधा / अण्धा]
khaMbhaa	‘pole’	[ख, म्, भा = खंभा / खम्भा]

In each of the above examples, there is a nasal consonant that forms a cluster with the following consonantal sound. In *paNkhaa*, what follows the nasal consonant is *kh* which is a velar sound. In *paNjaa*, the consonant following a nasal is a palatal sound; in *aNDaa* the consonant following the nasal is a retroflex sound, in *aNdhaa*, the consonant following the nasal is a dental sound, and in *khaMbhaa*, the consonant following the nasal is a labial sound. A close look at these clusters reveals a lot. In these clusters, the nasal quality of the consonant is predictable when analyzed in the light of their places of articulations. Both nasal and oral sounds have same place of articulations; namely velar nasal in *paNkhaa*, palatal nasal in *paNjaa*, retroflex nasal in *aNDaa*, dental nasal in *aNdhaa*, and labial nasal in *khaMbhaa*. This phenomenon is nasal harmony. This cross linguistic phenomenon also helps understand the rule governed pattern of language and makes teachers informed in dealing with such issues in the classroom.

Syntax

This section deals with language as a rule governed system at the level of sentences. Examples come from agreement systems, negation, and negative polarity items. There are two major parts of a sentence namely, subject and predicate. Predicate consists of a verb and an object. Universal principles of language reveal that a sentence is not possible without a subject and a verb. At the same time, there must be agreement between the phi features of these two parts.

Agreement

Subjects agree with verbs in languages in terms of some of the phi features. These features vary from language to language. These features usually consist of number, person and gender. Some of these features on the subject NP must match with those on the VP. Languages vary

from one another as per the physical presence of these features on the verb.

5.

raajuu	muuvii	dekh	rahaa	thaa
Raju-S-M	movie-S-F	watch	cont-S-M	pst-S-M
'Raju (M-S) was (M-S) watching a movie (F-S).'				

Number and gender both must show up on the verb in a Hindi sentence as in (5) whereas, only number shows up on the verb in an English sentence. See the English counterpart of (5). In (5) the masculine and singular feature of the subject *Raju* shows up on the verb *dekh rahaa hai* with the same value. This is an example of agreement between the subject and the verb.

Word Order (S-O [IO-DO]-V)

As far as the order of words in a sentence is concerned, subject precedes predicate. However, languages vary according to the position of the object within the predicate. The object precedes the verb within the predicate in Hindi and it follows the verb in English.

6.

siimaa	ne	raajuu	ko	kapRe	diye
Sima-S-F	ERG	Raju-M-S	to	cloth-P-M	give-PERF-M-P
'Sima gave clothes to Raju.'					

In (6) the Subject Noun precedes the predicate. Objects precede the verb within the predicate. With this example we also learn that the indirect object in Hindi precedes the direct object of the verb within the predicate.

Negation and Negative Polarity Items

Negation is yet another fascinating aspect of human language. The analysis of negation helps us understand acquisition and learning along with several interesting aspects of language.

Negation Markers

There are three markers of negation in Hindi; *nahiiN*, *na*, and *mat*. *NahiiN* and *naa* occur almost in all the contexts as in (7), whereas *mat* occurs only in the imperative sentence as in (8).

There are two types of negation in a language, sentential and constituent negation. Sentential negation usually occurs right before the verb and negates the entire sentence as in (7). Constituent negation on the other hand negates only the constituent that it follows as in (9).

7. raajuu aaj [nahiiN/na/*mat aayegaa]
Raju today NEG come-FUT-M-S
'Raju will not come today.'

8. (tum) [mat/nahiiN/na jaao]
you NEG go-IMP
'Don't go.'

9. ham [moTar saaikal se nahiiN] (kaar se) jaayeNge
we motar cycle by NEG car by go-FUT-M-P
'We will go but not by motor cycle.'

Licensing of negative polarity items

Languages have elements such as *ek phuuTii kauRii* 'a red cent', *hargiz/kataii* 'at any cost', and *koi/kisii* 'any' that are warranted only in the presence of a negation marker in a sentence. In the absence of a negation marker, the presence of such items leads to ungrammaticality as in (10a-b). These are negative polarity items.

10a. gariiboN ko ek phuuTii kauRi *(nahiiN) mili
poor-P-OBL to one broken shell NEG get-PERF-F
'The poor did not get a red cent.'

b. raajuu hargiz/kataii *(nahiiN) aayegaa
Raju at any cost NEG come-M-S-FUT
'Raju will not come at all/at any cost.'

Some negative polarity items are licensed in the absence of a negative marker too. They are licensed in the absence of a negative marker as in (11a) and (12a).

11a. raajuu ne kisii ko maaraa?
Raju ERG someone to hit-M-S-PERF
'Did Raju hit anyone?'

11b. *raajuu hargiz/kataii aayegaa?
Raju at any cost come-M-S-FUT
'Will Raju come at all/at any cost?'

12a. raajuu kisii ko maar saktaa hai
Raju someone to hit can-IMPF-M-S PRES-S
'Raju can hit anyone.'

12b. *raajuu hargiz/kataii siimaan ko maar saktaa hai
Raju at any cost Sima to hit can-IMPF-M-S PRES-S
'Raju can hit Sima at all/at any cost.'

The grammaticality of (11a) and (12a) show that questions and modals have capability to license negative polarity items. However, note that questions and modals can only license *kisii* 'any' type of negative polarity items and not *hargiz/kataii* 'at any cost' type as the ungrammaticality of (11b) and (12b) demonstrates. These examples show that there are two types of negative polarity items in language. The first type of negative polarity items strictly requires a negative maker for licensing. The second type of negative polarity items can be licensed by questions and modals in the absence of a negative marker (Kumar 2006).

Conclusion

Now what does all this mean to a teacher? First of all, it shows that an explanatorily adequate analysis will have fewer operations. With simpler presentation and adequate explanation learning takes place effectively. Teaching of language without some sort of understanding of acquisition of language, learning appears difficult. Teaching of second language does not have to be done in a linear fashion, like building a wall; brick by brick. In the light of many recent findings of linguistic research the focus must shift to the fact that language grows under appropriate circumstances. Direct intervention does not work effectively rather it has to be indirect (Krashen 1985, 2003). Given the analyses that I presented in this paper, we

understand language acquisition better. The better we understand language, fewer the rules, simpler the grammar, lower the intervention, superior the teaching and fabulous the learning.

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Using Multilinguality as a Classroom Resource

Rajni Dwivedi

Understanding Language

Can we think of ourselves as being human if we did not have language? What would we have been without it? What kind of a society would we have been? How would we share our thoughts with each other? Would we be able to think? Would we be able to reflect on what we were doing and what was happening around us, and record it? Would it be possible for us to go into the past and discover our histories? Would it be possible for us to plan our future? Would we be able to do so many new experiments and researches? The list of questions is endless. It is obvious that without language none of these things would be possible. Language is a vital attribute of being human.

For a long time, language was seen just as a tool for communication. It is now clear, however, that this is a very narrow understanding of language. Language has a much wider application; apart from communication, language also enables human beings to think, imagine, feel, analyze, and is a powerful medium of constructing knowledge.

Generally, language is taken to mean English or Hindi, or a specific language. However, no one speaks only one specific language or only a single fixed variety. In the context of India, almost every Indian uses many languages and their varieties. Thus apart from cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, we also have language diversity. In fact there are so many languages that it is not possible for one to understand all of them. But multilinguality does not imply that one

has to learn all the languages; what it means is that one has to respect all languages and their speakers.

It is indeed surprising to note that languages have more similarities than differences. For example, all languages have vowel and consonantal sounds (of course the number may vary). Also, most of the words will follow alteration of these sounds. The sentences will generally have a subject, an object and a verb (the order may vary).

The central idea of this paper is to discuss how multilinguality can be used as a resource in the classroom. I will first discuss the language situation in India with the help of some concrete examples. I will then try to explain why we need to promote multilinguality, and how it can be used as a resource in the classroom. Lastly, I will explore how the similarities and differences in languages can be exploited in the classroom to make learning more interesting and meaningful.

Multilingualism in India

I reproduce below observations from three different situations:

Observation 1

I observed class 1 in an Udaipur primary school. It had twenty-five children. Most of the children were quite fluent in Hindi and Mewari (language spoken in Udaipur, Rajasthan, and nearby areas). They also spoke a few words of English. Some of the children could speak Vagari and Marwari. In conversations with me (or any other teacher), they would talk in Hindi, but when talking with

their friends, while doing group work, while playing or during lunch, they would talk in their local language (s).

Observation 2

This is an observation of an office in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. There were approximately fifty cleaning staff employed at the office. Most of them spoke at least three to four languages. During an informal conversation with them, I learnt that not only did they speak Chhattisgari and its other varieties, but they also spoke Hindi and some English. Most of the people belonging to this group had never been to school but they spoke all the languages quite fluently.

Observation 3

I have recently shifted to Assam where I am living in a very small village. The majority of the adult population here has never been to school. However, almost all of them speak at least two-three languages. These include Mundari, Kisani, Asami, Nepali, Bengali and some Hindi.

These observations give us an idea of the linguistic diversity in our country. They also substantiate the fact that India is a multilingual country and that knowing/speaking at least two to three languages is a common phenomenon across the country—whether it is Rajasthan in the west, or Chhattisgarh or Assam in the east.

The observations elucidate that: 1) learning more than one language is not a difficult task (provided there are many languages in the environment) and 2) each one of us has the potential to learn more than one language.

Why then does language learning become so difficult in school?

Appreciating Classroom Multilinguality

Many people acquire several languages as children, yet language learning seems to be a very difficult task in schools. What makes

children fear a new language when it is introduced? Despite having the potential for learning several languages, why do children get disinterested in learning the new language being taught formally at school? Why do they often not want to share the fact that they already know so many languages? This makes us think about the multilingual classroom.

By multilinguality we mean that not only do people possess the ability to speak different languages, but they also have the freedom to speak their own languages. Also, people are not laughed at, or seen as inferior because they come from a certain language background. If this can be achieved, then classroom multilinguality is here to stay. However, how this is to be achieved is not very clear as multilinguality is considered as a barrier to learning ‘the one language’ with all its ‘purity’. We need to break these stereotypes that not only become hurdles in achieving democratic values, but also hamper the learning processes of children.

Building upon what children already know, and relating the school knowledge with their daily experiences has a positive impact on children’s learning. A three to four-year-old child knows not only the rules of his/her language, but also when to speak, whom to speak with and how. By treating a class as monolingual, the teacher neither appreciates the language potential of the children, nor makes use of the linguistic capability each child has. Instead language is treated as another subject where the emphasis is on finishing the syllabus. The primary objective of language teaching, however, is to make children feel secure, to help them share their experiences, to draw a connection between the home and school language, to listen to each other, to question and thus develop an interest in language learning. This objective will be achieved if the classroom interaction respects all languages, and the educational programme and

the teacher make an effort to understand and use the languages of children and their community. Several studies have repeatedly shown that multilinguality correlates highly significantly with language proficiency, scholastic achievement, cognitive flexibility, and social tolerance.

The concept of spirality between various subjects is well known. A multilingual classroom makes it possible for children to see the similarities and differences between various languages. While analyzing languages, children learn various skills such as collecting, observing and analyzing data, and reaching conclusions, which are important for any subjects be it, Science, Mathematics or History.

A good classroom is one where children are respected for what they are and where they are engaged. We all are aware that language is constitutive of human being; without it, it is difficult to think of ourselves and our society. Respecting children's language means respecting children, giving their language space in the class is essential for giving them space. "Children will learn only in an atmosphere where they feel they are valued. ... Our children need to feel that each one of them, their homes, communities, languages and cultures, are valuable" (NCF 2005, pp. 14). A multilingual classroom is the only viable way forward.

Engagement with the children is possible when the children understand the task, feel that it is challenging according to their level, can make some meaning out of it and thus see the purpose of doing it. Often, children get stuck because they cannot understand the task as it is in a different language. They are not able to understand most of the things that go on in the classroom and gradually get disconnected. This in turn demotivates children and destroys their self-confidence and the space for learning from the peer group. They gradually lose their confidence, self-esteem and interest in studies.

In the Classroom

What should be taught, how it should be taught, what kind of textbooks should be used, what should the role of the teacher and the children be—all these questions are connected with the kind of education we want, which is ultimately linked to the kind of society we want. In the following section, we will see how multilinguality can prove to be a useful resource in the classroom. We will also learn how multilinguality allows us to attain some of the objectives of language teaching, and thus of overall education.

Some Activities

For these activities, the teacher may evolve her own methodology. The following guidelines may help:

1. Do not make children feel that some languages are better than others.
2. Allow them to speak the language they are comfortable with.
3. Do not pressurize them to speak the standard language.
4. Allow them to talk about their family, experiences with their friends, toys or whatever they like.

Imagine a class (classes 1 and 2) where two-three languages are represented. The teacher does not speak the language/s of the children. How can she start? It is quite a challenging situation for the teacher; either she can take help from other teachers or older children.

Children may be asked to draw things they like the most. The teacher may ask them to name the things that they have drawn. They may also be asked to name animals, means of transport, and names of the things that they see in the classroom. While children list the names, the teacher can write them down, either on the board, or in her notebook (not for the children but for herself so that the next time she knows

some of the words from the children's language repertoire).

Music has no boundaries. Therefore, music can be used initially by *just singing poems*. This may be accompanied by the matching actions, or the poem may be sung without any action. This will give both the teacher as well as the students the exposure to sounds as well as words of new languages along with the rhythm.

By exploring and appreciating what children know and by trying to understand them, the teacher will encourage the children to take part in the classroom processes. Giving space to their language will heighten their self-esteem and also make them more confident. However, the teacher will have to have patience as this is a time-intensive task as many times children do not speak at all.

Simultaneously, the teacher may also introduce some script, letters, words or sentences. Children should be given the freedom to use the standard script (it may be Devnagari, Bangla, Assamese, etc.) to write their language. Once the children become familiar with the various languages in the classroom and develop confidence in the teacher that she will not stop them from using any language in any way that they want, more challenging tasks can be given to them. The children may for example be asked to do an oral translation of small sentences, stories, or poems; or be asked to find words from different languages which have the same meaning.

In higher classes (5, 6, and 7) children may be given more complex projects such as:

1. Conduct a survey and find out which languages people speak in your village/community/*mohalla*). Children may be divided into groups of five and given some ideas for the survey—number of days (20-30), number of families they need to interact with (at least 20-30 from different locations of the village/*mohalla*). The survey may

also be conducted across different socio-economic categories (teacher needs to explain this). Making a language profile will also involve some mathematical skills such as making a table, comparing the percentage, etc.

2. Another activity for children could be to translate stories/poems from textbooks. These stories would not be from their own textbooks but from those of the junior classes. Again, this activity may be conducted in groups. After translating two to three stories, the children may be asked to share them with the younger children. This interaction will not only give children the confidence that they can help others to learn, but it will also develop a sense of responsibility and sensitivity towards younger children. The collection of stories can also be translated in various languages.

These activities must simply be taken as suggestions. How these will unfold in the classroom will depend on the teacher and children, and the overall context of the classroom. If there are fifty to sixty children in a class (which is true in our context), and they represent four-five different languages, then doing these activities becomes really challenging.

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Language Teaching at the Elementary School Level: Language Bias among Teachers and Pedagogical Tools to Check it

Sweta Sinha

Introduction

At times, an elementary teacher is herself filled with certain prejudices regarding the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. This article discusses the need for teachers to overcome these for effective language teaching. Based on a pilot study of around two hundred children between the ages of four and seven years, the article also suggests some pedagogical tools which will help teachers use children's mother tongues in the classroom.

Role of an Elementary Teacher

'Elementary Education' from Class 1 to 8 hopes to prepare future citizens. It will not be an exaggeration to say that teachers at this stage lay the foundations of the entire society. An important quality of a teacher is to be free from prejudices. Her personal prejudices should never stand in the way of her service to humanity, especially when it comes to her interactions with children.

'Linguistics' and some Language Prejudices

An aspiring elementary teacher may question the need for the inclusion of papers of Linguistics (i.e. the science of language) in a Bachelor or a Masters of Elementary Education programme; she knows that she will never teach these topics directly to students. However, a study of Linguistics makes us less prejudiced language teachers in many ways.

Linguistics introduces us to the nature and structure of language and to our rich multi-lingual heritage. It helps us understand that languages are not inherently superior to dialects for the often stated reasons: Dialects have no grammar, no literature, no script, smaller communities and that it is spoken over a small area. When we study the relationship between language and power we realise that the difference between a language and a dialect is not a question of language at all but a political question where what is spoken by the elite becomes a language and all other varieties spoken get the status of a dialect. Teachers begin to appreciate that every language that children bring into the classroom is equally rich and scientific.

Another thing that becomes clear is that a child's mother tongue is actually a resource for the teacher in the classroom. When a child of 6 enters the school, she also carries with her many concepts of all school subjects in that language. It is up to the teacher to be sensitive to this knowledge and utilize it in the classroom.

Last but not the least, what we become sensitive to is that a child's mother tongue is a part of the child's identity. If the child is made to feel that there is no space for it in her classroom, then she will feel lost and alienated.

The Study

A pilot study was undertaken across three MCD primary schools in New Delhi, which comprised approximately two hundred children in the age

group four to seven years. Special attention was paid to include children from linguistically varied backgrounds. This was done in order to study the impact on the level of cognition of students who are taught in Hindi, but belonged to a different speech community. The study methodology mainly involved observation and interviews. The distribution of students has been depicted in table 1, as given below:]

Table 1: Distribution of students based on their mother tongue/MT

(a) Delhi variety of Hindi as MT	70
(b) Punjabi as MT	40
(c) Haryanvi (Jatu) as MT	45
(d) Bihari variety of Hindi as MT	30
(e) Others (Bangla, Oriya, Tamil)	15

Depending on the performance in the various evaluative tests conducted in the classes, the students were divided into five categories. Table 2 shows the distribution of students in the five categories labelled I, II, III, IV and V.

Table 2: Category-wise distribution of students based on academic performance

Category		Number of students
I	Outstanding	10
II	Very good	30
III	Good	40
IV	Average	70
V	Poor	50

Out of 80 students in the first three categories, 40 belonged to group (a), 10 belonged to group

(b), 15 belonged to group (c), 15 belonged to group (d) and 0 to group (e) (for group classification please refer to Table 1). When depicted on a graph (as shown in Figure 1) the results of these figures were indeed eye-opening.

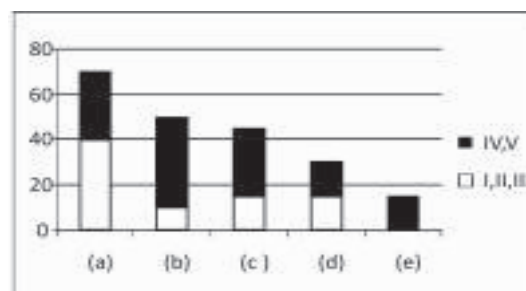


Fig. 1: Distribution of Students based on their Academic Performance

The interpretation of the above graph is simple. The best performance is indicated by group (a) and group (d), where 55 per cent and 50 per cent of the total students of those groups have shown good to outstanding academic performance. The worst performing group is (e), in which none of the students belong to the top three performing categories.

Thus, it was found that the students whose MT closely matched the medium of instruction showed better performance in the examinations compared with students who struggled to comprehend the language in which the lessons were being imparted.

This study emphasizes the importance of the use of the mother tongue by teachers in elementary education. While it is not always possible for the teacher to converse in the mother tongue of each and every student, the adoption of some new pedagogical tools can easily take care of such problems. Some of these practices include:

(a) Connecting school learning to children's daily lives

The themes taught in the classroom must be connected to the daily lives of children. The

teacher may begin by setting an example. He/she may start by narrating her daily routine in her mother tongue (MT) as well as the target language (OT or other tongue) (Kachru, 1992, p. 4). During the course of the narration, he/she may pick prominent words from the discourse which children can easily identify with. Now the same exercise can be repeated by asking children to share their daily routines. Narrating the same incident in the MT and the OT will help children to overcome their language biases. Even if some children are not very good at the OT they will still feel good about speaking more in their MT. With this kind of mindset they will approach their learning with much more confidence.

(b) Introduction of humour increases the chances of learning and cognition.

Humour can play a fundamental role in creating harmony and cohesion between teachers and students. Learners must be encouraged to share ‘funny’ experiences around language. Learners can also explore the functions of humour in society such as breaking ice, acquiring status, or making social commentary.

Imagine a conversation between two Hindi speakers, one speaking the Bihari Hindi and the other speaking the Delhi Hindi.

- /hamko bhukh lagaa hai/ (Bihari Hindi)

(I am feeling hungry)

- /aur kisko bhukh laga hai?/ (Delhi Hindi)

(Who else is feeling hungry?)

- / hamko aur kisiko nahi/ (Bihari Hindi)

(Me and no one else)

- /to ‘mujhe’ bolo ‘hamko’ nahi/ (Delhi Hindi)

(Then say ‘I’ instead of ‘we’)

Such linguistic differences are very easy to identify in a multilingual language environment and the teacher can use the humour in the situation for focusing on the various levels of

linguistic differences. The recommendation here is that children can learn a lot about the target language(OT) if they appreciate the similarities and differences with MTs. Armed with this knowledge, learners will be able to express themselves more freely and regain control of their identity. (Khoury, Raybould & Salim, 2012).

Humour is an inextricable part of the human experience and thus a fundamental aspect of humanity’s unique capacity for language. In fact, it stands as one of the few universals applicable to all peoples and knowledge throughout the world (Kruger, 1996; Trachtenberg, 1979). Teaching techniques involving humour will help keep students interested in classroom teaching. In the case of a multicultural classroom, the additional aspects of the introduction of humour make the class interesting as well as informative. Let us discuss this in relation to the following point where humour and multiculturalism play significant roles.

(c) Use of multiculturalism prevailing in India as an aid .

India is the meeting point of several cultures and ethnicities. Our mother tongue is a marker of our cultural heritage. Providing equal footing to all cultures thus, involves giving space to children’s mother tongues in the classroom.

Let us imagine a conversation in a multilingual classroom consisting of Bangla, Hindi and Tamil L1 speakers.

- /aami jol khaai/ (Bangla L1 speaker)

(I drink water)

- /jal khai nahi pi/ (Hindi L1 speaker)

(Not eat water, drink water)

- In Bangla, the verb /khaai/ is used in place of the verb /pi/ as in Hindi but it means the same.

(The teacher explains).

- /seri, naan jalam kudikaren/ (Tamil L1 speaker)
(Ok, I drink water)
- /kaun saa naan jal gayaa/ (Hindi L1 speaker)
(Which bread got burnt?)

The language teacher can make use of such confusions in communication to bring out the differences and similarities between various languages. This in turn may lead to a better classroom environment where not only will children express themselves without any bias, but they will also learn to be open towards other languages and cultures. This kind of a practice will be educative for both the teacher and the taught.

Better to Practice than to Preach

After the discussion on multiculturalism in the previous section, it becomes evident that maintaining a healthy linguistic environment in a classroom is not difficult. The teacher need not be speaking all the languages spoken by her children at home. He/she just needs to be open to the languages spoken by the students. The primary goal should be to make the students think on their own. Once this goal is achieved, language education becomes a more meaningful journey.

Conclusion

Thus an elementary teacher has immense opportunities to mould young minds, and this role becomes even more important and interesting for language teachers. Language is intrinsic to our identity, so utmost care must be taken to make sure that no child's identity is maligned in the process of teaching and learning. Language is also a very powerful tool for expression, hence the teacher must first make the children comfortable with their own native languages, and then take them to newer heights where they can learn other languages. Learning becomes

deformed in a suppressed and biased environment, and beautiful in an environment free from prejudice.

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Developing Assessment Literacy of English Teachers: A Workshop

Santosh Kumar Mahapatra

Introduction

In India, there has been little effort to develop separate and focused pre- and in-service training programmes for English teachers in schools. As a result, a large percentage of these teachers lack the skills, abilities and knowledge, etc., required for effective teaching of language skills. Assessment being one of the most important areas of teaching also gets ignored in the process. But this negligence may prove really costly in an educational scenario which is already considered to be examination-driven. So what is urgently required is professional training for in-service teachers, and a simultaneous effort to push for similar programmes to be part of in-service teacher education programmes across the country.

In light of the above background, this paper describes a workshop that was held in June 2012, with a group of eighteen English teachers from All Saints High School, Hyderabad. This workshop helps practising English teachers to identify the skills that are developed in their teaching, and to assess them. The main objective of the workshop was to sensitize the teachers around translating assessment objectives to sound assessment tasks. A few changes have been made to the workshop content presented in this paper so that it becomes applicable to a larger population. However, it is believed that the present form can be further tailored to suit the needs of teachers practicing in other specific English as Second Language (ESL) situations.

Pre-Workshop Preparations

Thorough and meticulous planning should be done before the actual workshop. This should include the following (in order):

1. Collecting information about the institution/s in which the participants work	How the institution management wants its teachers to work, whether it wants them to grow professionally, and whether some professional development programmes are provided to the teachers by the institution.
2. Collecting basic information about the participants	This includes qualification, teaching experience, proficiency in English, knowledge about assessment, current teaching and assessment responsibilities assigned by the institution.

After collecting this information, the trainer, in consultation with the institution management, should decide on the duration of the workshop. Ideally, the workshop should last four-six hours excluding breaks which should be taken at regular intervals. The number of participants should not be more than 30.

The next step involves preparing the hand-outs, worksheets and feedback forms, and gathering a variety of texts to be used during the workshop. The first hand-out should enunciate the objectives and schedule of the workshop. A sample of the hand-out has been given below:

Hand-out I

Objectives of the Workshop:

1. Familiarizing the participants with the objectives of teaching and assessment
2. Helping participants design sound assessment tasks that assess only target skills
3. Promoting mutual cooperation and group work among participants so that they help one another design assessments

Workshop Schedule:

Introduction (15 minutes): The trainer and the participants get introduced to each other

Session 1 (45 minutes): Finding teaching objectives from lessons

Session 2 (30 minutes): Teaching to testing

Session 3 (30 minutes): Deciding the skill/s and sub-skill/s to be assessed

Session 4 (2 hours): Designing tasks for testing what has been taught

Session 5 (15 minutes): Revisiting the workshop content

Session 6 (15 minutes): Feedback on the workshop

A copy of this hand-out should be provided to each participant just before the commencement of the workshop.

The Workshop

Session 1

The trainer divides the participants into groups of three or four. Each group is provided with a lesson from a well-designed English textbook used at the level taught by the participants. No two lessons should be the same. Also, the trainer should ensure that most of the language skills are covered in the lessons. The groups are asked to look at the activities and tasks provided in their respective lessons and state the objective/s of each activity and task. They should be allowed fifteen minutes to complete this. After this, each group should be asked to present their tasks and objectives to the class, and other groups should be asked to comment on the accuracy of the group's findings. Finally, the trainer gives his comments and feedback on the findings.

Session 2

The participants are randomly divided into groups of three or four. The lessons from the English textbook used in the first session are redistributed among the groups. Each group is asked to state the skills they will assess, and how they will assess them if they were to teach that lesson. The groups are given fifteen minutes for discussion with their group-mates before they present. After each presentation, the other groups give feedback on that group's proposal. The trainer monitors and guides the discussion.

Session 3

The third session is an extension of the second session. The trainer once again divides the participants into groups of three to four. He/she

gives each group two hand-outs: one containing a set of tasks and the other, a list of skills and sub-skills. He then asks each group to match the tasks with the skills and sub-skills they are assessing. The groups are given fifteen minutes to do this. Each group is then asked to talk about the tasks and their choice of skills and sub-skills. Though the trainer allows the other groups to make suggestions, he/she ensures that each group gets the correct answers and proper feedback.

Session 4

The trainer divides the participants into small groups and gives a list of skills and sub-skills to each group. The groups are given five minutes to go through this list. A large variety of articles, pictures, stories, poems, etc., are kept in different folders on a table in front of the participants. The groups are asked to choose relevant texts from these folders to design tasks for assessing the given set of skills and sub-skills. The groups are given ninety minutes to design the assessment tasks. The trainer helps the groups if they need his/her help. At the end of ninety minutes, each group presents its tasks before the other groups who give their feedback. The trainer also gives his/her feedback, which includes suggestions if required, for improving the tasks.

Session 5

The trainer asks the learners to talk about what they have learnt in the workshop and in the process, enables them to quickly revisit the workshop content and then winds up the workshop.

Session 6

Feedback on the workshop is collected from all the participants using a feedback form. The participants are requested to give suggestions,

if any, for further improving the workshop. The trainer may analyse these forms and make necessary changes to the programme if required.

Conclusion

Language assessment is a vast field. The workshop described in this paper is a small attempt at addressing the assessment training needs of English teachers. Moreover, the programme confines itself to a small area of assessment. Other areas can also be addressed in similar or different ways. More efforts in this direction will benefit the field of English Language Education in India. In fact, such workshops are needed not just for English but for all the other languages being taught in the school.

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Teaching Business Correspondence: Using Learners' Response as Feedback for Planning Reteaching

Sarika Khurana

Introduction

Using learners' responses as feedback for planning remedial teaching is a common practice in language teaching. This article argues that students of business communication mug up the qualities of a good business letter from their prescribed textbooks but fail to write successfully when confronted with a new situation; there is a disconnect between theory and practice. It also describes how teachers can plan remedial teaching on the basis of the learners' feedback to help students understand the qualities of a good correspondence so that they can apply this knowledge to their own practice.

Business Communication

Business Communication in English is one of the papers in business-related courses in almost all schools and colleges in India. The course, like all English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, deals with theoretical aspects and their practical application in business settings. It prescribes, among others, theoretical topics such as definition of communication, its nature and functions, direction of communication, barriers to communication, elements of effective communication and so on, and expects teachers to build a bridge between this theoretical knowledge and its application.

Theory and Practice

There are many challenges of teaching this course. One of the challenges, the teacher faces

is the 'disconnect' he/she finds between students' theoretical knowledge of certain concepts mugged up from books, and their understanding and practical application in business communication activities. This becomes evident when in the examination students are asked to attempt two related questions—one aimed at testing their theoretical knowledge and the other at testing their skill in the application of this knowledge. For example,

- Q.1. Describe the qualities of an effective business communication.
- Q. 2. You are interested in doing a part-time training course. Write a letter to the Principal of a training institute in your neighbourhood. In your letter:
- Describe the type of training course you want to do and indicate the timings that suit you.
 - Explain why you want to do this training course.
 - Ask questions to seek details of the course.

Write at least 150 words. The students whose answers are less than 150 words will be penalized.

The examiner finds that students score high on theoretical knowledge in Q 1. However, their response to its practical application in Q 2 is not as good. This is apparent from a typical sample answer reproduced as follows:

Respected sir/madam

How are you? My name is Rahul Sharma and I live in the neighbourhood to your training institute. I am interesting in doing a part-time training course from your institute because it is very near my house. Please let me know the timings that suit you.

I have done B.Com (Professional) course from a college here and want to do this training. I am working a junior accountant in a private company for six months now. My office will give me promotion and more salary to doing training. So I want to do this training now.

Please send me details of the course. How can I get admission? What is the tuition fees and admission fees? What is the duration of the training course? Is it a certificate or diploma course? Are reading materials given or I buy it?

Regards and thank you.

Yours' obediently
(Rahul Sharma)

The reason for this wide variation in the performance of the students in these two questions can be attributed to the distinction between rote learning and understanding. According to the books on business communication generally prescribed for our students in India, the qualities of an effective business communication are what they term, the '7Cs'. These '7Cs' stand for seven qualities that these textbooks list as *Completeness*, *Conciseness*, *Coherence*, *Courtesy*, *Clarity*, *Correctness*, and *Consideration*. So, in answer to Q.1, students reproduce what they have mugged up from their books and write a very good answer detailing these seven qualities so thoroughly that they score almost 100 per cent marks on this written assignment. But it soon becomes apparent that although they have

answered this theoretical question very well, they have not understood the significance of these qualities. Hence they fail to apply this knowledge to the practical assignment in Q. 2.

There are many reasons why this theoretical knowledge does not get translated into practice. However, one of the main reasons is that business communication teachers do not spend much time explaining the theoretical concepts and making learners practice application. Moreover, many of these '7Cs' signify abstract qualities that are not easy to understand and apply unless the teacher devotes time and effort to explain them and makes students practice their application.

The task before the teacher then is to explain to the students the concept of the '7 Cs' and demonstrate to them how these can be applied in letters drafted by them or by other writers. They generally do not do this as it is an arduous task. Alternatively, the teacher can give students concrete criteria in place of these abstract ones that are easy to understand and apply. I find this alternative more useful as such criteria do exist and are easier to remember and apply.¹ One of these criteria² is as follows:

1. Task completion
 - a) Format
 - b) Task completion
 - c) Tone and style
2. Coherence and cohesion
 - a) Logical development of ideas
 - b) Inter-linking of sentences
 - c) Paragraphing
 - d) Referencing
3. Language
 - a) Lexical resource
 - b) Grammar and structures
 - c) Punctuation

These criteria can be understood from the following explanations:

1. Task Completion

- a) **Format:** Check that the format is appropriate. Format does not only refer to the layout of the letter. It also includes the text type and all that goes into making and presenting it—the tasks expected, ideas and their relevance, tone and manner of communication, choice of lexis and register used, and the manner in which the ideas are communicated. The format will depend on the type of text one is expected to write, i.e., whether it is a letter, a set of instructions, an office memo, a notice, a report (short or long), a proposal and so on, as each type of text has its own distinct format, use of register, etc., and the writer is expected to follow these.
 - b) **Task completion:** Check that the given task is fully and appropriately completed. Does it give adequate and relevant ideas? Is the purpose of writing clear? Has it covered all the key points the task requires it to cover?
 - c) **Tone and style:** Is the tone of the letter appropriate to the task involved? Is the writer aware of formal and informal styles of writing and has s/he taken care to use the appropriate style of writing? Make sure that the style of writing, particularly while conveying bad news does not cause offence to the reader.
- 2. Coherence and cohesion:** Is there a logical development of ideas in the writing? Has the writer used appropriate cohesive devices to indicate a logical relationship between ideas and linked sentences from the first to the next in the paragraph? Has s/he used paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately? Are backward and forward referencing accurate and appropriate?

3. Language

- a) **Lexical resource:** Are the writer's words and expressions accurate and appropriate? Does the writer show evidence of awareness of word formation, style and collocation in her/his selection and use of words and expressions? Are the spellings accurate? Will the density of errors in word formation and spellings impede communication?
- b) **Grammar and Structure:** Is there a wide range and variety in the sentence structures? Are the sentences grammatically correct? Will the density of grammatical errors make communication difficult? What is the nature of these errors: are they systematic, asystematic, or slips?
- c) Does the writer use important punctuation marks to make the meaning clear?

These are concrete criteria, and can be easily applied by learners for assessing the suitability of a given draft letter, or to even rewrite an appropriate letter of their own with some help and practice by the teacher.

Let us see how the teacher can give students practice in applying these criteria to assess the suitability of the draft letter given earlier.

Exercise 1. Read the answer to Q. 2 and see if it meets the following criteria. Put a tick mark (✓) if it meets the criteria and a cross (X) if it does not. Give reasons for your answer, citing examples from the given letter, if necessary.

1. Task Completion
 - a) Format
 - b) Task fulfilment
 - c) Tone and Style
2. Coherence and cohesion
 - a) Logical development of ideas

- b) Inter-linking of sentences
 - c) Paragraphing
 - d) Referencing
3. Language
- a) Lexical resource
 - b) Grammar and structures
 - c) Punctuation

(Note: Initially the exercise can be done in pairs/groups with a time limit for completion).

When the exercise is over, the teacher has to give feedback to the learners in order to help them improve upon the draft reply or rewrite one, if necessary.

Practice and feedback could be given by showing more sample drafts on the same topic or on another topic, either written specially, or picked from those written by the learners in earlier classes as shown in Q. 3.

Q.3. Your company provides inter-city train services. It has received a complaint from one of its customers regarding late running of a train and on-board catering. The office assistant has drafted the following letter in reply. Read the draft letter and examine if it is a suitable reply to be sent. Give reasons for your answer.

Assess the suitability of the draft letter, and then join your group and discuss your answer/views with them.

(Note: Keep in mind the criteria for effective business communication given earlier while judging the suitability of this draft reply).

(Draft letter – adapted)

Dear Sir/Madam

It is with great regret that we read of your recent unpleasant experience while travelling on our Shatabad train from New Delhi to Amritsar on the morning of 2 December. We offer our sincere apologies and hope that your experience will not be repeated.

On receiving your letter, we investigated into your complaint concerning the late departure of the train. Our investigation reveals that the reason for the delay on the day in question was purely technical. The fault had to be replaced and thoroughly checked before the train could be allowed to depart.

We are sure that you will appreciate that the delay was unavoidable as the safety of our customers is as important as providing good service.

Yours truly

Each practice exercise needs to be followed by the teacher's feedback so that learners understand the positive and negative aspects of each draft letter taken up for consideration.

We have found that this technique of planning reteaching based on learners' response proves very helpful for them. It gives them concrete criteria to judge the suitability of a business correspondence rather than depend on abstract criteria mugged up from their books. Besides, this method is also more effective than providing a 'model' answer and discussing it, since a model focuses only on 'imitation' and 'conformity' and ignores individual creation and variety. Analysing and discussing a model answer postulates only the positive aspects of an answer. Hence this technique fails to anticipate what different individuals may do and thus ignores variation in free writing activity. On the other hand, the method of teaching that involves looking at the pitfalls faced by different

learners helps them to move from ‘imitation’ and rote-learning of theoretical knowledge to understanding and creation.

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Interview

Face to Face with Dr. John Kurrien

Kishore Darak

Dr. John Kurrien is the co-founder and Director Emeritus, Centre for Learning Resources in Pune which has focussed on quality in the development and education of disadvantaged children.

Kishore Darak (KD): Good afternoon John. As we plan to discuss language education in India, let me begin by asking about the genesis of Centre for Learning Resources (CLR).

John Kurrien (JK): My wife Zakiya Kurrien and I started the CLR in 1983, and worked there for almost thirty years as its founding directors. One of our main thrust areas was the teaching and learning of home and regional languages at the pre-primary and primary level, and English in regional medium elementary schools.

We continue to undertake large-scale projects in Maharashtra and various other states across India in collaboration with government agencies and NGOs. The goal of our work is to improve the development and learning of children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

KD: What are some key language issues in primary education?

JK: Our experience, as well as that of others, indicates that major language problems arise when the children's home language, if distinct from the state language, is not addressed in our schools. Unless you begin with some attention to the home language in school, many tribal and migrant children, for example, are going to be struggling to read and write in the school medium of instruction, often the state language.

Moreover, a child's cognitive and personality development, as well as progress in all other school subjects, is strongly related to his/her early acquisition of language skills in the primary years. Limited early language development leads to an inability to cope with other subjects in high school. All of this happens because our regional languages are taught badly right from the primary level onwards.

KD: Can you clarify this?

JK: Yes. First and foremost, most teachers, teacher educators, national test designers and policymakers do not understand that reading is all about comprehension. Many people think that the teaching of reading only involves reading aloud. However, while I may be able to read a text aloud, it does not mean that I understand it.

KD: So you are highlighting the fact that reading Marathi or Hindi aloud because you know the Devanagari script, does not guarantee understanding?

JK: Yes. Confusing 'reading aloud' with 'reading with comprehension' is the most critical problem of our language teaching at all levels. Silent reading (with comprehension) is a more important indicator of actual reading levels.

Also, at our primary levels and beyond, only the most trivial level of comprehension is tested, which involves looking for some 'give-away'

words in the passage provided. The standard practice is to get individual children, or the entire class, to read aloud and answer trivial comprehension questions. But there is far more to teaching reading comprehension, such as asking questions which are inferential, or focusing on the author's intent, etc. Finally, there is a gross neglect of teaching writing skills—an issue which has barely entered into any discussions on language.

KD: I am now coming to an important issue in language education, the question of English.

Many people think that English as a medium of instruction is the way forward, and the exponential expansion of English medium schools reflects this. What are your views?

JK: In my opinion, the role of English in school education is the most critical issue facing the country. First, every school should give every child an opportunity to acquire basic English skills. Schools are crippling children's futures when they leave school without these skills.

Acquiring English is absolutely critical. However, this does not mean that you can only acquire these skills through English medium schools. In fact, with some notable exceptions, I am totally opposed to the current indiscriminate expansion of English medium schools.

KD: But what can you say to poor and middle class parents, who desperately want their children to go to English medium schools?

JK: First let me note that while English skills have always been in great demand in colonial and post-independence India, till recently this did not translate into the current pan-Indian craze for English medium schooling, cutting across all classes. This fundamental change began in the 1990's with the liberalization and

globalization of the Indian economy, and a growing mass awareness, rural and urban, of the importance of English skills.

But our regional medium schools simply did not understand the challenge, and were unable to equip the children with basic English skills. This critical failure is primarily responsible for the extraordinary expansion and popularity of English medium schooling in the last three decades. And given the importance of English for economic and social mobility, English medium schooling is seen as the panacea of all evils.

Parents, especially those who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, equate success with the ability of their children to speak in English and pass exams. But most children from such backgrounds are only able to parrot some formulaic phrases in English, and learn by heart to pass exams. Most parents do not understand that this constitutes neither the foundational language proficiency, nor the cognitive and other skills that are required to prepare children to cope with an unpredictable future beyond school.

But looking at 'successful' students studying in English medium schools, and swayed by their own ambitions, they feel that they have arrived when they admit their children to an English medium school. There is a very important need to educate parents on whether English medium instruction is what will best serve the immediate and long-term interests of their children, and thus enable parents to make informed choices.

KD: What is your response to Dalit activists who see English medium instruction as the path to emancipation and social mobility, and corporates who promote English medium education in the name of equity and economic growth?

JK: Dalit activists and corporate heads have also been disillusioned by the failure of our

regional medium schools to provide English skills. But instead of significantly improving the teaching of English in regional medium schools, English medium schooling has come to be seen as the equitable and empowering educational solution. In my opinion, for the vast majority of poor and lower middle class children in rural and urban India, this is a recipe for disaster.

For children who come from socio-economically disadvantaged and lower middle class backgrounds, all that I have said about the problems with education in the regional/state languages as the medium of instruction applies to the majority of new English medium schools who cater to these groups of children. Children learn by rote, and acquire very limited listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

In fact compared to regional medium schools, the burden of incomprehension is further compounded in these new English medium schools because many of their teachers' own English skills are extremely limited, especially their spoken and writing skills. Moreover, they have no clue as to how to teach English to poor and lower middle class children who come from homes in which English is never spoken, and rarely heard.

The push for English medium education has bizarrely extended to the pre-primary years with many kindergarten(KG) classes opening in slums or rural areas. Nursery rhymes and some stock phrases in English, and learning to read and write the English alphabet is the order of the day, taught by untrained /poorly trained teachers who do not even have a nodding acquaintance with English.

Can you imagine the impact of such an education on a child's personality development—the stunting of her sense of self, confidence, and cognitive development? And what happens to these children as they proceed to study in English medium schools, where the

subjects are taught in a 'foreign' language taught by linguistically challenged teachers.

KD: But how do other countries cope with the growing demand for English skills? Are they also abandoning their languages for English medium schooling?

JK: Almost every country in the world has recognized the importance of English. But no country, with the exception of some ex-colonies, is following the Indian route of rapidly expanding English medium instruction at the expense of schooling in the regional languages. We must learn from China, a country with a similarly large population and even larger ambitions to be a global power. It has made a huge effort to improve standards and move away from rote learning.

Unlike India which was ranked almost at the bottom, China very recently performed excellently in PISA, an international test that assesses critical thinking in reading, science and mathematics of secondary school students from many countries. Like almost every developed and developing country, China has recognized that the most effective school education for rich and poor alike is conducted in the mother tongue. But acknowledging that English skills are also critical, they have put the teaching of English as a second language in schools and post-secondary education on a war footing. This is what we need to do in our regional medium schools.

KD: And what would teaching English on a war footing in our regional medium schools concretely entail?

JK: First and foremost, improving the standards of English teaching and learning should be given the highest priority in our regional medium schools. All skills need to be taught with a focus on the early development of spoken English.

The most significant reform is to ensure that all English teachers in regional medium schools including new recruits and existing teachers are themselves proficient in English. Methods of teaching English need to focus on how to teach children from non-English speaking backgrounds, and for whom English is a foreign language.

Moreover, since all that we teach should be understood by the learner and be meaningful, a multilingual/bilingual approach should be adopted, especially in the early years. A successful example of this is the CLR—a three-year bilingual radio programme in Marathi/English and Hindi/English, which has successfully taught millions of urban and rural children in regional medium government elementary schools basic skills in spoken English.

The next most important reform is in the area of curriculum and evaluation as it directly influences what is taught and learnt. We need to junk most of our textbooks that are used to teach English as a second language, and the sooner we do this, the better. In addition to new textbooks, given its backwash impact on teaching and learning, we need to introduce assessment procedures that record progress in all English language skills.

Every state needs to constitute an expert committee to look at the issue of English in regional medium schools comprehensively—teacher training, curriculum, textbooks and evaluation reform, etc. NCERT and SCERTs have a significant role in catalysing this process.

KD: Your final thoughts on the subject...

JK: Unless our regional medium schools improve their overall standards, especially in English, we can expect that in the next few decades English may well replace Hindi as the largest medium of instruction. Currently, more students are studying in English medium schools

than any other regional medium school, with the exception of Hindi.

In pursuit of the goals of equity and quality, state governments, corporates and some large-scale NGOs have over the last decade promoted the rapid expansion of English medium schooling. This has been primarily justified on the basis that ‘the people’ want it. However, people wanting it, is hardly reason enough for the government and civil society to abandon the effort to improve English standards in regional medium schools.

Both national and international tests indicate that the standards of learning in all our schools, whether government, aided or private is very low. The evidence clearly indicates that this stems from learning by rote, and a lack of teaching of higher-order skills. For reasons stated earlier, English medium schooling for the masses will not improve effective learning, but will in my opinion only make matters worse.

But this view is not based on any systematic empirical research. And therefore, before we continue to expand English medium schools indiscriminately, utmost priority should be given to an impartial and thorough assessment of these new English medium schools, with a focus on how and what children are learning. If the government agencies do not undertake this, it should be taken up by Indian corporations and foundations. Initiating and funding this process would be a significant contribution to India’s educational future.

Kishore Darak is a Pune based teacher, teacher educator and an independent researcher. Textbooks, Curriculum, Politics of Language, etc. are areas of his interest. He writes frequently in Marathi newspapers and magazines on the issues of elementary education.

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Landmarks

Multilingualism, Language Policy and the Constituent Assembly Debates

S. Imtiaz Hasnain

This short paper looks at the Constituent Assembly Debates about language issues in India as well as the language provisions in the Indian Constitution with focus on the language policy of India and the implications on teaching. The Constituent Assembly Debates reveal the intention of various players. The debates spread over the entire period from 9 Dec 1946 to 1949 and ended with the proclamation of the Constitution of India that came in force on 26 January 1950.

Language Issue and the Constituent Assembly Debates

Language issues become very sensitive and divisive within the Constituent Assembly. In the early days the Assembly was not separated into factions or groups. However, it got completely divided when it came to issues of language. Language, like Fundamental Rights, touched everyone. Flip through the pages of the Constituent Assembly Debates and one will find the language problem agitating and plaguing the Assembly throughout its three-year lifetime. In fact, right at the beginning, some members addressed the Chairman of the CAD in vernacular languages understood by only a few other fellow-members. Language meant many things to many people: it meant the issue of mother tongue teaching in primary schools; some viewed language as a source of social status through which children of privilege classes could

qualify in central services exams; for some language involved the cultural and historical pride of the linguistic community and also religious community; some looked at language in terms of power relations involving domination of foreigners and colonizers over the natives and hence language evoked a sense of national pride, hence arguments were made in favour of a national language, a Hindi version of the Constitution, etc. Each perception regarding language generated its own logic of thinking, and the issues that occupied centre-stage in the Constituent Assembly Debates invariably surrounded the perceptions that people had about language.

Although the romantic-ethnic nationalism of the 19th century, the trauma of partition and the religio-nationalist discourse during the freedom struggle projecting the idea of a single national language were loud and clear, the CAD clearly steered away from getting into any possible language controversy by not giving precedence to any one of the Indian Languages over the others. The members of the Assembly were aware of the apparent impossibility of the language task, and did not attempt the impossible. Thus, with one stroke of genius declared Hindi as the 'official language of the Union' (not national language) that would be used for inter-provincial communication, and assured English the status of an 'associate official language' for an initial period of fifteen years.

Gandhi in the Debate

Whenever there had been occasion when the arguments concerning language in the Constituent Assembly Debates verged on being divisive and communally charged, Gandhi's metaphysical intervention brought sanity to the discussion. For instance, when, in reaction to mention of 'composite culture' and 'the forms, style and expression used in Hindustani' in a paragraph that preceded a list of 13 vernacular languages in Ayyangar's amendment, Seth Govind Das said that:

...Urdu has mostly drawn inspiration from outside the country...It is true we have accepted our country to be a secular State but we never thought that that acceptance implied the acceptance of the continued existence of heterogeneous cultures. India is an ancient country with an ancient history. For thousands of years one and the same culture has all along been obtaining here. This tradition is still unbroken. It is in order to maintain this tradition that we want one language and one script for the whole country." (CAD, 1989, Vol. IX: 1328)

Nehru relied on Gandhi's legacy to give a fitting reply to Seth Govind Das (without actually naming him) in defence of Ayyangar's amendment: He said it would be a betrayal of the 'Father of the Nation' not to adopt an idiom that 'should represent that composite culture which grew up in the Northern India' (CAD, 1989, Vol. IX: 1411), as the official language. 'No amount of copying and imitation,..., will make you truly cultured because you will always be a copy of somebody else... when you are on the threshold of a new age, to talk always of the past and the past, is not a good preparation for entering that portal. Language is one of these issues, there are many others. (CAD, 1989, Vol. IX: 1412)

Ayyangar's compromise formula invited several amendments. Roughly 400 amendments to Ayyangar's text submitted in the Assembly basically modified four aspects which were, nonetheless, important (Jaffrelot, 2004: 143). These were: The President would officially recognize figures originating in Sanskrit, 15 years after the promulgation of the Constitution; Hindi would be used in the regional courts with the approval of the President of the Republic; legal texts could be promulgated in regional languages as long as an English translation was provided; Sanskrit would be added to the 13 languages officially recognized in the initial list.

Thus English remained the language of the elite and of interstate relations. With the 1965 deadline approaching, the Parliament reviewed the issue in 1963, and the Official Languages Act made English the 'associate official language' and finally the 1967 amendment dispelled the fears of non-Hindi speaking states and guaranteed the use of English until such time that its demand for replacement comes from the non-Hindi states and, thus marked the beginning of a sustained and indefinite policy of bilingualism in education.

Language Matters and Constitution of India: A Critical Reflection on Language Policy

The Constitution of India resolved the language controversy by separating the national from the official and selecting Hindi to be the official language of the country. De facto this left multilingualism to symbolize the nation. The policy of promotion of multilingualism is built on principles of non-discrimination, which may affect both the speakers of a language and the language per se. The former entails giving equal opportunity to the individual to pursue one's sense of well-being without any language-based discrimination, and the Constitution resolves the conflict arising out of language by establishing

Fundamental Rights of citizens (Articles 15(1) and 16 (1) & (2)) Although what counts as discrimination in these Articles are ascribed attributes (Annamalai, n.d.) such as “religion, caste, sex, place of birth, or any one of them.” Language in this conceptualization of discrimination is an acquired attribute (Annamalai, n.d.) which gets recognition only by extension. For instance, in jobs where language skills are essential, a good knowledge in that particular language would satisfy the principle of equality of opportunity for employment. Where no language skills are required, there would be no discrimination.

Article 29 (2) also confers a special right on all citizens for admission in state maintained or aided educational institutions and the speaker of a language cannot be denied admission on the ground that he or she does not have any skill in the language required by the educational curriculum. In fact, according to the national policy of education in India,, a student must have three languages to different levels of competency in 10 years of schooling.

Discrimination of a language, on the other hand, involves use of language in education, as a medium of instruction, as a taught language, etc. Art. 29 mitigates this discrimination by giving the fundamental right to “any section of the citizens of India” to conserve their “distinct language, script or culture.” (Art. 29 (1)) This Article (29 (1)) is not subject to any reasonable restrictions. This right conferred upon the citizens to conserve their language, script and culture is made absolute by the Constitution. However, what provides the enabling context and intellectual resources for the effectuation of this right is the education. For instance, it is in the context of language in education that Guru Nanak University made provision to promote studies and research in Punjabi language and literature and to undertake measures for the development of Punjabi language, literature and culture.

By giving linguistic and religious minorities the right to establish and administer institutions of their choice (Art. 30(1)) and mandating the state to maintain equality of treatment in granting aid to educational institutions even if it is under the management of a minority, either based on religion or language (Art. 30(2)), the Constitution skilfully mitigated discrimination in educational opportunities by allowing its use in education, particularly with reference to minorities.

While Art. 29 brings in its ambit “any section of the citizens of India”, Art. 30 extends its operation only to linguistic or religious minorities. When in April 1947, the Assembly had stated that “Minorities in every unit shall be protected in respect of their language, script and culture, and no laws or regulations may be enacted that may operate oppressively or prejudicially in this respect” (CAD, 1989, Vol. VII: 893), the Constituent Assembly replaced the word ‘minorities’ and the Constituent Drafting Committee wrote this important article in the following terms: “Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script and culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.” (ibid) The members of the Constituent Assembly believed that this invokes language right, and, therefore, any section of the citizens of India should be entitled to preservation of their language. It must not be perceived as a group right. (CAD, 1989, Vol. IX: 1412)

Art. 29(1) in conjunction with Art. 30(1) gives the minority (or any section of the citizens of India) the choice of medium of instruction and the state to use its power to determine the medium of instruction in such a manner as to effectuate minority right. For instance, in the famous *Punjabi University* case, the Punjab Government, through a notification, compulsorily affiliated certain colleges to the Punjabi University which prescribed Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script as the sole and exclusive

medium of instruction and examination for certain courses. The Supreme Court declared that such a notification violated the right of the Arya Samajis to use their own script in the colleges run by them and compulsorily affiliated to Punjabi University. Likewise, a rule made by the Gujarat University prescribing Gujarati or Hindi as the sole medium of instruction and examination in its affiliated colleges was held to infringe the right of the Anglo-Indians who had English as their mother tongue.

By encompassing all minorities, the constitutional provision in Article 350 builds up the foundation for the language policy in India which allows “every person to submit a representation for the redress of any grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or the State, as the case may be.” Article 350A places an obligation on the state by stipulating that “It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.” Article 350 B stipulates that “There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President [and] It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities ... and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament and sent to the governments of the States concerned”. However, the two amendments that came as 350A and 350B made Article 350 infructuous for these minorities. They constitute a special directive and not a fundamental right, and, therefore, neither the state makes extra effort to meet the obligations of the linguistic

minorities, nor are their failures brought to the court for deliberation. Even the special officer of the Linguistic Minorities Commission constituted by the Government of India does not have legal power to seek the intervention of courts when there is violation of this Article.

Language Issue and the Policy of Circumscribed Multilingualism

The notion of ‘composite culture’, which became an acceptable compromise between the extremists and the moderates during the CAD, was thought to be multiculturalism. Yet, it subscribed to the essentialist position by treating culture as being rigid and fixed. Language policy also reflected these ideological trends by turning blind eye to the importance of multilingualism. It also joined the chorus of ‘unity in diversity’ with an underlying assumption that there is ‘a language’ which is rigid and fixed. The ‘three-language formula’, recommended by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1956 and approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961 for establishing equality with regard to the study of languages between the Hindi and non-Hindi areas along with creating a modern outlook (through English), emerged as a compromise with an assumption that there is ‘language’.

Our language policy was blind towards accepting that conglomeration of one language plus another is not multilingualism; variability in linguistic behaviour is a facilitator and not an obstacle in communication; our verbal repertoire is characterized by fluidity and heterogeneity and not by normativity and homogeneity; and the conceptual clarity, level of proficiency, scholastic achievement and cognitive flexibility are best achieved when the pedagogy is firmly rooted in multilinguality. Multilinguality available in the classroom can be used both as a resource as well as a goal for language teaching, but it also has the bearing on the use of the mother tongue

in pedagogy. According to Krashen (1982), a low affective filter is one of the cornerstones of success for learning a new language. If a learner is allowed to use his/her mother tongue, it will help sensitize other learners of language variations and can create conscious awareness of the forms of language or metalinguistic awareness, which in turn may help in learning more language. This additional benefit that builds metalinguistic awareness will encourage higher-order thinking and reading comprehension.

Recent work on multilingualism and education and NCF 2005 and its Position paper on teaching of Indian Languages are indicators of a shift in paradigm of language policy which acknowledges the wisdom of the members of the CAD but understands the “need to grow out of the recommendations of and the policies based on the CAD.” (Agnihotri, 2007: 200)

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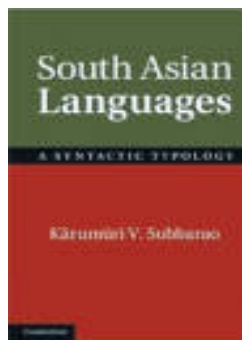
Book Reviews

South Asian Language: A Syntactic Typology.

By Kârûmûri V.
Subbârão (2012).

Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press. (400
pages)

ISBN: 9780521861489



South Asian Languages: A Syntactic Typology by K. V. Subbârão promises to be a very significant milestone in the linguistic exploration and study of South Asian Languages in general, and the Indian Sub-continent in particular. The book is an outcome of three decades of dedicated and focused investigation on these languages by the author using primary data. In the book, the author very closely traverses four genetically distinct language families with around sixty representative languages, all spoken in the sub-continent. It is perhaps the first of its kind with such a wide variety of data and close syntactic analysis. Languages of this region comprise four genetically distinct language families—Indo-Aryan Language Families; Dravidian Language Families; Tibeto-Burman Language Families; and Austro-Asiatic Language Families with two sub-families, Mon-Khmer and Munda. Out of these four families, the author has studied sixty languages which form a comprehensive database for a large investigation.

Drawing on the modular approach of the Government and Binding Theory in terms of Government, Binding, C-command, Control, Case, etc., the author skilfully examines these modules in the context of the subjected sixty languages from four genetically distinct language

families in the Indian sub-continent, and projects these generalizations to a wider spectrum of South Asian Languages. Languages differ from each other in terms of a finite set of parameters. As Chomsky (1975) puts it, as a general principle, a language belongs to “the Universal Grammar (UG) as part of ‘pre-existent’ knowledge that makes learning possible (p. 118)”. The volume examines the principle of South Asian Languages in terms of the UG and the parameters (variations) in syntax and morphology that make them distinct from each other. It focuses on the syntactic typology of South Asian Languages in general and a high degree of syntactic convergence in particular with special reference to the notion of ‘India as a Linguistic Area’ (Emeneau, 1956; Masica, 1976).

Chomsky’s response (1975) to the behaviourist model triggered a fundamental shift in the linguistic paradigm with multiple implications for a theoretical explanation thereafter. Since then there has been a steady progress towards substantial accuracy in linguistic predictability and language generalizations. The Government and Binding Theory (Chomsky, 1981, 1982, 1986a, 1986b) and subsequent developments have proved to be the most effective and robust model of syntactic analysis with its modular approach. The data in the volume have been analysed in this modular approach to discuss and demonstrate syntactic nature, convergence and predictions for language contact among South Asian languages. The work identifies deviations in the syntactic properties of these languages in a theory neutral way, and tries to explain them in the theoretical construct of the Government and Binding framework. The author builds upon the seminal work by Emeneau (1956), Masica (1976), Schiffman & Shapiro (1981), and Subbarao (2007), and provides a very

comprehensive and inclusive perspective on the syntactic typology of these languages from the region. The study extends the notion of ‘India as a Linguistic Area’ to entire South Asia as a Linguistic Area with logical reasoning and empirical data.

All the eight chapters together provide a comprehensive idea about syntactic characteristics, typological features and distinctiveness of languages of the South Asian region in general and the Indian Sub-continent in particular. The most significant contribution of this study is that it comes as a fundamental study on a large scale, with primary data on four distinct language families spread over the region. The study brings out a number of distinctive syntactic features with elaborate theoretical analysis and close observation. The inferences drawn in the volume provide researchers with many theoretical implications to the established research findings in the field suggesting a new and inclusive expansion of the paradigm.

Finally, this volume is a tribute by the author to the discipline he has been active in for over four decades, and is handy for all researchers in the field as a ready reference with immense potential to review and examine some very pertinent issues identified, discussed and underlined about the languages and language families of the region. Undoubtedly, this volume is an academic accomplishment and remains a challenging agenda for all researchers and academicians working in this discipline.

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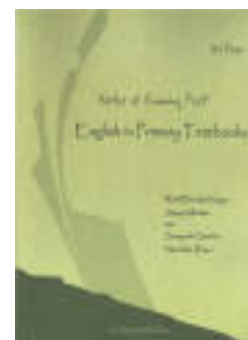
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Sur Pipa: English in Primary Textbooks

Rimli Bhattacharya & Anuja Madan with Sreyoshi Sarkar and Nivedita Basu (2012). Eklavya Publications, Bhopal



Let's Move Beyond Textbooks

It is axiomatic to equate children with noise. Left unsupervised by the teacher, the noise level in a classroom full of students can disturb lessons being conducted in

the neighbouring classrooms. As a child, the most often heard admonishment from teachers and adults was, “Don’t make noise”.

Let us imagine a scenario. Picture a noisy classroom. As the teacher you quietly enter and sit on one of the empty desks along with the students. After a while you are able to discern that the ‘noise’ is actually polyphony of parallel conversations. You gather the threads of a couple of conversations, amongst the many that are taking place in your immediate vicinity. You listen in and intervene; students generously include you in the conversation you choose to enter. You are a deft conversationalist and so are able to integrate ideas, themes and stories into the conversation, picking up connecting threads. The conversation group you are in is now engaging with the thread that you have woven into their conversation. You unobtrusively withdraw from this group, take a prominent position in the class and introduce the theme of that group to all the students and then draw their attention to the lesson in the textbook from which this theme has emerged.

The lesson that this possible though improbable scenario presents is that there is a world of the student that current pedagogical practices do not engage with. Would it not be useful for the teacher, a powerful individual in the context of the classroom, to enter into this world with the agenda of the curriculum manifest through the textbook, rather than to seek to create a new world that bases itself solely on the textbook, and then strives to get children to relate to it?

The book under review, *English in Primary Textbooks* is a rare and welcome attempt to incorporate the field research of actual pedagogical practices in classroom situations into the literature of language teaching in India. It presents the findings of a research project on children’s literature, more specifically on the current set of English textbooks published by the NCERT. This project was undertaken by

researchers teaching English Literature to university students.

When we talk about children’s literature, we often forget that in India, textbooks are the *only* books that most children possess. It is heart-warming that when the researchers behind *English in Primary Textbooks* undertook to do a research project on children’s literature, they chose the current set of English textbooks published by the NCERT. This is especially relevant because these textbooks were published after a comprehensive round of review and analysis that led to the publication of the National Focus Group Position Papers (NFG) and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2005.

The first section of *English in Primary Textbooks* presents an analysis of the formulation of the policy that guided their work and how it impacted the textbooks. It shows how the textbooks have inadequately captured the essential thrust of the new pedagogical approach articulated in the NFG on English and the NCF.

The second section essentially drives home the point made in the first section, that the textbooks could have been prepared more imaginatively and sensitively. It reviews the books and specifically select lessons are subjected to a microanalysis. The texts chosen for the lessons are written very blandly. Even classics such as the adaptation of Prem Chand’s *Bade Bhaiisaab* (which in the textbook has been unnecessarily retitled as *My Elder Brother* considering the importance given to the multilingual approach in the new policy documents), have been rendered in a monochromatic manner focusing on a single moral lesson to be learnt from the text, rather than a more textured approach that would invite students to participate more actively with their own ‘readings’ or interpretations of the text. The text-based questions lean heavily on testing

comprehension and reading recall. They do not allow students to identify more closely with the text by asking more ‘open-ended questions’, or questions to which each individual student is encouraged to answer in their own way, such that there is no single correct answer.

The first two sections therefore, present the familiar, if slightly depressing story of how even the best policy does not get adequately captured in its implementation. The third section, the most valuable part of the book deals with observing how textbook transactions are conducted in the classroom. In all there are three sets of observations out of which two are constrained by the manner in which teachers dominate the class. In fact in one observation, the teacher in an attempt to correct pronunciation constantly interrupts a Bengali-speaking child who is reading out loud. The third set of observations present a case where the observer is able to participate in the conversations that go on in the class independent of the teacher. The teacher does reprimand the students, but being “visibly anxious about the impression such a situation would have on ‘the observer’, is not particularly harsh to her students.” The observer is therefore able to witness conversations between the students that take the lesson that is being taught in class right into their own lives. The lesson is on Pinocchio and one of the students asks his partner, “*Kal Pinocchio aa raha tha TV pe; tu ne dekha?*” (Did you watch Pinocchio on TV yesterday)? Like in the case of many conversations, this thread trails away and is replaced with a more ‘interesting’ topic. The observer is asked, “*Aap Speed Racer ya Spiderman dekhte ho?*” (Do you watch Speed Racer or Spiderman?). The same student makes a claim that the observer lives in the house above his, and that he has known her since childhood. In fact it is only in this interaction that we witness children communicating with us through the observer showing complete “agency” in their actions.

If in a scenario similar to the imaginary one outlined in the beginning of this review, the textbook is seen as an opening thread to a conversation, or more importantly a contributing thread to an ongoing conversation, we need not be so dependent on its quality. The conversation and the students can soon move beyond the textbook. This is not to say that textbook writers, designers or publishers need to be lax about their job, in fact quite the opposite. Imagine the challenge, the producers of a textbook would face when they think of every reader as a reviewer giving their work a critical reading!

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Suggested Readings

Ideas: Speaking and Listening Activities for Upper-intermediate Students

By Leo Jones

Student's book and
Teacher's book

Cambridge University
Press

First printed 1987

ISBN 0521 270804

Student's book
(Paperback)

ISBN 0521 270812 Teacher's book
(Paperback)



Comprising a unique collection of absorbing and enjoyable activities, *Ideas* aims to improve the listening and speaking abilities of students at upper-intermediate and advanced levels. The two-book series originally came with a set of two cassettes, and the activities listed in the same can be adapted to suit classroom requirements in the Indian context to the exclusion of the cassettes. Each activity encourages language practice, and also involves genuine communication whereby students can solve problems, exchange information and participate in role play and discussions.

Ideas (students' book) is divided into a total of twenty-two units on wide-ranging topics such as 'Personal information', 'Weather and climate', 'Strange phenomenon', 'Transport', 'Health', 'Technology', 'Language and communication', and 'Advertising'. Each unit in turn has at least five to eight student-centered activities designed to encourage students to share their ideas, opinions and experiences with each other. Of course, some of the activities such as those listed under the 'Current affairs'

unit will have to be adapted for each class according to the current news, but the type of activities envisaged (writing captions for pictures; making stories from combination pictures) are valid even for the examples as cited in the text. There is a wide range of photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and maps and drawings which can be modified and used for the higher classes to facilitate oral/aural skills in language learners. The liberal use of pictures, sketches and diagrams makes the book an extremely lucid and entertaining read. Some of the activities cited in the chapters (example 'new clothes' in chapter 2) will make sense only in conjunction with the recordings in the cassettes but nevertheless, by inference, extension and adaptability, these activities too can be used to encourage learners to speak and listen in their target language. All the activities recommend group initiative and learners are supposed to work together to get the answers to the questions (example 'speak about your country' in chapter 3); to imagine situations (what if you are marooned in a flood); to listen to and report communication (a menu on television, phone messages), etc. The unit 'Stranger than fiction' has interesting activities which require the students to sit together and distinguish between true and false statements (i. A pencil can draw a continuous line 5.5 km long; ii. Humans can perceive only four tastes; iii. The whale is the world's largest fish). The teacher's book serves as a ready reference by providing answers to these questions (i. False - the answer is 55 km; ii. True - sweet, sour, salt and bitter; iii. False - whale is a mammal). It also gives instructions to the teacher on how s/he can adapt some of the activities and encourage students to work in groups. The teacher may for instance divide students into multicultural groups to discuss culture-specific superstitions such as avoiding

walking under a ladder, stopping when a black cat crosses one's path, throwing a coin in a fountain to make a wish, etc. Each unit in the teacher's book is preceded by a vocabulary section. The unit also has the transcript of the recordings and suggestions for written work for the students.

Language Transfer: Cross-linguistic Influence in Language Learning

By Terence Odlin

Series Editors:
Michael H. Long and
Jack C. Richards

Cambridge
University Press;
USA

First published: 1989

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The idea of language transfer is of crucial importance in applied linguistics, second language acquisition and language teaching. Although it had waned in the 1960s (when learners' errors were seen not as evidence of language transfer but of 'creative construction process'), in recent years, the role of transfer has come to be acknowledged. Terry Odlin's *Language Transfer* provides an account of the nature of language transfer or cross-linguistic influence, and its role in second language acquisition. In the words of the Series Editors:

Odlin documents the historical development of the concept of language transfer, explores the role of transfer in discourse, semantics, syntax, phonology and writing systems, and examines the way language transfer interacts with linguistic as well as cultural, social and

personal factors in second language learning and use (p. ix).

The book is divided into ten chapters each of which deals with a different linguistic aspect of transfer. The first two chapters give an introduction and earlier views on the issue of transfer; the third chapter defines some fundamental problems in the study of transfer. Chapters four-eight form the theoretical base of the book and follow a somewhat top-down approach to the issue of transfer, starting with discourse (chapter 4), semantics (chapter 5), syntax (chapter 6), phonetics, phonology and writing systems (chapter 7), and moving on to non-structural factors in transfer (Chapter 8).

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction of the issue of transfer; chapter 2 provides its background. With plenty of examples, this chapter introduces the differences between borrowing transfer and substratum transfer: the former refers to the influence a second language has on a previously acquired language, while the latter refers to a type of cross-linguistic influence (typically of the source language) on the acquisition of a target language. This chapter also has a few sections dealing with contrastive analysis and the universal processes in acquisition. Chapter 3 identifies some theoretical and practical problems associated with the study of transfer (mainly that it is *not* a consequence of habit formation; it is *not* interference or falling back on the native language, and is *not* always the 'influence of native language'). The problems of generalization arising from language universals and linguistic typologies are also addressed in this chapter. The next four chapters present detailed analyses: Chapter 4 begins by addressing what Odlin calls the most challenging areas in contrastive analysis—discourse. Phenomenon such as politeness (including requests, apologies, other speech acts, conversational style, etc.) and coherence are addressed (including narratives, indirection in

discourse) in this chapter. The next chapter on semantics addresses both propositional semantics (semantic universals and linguistic relativism, semantic case) and lexical semantics (cognate vocabulary; lexical universals and acquisition and lexicon and morphology). Chapter 6 is concerned with syntactic transfer (especially with regard to word order, relative clauses and negation). Chapter 7 examines phonetic and phonological transfer (phonetic and phonemic differences, segmental errors, suprasegmental patterns), pronunciation, language universal and typologies and writing systems. Chapter 8 deals with non-structural factors in transfer, i.e. individual variation (personality/aptitude/ literacy) and age of acquisition (foreign accents etc). From the point of view of language teachers, this chapter is important in that it deals with transfer from the point of view of social context: issues of multilingualism and learners' perceptions, semantic transfer and social context, linguistic focusing and transfer in relation to social prestige are deliberated upon. Chapters 9 and 10 ('Looking back and looking ahead' and 'Implications for teaching') are also chapters that teachers of language in a multicultural classroom (as is inevitable in a country such as India) will find immensely useful. Although the book does not address contemporary aspects of the issue of transfer (its fourth reprint came out almost twenty years ago in 1994), because of its easy readability, it can readily serve as an introductory text for students of linguistics and applied linguistics. In all, *Language Transfer* provides a comprehensive overview of the issue of cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition, and its holistic viewpoint will be useful for language researchers, teachers and students of applied linguistics, teacher trainers and educational researchers.

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Classroom Activities

Activity 1: My Object, My Steps

Objectives

- To enhance learners' creativity by integrating English learning with craft.
- To enable the learners to give instructions in their own words in English.

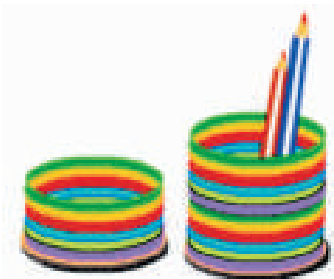
Material

Old bangles of same size, a strong adhesive such as Fevicol, a piece of cardboard and a pair of scissors.

Scope: Middle School learners (Grades VI to VIII).

Procedure

1. The teacher carries a few old bangles of the same size, an adhesive, a piece of cardboard and a pair of scissors to class.
2. He/she encourages the learners to carefully observe the process of making a pen stand using this material (the instructions for making the pen stand have been given below).
3. Once the bangle pen stand is ready, the teacher, along with the learners, discusses the steps involved in making it. The teacher writes these steps on the black board in the given manner.



Step 1: Collect bangles of different colours but of the same size.

Step 2: Use a bangle to draw a circle on the piece of cardboard. Cut out the circle.

Step 3: Now stick one bangle on top of the other using the circular cardboard as the base for your pencil stand.

Step 4: Stick the bangles until you get a height of four inches. Your pencil stand is ready. There is no need to paint or decorate it as it will be the most colourful pencil stand that you will have.

4. The teacher asks the learners to get waste material (for making any object of their choice) the next day.
5. The learners are encouraged to make an object using the waste material.
6. The teacher encourages the learners to write on a piece of paper, the step-by-step instructions for making that object. The teacher acts as a facilitator and helps the students in accomplishing this task.
7. The teacher must display (in the class) all the objects made by the students along with the sheets on which the students have written the instructions for making that object.

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Activity 2: Match the Titles

Objectives

1. To be able to match words
2. Develop the ability to use visual cues in reading

Material

1. Fifty or more books
2. Slips of papers

Scope: This activity can be done with a group of 4-5 children who have recently begun reading.

Preparation

Segregate the books into 3 or 4 categories based on the length of the titles. On each slip, write the title of one book and fold it. If possible, get the children to sit around you and read out the titles you are writing before folding them. Arrange the books category-wise in a line with the cover page visible.

Procedure

- Mix the slips and ask the children to pick one slip each.
- The children need to open the slip and match the title with the book. Ask them to identify the book and then either read out the title or repeat it after you. Change the positions of the books and repeat the activity.

Activity 3: Find the Book

Objective

1. In this activity, the children have to read a small extract from a book and guess the name of the book it has been taken from.

Material

1. Thirty or more books (at least half of these books should be known to the children)
2. Slips of papers

Scope: This is a variation of the above activity, however it is aimed at children who are able to read.

Preparation

Copy a paragraph (around 50 words) from each book on the slips of the papers. This preparation should be done in the absence of the children. Put all the books in a line with the cover page visible.

Procedure

Mix up the slips and ask each child to pick one. At a time two-three children will participate in this game. They have to read the paragraph and

then look at the books and identify the book from which the paragraph has been picked. Children may use visual cues, read the titles of the books, maybe even flip through the pages or start reading the book until they find the paragraph.

QUEST TEAM

QUEST is a school-based support programme of Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre being run in some public and private schools of Udaipur, with the aim of improving classroom processes, teacher understanding and proficiency levels in children.

Activity 4: Asking Questions

Objectives

Asking appropriate questions to seek specific information

Grammar: Do you have a/an...? Yes, I have a/an... No, I don't....

Scope: Upper Primary

Preparation

1. Prepare the worksheets as per the given sample.
2. Make enough worksheets for all students in the class.

Procedure

Part A

1. Write a question on the board, for example:
Do you have a red T shirt in your cupboard?
2. Ask this question individually to a random selection of students.
3. Encourage them to answer using the following structure:
Yes, I have a red T shirt in my cupboard.
Or, No, I don't have a red T shirt in my cupboard.
4. For every 'Yes' answer, put a tick (✓) against the question on the board.
5. For every 'No' answer put a cross (x) against the question.

- Leave the question with the ticks (v) and the crosses (x) on the board.

Part B

- Divide the class into groups of ten.
- Give a worksheet to every student.
- Tell them to work only within their groups, asking the question, *Do you have a/an...?*
- The students must respond appropriately saying *Yes, I have...a/an.* or, *No, I don't have a/an....*
- Ensure that students ask the question correctly as shown in the following examples:

Question: *Do you have a/an...?*

- Green pencil in pencil box*
 - Do you have a green pencil in your pencil box? Yes, I have a green pencil in my pencil box.*
 - Do you have a white handkerchief in your pocket? No, I don't have a white handkerchief in my pocket.*
- White handkerchief in pocket*

- For every 'yes' answer the children must put a tick (v) in the appropriate column in their worksheet.
- For every 'no' answer, the children must put a cross (x) in the appropriate column in their worksheet.
- Tell them to conduct this exercise with all members of their group.

Part C

- Draw the attention of the students to the board.
- Count the number of 'Yes' responses and note it down.
- Count the number of 'No' responses and note it down.
- Now, report your findings to the class:
Ten students in the class have a red T shirt in their cupboard.
Twenty students in the class don't have a red T shirt in their cupboard.

- Ask the students to compile the information that they have gathered within their groups and report it to the class in the same way as you have done. For example:
Only three students have a green pencil in their pencil box.
- Each group has to report their findings separately.

Sample Worksheet

Question: Do you have a/an...?	Yes	No
1. paper clip in bag		
2. painting on bedroom wall		
3. umbrella at home		
4. box of crayons in school bag		
5. water bottle in bag		
6. pencil box on desk		
7. mobile phone at home		
8. pet at home		
9. apple in fridge		
10. yellow T shirt in cupboard		

Adapted from *Have you got it?* Reward elementary resource Pack. © Susan Kay, 1997. Published by Heinemann English Language Teaching.

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Reports

Workshop on the Teaching of Kannada as a First Language

6-8 February 2013

Azim Premji University, Bangalore

Partha Sarathi Misra

As children have no difficulty in speaking their home language, it is often assumed that they will have no difficulty in acquiring the same language in school. The reality is, however, starkly different. It has been observed that even in class V, many children are unable to read and write in their first language. One part of the explanation comes from the fact that the language variety spoken at home is different from the language variety taught in school and therefore, students face difficulties in acquiring the school language. This hypothesis however, leaves several issues relating to first language pedagogy unexplained. It is essential to understand how children learn their first language; how they can be meaningfully engaged in learning the school language; and how children can be engaged in using language for the purpose of communication information, expression, analysis, critical thinking and interactions. In view of the need for such in-depth understanding, a three-day workshop on teaching Kannada as a first language was held at Azim Premji University, Bangalore from 6th to 8th February 2013. The workshop was organized by the Academics and Pedagogy unit of the University Resource Centre, Azim Premji University. It was attended by the Kannada language teacher trainers of the District Institute, Yadgir; members of the Child Friendly School Initiative scheme of Shorapur, Karnataka; and teachers of the Migrant Labour schools, Bangalore.

The primary objective of the workshop was to have a shared understanding of the needs of the participants as language teachers and teacher educators in the field of teaching Kannada as a first language, to see their own roles as teacher trainers and to prepare a road map for their professional development and engagement.

The workshop started with a detailed analysis of the nature and functions of language, the acquisition of the first language and the transition from home language to school language. The participants showed a keen interest in the theories of language universals, innateness of language and the socio-linguistic variables affecting the acquisition of the first language. They also shared their assumptions underlying first language teaching, and the experiences and challenges faced by them in the field of language teaching.

During the post-lunch session of the first day, Prof. Vanamala Viswanatha made a presentation on the use of language in teaching the first language. Citing plenty of examples from Kannada poetry, she demonstrated the pedagogical relevance of literature in teaching the first language to the tiny tots.

On the second day of the workshop, Dr Devaki Lakshminarayana interacted with the participants and prompted them to contemplate the correlation between the linguistic and the cognitive development of the child, and the nature and functions of language which go beyond mere communication. Her presentation and

suggestions helped the participants to channelize their perceptions on language, language learning and language teaching. This in turn has a direct bearing on the qualitative improvement of the teaching and learning of Kannada as a first language. She also guided the participants in conceptualizing the vision statement of the Kannada Language Co-dev Group proposed to be formed shortly. The aim of this group would be to enhance the professional competence of the members of the Foundation involved in teaching Kannada as a first language.

Participating in the deliberations of the workshop, Dr Parthasarathi Misra spoke on the theory and practice of reading and writing, and the participants tried to relate the findings of the recent research on reading and writing to their field experience. A detailed discussion on reading and writing prompted the participants to conclude that they would like to attend a few sessions on “Reading and Writing” for a better understanding of its theory and practice with reference to the teaching and learning of Kannada as a first language.

On the last day of the workshop, the participants discussed the pedagogical issues of teaching Kannada as a first language with reference to the guidelines formulated by NCF 2005. Under the guidance of Dr Devaki Lakshminarayana, the participants shared their understanding of the core issues of teaching Kannada as a first language.

The three-day workshop created awareness among the participants of the need for their professional development in the field of language and language pedagogy. It was decided that a Kannada Co-dev group meant for the teachers and teacher trainers involved in teaching Kannada would be formed soon to carry forward the dialogue initiated in the workshop.

The 3rd International English Language Teacher Educator Conference 2013

16-18 March 2013

International Convention Centre, Hyderabad

Partha Sarathi Misra

The 3rd International English Language Teacher Educator Conference mentioned in the section on forthcoming events in the January 2013 issue of *Language and Language Teaching* was held at the International Convention Centre, Hyderabad from 16-18 March 2013. The conference, organized by the British Council in collaboration with the English and Foreign Languages University (EFL-U), Hyderabad with support from the English Language Teachers’ Association of India (ELTAI) and the International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) was a highly focused international academic exercise that ignited the imagination of more than 1300 delegates representing 22 countries of Asia, Europe, Africa and America. Besides the key note and plenary speakers, 122 speakers presented their research papers in parallel sessions.

On the first day Ms Alison Barrett and Prof. Paul Gunasekhar welcomed the participants. The keynote address was given by Prof. B. Kumaravadivelu of San Jose State University. The keynote and the plenary talks by Penny Ur, Adrian Holliday and Ajit Mohanty set the tone of the conference which aimed at exploring the theory and practice of English language teacher education in diverse environments.

In his keynote address, Prof. B. Kumaravadivelu observed that the current approaches to English language teacher education were too inadequate to prepare teachers to meet the emerging challenges posed by economic, cultural and educational globalization. He also called for restructuring the English language teacher

education programmes across the globe.

Prof. Ajit Mohanty's paper on "English and Multilingualism in India: Grounding ELT in Multilingual Education Framework" created a lot of interest among the delegates. Prof. Mohanty's analysis of the multilingual social reality confronting the teaching of English in India and his portrayal of the 'double divide' prompted the delegates to look at the policy and practice of English teaching in India more critically and dispassionately. He also presented the sad tale of the disadvantaged tribal learners of English, who he said were the victims of 'double divide'. Prof. Mohanty repeated time and again that these tribal learners have to get their education first in an alien Indian language and then in English, which is doubly removed from their social milieu. In a very convincing manner, Prof. Mohanty presented the pedagogical issues related to the Multilingual Education Framework and indicated their relevance in the context of the all-pervasive diversity engulfing the ELT scenario of the country.

The theme of multilingualism was discussed and debated in a number of papers presented in the conference. Some of these papers were: "The Practice and Perception of Multilingualism in Technical Institutions of India" by Ajit Kumar Pradhan, "Towards Multilingual Methods and Materials" by Anand Mahanand, "The Role of Mother Tongue and English in Indian Education" by Anil Sarwal, "L1 Interference in Acquisition of English as L2: A Case of Secondary School Students of Assam" by Aatur Rahman, "Challenges of Teaching English in a Multilingual Situation: A Case Study from Kasargod District of Kerala" by Babitha Bhaskaran, "A Multilingual Approach in Teaching Spoken English at Undergraduate Level" by Hanumant Krishna Awatade and Vishal Ankush Salunkhe, "Code Switching as a Strategy for Acquisition of English in the Bilingual Context" by J. John Sekhar,

"Multilinguality as a Resource: A Study of Language Pedagogy in the Primary Class Room of Bhopal" by Neha Aggarwal, "An Experiment with Multilingual Pedagogy for English Language Teacher Professional Development" by Nivedita Vijay Bedadur, "The Importance of Mother Tongue Education for Quality and Access" by Pamela Mackenzie, "Multilingualism in Action: Theory and Practice" by Partha Sarathi Misra, "A Multilingual Approach Towards Language Teaching in Odisha Schools" by Patra Bairagi, "Multilingual Approaches to the Teaching of English: An Invaluable Resource or an Inevitable Pitfall" by Shivani Pujala Kasarla, "Mother Tongue as a Resource for Teachers and Teacher Educators of English" by Shivani Saini, "Critical Language Practices for English Language Teacher Education: A Proposal for a Bilingual Teacher Education Programme" in Karnataka by Vanamala Viswanatha and Jane Sahi.

The long list of papers related to bilingualism and multilingualism does not undermine the importance of papers related to the socio-economic environment or the home environment. In a number of papers, issues related to English and economic development, developing global citizens, marginalized societies, parent participation in language education and linguistic priorities among minority language groups were discussed. The diversity of the issues related to language kept the participants engrossed during the days of the conference. A presentation entitled, "Goddess or Demon? English and the Dalit community in India" by Alison Barrett and Maya Pandit-Narkar explored the complex relationship between caste, language and identity politics while another presentation entitled "English Language Teacher Education in a Diverse Environment: Principle to Practice" by Nisha Butoliya explored the nature of pragmatic support required for bringing a change in the

teacher education curricula so that they can cater to the diversity in the language classroom. Diversity in all its diverse manifestations enhanced the academic rigour of the deliberations during the conference.

Prof. Adrian Holliday of Canterbury Christ Church University, UK spoke in the plenary session of the second day. In his speech, “Authenticity, Communities and Hidden Potentials”, Adrian Holliday suggested that English teachers should encourage in their students the ability to research their existing lingua-cultural experience so that they can sharpen their ability to stamp their identities on English which will eventually avoid restrictive popular discourses about culture and language.

Prof. Manique Gunasekhara of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka addressed the delegates in the morning plenary session of the third day and spoke on “English Skills for Employability in the 21st Century”. She discussed the changing needs of courses designed to prepare students for the job market and pointed out that the changing needs have morphed into a mix of English for academic purposes, English for professional purposes and English for social purposes, including upward social mobility. Prof. R. Amritavalli of EFL University, Hyderabad gave her plenary address in the afternoon when she spoke on “Learner-Autonomy in Text Choice: Authenticity, Length and Comprehensibility”. She argued that learner autonomy in the choice of texts in the class room was a feasible and desirable way of providing a guided space for individual learning.

The three-day conference ended on 17 March 2013 with a thought provoking panel discussion. The panel discussion chaired by Philip Powell-Daviessical had Anjali Noronha, Director, Eklavya; Geetha Durairajan, Professor, EFL University; Paul Gunasekhar, Dean, EFL University; and Debanjan Chakrabarti, Head English Partnerships, British Council, East India

as the distinguished panelists. Their discussion on “Language for Development” prompted the delegates to raise a number of questions which were very aptly, judiciously and convincingly answered by the panelists. This was followed by a gala dinner with a performance by students of St. Joseph’s Public School, Hyderabad and a piano recital by Dennis Powel, presented by Trinity College, London.

Though the conference was primarily designed for English language teacher educators and trainers involved in teaching English, it was heartening to note that it provided valuable insights for all language teachers, right from the primary to the postgraduate level. The issues discussed in the conference were largely relevant to language teachers in general and English teachers in particular. As the theme of diversity was placed at the centre of the agenda of the conference, the linguistic diversity of India and the role of the mother tongue in the Indian educational system were highlighted in a number of presentations. The essence of the conference was very succinctly expressed by Prof. Sunaina Singh, Vice Chancellor of the EFL University, when she remarked that the conference had given the participants an opportunity to explore the tremendous diversity of teaching-learning approaches available to teachers and teacher educators and provided a suitable platform for discussing issues related to society’s role in promoting language in general and English in particular with the ultimate objective of formalizing teacher development.

Partha Sarathi Misra has an M.A in English, University of Nottingham, UK; PG Diploma in English Teaching, CIEFL (EFL University), Hyderabad and Ph.D in Linguistics, University of Calcutta. He is at present working as a Specialist with the Academics and Pedagogy team at the Azim Premji University.

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Language Workshop for Field Members of Azim Premji Foundation

19-24 March 2013

State Institute Office, Azim Premji Foundation, Jaipur.

Nivedita Vijay Bedadur

'The Language Workshop' was held from 19 to 24 March 2013 at Jaipur State Institute Office of Azim Premji Foundation, Rajasthan under the guidance of Prof. Rama Kant Agnihotri and Prof. Amrit Lal Khanna. It was attended by forty-seven members; twenty-one from the English Co-development group, three from the Kannada Co-development group, twenty from the Hindi Co-development group and three members from Vidya Bhavan Society. The objectives of the workshop were:

- i. Understanding how children learn languages
- ii. Understanding the nature and structure of language
- iii. Understanding the nature of language acquisition and language learning

Language Profile of the Learners: The First Step towards Understanding Multilinguality

The need to prepare a language profile of the learners was discussed by Rajni and an outline for creating a language profile of the participants was prepared. The second session focused on the capability of the child to acquire a language. It addressed questions such as whether language acquisition occurs through imitation and association, the relationship between language and cognition, whether language acquisition takes place step by step, or in a simultaneous manner, and the prior knowledge of the child. The next day started with the singing of the

poem, '*Le mashale chal pare hain log mere gaon ke*'. It was discussed how this poem could be written in the Roman script. The participants were divided into groups according to their native languages. Incidentally, there were nine languages represented in the hall. Each group translated the song into their language and wrote it in the Roman script and displayed it on the walls of the room.

Reflections on the Task of Translation

In the afternoon session, Professor Agnihotri helped the participants reflect on the task they had done in the morning. The participants realized that all languages can be written in one script, any language can be written in any script with some modifications. In fact, a language has nothing to do with its script and we must release ourselves from the bondage of script. Also, knowledge of one language leads to an understanding of another language. They understood that translation cannot be done without understanding a discourse. They also recognized the similarities in the structures of human languages along with an appreciation of the differences between vocalic and consonantal sounds. The final session on 'What is Reading' was anchored by Pallavi. This session was marked by a lively debate on authorial intention and multiplicity of meanings.

Explorations into the Nature of Language

The first session on day three of the workshop was devoted to resolving the doubts of the participants. The second session comprised group tasks such as identifying the following consonantal patterns 'CCCV and VCCC' in words in the poem that the participants had translated into their language, and the rules for change in number in their language using the data from the poem. The presentation of this task led to the discovery of a fundamental

universal rule underlying the sound system of almost all languages—the structure of sound clusters (in words) in most human languages is CVCV. It was concluded that language learning is a process of unlearning because a child can learn any language by using universal rules.

What is the Nature of Language?

The fourth day began with a discussion on the nature of language. Professor Agnihotri explained that spoken languages change faster than written languages, and that one has to keep formulating new relationships between sound and script. Language is at the same time 100 per cent arbitrary and 100 per cent rule governed.

The next session began with a discussion on the composition of a syllable. A syllable is the smallest cluster of sounds which we can say in one breath. The vocalic sound in the syllable is the nucleus and constitutes the syllabic peak. True consonantal sounds are not syllabic, i.e. they need a vowel to actualize the syllable. The sounds /m/, /n/, /l/ are special as they can belong to both the + syllabic and – syllabic category. They can form a syllabic peak in words such as ‘little’ or ‘button’ in English, or they can be true consonants in the initial position. /w/ and /j/ on the other hand are tricky sounds. Neither are they consonants, nor can they form a syllabic peak. All true vowels can form a syllabic peak. They are the nucleus of a syllable. This discussion was followed by task-wise presentations on plurals by the participants.

A Discussion on the Plural Morpheme in English

Professor Agnihotri explained that in English the plural allomorphs comprise /s/, /z/ and /iz/. Words such as child, ox, mouse, tooth, wife, and knife are listed words, exceptions to the norm.

He also elaborated on the three rules for the formation of the plurals of all other words. The final session was based on the reading material given the day before and focused on the nature of language. There was an exhaustive discussion on the linguistic capability of a four-year-old child.

More Explorations into Language Acquisition

On the fifth day of the workshop, Professor Agnihotri put a problem related to plural morphemes before the participants and asked them to solve it. With complete confidence the participants solved the problem. Professor Agnihotri explained that a three-year-old child also has the same knowledge. This proves that a child can recreate the rules underlying the sound system of a language without conscious effort. This was followed by a discussion on the findings on pluralization in Hindi. The discussion revealed that different plural noun forms may look the same but they perform different functions in a sentence. Children who are native speakers of English acquire plurals before gender, but children who are native speakers of Hindi acquire gender before plurals.

Word Webs Reveal the Structure of Language: Demystifying Language Acquisition

The next task was to create word webs. The word *chal* in Hindi was written on the board, and the groups came up with up to twenty forms of the word in Hindi and other Indian languages. However, there were fewer forms for ‘walk’ in English. It was pointed out that a child needs only five-six such word webs to hypothesize the structure of word-building in a language, after which s/he can form variations of words s/he has not yet heard. This is the reason why children

make logical mistakes with listed words or exceptions to a rule. This is also how children invent pseudo words.

In the next session, the structure of sentences was analyzed. SVO and SOV sentence patterns were discussed in detail and the participants were asked to fill in a table to discuss rules of Person-Number-Gender (PNG) in their language. This was followed by a discussion on language families in the post-lunch session.

The last day began with a beautiful *Bal Geet* by Khajaan Singhji, which was followed by a group discussion on language and aesthetics. The discussion was followed by a group activity. The participants were divided into six groups. The task was to identify the rules for making i) negative sentences, ii) yes-no questions, and iii) 'Wh' questions.

The second session began with presentations on negation, 'yes/no' questions and 'wh' questions in both English and Hindi. The participants analyzed the general rules for negation in English, Hindi and Kannada and concluded that in most languages, the negative marker occurs very close to the verb. The participants marvelled at the fact that a child of four possesses this knowledge.

The 'yes-no' questions were examined closely for both English and Hindi. The case with 'wh' questions is slightly different in Hindi and English. It was emphasized that children know the difference between the rules for formation of all such type of questions and answering them. It is indeed a surprising fact that the language input that children receive is far less than the output produced by them; this is known as 'Plato's Problem'. Children follow all the rules of language, including the ones mentioned above and many more without being formally taught. These observations lead to positing a Language Acquisition Device which has a Universal

Grammar and a parameter setting device. Children cannot learn by repetition alone as they utter sentences that they have never heard before. A child can learn any language provided the child is able to make meaning out of the language she/he is exposed to. Language learning should, as much as possible, replicate language acquisition.

Nivedita Vijay Bedadur has been an English language teacher, resource person and Principal in Kendriya Vidyalayas at home and abroad. She is at present working at the University Resource Centre of Azim Premji University.

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Forthcoming Events

September 2013

Certificate Programme in Foundations of Education

Dates: From mid September 2013 to the last week of January 2014

Deadline for sending in the application: 31 August 2013

Organization: Digantar, Jaipur

Website: <http://www.digantar.org/programmes/certificateprogramme.html>

Brochure: <http://www.digantar.org/pdf/Brochure%202012-13.pdf>

Contact Person: Kuldeep Garg
kuldeep@digantar.org

October 2013

9th TESOL Virtual Seminar of 2013

Implications and Applications of the Latest Brain Research for English Language Learners and Teachers

Dates: 2 October 2013; **Online**

Web: <http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars>

KOTESOL 2013

The 21st Annual Korea TESOL International Conference

Exploring the Road Less Traveled: From Practice to Theory

Dates: 12-13 October 2013

Location: Seoul, **Korea**

Web: <http://www.koreatesol.org>

The 12th Symposium on Second Language Writing

L2 Writing in the Global Context: Represented, Underrepresented, and Unrepresented Voices

Dates: 17-21 October 2013

Location: Shandong University, Jinan, **China**

Web: <http://sslw.asu.edu/2013>

ICLALIS 2013: International Conference on Languages, Linguistics, and Society

The Developing Roles of Language in a Multi-faceted Society

Dates: 22-24 October 2013

Location: Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, **Malaysia**

Web: <http://iclalis2013.blogspot.com>

JALT 2013: The 39th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition

Learning is a Lifelong Voyage

Dates: 25-28 October 2013

Location: Kobe, **Japan**

Last date of submission of papers: 21 April 2014

Web: <http://jalt.org/conference>

Asia TEFL 2013: The 11th Asia TEFL International Conference

Englishes Across Asian Contexts: Challenges and Opportunities

Dates: 26-28 October 2013

Location: Ateneo de Manila University, Manila, **Philippines**

Web: <http://asiateflphil.org/2013-conference.html>

10th TESOL Virtual Seminar of 2013

Exploring the (Often) Unexplored: Sociopragmatics for Students, Educators, and Administrators

Dates: 30 October 2013; **Online**

Web: <http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars>

The 11th TELLSI International Conference
*Professional Development in Language
Teacher Education*

Dates: 30 October –1 November 2013

Location: Mashhad, **Iran**

Web : http://www.tellsi11.ir/en_new/

November 2013

11th TESOL Virtual Seminar of 2013
*Insights from Other Worlds: What
TESOLers Can Learn from Other
Professions*

Date: 6 November 2013; **Online**

Web: [http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/
online-courses-seminars](http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars)

**CoLT 2013: 2nd International Conference on
Language Learning and Teaching**
*Passing the Baton: Revitalising, Preserving
and Sustaining Languages of the World*

Dates: 7-8 November 2013

Location: Penang, **Malaysia**

Web: <http://www.icolt2013.org>

**ILLC 2013: Fifth International Language
Learning Conference**
*Acknowledging Multilingualism,
Multiculturalism and Their Different
Facets in Language Teaching and
Learning*

Dates: 11-13 November 2013

Location: Georgetown, Penang, **Malaysia**

Web: <http://illc2013.wix.com/illc#>

SILC 3rd International ELT Symposium
*Humanizing the ELT Classroom: Best
Practices for Best Outcomes*

Dates: 12-14 November 2013

Location: Al Yamamah University,

Riyadh, **Saudi Arabia**

Web: <http://symposium.alyamamah.edu.sa/>

**AppLing 2013: The 2013 Taipei Tech
International Conference on Applied Linguistics**

Dates: 14-15 November 2013

Location: Taipei, **Taiwan**

Web: [http://linguistlist.org/issues/24/24-
830.html](http://linguistlist.org/issues/24/24-830.html)

TESOL Symposium

*Envisioning and Creating the Future for
English Language Teaching and Learning*

Dates: 15-16 November 2013;

Location: Guangdong Univ. of Foreign
Studies, Guangzhou, **China**

Web: <http://bit.ly/XEfwPD>

**ICL2013: International Conference on
Languages 2013**

Solidarity Through Languages

Dates: 16-17 November 2013

Location: Phuket, **Thailand**

Web: <http://www.icl2013.com/>

**7th International Seminar 2013, Satya Wacana
Christian University**

*Language Policy and Planning: What are
the Issues?*

Dates: 20-21 November 2013

Location: Salatiga, **Indonesia**

Web: <http://fll.uksw.edu/seminars/>

**PACLIC 27: The 27th Pacific Asia Conference on
Language, Information, and Computation**

Dates: 21-24 November 2013

Location: Taipei, **Taiwan**

Web: <http://paclic27.nccu.edu.tw>

**The 1st International Conference on English
Language Teaching:**

ELT in a Globalization Era

Dates: 22 November 2013

Location: Taichung, **Taiwan**

[http://140.128.114.153/flldthu/
main.php?site_id=2](http://140.128.114.153/flldthu/main.php?site_id=2)

Applied Linguistics Associations of New Zealand and Australia Joint (ALANZ & ALAA) Conference 2013

Knowing, Being, Doing in Applied Linguistics

Dates: 27-29 November 2013

Location: Victoria University of

Wellington, **New Zealand**

Web: <http://www.alanz2013.org.nz/about.html>

GLoCALL 2013

Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Dates: 28-30 November 2013

Location: Da Nang, **Vietnam**

Web: <http://glocall.org/>

December 2013

LLL 2013: International Conference on Language, Literature & Linguistics

Dates: 2-3 December 2013

Locations: Colombo, **Sri Lanka**

Web: <http://www.languages3000.com/>

NZDC4: The 4th New Zealand Discourse Conference

Dates: 2-4 December 2013

Location: AUT University, Auckland, **New Zealand**

Web: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-institutes/icdc/conferences>

12th TESOL Virtual Seminar of 2013

Talking in Order to Learn: Insights and Practical Strategies on Learner Anxiety and Motivation

Date: 4 December 2013; **Online**

Web: <http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars>

ESEA 2013: The 17th English in Southeast Asia Conference

English in the National, Regional & Global Context

Dates: 5-7 December 2013

Location: Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**

Web: <http://umconference.um.edu.my/esea2013>

ALAPP 2013: The 3rd International Conference Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice

Dates: 12-14 December 2013

Location: Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**

Web: <http://umconference.um.edu.my/alapp2013>

Vocab@Vic 2013

Current Trends in Vocabulary Studies

Dates: 18-20 December 2013

Location: Victoria University of

Wellington, **New Zealand**

Web: <http://www.vocab.org.nz/>

2013 HKICEPS: Hong Kong International Conference on Education, Psychology and Society

Dates: 19-21 December 2013

Location: **Hong Kong**

<http://www.hkiceps.org/>

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