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What Esperanto Offers Language Teachers

A. Giridhar Rao

What is Esperanto?

Esperanto is the most widely spoken constructed international auxiliary language in the world. Initiated by Ludwik Lazarz Zamenhof (1859-1917), it was designed as a universal second language that is easy to learn, and is not the cultural property of any linguistic or ethnic community. In 1887, Zamenhof published (in Russian) his *International Language: Foreword and Complete Textbook* (Zamenhof, 2006) under the pseudonym "Doktoro Esperanto" (Doctor One-who-hopes), from which the name of the language derives.

Esperanto as a Foundation Course

As early as 1908, the Polish Esperantist Antoni Grabowski wrote a paper entitled "Esperanto as a preparation for the learning of languages". Since then, many studies have demonstrated the value of Esperanto as a foundation course (For brief descriptions, see "Propaedeutic value of Esperanto" in the English Wikipedia). More specifically, the large-scale studies conducted by Helmar Frank (Corsetti, 2005), from the 1970s, and the more recent studies by Zlatko Tišljarić (1996) demonstrate the impact of Esperanto on the learning of the target language. According to the studies, there is a thirty per cent gain in standardized tests in the target language, for children who have done a foundation course in Esperanto, and then learnt the target language, compared to those who did not do the foundation course.

As language learning research shows, language awareness is an important predictor of third

language acquisition (Jessner, 1999). Also, metalinguistic awareness, in fact, feeds back into mother-tongue competence as well (Pinto and Corsetti, 2001). In several studies, Esperanto learners have shown greater language awareness as compared to learners of other foreign languages (Corsetti, 2005).

Monash University in Australia ran a project called EKPAROLI between 1994 and 1997. Interestingly, the name of the project is an Esperanto acronym for 'Esperanto as a preparatory method for speeding up Asian language learning and teaching'; in Esperanto, the word *ekparoli* also means 'to begin to speak'. This primary school project compared several 'Languages Other Than English' (LOTEs), and found that Esperanto was a better LOTE than the other LOTEs in the project-German, Indonesian, or Japanese-on several counts. Project coordinator Alan Bishop concluded:

Thus one should be choosing a first LOTE

- in which the children will gain early success
- which they will enjoy learning
- which will show them how important LOTE study is
- which will prepare them successfully for later LOTE study

According to the research in the EKPAROLI project, Esperanto meets all these criteria better than the other languages in the study (Bishop, 1997).

As part of the on-going project *Springboard to Languages*, Esperanto is taught as a 'starter language' in several primary schools in the UK.

Giving an analogy, their website says:

Many schools used to teach children the recorder, not to produce a nation of recorder players, but as a preparation for learning other instruments. Springboard uses Esperanto, not to produce a nation of Esperanto-speakers, but as a preparation for learning other languages.

According to a five-year case study of the project:

The children participating in the programme:

- showed, on average, considerable facility when confronted with metalinguistic tasks requiring them to access unknown languages or to transfer knowledge between languages;
- often performed as well as-and on occasion even outperformed-peers who were older, had more experience of learning languages, or had been exposed to a language-taster programme;
- generally developed a positive attitude towards speakers of other languages;
- reported enjoyment of their language lessons, thought that learning a language was fun, and looked forward to learning other languages;

and that staff participating in the programme, including non-specialist language teachers felt that:

- overall... the programme was fulfilling its aims;
- the regularity of Esperanto helped with the development of children's literacy and even numeracy skills;
- lower-ability children in particular might benefit from the learning of a regular language such as Esperanto (Tellier, 2013, p. 35).

Indeed, many of these studies have emphasized the benefits of Esperanto for the linguistically

non-gifted student. Summarizing the extensive studies in an essay, "The Rationale of the Springboard Project" Renato Corsetti declares, "The only question remaining today is how easy Esperanto is to learn relative to the various mother tongues of different students" (Nagata and Corsetti, 2005). All these studies lead us to believe that there is a good case to be made out for Esperanto as a valuable resource in promoting language learning and multilingualism.

What Makes Esperanto Easy?

So what is special about Esperanto? Detlev Blanke (2009), lists seven "Causes of the relative success of Esperanto". These are:

1. Lexical sources are easily recognisable for many
2. Esperanto has an easily grasped phonology
3. Phonological alphabet and simple orthography
4. Lacks morphemic variants
5. Allows for easy combinability of morphemes through productive word formation
6. Open to the assimilation of new international lexical elements
7. Esperanto is characterised by unambiguous marking of the principal classes of words and grammatical categories

Let us see points 5 and 7 in action:

In Esperanto, all nouns end in -o, and all adjectives in -a. Take *ĉevalo*, for example -the word for 'horse'. Look at the following series:

ĉevalo = a horse or stallion

ĉevalino = female-horse, a mare

ĉevalido = horse-offspring, a foal or colt

ĉevalidino = female-offspring of horse (combining the two affixes *-id-* and *-in-*); a filly
ĉevalejo = a stable (place where a horse is kept)

ĉevala = equine or horse-like (since all adjectives end in *-a*)

Notice how economical the word formation is. With just one root, 'ĉeval-' we have produced six words: *ĉevalo*, *ĉevalino*, *ĉevalido*, *ĉevalidino*, *ĉevalejo* and *ĉevala*. In contrast, in English, to understand all the derivatives of the word 'horse', is to know the whole word family of horses: horse, stallion, mare, foal, colt, filly, stable, and equine-eight words with different spellings and etymologies. Moreover, this is not unique to English. As we know, all languages demand a huge investment of time and effort in memorizing words. The Esperanto word-making strategy, in contrast, cuts down the learning time to a fraction of the time needed for other languages.

Take another series of affixes in Esperanto, this time with the infinitive *skribi* (to write):

skribi = to write + *-aĵ* = something concrete, something tangible; *skirbaĵo* = some writing, something written

-il = a tool; *skribilo* = a pen + *-ar* = a group of things; *skribilaro* = stationery, a bunch of things you need to write with-pens, papers, erasers, etc.

-ej = a place (remember *ĉevalejo*); *skribejo* = a room where one sits and writes; *skribilejo* = a room where you keep pens

-ist = a professional; *skribisto* = a professional writer, a scribe; *skribilisto* = someone who professionally makes or sells pens; *skribilaristo* = a stationery producer or seller

Interestingly enough, these Esperanto affixes can become words in themselves. Thus we have:

ino (female), *ido* (child), *aro* (set), *ilo* (tool), *ejo* (place), *isto* (professional)-these are lexical affixes. The creativity does not end there; the affixes themselves form compounds: *inismo* (feminism), *ilaro* (toolkit). Esperanto thus has a highly productive derivational morphology which is intensively agglutinating.

One result of this productivity can be seen in John Wells' bi-directional *English Esperanto English Dictionary* (2010). There are 22300 entries in the English section of the dictionary; the Esperanto section has a mere 10315.

Another outcome of the derivational morphology in Esperanto is in the reduced time needed to learn the basics. The Alliance Française of Madras (2013) offers an A1 level proficiency course in French which lasts 160 class-hours; the Goethe-Institut (2013) says its A1 course in German requires between 80 and 200 class-hours. In contrast, the experiences of Esperanto teachers worldwide (Tišljár, 1996), indicate that we need no more than 40 class-hours to achieve an A1 level proficiency in Esperanto. In fact according to Hungarian Katalin Kováts-a very experienced Esperanto teacher-even 20 class-hours are sufficient for A1 level proficiency in Esperanto (Personal communication).

Esperanto as a Starter Language in India

As we have explored elsewhere, India's linguistic diversity is under threat and our "linguistic commons" are rapidly eroding (Rao, 2011). Language learning in both rural and urban India is in a state of crisis. Although English-medium education is expanding, the challenges are severe (Rao, 2013). Further, for citizenship in an increasingly 'glocal' world, we need a mother-tongue-based, high level multilingual education that includes English.

Esperanto's goal of being a universal second language means that it has a profound commitment to the mother languages, to

defending linguistic human rights, and to maintaining linguistic diversity (UEA, 2009). Given the foregoing remarks on its ease and efficacy, Esperanto needs to be explored as a resource for second and third language learning in our education system.

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'No Talking, Children!' Speech and Silencing in Language Classrooms: Of Difference, Dialogue and Learning

Reva Yunus

This paper is an attempt to understand and analyse the language learning experiences of a child from a socio-economically weaker section attending an urban low-fee-private (LFP) school. Children from marginalized communities are caught in the multi-layered Indian school system which often forces them to attend inferior quality English-medium LFPⁱ schools. With socio-economic differences, the learners' cultural capital, experiences of language use and abilities also vary. This paper analyses how these variations are converted to oppression instead of resources for learning for the underprivileged children.

To talk about linkages between language, cultural background and learning, Lankshear et al. provide the wonderful concept of 'D'iscourse. According to Lankshear et al. (1997), Discourse, with a capital 'D', can be understood as "the way of talking and thinking that is characteristic of a sub-group in the society." That is, the "combinations of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, values, goals, beliefs and assumptions" that the subgroup practices and seeks to pass on to newcomers. The language component both shapes and is shaped by other components of Discourse.

Primary Discourses are those that family and kinship groups initiate young people into-our 'first ways of thinking feeling, and...using...our language', of learning to 'make sense' of life's experiences. Secondary Discourses on the other hand such as those that take place in schools, are 'encountered through participation in social institutions beyond the primary groups'.

Learners for whom primary and classroom Discourses are very far apart, find it difficult to perform well at school or even complete school (Lankshear et al., 1997). A larger number of learners than we usually imagine, lose confidence and interest, and are pushed out of school.

In this paper, I have combined the idea of Discourse, with Barnes' (2008) and Alexander's (2008) work on the role of speech and dialogue in learning.

Drawing upon Piaget's theory of learning and social constructivism, Barnes points out that new knowledge has to be internalized and appropriated as one's own through a process of "retrieving and transforming what we already know". So, learning is "working on (existing) understanding" which can most readily be achieved through talk. He further argues that writing and speech have distinct roles to play in language teaching-learning, and speech must not be neglected. However, as we know, Indian classrooms focus on writing to the exclusion of all other ways of using language.

Barnes also distinguishes between presentational talk which is tailored to audience expectations, and presented to them for "evaluation", and exploratory talk, which is "hesitant, broken, full of dead ends and changes of direction", but tremendously useful for understanding and appropriating of new knowledge. Alexander builds on presentational and exploratory talk, and other work, to talk about the "pedagogy of the spoken word". Classroom dialogue, he argues, has a purpose and an end point, unlike

conversations. This purpose is clear to the teacher, who must direct the dialogue without discouraging children from working on their understanding through it. Her role is to determine when such talk is requiredⁱⁱ, to facilitate it, and to ensure that it is not reduced to imitation or a search for the 'right' answers.

So, in order to give speech and dialogue their rightful place in language teaching-learning, classrooms must welcome the experiences and reflections of the learners. Further, for children whose primary Discourses are very different from their classroom Discourses, schools / teachers must work towards understanding these differencesⁱⁱⁱ and their implications for teaching-learning. They must also help such children build on existing knowledge and linguistic abilities through participation in classroom Discourse.

This case study^{iv} was conducted in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. At the time of participating in this study, Ajju was a bright-eyed, intelligent eight-year old boy with a terrific sense of fun, and a marvellous ability to amuse himself and his baby sister. His mother was a domestic worker and his father, a daily-wage construction worker. His first language was Nimari, but he could read, write, and speak Hindi well^v. When not at school, he accompanied his mother to work to take care of his eleven-month old sister Anjali, or stayed home with her. He studied in class II in an English-medium section of a nearby LFP school. In English, he could only identify individual letters of the alphabet, and the words 'done' at school. He displayed an eagerness to learn and communicate when outside school. The school was housed in a very small building, had a common toilet, and no playground. It had mostly under-qualified and under/un-trained teachers. The six students of class II shared a classroom with six other students of class I. Neither the Principal, nor Ajju's language teacher, Sunita, could speak much English.

I studied how Ajju's primary Discourse differed from his classroom Discourse, primarily in terms

of talk; and how that affected the opportunities for classroom-talk. I see this as part of a larger agenda to understand how existing classroom Discourses disenfranchise children whose cultural contexts cannot provide the kind of rigid training demanded for success at school.

What Happened in the Language Classroom

The primary differences I found in the talk in Ajju's classroom and his home^{vi}, pertained to the terms of talk-Ajju's status, his participation in talk, the affective component of his relationships with adults, and the content of interactions in the two settings.

In the classroom, Sunita controlled all interactions, particularly, learners' talk^{vii}. Except for one girl who usually provided the 'right' answers to Sunita's questions, none of the other children initiated a conversation with Sunita, except to ask for information on homework submissions or test dates. Sunita decided what words children needed help with, and disapproved of their asking for help from each other. Her talk with the children was limited to asking and answering "closed questions" (Alexander, 2008), evaluating answers as right or wrong, and scolding them. She did not stop or try doing things differently if anyone looked confused or uninterested.

Therefore, the conversation in the classroom comprised presentational talk in which Ajju never participated. He did not ask or answer questions, or draw Sunita's attention to himself in any way, except when he missed school. On these occasions, he got sarcasm and humiliation for not taking school seriously. On the other hand, at home there was ample opportunity for exploratory talk. Ajju referred frequently to his conversations with his uncle, grandfather or cousins. He seemed comfortable asking questions from them, or discussing movies or vehicles, etc.

Sunita equated understanding a lesson with 'doing' the 'difficult words' in it. While she regularly dictated meanings, and exhorted children to remember them, she did not make any effort to relate the new words, ideas, stories or poems with anything the children may have read / heard / felt / discussed outside the classroom. Therefore, Sunita did not attribute any ability or knowledge to Ajju (or the other students) outside of what had been done in class, particularly, something that could help him develop his language skills in Hindi / English. This approach denied the cognitive and emotional abilities that Ajju had developed in his cultural context. Clearly, Sunita followed the 'empty receptacle'^{viii} concept of learners.

Within the environs of his primary Discourse, Ajju's status was completely different. He helped his family survive by taking care of Anjali and therefore allowing his mother to work. He was also responsible for learning his role and position in the extended family. At home, he was constantly in dialogue with his sister and making sense of their relationship, his role, and of babies (their behaviour, needs, development trajectory). Why was this tremendously significant process of meaning-making not seen as important cognitively, linguistically and socially?

Another important difference between the primary and secondary Discourse lay in the nature of relationships. His relationships with his family at home and his classmates in the classroom determined the quality and nature of his talk with them. He seemed comfortable with most family members, and could rely on them to take care of him. Most importantly, they were usually ready to hear his side of things, and saw him as a capable person. Unlike in these relationships, the affective component was missing in his relationship with Sunita. While this absence was also caused by the institutional context in which Sunita was working^{ix}, most teachers do not feel accountable to parents or children if the families are poor and illiterate.

So, not surprisingly, Sunita often threatened, ridiculed and punished her pupils. Consequently, once inside the school gates, Ajju's eyes would lose their twinkling curiosity and the ready smile and bubbling laughter would vanish. He would become quiet, wary, cautious, and not relaxed, warm or friendly.

Another difference between the school and home settings lay in the fact that Ajju had to be a rather one-dimensional person at school. For example, there would be rows over his father's drinking, but at school he was supposed to be engrossed in spellings and meanings, and not worry about what was happening at home. He and the other students were often humiliated for coming to school without books or proper uniform. Ajju had nowhere to keep his books safe so they were often eaten by mice. Sunita was also often sarcastic about guests or festivals being more important than studies.^x Ajju's mother relied on her natal family for moral and financial support, so maintaining ties with them was important for the family. But these reasons for absence or not finishing the homework did not count with Sunita. Therefore, instead of investing his intelligence in learning, Ajju invested it solely in understanding school rules and trying to survive without unpleasant experiences.

Lastly, work at school was often about unfamiliar people, places and ideas; Ajju was never given the time or the freedom to express and explore his own ways of relating to them. If he could learn reading, writing and speaking in English in the context of his experiences and ideas, he would be more confident and feel less pressured. For example, writing or speaking about his sister's antics, or his unique method for finding his sharpener^{xi} would be a great motivation for learning for Ajju. In addition to that, the impact on his self-esteem as a person whose ideas and experiences count, and who is a capable learner, would be tremendous.

It is clear from Ajju's case study that teachers and curriculum designers neglect the linkages between a child's abilities across multiple languages. So, English is taught in isolation from Ajju's knowledge and fluency in Nimari and Hindi.^{xiii} A new language is imposed on him without helping him make sense of why learning it is necessary, or how to relate to it, or transfer his linguistic abilities from Nimari and Hindi to English.

Finally, Sunita's knowledge of English language and language pedagogy in general was apparently very limited. She provided incorrect explanations, explained in difficult Hindi, ignored mistakes in the identification of sounds and letters, and associated sounds with written letters incorrectly.

What do we Need to Worry About?

It is evident that everything that Ajju is, and can do, is denied by the classroom Discourse to a large extent. The institutionalized teacher-pupil-curriculum relationship does not acknowledge the relevance of speech to learning, or the linkages between Ajju's experiences and his language learning. So how can there be a dialogue among the learners or with the teacher, which will aid learning? As Dennison (1969) rightly points out, "there is no such thing as learning except in the continuum of experience. But this continuum cannot survive in the classrooms unless there is reality of encounter between the adults and children." Interestingly, Sunita studied in the same school. Therefore, at least as a learner, she was in a similar socio-economic category. Yet, she was not sensitive to her pupils' abilities and constraints, and imparted education of the same inequitable quality that she most probably received.

This case study backs Dennison statement that "teachers must be themselves and not play roles" in order to understand and help learners. But

rigid, top-down institutional frameworks do not allow teachers to be themselves. Further, teachers are not trained to appreciate the importance of reflecting on their practice, their own growth and problems. Another broken continuum—they have never seen the connections between their educational experiences, socio-economic background, their teaching and their learners. So how can there be such a thing as dialogue except in the continuum of experience for both teachers and pupils?

Finally, Alexander (2008) argues that we need to grasp the connections between literacy, education and democracy. Education needs to be linked to the practice of democracy through the learners' ability to participate in it. Instead of helping young people develop the ability to reflect on and articulate thoughts, ideas and feelings important to them—in short, develop a voice—language classrooms tend to silence them, both literally and figuratively. For children like Ajju, whose only hope for upward social mobility lies in schooling, there can be no greater oppression in and through education.

Endnotes

- i. Terminology and classification borrowed from Srivastava (2006). These refer to a category of schools in urban areas that cater mostly to families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The appeal of these schools lies in the fact that they offer education in English which most state-government schools do not.
- ii. Talk about how he does not argue that only talk is required for learning but that it must form a crucial part of teacher's repertoire and be used as such.
- iii. These must not be perceived as deficiencies in particular socio-cultural contexts, neither by curriculum designers and teacher educators, nor by teachers or learners themselves.

- iv. All names changed. About research method: I observed the child's Hindi and English language classrooms, both taught by the same teacher. I took notes on non-verbal interactions and behaviours, and recorded proceedings with the permission of the teacher and the principal of the school. I had earlier obtained permission from Ajju and his mother for his participation in this study. I also recorded and analysed conversations between Ajju, his sister and myself at his residence. I have transcribed all the recordings myself.
- v. In and around Indore, Malvi and Nimari are the first languages for a large number of people. Most of them are comfortably bilingual and speak fluent Hindi. Ajju had picked up Hindi before joining school, however he learnt reading and writing at school and loved to read storybooks in Hindi.
- vi. Though primary Discourses are definitely not limited to what happens at home, this was what was most accessible in Ajju's case. Ajju did not have many playmates in the area as he was living close to a construction site in an upper middle class locality and did not have friends. Typically a worker's family work as guards for under-construction buildings and the worker sometimes gets paid a little more for this work. So, my data on primary Discourse comes from Ajju's conversations with his family members and my observations.
- vii. Excerpts from a conversation between Ajju and myself:
 Ajju: 'wo to ko . . . main to jara bi nai karta kyonki sabko maar padti hai, mujhe nai achha lagata ki mujhe bi maar pade' (no body. I don't talk at all because everyone is beaten, I don't like that I should also be beaten.)
 Reva: 'nai, wo aur bhi to kuch baat kar sakte hain jisse maar nahi pade (short laugh)'

(no, . . . we can talk about something which does not result in getting hit?)

Ajju: 'madam se hi bolna padata hai, main to unse . . . madam se hi karta hoon ki maar na pade' (have to speak to madam only, I . . . talk to her . . . to madam only, so that I don't get beaten.)

'Madam' obviously has very rigid views about talking (recording from classroom):

Madam (shrill, disapproving, unpleasant tone): 'Aur apne skool me bi agar apan anushasan se rahenge to apne teacheron ko bi achha lagega, samajh me aaya? Jaise ki agar tum skool me padhne aate ho to padho; baat cheet karne aate ho to padho. . . baat cheet karo. Baat cheet karne aate ho kya skool me? Padhne aate ho na? To phir padhai kara karo; baat cheet mat kiya karo jaise tum log karte ho beech-beech me. Tum ko baat cheet karne ke liye lunch ka samay diya jaata hai, us samay mein tum baat cheet karo kuch bi karo.' (And if we stay disciplined in school our teachers will also like it, do you understand? Like, you come to school to study, so study; if you come to talk . . . then study . . . talk. Do you come to school to talk? You come to study right? Then, do study! Don't talk like you do sometimes in the middle. you're given lunch time for talking, at that time you can talk, do anything.)

viii. From Paulo Freire's theorizing of the 'banking concept' of education. Reference provided in the reference section.

ix. She is underpaid, as almost all LFP school teachers are in Indore. She also does not know English herself, but has to prove to herself that she can control the children and complete the syllabus on time. The school runs two shifts and hence a period is quite short. Further, children are not given any time to play or draw or do anything at school. They just have five to six straight periods

studying different subjects, and then they go home. The lunch break is short too. The entire atmosphere is depressing, cheerless and suffocating.

- x. Sunita getting sarcastic over a child having missed school:

Boy: 'Madamji hamare yahan mehman aaye the!' (madam ji, we had guests!)

He's obviously excited about it. But she responds with:

Sunita: 'Mehman jaroori hai apni class jaroori thodi hi hai. Hai ki nai? Sai hai na? Hai na mehmanon jaroori hain, skool aana jaroori nai hai!' (Guests are important, our class is not important. Yes, or no? Right, isn't that? Aren't guests important? Coming to school isn't important!)

- xi. Anjali frequently threw Aju's sharpener under their bed. He had developed a method to get it out from there without having to look under the bed himself. He used the magnetic property of the sharpener blade, the wheels of a broken toy car and a magnet he had found somewhere, to find the sharpener. He explained the method to me in Hindi and demonstrated it too.

- xii. Here is an example of his grasp of Hindi and ability to express himself:

Aju: 'La de de' (Come on, give it to me.). He was asking Anjali to hand him what she was playing with.

Reva: 'Degi nai' (laughing), she won't give it)

Aju (laughing gleefully): 'Khel ri kabaddi!' (She's playing kabaddi!)

This is an example of 'symbolization': Anjali was pretending to give the object in her hand to him, but not actually handing it over. He called these antics of hers, 'kabaddi'-a sport in which one has to dodge opponents who are trying to catch them.

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Reading: An Orchestration of Cues

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Reading is perhaps one of the most important skills taught in schools. Its use is not confined to the curricular area under which it is taught, namely language(s), but it is used right across the school curriculum. Consequently, the success in reading has serious implications for other subjects as well. Despite the obvious significance of reading, it continues to be an area of concern especially in the primary grades. Largely, children are taught reading skills which are often not lasting, and do not result in meaningful reading. Contemporary research in reading conceptualizes it as essentially a meaning-making process. Several strands of research from various disciplines converge to highlight the significance of meaning (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). However the pedagogy of language practised in schools often neglects the meaning-making aspect, and considers the mechanics of language more important. According to Kumar (2009), “Children breaking down words into letters and sentences into words are common sight in Indian primary schools” (p. 79). Sinha (2000) observes that the conceptualization of reading as an exercise in finding the oral equivalent of written language is an obstacle in making sense, and hampers comprehension.

This paper examines the reading of a good and a poor reader of Grade III. It analyses the noticeably different ways in which they process the text, and how they negotiate the challenges they encounter while reading.

The Language Cueing System

Goodman (1996) emphasizes on the importance of the harmonious functioning of the four language cueing systems—semantics, syntax, graphophonics and pragmatics. Successful or meaningful reading happens when all four systems function in tandem with each other. Semantics refers to the meaning aspect of a language system; syntax refers to the sentence structure or word-order in a particular language. For instance, in Hindi, the verb always follows the object, unlike English where the verb precedes the object. Graphophonics refers to the specific symbol-sound association in a language. For example, the sound /k/ in Hindi can be associated with only one symbol or letter. Pragmatics is about the use of language in specific ways in certain contexts. An over-reliance on just one or two cueing systems or a complete neglect of one or more systems by the reader can seriously affect reading and the meaning. The centrality of meaning in reading cannot be denied or compromised.

Miscue analysis, a technique for analysing reading, allows one to ‘peep’ into the ways in which a reader uses the four cueing systems. This technique was developed by Kenneth Goodman (Rhodes and Shanklin, 1993). Goodman (1996) coined the term *miscue* to refer to what are commonly perceived as errors while reading. This was to avoid the negative connotations of the word *error*. The technique looks at the ‘errors’ made by children during reading very favourably, and examines why and

how the reader has ‘deviated’ from the text. Interestingly, this analytical process reveals that all kinds of readers make miscues while reading. The analysis in the following section will reveal the complex ways in which the four systems function simultaneously to generate meaning. This multiple cueing system of language has been used as the framework for examining the reading of two children. ‘Good’ and ‘poor’ readers are terms routinely used in research literature. However, the intention is not to ‘label’ children but only to highlight the sharp qualitative differences in their reading.

Miscues: Nature of Reading

Two Grade III children—one a struggling reader and the other a good reader—were given an unfamiliar story, *Dehati ki gaay* (Shankar, 1999), to read aloud. Their reading was recorded, and later analysed to study the nature of miscues, or deviations they were making from the original text. The analysis revealed the qualitative differences in their miscues and consequently reading. A section of the text read by the children will be discussed here.

Consider Text A- the reading sample of the poor reader. The reader makes three miscues in the first sentence (S1). The first miscue is the splitting of the word *gaon* (village) into *ga* and *v*; the nasal sound is ignored completely. He does not bother to blend the parts of the split word and moves ahead. Soon, in the same sentence (S1), he misreads the word *gaay* (cow) as *gaya* (went/the name of a place) and *thi* (auxiliary verb ‘was’, in this context referring to a female) as *tha* (changing the referent to male). Locally, *tha* seems in consonance with *gaya*. *Gaya* and *tha* are words in Hindi, and may look visually similar to the words they have replaced. So, at the level of individual words, one may choose to overlook these ‘slips’. But on examining the syntax of the whole sentence as read by the child, the resulting meaning does

not seem very satisfactory. The second sentence (S2) is riddled with miscues but they are of a self-correcting nature. The reader skips the second word, *pratidin* (everyday), splits the word *paanch* (five) into *paan* and *ch* and blends it to sound out *paanch*, this time not missing the nasal sound—the *anusvar*. A similar splitting and blending takes place with the word *kilo*. After reading *doodh* (milk), the reader reads *diya* (gave) in place of *deti* (gives), corrects it, and reads *hai* (is) in place of *thi* (was). Considering the deletion of the word *pratidin* and the substitution with the word *hai*, the resulting sentence makes complete meaning even though the tense of the second sentence (S2) has been changed and is not in keeping with the first one. It is difficult to explain this miscue *hai* because visually, the text does not lead to it. In the third sentence (S3), *baich* (to sell) is read as *pahun* and *cha* which, if blended together, would make *pahuncha* (to bring it, here). This makes sense until one reaches the word *use*(that) which is read as *usse*, and the sentence structure begins to crumble at the word *paise* (money). Again at the end of the sentence (S3), the use of the plural form of the word *rehna* (to live) as *rehte thay* (changes the referent from singular to plural) brings incongruence between the singular subject, the *dehati* (the villager), and the substituted word *usse*. In the fourth sentence (S4), the word *gaon* is repeated, and the child reads it differently from the way he read it in the first sentence. This time, the *anusvar* stays and the long vowel \a\ is ignored. He progresses, and when he encounters the word *vivah* (wedding), his reading starts to falter. He makes two attempts at reading the word, the first time by splitting it, and then by blending it or trying to read the whole word. In both cases, he creates non-words. Again, he changes the tense when he reads *hai* in place of *ho*, and makes unsuccessful attempts at sounding out and blending the word *raha*, and finally ends with *th* for *tha*. In the fifth

sentence (S5), he reads in a similar manner. Interestingly, he stumbles over words he had earlier read with ease in the first few sentences. *dehati* and *doodh* are two such words. In S5 of Text A he makes three attempts at reading the word *vivah*, but does not meet with success.

An analysis of his reading shows clearly that the most commonly used reading strategy displayed in his reading is that of sounding out the constituent sounds in a word, and then trying to blend them together. More often than not, the use of this strategy does not lead him to the word in the text. Undeterred, he either leaves it at the non-word that has been created, or reads a form of the word which is acceptable in Hindi but syntactically inappropriate, and moves on. *Sakeg* and *uhe* in S5 and *veeh* in S4 of Text A are a few examples of such non-words. The child knows the letters and *matras* and he is using this knowledge in isolation to read. It seems strange that he is able to use this knowledge effectively in some places, and in other places he does not seem to be able to use it. One can speculate that the sole use of graphophonics cannot go a long way in supporting reading. In this case, the child is not actively bringing his knowledge of the sentence structure in Hindi to support his knowledge of the Hindi alphabet. More importantly, he does not seem to know that one reads for meaning, and so makes no attempt to preserve the global meaning of the text. Evidently, he is creating pockets of coherent phrases in some places, and in other places is completely abandoning the meaning and indiscriminately sounding out words. He is not worried about carrying forward or building on the meaning that has been created in the preceding sentences. Moreover, narratives tend to be in the past tense, and active use of the knowledge of this often used genre could have guided him to not switch tense from one sentence to the other.

The reading of the same section of the text by the good reader resulted in three miscues. In

the second sentence (S2) of Text B- the reading sample of the good reader, the child inserts the word *ek* after *doodh*, but goes back and repeats the stretch from *doodh*, this time without the earlier inserted word, *ek*. Like the poor reader, he also stumbles over the word *vivah* in the fourth sentence (S4), perhaps because it is not used as commonly as its synonym, *shaadi*. He makes two attempts, the first one being *vaan* which does not occur in the word at all, and then *viha* which gives him a clue about the word, and finally he reads it correctly. Lastly, there seems to be tentativeness in reading the word *sakega* in the fifth sentence (S5). This child is evidently monitoring his reading, and is alert to a changed and inappropriate syntax when he makes the insertion with *ek* and instantly goes back and rectifies it. He is simultaneously attentive to the sentence structure of the story and the meaning that is being created, and makes selective use of the strategy of focusing on the letters in a word.

The word *vivah* proves to be interesting in analysing the reading of the two children. The poor reader makes more attempts to read it, and is phonologically closer to the word in his attempts. He comes as close as *vivh* but does not use his knowledge of the world and steadfastly focuses only on the splitting and blending of the word. The reading of the preceding sentences does not support him because a coherent meaning does not emerge out of his reading. Therefore, his reading increasingly collapses. The other child consistently monitors his reading for meaning, and makes deviations or miscues which keep the meaning intact.

Conclusion

Miscue analysis urges us to listen to what children are telling us about their reading capabilities and the kind of help they need. Conceptualization of reading as an exercise in

decoding or simply sounding out words, limits our ability as teachers to support children's reading. More often than not, a child struggling with reading is asked to learn his letters and *matras* well (Kaushik, 2004). Such a suggestion overlooks the real complexity of the reading process. It also fails to communicate to the child that she has to actively integrate all the knowledge she has about the language—its sentence structure, the meaning of words, the letter-sound associations—towards one central objective of reading to construct meaning. The role that we have chosen for ourselves, one of correcting children and eliminating errors while reading needs to be redefined (Owocki and Y. Goodman, 2002).

Original Text – *Dehati ki gaay*

- S1 एक गाँव वाले के पास एक गाँव थी।
 S2 वह प्रतिदिन पाँच किलो दूध देती थी।
 S3 देहाती दूध बेचकर उस पैसे से मजे से रहता था।
 S4 गाँव के पास ही कहीं विवाह हो रहा था।
 S5 लोग उस देहाती के पास यह पता लगाने आये कि वह विवाह के समय उन्हें कितना दूध दे सकेगा।

Text A – Reading Sample of the Poor Reader

- S1 एक गाव वाले के पास एक गया था।
 S2 वह पाँच-पाँच की लो किलो दूध दिया देती है।
 S3 देहाती दूध पहुँचा कर उसे पै से पैसे से मजे से रहते हैं रहते थे।
 S4 गं व गंव के पास ही कहीं वी व ह वीह है रह रह थ।
 S5 लोग उसे देह देहती के पास यह पता लगाने आया कि वह वह वी वीव ह वीवह से उहे उहे की तने कितने दूर दे सकेगा

Text B - Reading Sample of the Good Reader

- S1 एक गाँव वाले के पास एक गाय थी।
 S2 वह प्रतिदिन पाँच किलो दूध एक दूध देती थी।

- S3 देहाती दूध बेचकर उस पैसे से मजे से रहता था।
 S4 गाँव के पास ही कहीं वा विहा विवाह हो रहा था।
 S5 लोग उस देहाती के पास यह पता लगाने आये कि वह विवाह के समय उन्हें कितना दूध दे सकेगा।

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The Stronger Text of Indian Classrooms

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The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 advocated ideas of ‘constructivism’ and emphasized on relating the content of the books with the childrens’ lives. Based on the NCF 2005 recommendations, new textbooks were designed for all subjects. In this paper, I will focus on the new language textbooks *Rimjhim*, and their present status in Indian classrooms.

As a teacher-educator, I was really excited when I first read the ‘*Rimjhim*’ textbooks. However that excitement soon turned to despondency when I observed how it was being used in primary school classrooms. Instead of textbooks, both teachers as well as students were relying mostly on guidebooks. My present paper is the outcome of my observations. The paper is divided into three parts: in the first part I will focus on an analysis of the *Rimjhim* textbooks, the second part is based on a study of the corresponding guidebooks, and the last part reflects on the struggle of the textbooks against a ‘stronger text’.

***Rimjhim* Textbooks: An Analysis**

For the purpose of my study, I have selected two books from the *Rimjhim* series, *Rimjhim-2* and *Rimjhim-4*. From *Rimjhim-2*, I have looked at two chapters—‘Aadhik Balwaan Kaun’ (Chapter 4) and ‘Bahut Hua’ (Chapter 6). From *Rimjhim-4*, I have selected two chapters entitled ‘Naav Banao-Naav Banao’ (Chapter 6) and ‘Sunita ki Pahiya Kursi’ (Chapter 12). An analysis of these chapters revealed the following points that highlight the excellent quality of these textbooks:

1. Link between reading, writing and speaking.

One of the major strengths of the *Rimjhim* series is the integrated language exercises which have been designed so that there is a link between the different language skills. This is evident from the following examples:

- One day the clouds decided that they would not bring rain because everybody criticized them for raining hard. What will happen next? Extend the story. (*Rimjhim-2*, p. 37)
- Imagine if wind said to the sun, whosoever will remove this tent from the ground, that person will be stronger. How will the story proceed? Think and tell. (*Rimjhim-2*, p. 26)

2. Questions based on personal experiences

According to (Graves, 1983), ‘voice’ gets automatically reflected in the work when students are allowed to write about their personal experiences. In *Rimjhim*, one can find lots of exercises which ask the students to share their personal experiences with the class. Some examples of such exercises are:

- The character in the story took off his coat when he started feeling hot. What do you do when you feel hot in summers? (*Rimjhim-2*, p. 25).
- Generally water gets accumulated on the roads during rainy season. What happens near your house or in your neighbourhood during rainy season? Share with the class. (*Rimjhim-4*, p. 49)

3. Questions based on imagination

The textbook offers a lot of imagination-based questions to students. Interesting situations are

given to the students and they are expected to imagine and write about them. For example:

- There must be a lot of questions and ideas that come to your mind after reading this chapter on Sunita. Write down all the ideas in a letter to Sunita. (*Rimjhim-4*, p. 104)
- Read the poem once again. The story of a boat and its journey is hidden in the poem. Imagine that you are that boat. Now tell your story to everyone. (*Rimjhim-4*, p. 46)

4. Questions based on creative ideas

There is an effort to present the students with some real problems and ask them to find the solution to the problems. These questions require creative thinking and innovative ideas. Some examples of such questions are:

There are many children like Sunita. Some cannot see, while there are others who cannot speak or hear. Some have problems with their hands and some cannot walk. Think about one such child. If you have some physical problem, think about the challenges you would have to face. In order to face that challenge, what would you like to invent? Think about it and tell:

- How will you make it?
- What things will be required to make that?
- What would be the task performed by that thing?
- Make a picture of that thing.

These examples clearly reflect how *Rimjhim* provides ample scope for language development. It has questions that are well-drafted and have a clear sense of audience, purpose and space for 'voice'.

The Culture of Guide books

The aim of the *Rimjhim* series can only be fulfilled if it is used in the class in the same spirit in which it is designed. After reading such creative books, one might be inclined to believe that language classes will become highly creative and exciting. However, the reality appears

somehow different. As a teacher educator, whenever I visit schools, I always try to interact with the primary school teachers to find out their opinion about the *Rimjhim* series. Unfortunately, feelings of discontent have always dominated the teachers' responses. They question the utility of books that are loaded with stories, poems and dramas but do not include conventional exercises. Often, they also find it difficult to understand the usefulness of textbooks which do not start from the basics of Hindi—the 'Varnamala'. They prefer to teach the lesson using workbooks or guides published by private publishers because these are packed with conventional exercises. In this section, I will focus on how these workbooks or guides are defeating the very purpose of *Rimjhim*. To support my argument, I will give some examples from such workbooks and guides preferred by the teachers over *Rimjhim*. For clarification and consistency, I have selected the same chapters that have been discussed in the above section.

1) Information based questions

The workbook based on the stories carries extremely conventional and information based questions. Students are expected to read the text and answer questions such as:

- What did Sunita's mother ask her to bring? (*Abhyas Pustika Rimjhim-4*, p. 78)
- What is decided between the Sun and the Wind? (*Abhyas Pustika Rimjhim-2*, p. 22)

2) Insensitive attitude

There are certain questions in the workbook which completely contradict the spirit of the stories in the textbook. As the workbooks are extensively used in the classes, it is worth reflecting about what our students are finally learning from the stories. For example the chapter 'Sunita ki Pahiyaa Kursi' (*Rimjhim-4*) has been included in the book to sensitize the students to physically challenged children. The chapter talks about the story of a girl, Sunita, who cannot walk. But she wants to do

everything on her own and feels irritated when people look at her with sympathy. Sunita finally meets a boy named Amit who is often teased by people for his short height. Later in the story, both of them become friends. This story has been included in the textbook so that the students can empathize with the lead characters and develop a sensitive attitude towards such children. In the workbook on this lesson, there is a question which is in complete contrast with the spirit of the chapter. The question is:

How do you make fun of your friends?
Write the names of five of your friends along with the names by which you tease them.
(*Abhyas Pustika Rimjhim-4*, p. 79).

The tone of this question makes one feel that it is okay to tease children with respect to their disabilities. What will a student of class IV learn from this story and such exercises, is a question worth thinking about.

3) Conventional exercises

The workbooks published by private publishers comprise typical writing exercises such as fill in the blanks, word meanings, synonyms and antonyms, correct or incorrect sentences, and make sentences. Thus, the attempt of the creators of *Rimjhim* textbooks to encourage aesthetic reading among students is nullified by the exercises that encourage efferent reading. These exercises solely focus on extracting information from the text without providing space for experiencing the literature.

4) No scope for reflection

An analysis of the guidebooks reveals the real condition of our primary school teaching. The guidebook contains answers for all the questions of *Rimjhim* ranging from information, analysis, reflection, experiences and personal views. The attempts made through *Rimjhim* to sensitize the students and make them reflect are suppressed by the typical answers of these guidebooks. This issue becomes even more important when we realize that a lot of teachers are only using these guidebooks for routine teaching in the class.

In the chapter, 'Sunita ki Pahiyaa Kursi' from *Rimjhim-4*, there is a question: Do you know any child who cannot hear or talk? How do you communicate with that child? This question is important because it is meant to make students sensitive and empathic towards such children. It is only when the students reflect on their environment, that they will find children like Sunita and will be able to establish a connection with them. For this question, the guidebook provides a straight answer: I know a child who cannot hear or talk. His name is Vishal. I communicate with him using signs. (*CP Guide*, p. 80).

These guides and workbooks have left no space or scope for our children to think and reflect and write. The unfortunate reality however is that these guidebooks are popularly used in various schools.

Discussion and Reflection

The basic reason behind the struggle with implementing books such as *Rimjhim* is the ideology on which our education system is founded. Our education system is based on two 'B's—Behaviorism and the Banking Concept. Students are constantly drilled and given practice in producing required approved structures. Deviations from set standards are rejected and the use of reinforcement is done to mould students in the required structure. An 'exact' copy is rewarded with comments such as 'good' and 'excellent', while deviations are met with disapproval and punishment. Any thoughts or reflections are clearly discouraged since they pose a threat in achieving the objective of this education structure, which is creating passive learners.

Freire's 'Banking Concept' presents a clear reflection of our education system. He states,

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher

issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat (p. 53).

Hence, the ultimate aim of our classrooms is not to create 'reflective minds' but to create 'deposit boxes' which can store unquestioningly. Any attempt or innovation which is not in accordance to these approaches faces resistance by the system.

This explanation however does not imply that the entire blame rests on the teachers who are transacting the content of *Rimjhim*. We need to reflect whether we have empowered the teachers to teach such a creative text. Have we engaged them in critical and reflective thinking while training them as teachers. The manner in which we have trained our teachers during their pre-service or in-service sessions is reflected in the quality of teaching they practise in their classes. Teacher training unfortunately does not include courses on pedagogy of reading and writing. Teachers unequipped with the knowledge of literacy pedagogy transact the textbook exercises in a typical drill and practice framework. Since this is similar to the framework in which they have themselves studied, they are most comfortable with it. Hence, greater preference is given to guide books over *Rimjhim*.

Empowering Teachers and Rimjhim

There is an urgent need for a change in the education system. We need to create a system where young minds can think and reflect. One of the main ways to achieve this is to equip our teachers with the required knowledge of pedagogy. Since teachers are the main interpreters of the curriculum, it is essential to empower them with the appropriate knowledge. Batra (2005) focuses on acknowledging the voice and agency of the teachers and declares it as a key component in bringing any change. According to her any initiative or policy reform is useless, if teachers are not empowered. She

questions the NCF 2005 saying, "How do you enable critical thinking and meaning making among children with a teacher who has not been through such a process herself?" (Batra 2005, p. 4350) This statement emphasizes that the teacher is the core component of a classroom and till the time her orientation is neglected, the guidebooks will continue to exist as 'The Stronger Text'.

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Teacher Talk in the Second Language Classroom

K. N. Anandan

The shift from a teacher-centred classroom to a learner-centred or learning-centred classroom does not imply that the role of the teacher has drastically reduced to that of a silent facilitator who leaves everything in the hands of the learners. The teacher has to interact with the learners at various points of the classroom transaction in order to engage them psychologically and emotionally in the learning process. If this interaction does not take place, the learners will be deprived of the contextually relevant teacher talk which has a lot of potential as a rich listening input for language acquisition. In this paper, I would like to present the various aspects of teacher talk in the context of facilitating second language acquisition.

What is Teacher Talk?

According to language pedagogues, teacher-centred classrooms are characterized by teachers over-talk. However, teacher talk is very different from this scenario. Teacher talk also does not refer to the countless questions the teacher may have to ask the children in order to elicit responses (free or fixed) from them. In the modular mode of classroom transaction, as conceived in Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP), the nomenclature ‘teacher talk’ encompasses the oral narratives presented by the teacher as well as the dialogues that takes place between the teacher and the students at various points of classroom transaction.

Teacher Talk as a Rich Listening Input for the Learners

As has already been pointed out, interaction cannot merely be conceived as some questions that teachers need to ask the learners in order to elicit a response from them. It is fairly evident that classroom interaction at any point of transaction has common objectives as well as some specific objectives. Let us see what these are:

Common Objectives of Classroom Interaction

It is reasonable to assume that the common objectives of interaction include the following:

1. Sharing of ideas
2. Giving rich, authentic listening inputs
3. Embedding functional aspects of language in natural and authentic contexts
4. Maintaining a rapport with the learners
5. Dialoguing with the learners
6. Giving feedback to the learners for taking them to the next level of learning
7. Maintaining the continuity of the theme in all the modules of transaction

Only a few of these objectives are transparent enough to understand. However, given the fact that the nomenclatures people use in the world of teaching and learning can be notoriously ambiguous, some amount of opacity can be expected. Simply put, classroom interaction is not meant for just giving some information to

the learners; it is meant to encourage learners to think for themselves, and come out with their own ideas. Moreover, interaction should not just consist of posing questions one after the other; it should engage the learners meaningfully through dialogues and hence get an understanding of the different perspectives of the learners on the given theme.

Specific Objectives of Interaction

Apart from the common objectives we have enumerated earlier, each instance of interaction may also have specific objectives. Some of these objectives include:

Specific objectives of interactions based on the trigger

- Ascertaining learners' assumptions on the theme
- Establishing learners' perceptions on what has been watched
- Leading the learners to the theme / issue
- Making learners predict what they are going to listen to or read

Interaction at narrative gaps

- Triggering divergent thinking among learners
- Eliciting learners' perceptions on the theme
- Making predictions on what might follow
- Determining learners' reflections on what he / she has listened to
- Checking whether the central characters of the story have been emotionally registered (so that the learners can respond to a given situation from the point of view of the characters that they identify with)
- Analysing the situation critically (from the point of view of the various characters involved in it)

Interaction leading to individual reading

- Instilling the urge to read in learners

- Instilling confidence in the learners for undertaking the reading activity

Interaction during collaborative reading

- Ensuring that ideas are shared as per the instructions given to the learners
- Assessing the progress of group work
- Extending optimal support to those who need it
- Ensuring cooperation in team work
- Addressing the learning issues of children who are progressing at a slower pace

Interaction related to extrapolating the text with the help of analytical questions

- Registering multiple perspectives on the theme
- Identifying the point of view of the writer as well as the learners
- Instilling value systems
- Building tolerance

Interaction related to the presentation of teacher's version of the targeted discourse

- Giving feedback on what the children have written
- Highlighting the salient features of the discussion
- Providing additional inputs to the learners for refining their written work in terms of the targeted discourse features and language elements
- Providing a natural extension of the reading activity as the teacher's version of the written discourse provides a supplementary reading material related to the theme that is being dealt with

Interaction related to editing

- Sensitizing the learners to various kinds of errors
- Giving positive feedback to the learners on their writing

- Checking the learner's intuitions on grammaticality
- Building confidence in the learners to use the language

Teachers who have carried out the editing activity have reported that it is eagerly undertaken by most students.

Interaction related to forming big books

- Addressing the heterogeneity of the class
- Providing a slot for creativity
- Checking the learner's affinity to the target language

Dialoguing

It is important that the teacher builds a dialogue with the learners. This can be done with the help of strategies such as the following:

Seeking confirmation (using positive, negative and same way tags)

- Reporting (Meena says that...)
- Using discourse markers (for expressing attitude, politeness, etc.)
- Agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker
- Seeking agreement or disagreement
- Stating one's opinion
- Using short responses
- Building on a certain response

Features of Teacher Talk

The general features of teacher talk include:

Using error-free language with well-formed constructions

- Using language that is comprehensible to all learners
- Being audible to the whole class
- Using dynamic, positive, pleasant and learner friendly language
- Using language that is free from expressions related to finding fault with the learners

- Drastically reducing the speed of articulation
- Maintaining articulatory features (such as pause, stress, tone, and tempo)
- Making sure that there is a dialogue between the teacher and the learners and not just one-sided talk from the teacher
- Using language that contains various discourse markers (such, as well, precisely, as a matter of fact, etc.) wherever these elements are required contextually
- Using language that contains linguistic elements such as tags, short responses, etc.
- Addressing higher order thinking skills

How do we Make Teacher Talk Comprehensible?

This is a billion dollar question. What the teacher says must be comprehensible to the learners. Imagine that the teacher has to present an oral narrative. There is no point in repeating something again and again thinking that repetition will enhance comprehension. How do we ensure comprehension? The following strategies may be useful to achieve this objective:

1. Breaking longer expressions into smaller ones. Let me illustrate this point with the help of a case. Consider the following story:

A dog, crossing a bridge over a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth, saw his own shadow in the water and took it for that of another dog, with a piece of meat double his own in size. He immediately let go of his own piece of meat, and fiercely attacked the other dog to get his larger piece from him. He thus lost both pieces—the one that he grasped at in the water, because it was a shadow, and his own, because the stream swept it away.

There are several sentences in the story which contain more than one idea. The first sentence, for example, contains the following ideas:

- There is a dog.
- It holds a piece of meat in his mouth.
- There is a bridge.
- There is a stream flowing under the bridge.
- The dog is crossing the bridge.
- It sees its own shadow in the water.
- The dog thinks that there is another dog with a piece of meat double the size of the one in his mouth.

It will be better to split the longer sentence into its component sentences. The shorter sentences will be more comprehensible to the learners.

2. Include images in the story

It is not enough to split long sentences into smaller ones. We have to ensure that we can create images in the listener's mind. What are the images to be created?

- The image of a dog with a piece of meat in its mouth (colour of the dog, its size, its greedy look, appearance of the piece of meat, etc.)
- An image of a bridge with a stream flowing under it (what is the bridge made of? The murmur of the stream, the bubbles floating on the surface, the shadow of the bridge and the dog, etc.)

3. Insert dialogues or self-talk wherever possible

- What do you think is going through the mind of the dog as it holds the piece of meat in its mouth?
- What do you think is going through the mind of the dog as it sees its shadow in the water?

4. Use familiar words wherever possible

There are several English words (the so-called 'loan words') in the children's repertoire of words that they may be using in their day-to-day communication without realizing that they are English words. In the

lower classes, words related to themes such as school, class, kitchen, road, etc., can be elicited from the children, and a spider gram or a word web of each theme may be created. These words can be activated by using them both as nouns and verbs in narratives and for interaction.

5. Use proper voice modulation

Prosodic features such as pauses, stress, pitch and tone contribute to effective oral communication. Spoken language will be comprehended in a better way if the teacher makes use of appropriate articulatory features.

6. Use of optimum gestures

Suitable gestures are an important component of communication, and contribute to better comprehension. However, the teacher must take care that she / he is not over-acting. Gestures must be optimized in terms of hand-eye coordination, postures and facial expressions.

Levels of Teacher Talk

There are various levels of teacher talk. Take for example, the teacher talk related to the trigger of drawing out the learner's perception of what she / he has understood. This talk is conducted for all levels of learners.

Now consider the following expressions:

What do you think the picture / clipping / photograph is about?

1. What ideas do you get when you look at this picture /clipping / photograph?
2. You have seen the clipping. What do you think about it? Why don't you share your thoughts with your friends?
3. What does the picture tell you?
4. The picture tells us something, doesn't it? What is that?
5. I was wondering whether someone could tell the whole class what the picture is about.

All these expressions are suitable for interacting with the learners depending on the trigger. But they are not at the same linguistic level. We cannot ask these questions as formulated here in classes 1 and 2. At the same time, children in these classes will have their own perceptions about the picture and we must know what these are. One way to accomplish this is to establish the details of the picture by eliciting them one after the other from the learners with the help of simple questions. This may be followed by a cluster of questions to take out from the learners what they think about the picture. Sometimes it may be necessary to ask questions using the code-switching strategy. In conclusion, what really matters is whether we are able to address the perceptions of the individual learners by invoking higher order thinking skills.

Conclusion

We have discussed in detail what teacher talk is and how it is manifested as different instances of interaction that are carried out in a constructivist classroom. It is essential that the teacher has a clear idea of the common objectives of interaction as well as the specific objectives of each instance of interaction. The specific objectives of any instance of interaction are decided based on the moment at which the interaction is taking place in the classroom transaction and the level of the learners.

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Literature in Primary Classes

Kamlesh Chandra Joshi
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The discourse around language-teaching in primary classes generally centres on methods of teaching children how to read and write, and the effort involved in putting these methods into practice in the class. The dimension of literature in learning to read and write, or the joy of learning is relegated to the background in this discourse, especially since most of the children in our schools are still struggling to 'learn with understanding'. However, in order to 'learn with understanding' one must also learn about facets of literature. In this article, I will examine certain basic ideas related to literature in primary classes.

The teaching of literature begins the moment we start telling stories and reciting poems to children. These stories and poems are then discussed with them. In the process of discussing the stories, children get an opportunity to share and add their own experiences. As they do this, they simultaneously try to understand the experiences of other children, thereby widening their own horizons and thinking. Further, these experiences can also be used to explore socio-cultural values. For instance, if we are reading Premchand's story "Bade Bhai Sahib" with the children, we can discuss the prevalent system of school education with the children, and raise questions about the examination system. Similarly, while reading Mahasweta Devi's story "Kyoon-Kyoon Chhori" published by Tulika, we can talk about the education of under-privileged children. To add to this list, Rabindranath Tagore's "Jorasanko Waala Ghar" and Satyajit

Ray's "Jab Main Chota Tha" expose the children to the milieu of an educated, elite class of children, whereas Premchand's "Idgah" published by National Book Trust and "Zoo ki Kahani" and "Ismat ki Eid" published by Tulika are stories of children belonging to what are generally known as the common, ordinary class of people. The study of such literature can be used to unfold wider perspectives for the children. Teaching of literature thus involves sensitizing the children to various experiences and issues as also widening their vision and thought.

At this point I would like to emphasize that teaching a lesson in class does not just involve telling the meanings of difficult words, writing answers to the questions given at the end of the lesson, and thinking that this is what teaching is all about. What is more important is a good discussion on the content and the subject matter of the lesson. After all, the objective of teaching a language is to create, in the children, an interest in reading, and to develop good reading habits. This naturally involves various dimensions of literature.

Literature is a great source of joy and teaching it with that awareness can really add value to its teaching. When one comes to think of it, children relish and enjoy reading pieces of literature such as "Budhiya ki Roti", "Pyaasi Maina", "Pakki Dosti", "Bus ki Sair", "Lalu Peelu", "Main Bhi...", "Kajri Gaay Jhoolay Par", "Pippi", "Lambay Mozay" etc. In fact they even add details from their own imagination

to these readings; for their imagination is in tune with the imagination of these stories. It is to be noted that the children also enjoy reading foreign books such as “Kajri Gaay”, “Pippi ke Lambay Mozay” for the richness of their content. If they are reading something like “Billee ke Bachchay” published by Eklavya, they feel amused and entertained by the story of the kittens who bathe in the pond and come out of a pipe with smoke.

In order to develop their interest in literature, it is essential to draw the childrens’ attention to the beauty of the language so that they are able to recognize and appreciate this beauty. The poems in the junior classes—with their lyrics, rhythm and pattern of sounds—are a source of joy and entertainment for the children. Some examples of such poems include Prayag Shukla’s “Dhammak Dhammak Aataa Haathi, Oont Chalaa Bhai Oont Chalaa”; Shri Prasad ji’s “Haathi Challam Challam”; Nirankar Dev Sewak’s “Titlee aur Kali” and “Tesu Raja Beech Bazaar”; Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena’s “Ibn Batuta”; Ram Krishna Khaddar’s “Bandar Bhoop”; and Nagarjuna’s “Akaal aur us ke Baad”. We should discuss the lyrics, rhythm and patterns of sounds in these poems with the children, and also try to bring to their attention the imagination and pictorial quality of some of these poems. Here is a sample of some poems that are rich in imagination:

Bandar Bhoop

*Bandar gayaa khet mein bhaag
Chuttar-muttar toda saag.
Aag jalaakar chattar-mattar
Saag banaaya khaddar-baddar.
Saapad-soopad khaayaa khoob
Ponchaa munhu khaad kar doob.
Chhalni bichhaa, odh kar soup
Dat kar soye Bandar bhoop.*

Nirankar Dev Sewak’s poem ‘Titlee aur Kali’ also excites the imagination of children:

*Hari daal par lagi huee thee
Nanhi sundar ek kalee.
Titlee us se aa kar bolee
Tum lagtee ho badi bhalee.
Ab jaago tum aankhein kholo
Aur hamaare sung khelo.
Phailay sundar mahak tumhaaree
Mahkay saaree galee-galee.
Kalee chhitak kar khilee rangeelee
Turant khel kee sun kar baat.
Saath hawaa ke lagee bhaagne
Titlee chhoonay usay chalee.*

Similarly, Nagarjuna’s poem ‘Akaal aur us Kay Baad’ is also worth a mention here. In this poem, the poet gives a beautiful account of the scene during and after a famine, which the children can be exposed to. The teacher may also draw attention to the rhythm and sounds in the poem:

*Kaee dinon tak choolhaa royaa chak kee
rahee udaas
Kaee dinon tak kaanee kutiyaa soee
unkay paas
Kaee dinon tak lagee bheet par chhipka
liyon kee gasht
Kaee dinon tak choohon kee bhee haalat
rahee shikast.
Daanay aae ghar ke andar kaee dinon
kay baad
Dhukaan uthaa aangan say oopar kaee
dininon kay baad
Chamak utheen ghar bhar kee aankhein
kaee dinon kay baad
Kauvvay ne khujlaaee paankhein kaee
dininon kay baad.*

In the stories, the attention of children can be drawn to how the language has been used. For example:

Saamnay kee kyaaree mein bhindiyan ke oonchay-oonchay paudhe thay. Ek ore seetaphal kee ghanee bail phailee huee thee. Kyaariyan ke chaaron ore haray-bharay kelay ke vriksh lahraa rahay thay. Dinesh nay jaldee-jaldee bhindiyan ke paudhon ko ulatnaa-palatnaa aarambh kiyaa. Jab wahaan kuchh naheen milaa to usnay saaree seetaphal kee bail chhaan maaree.

(Kirmich kee Gaiind, Shanti Kumari Jain, Rimjhim-4, NCERT, New Delhi).

Donon kee museebat mein jaan thee. Har waqt paabandee, har waqt taqraar. Apnee marzee say choon bhee naheen kar saktay thay. Kabhee Arif ko gaanay kaa mood aata to bhaaijaan daantatay, “Chup hotaa hai ya naheen? Har waqt mendhak kee tarah tarraae jaataa hai.” Baahar jaa to Ammee poochhtee, “Baahar kyon gae?” Andar rahtay to daadi chillaatee, “Haai mera dimaagh phat rahaa hai shor ke maaray! Aree Razia, in bachchon ko zaraa baahar haank day.” Jaisay bachche na hue murghee ke choozay ho gae!

(Ek Din ki Baadshaahat, Jeelaani Bano, Rimjhim-5, NCERT, New Delhi).

Wahaan thee woh! Kajri Gaay pet ke bal letee, pedh ke neechay so rahee thee.

Usne saamnay waalee taangon se apnee aankhein dhak rakhee theen.

Kauvva bilkul unkay saamnay jaa utraa. Hal kay se, Kajri Gaay ke kaan par chonch maar kar usnay poochhaa, “Kajri Gaay, kya tum zindaa ho?”

Kajri Gaay nay lambee jamhaai lee.

“Aary! Lagtaa hai meree aankh lag gae thee”, Kajri Gaay ne kahaa.

“Kaan! Mujhay lagaa ki tum pedh se gir kar mar gae ho!” Kauvva chillaayaa.

(Kajri Gaay Padhnay Lagi, Jujja Wieslandar (2012), Translation – Swati Purandare, A and A Book Trust, Gurgaon)

Mangalvaar kaa din thaa. Kakshaa mein aatay hee Guruji nay kahaa, “Aaj kee padhaaee hai ki aaj skool mein koe padhaaee naheen hogee. Aur is padhaaee kaa vishaya hogaa– chhuttee kaa din. Tum logon ko chhutee kaa din achhay se bitaana chaahiye. Chhuttee kaa din tum nay kaisay bitaayaa, yah mujhay bataanaa. Chhuttee ke din kee padhaai subah uthnay say raat tak chalaygee, jab tak tum so naheen jaatay. Chhuttee kaa din akaylay bitaanaa chahtay ho to akaylay manaanaa, yaa jinkay saath manaanaa ho, unkay saath manaanaa. Ek saath jaisay kakshaa mein padhaaee kaa din hotaa hai, vaisay he ek saath bhee bitaa saktay ho. Apnay ghar mein yaa kisee kay ghar mein yaa ghar ke baahar is upyogee din kaa upyog karogay parantu lautkar ghar sahee samay par pahunch jaanaa.”

Skool thodee dooree par thaa. Skool kaa naam Gol Skool thaa. Skool ke chaaron taraf gol baraamdaa thaa. Skool sach-much golthaa. Baraamday mein har kakshaa ke darvaazay khultay thay. Gol Skool se kuchh door ek lambaa skool thaa. Khadee lakeer kee tarah lambaa. Par donon is tarah paasthay ki oopar se dekhnay mein dusk e ank kee tarah lagtay thay. Lambaa skool dahaai kee tarah thaa. Uskay saamnay aur peechhay baraamday thay. Donon skool ke baraamdon mein lakdee ke khambay lagay thay.

(Hari Ghaas ki Chhappar Waali Jhopadee aur Baunaa Pahaad, Vinod Kumar Shukla, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi).

Even a peep into most of our textbooks reveals the paucity of good reading material for children, most of it being heavy and artificial in nature. Also, the textbook alone cannot fulfill all the needs of children. If our long-term aims and objectives include reading with understanding, children taking interest in books, and the joy of learning, a library with rich resources that stimulates the interest of children should be a major concern. This incidentally, is also a recommendation by the government in the Right to Education Act.

Currently, there are too few libraries in our schools. Even if some books are available for the students under some scheme, they are not useful from the children's point of view and do not generate any interest in them. Also, classroom processes are limited to only teaching the meanings of words and the focus is on completing the exercises related to the lesson in hand. Most of the talk with children revolves around their knowledge of facts about the lesson rather than linking the text with their experience and reacting to it. All that is expected of children is to answer questions based on rote-learning whereas the attempt should be that they relate to stories and poetry, add their experiences to them, analyse them so that they can develop into good readers. The first attempt for all this will have to be made by teachers – we will have to learn to take interest in literature, especially children's literature, for only then will we be able to talk to children on aspects related to literature.

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Creating a Literacy Rich Environment

Nivedita V. Bedadur

What is a Literacy Rich Environment?

Looking at the bare peeling walls of my grade I classroom everyday, I wondered how I did not hate school. But the fact is that I didn't. My mind was rich with thoughts, and I lived most of my early life in the world of books. I thought I belonged there, and was one of the characters. Most adults thought I was crazy. But Baba, who introduced me to the world of books because he did not know what to do with a motherless child, did not think I was crazy. He told me stories, and encouraged me to think of the characters in the stories, to ask questions about them and to try and understand what it would feel like to be in their shoes. It was Baba who handed me a new book every Sunday and read it to me in bed.

What did Baba do, that made books a part of my world, lending meaning to the world within me and building connections to the world outside? He talked to me about books, told me stories, and read to me when he and I both looked at the pictures and print. Can I point to a day and time that I can say I began to read by myself? No, but all I know is that Baba soon stopped reading to me and I did not mind at all. I could read, and I would read; I would live in and through the world of the stories I read.

This is the experience of a child who is hooked to books and finds solace in reading. But the children in our schools either cannot read or donot read. They have not experienced the joy of connecting with stories. A literacy rich environment, such as the one experienced by

me would inculcate the love for books in today's children, getting them to seek connections between the world without and the world within.

What is a Literacy Rich Environment and how is it Different froman Input Rich Environment?

A literacy rich environment refers to building a culture of reading in the classroom. It does not limit itself to the physical environment of the classroom or the qualitative linguistic environment of the text but extends beyond the two and becomes a negotiation between the mind of the child, the text and culture. It therefore addresses both the physical and mental space that the text occupies. The text as a living breathing being is invited to participate and play in the classroom.

Why is a Literacy Environment Necessary for Reading Acquisition?

As mentioned earlier, a literacy environment does not only refer to the physical environment. It includes the environment of the mind, of working in the school, of self-identity, self-awareness, self-worth and expression. Such an environment can only be created in the culture that the child experiences both within and outside the class room; moreover, this culture must be connected to the pages of a book. In order to build these connections and to understand ourselves, it is necessary to bring the child's world into the classroom and connect it with

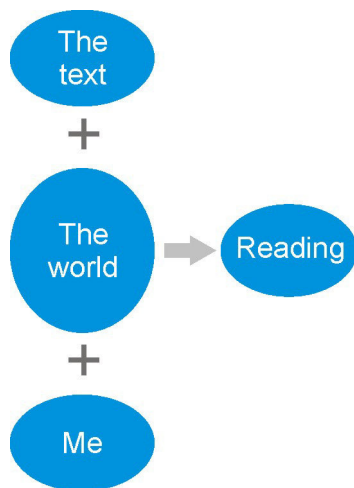
the world of stories. This can be done by writing down children's experiences.

How to Create a Literacy Rich Environment in the Classroom

Think about the message the literacy environment conveys to the children. Does it promote thinking? Does it cater to communication, and social and emotional development of the children? Does it invite children to discuss, ask questions, find their own learning journey, and share their discoveries in different ways to different audiences; does it give reading a purpose?

What Gives Reading its Purpose?

Reading is not a one way engagement with a text. It is a complex engagement between the world within the text, the mind of the child and the world of the child, to negotiate meaning and to question and understand the position of the text in the two worlds.



How can this Journey of Negotiation Begin?

This journey of negotiation can begin in two ways—by bringing the functionality of the text into the classroom and creating authentic literacy

environments which involve the world of the child; or by building an emotional connect with literacy.

To bring the functionality of literacy into the classroom we need to look at how print is viewed and how it functions in the world of a child. How does the child's family engage with print? These engagements and functions can become the starting point of our explorations. Children can collect reading materials from home, bring it to the class, talk about it and engage with it. Such materials or engagements will clearly be in the home language even though the home language may not have a written form. In fact, given our culture, all symbolic, cultural and religious occupations and engagements with symbols can be the starting point for further exploring the world of literacy.

I remember at the start of the nine days of Navratri, going up the long staircase to my home, starting at the first step by drawing the feet of the Goddess Laxmi, and moving up towards the door. I believe that is when my engagement with written symbols began. I began to wonder why the feet of Goddess Laxmi were drawn, why a certain conch-shaped symbol was etched at the door, and why the 'om'? However, my interaction with written words began with this journey up the stairs in more ways than one. In order to reach all the way up to the fifth floor where my home was, I had to pass the name plates of my friends. I remember reading the names and chanting Shetty - Sunil, Reddy - Rita, Raga-Darshana, and so on.

My best friend Avdhoot's family had a small business of *Vada-Pav* on a cart. There were frequent invitations to taste the mouth-watering *vadas* all wrapped up in oily newspaper. That's where Avdhoot and I began our negotiation with literacy—every single day!

The world of every child has literacy encounters and literacy materials which she/he has engaged with at some point. As teachers we need to

explore this world through the experiences of the child, and build connections between the literacy world within and outside the school. However, a child cannot begin the journey of literacy in the true sense unless there is an emotional connect with literacy. This second path of negotiating the journey of literacy usually happens through the support of an elder. The teacher is in fact in a unique position to support this emotional connect which can be established through drama, role play, or a learner-created text. Poetry, rhymes, songs, music, paintings are all symbolic tools which represent emotions and can hence be used to further the connect with literacy. Using literacy to explore art or music through culture would leave an indelible imprint on the child's mind, and forever make literacy a part of the child's life. Children have the unique ability to read drawings, and paintings such as the Worli art have a great potential for scaffolding language development. Drawing stick figures and creating stories around them is great fun. Songs can also be used to develop phonemic awareness which is the core of prediction in reading. The songs can be in the child's home language. Indian movies nowadays are also exploring the medium of folk songs in multilingual mode. This can be a wonderful starting point for literacy instruction!

Cognitive Value

Human beings are born with a special capacity to keep learning. In fact we never stop learning. We are like children until the time we die. Also, we never stop playing. Children love to play with words. That is why they love jingles and alliteration. We can use a cognitive play of words by helping children explore riddles, puns, ambiguity and a simple play on the letters of words. This helps in literacy acquisition by making children aware of the possibilities of word play, multiplicity of meaning, the way symbols become double metaphors and words

change their meanings. This, however, is done at a later stage in the learning process once the children have already learnt how to read and write. But why should we work incrementally with children and let all this happen later? Why can't these little nuances of language be explored to create possibilities for development of thought in the early stages of the learning process?

Making theme-based word webs in the languages of the classroom—comparing them, looking at them, and drawing pictures around them to support meaning-making—gives a lot of opportunity to children to compare the phonetic and semantic systems of the languages they hear around them and construct hypothesis about the nature of language. This process should not be articulated but needs to emerge as an outcome of learning the language. The teacher in the classroom must not be the keeper but a learner; she / he must be an explorer of knowledge along with the children. At first, teachers may be uncomfortable with this position. However, once they delve into it, they will begin to see the infinite possibilities of a cognitive approach to reading through literacy inputs.

Therefore, for a teacher, a literacy rich environment implies that she / he must become a learner, and go on a journey to find out what literacy actually means to the children she / he is entrusted with and to their families. What is the relationship between language and literacy in their culture? What is the function of literacy in their culture? The teacher must bring that knowledge into the classroom and value and nurture it even if it is a challenge. The child needs to begin at that point and start making connections between what she knows and what is new. The target language may not be the language of the child, or may not even be the language of the culture. There may be huge diversity in the classroom. Teachers need to celebrate that diversity and nurture its creativity.

A literacy rich environment for the learners implies that they be able to find their voice, to play with written symbols, to write new stories (generally the teacher does the writing) and to enjoy creative play. The learners must also be able to experience a seamless extension of reading and writing from the home, to the street, and to the school. They should feel a sense of self-worth and not feel alienated. This can happen when a part of their culture is mirrored on every wall of the school; the school then becomes their home.

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The Way we Talk as a Representation of the Way we Think: An Analysis of how the Government is Speaking to the Masses

Shweta Kakkar

Background

All languages around the world find themselves ranked in the same hierarchies of power and politics, as do other systems of society. For example, in India, it is acceptable for a fluent speaker of English to not know Hindi, though the opposite scenario is a reflection of poor skills of an individual. Even within the same language, the differences in the way that people use the language tend to be on a continuum and may range from negligible variations to significant differences. This paper focuses on 'Hindi', which is one of the national languages of India. Hindi also has considerable variations when placed on the continuum of language variation. There is one end of the continuum, which is 'shudh' (pure) Hindi. Das Gupta (1970) has termed the pure end of the continuum as 'literary' languages and the popular variants used in daily communication as 'native' languages. This paper will use the same definitions (literary and native) for the types of variations within the same language. The 'literary' standard of Hindi, which is rarely used in everyday communication, continues to be used in all Government communication. This paper seeks to explore the implication of this style of communication on the relationship that the Government maintains with the masses, which points to a larger, all-pervasive adult-child/giver-receiver relationship across all systems of our society, including education. In this exploration, I have referred to historical work that throws light on the evolution of the system of governance and of education, and have shown

how, the way in which we use language is a reflection of an obsession with bringing people up to a certain level of civilization or development, or on the contrary, to bring people down and to discriminate.

The evolution of the 'adult-child' relationship

Castes, languages and the segregations among people based on the hierarchies of these and other factors, existed in India from before the arrival of the British colonial regime. The pre-colonial Indian society was divided into 'varnas' or classes- i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras- and the educational system of the country was also a representation of this system. The indigenous education system derived knowledge from the existing social structure and imparted skills that were necessary to organize people into these existing structures (Acharya, 1996). For example, the trading class or Vaishyas would train their children in arithmetic and commerce. The government system in pre-colonial India thrived on the 'varnas' and the existence of the ruling classes and the ruled classes. The pre-colonial Indian society did not have a standard of 'ideal' that every person aspired to reach. For example, it was never the intention of the Brahman class to encourage all people to aspire for Sanskrit knowledge or the place that Brahmins enjoyed in the social structure.

The segregation of castes in pre-colonial India came with its own superiority-inferiority

quotients that divided people by rank. However, when the Britishers arrived in India, they brought with them a different kind of race-based division that represented the Orientalist thinking, propounding the moral, ethical and intelligence-based superiority of the British colonists. Thus, under the colonial rule Indians came to be seen as a unified, immoral and uneducated lot that needed raising-up, irrespective of what caste or varna they belonged to. Englishmen considered it their duty to raise the moral, ethical and intelligence standards of the natives.

This point of view meant that native Indian masses were seen as lacking the capacity to know what is good for them. The English colonizers, at the head of the Government in India, saw their relationship with the native population as an adult-child relationship (Kumar, 2005). Just as adults feel that it is their moral and social responsibility to monitor children and to tell them what is good or bad for them, similarly the English colonizers saw it their responsibility to introduce the native Indians to a better way of life.

This Orientalist perspective was also translated into action with the proclamation of the education policy of the British colonial rule in India through the *Woods Despatch* of 1854. The British colonial rule had a choice between reforming the existing indigenous education system into a national system of education and introducing a new system of education. Colonial officials such as William Adam were in the favour of building a national education system on the foundations of the existing system but this did not happen (Naik, 1974/2004). Instead, the education system was evolved as seen fit by the British rulers, in order to provide the moral and intellectual values that they saw missing in the natives and to create

a mass of Indians who would serve the clerical requirements of the British Raj. English-medium education came to be regarded as superior in quality to the education imparted in the vernacular languages.

How is the Government talking to the Masses?

The trends from this Orientalist perspective, as seen in the context of Government and Education continue to be shared by a lot of Indian leaders who view development from their own set of experiences. When India gained its independence, the foundations of this new nation were laid within the realms of existing structures of education, power, status and appearances. Languages too, were engulfed in these structures and have become another parameter for discrimination. In his work, Das Gupta (1970) discusses national development and how viewing the sub-national loyalties as anti-patriotic, is an unreasonable take on governance of a diverse population. However, his idea is that the mark of a modern society leads a region towards standardization of language, so that the difference between 'literary' languages and 'native' languages is reduced. By the above logic, it is expected that with the spread of education the 'polished' or refined mannerism of conversation and the 'literary' variants of Hindi will become a part of people's language use.



Even those who are not yet educated or have not acquired that level of comfort with literary Hindi should aspire to reach there.

The language that the Government uses in its communication with the masses, through public service announcements and publicity material are a good source of analysing this point. I use the example of one poster from a local Community Health Centre in Uttarakhand to observe the style of language. This poster is aimed at families with expectant mothers, urging them to use hospital care during delivery of child. It begins with heavy, Hindi words “surakshit matratv ke liye kriti sankalp: Uttarakhand sarkar”, which roughly translates into the idea that the Government of Uttarakhand is committed to ensuring safe motherhood. It uses unfamiliar words like ‘prasav’ (labour/delivery), ‘shulk’ (fees), vyavastha (arrangement), chikitsalay (hospital) and others. Interestingly, the poster uses the term ‘sarkari asptaal’ (government hospital), which is a colloquially familiar phrase for the free services that are provided by the Government. But when it is promising arrangement for transport to a better-equipped (and probably expensive) hospital in case of an emergency, it uses the terms ‘bade chikitsalay’ (big hospital).

But what does this analysis or the preceding discussion tell us? If we condense the preceding discussion, we arrive at two important statements:

1. The Government is talking to the masses in a variant of Hindi that is alien in the common parlance in most areas.
2. This variant of Hindi is being looked at, as the ideal state of language as achieved through education or exposure to a certain manner of living.

If the above two statements be true, then the implication of the subliminal messages through the Government’s way of talking to the masses is that most people who find this variant of

‘Hindi’ alien are not in the ideal state of development and standard of living. Here, one can find replication of the same Orientalist perspective of ‘adult’ and ‘child’ (Kumar, 2005) where the masses do not know what is for their own good and for their own development, and therefore must be led towards development by the Government. It is for this reason that a multinational corporation looking to initiate mining activities in a tribal area receives Government support since it is the view of the Government too that industry equals development, without regard to the definition of development that people from this area may believe in.

Pedagogical implications: A Case for Equality

Friedrich Nietzsche said, “There are no facts, only interpretations.” When a group of individuals are seated at the head of a country, their perspective about its people and their needs will determine what policies are formulated, how they are implemented and what structures are established by the Government to enable its people to access the basic necessities of an adequate standard of living. Many words and phrases in this previous statement are based on perspective: access, basic necessities and adequate standard of living.

Here if I focus on what I had previously discussed about education, it will become easier to see the substantial pedagogical implications of my arguments. When the British colonizers established the modern system of Indian education, they did so with their own perspective that said Indian natives are morally and intellectually inferior, and therefore not capable of judging what is good for them. The system of education that required rote learning, written examinations to test student knowledge, determination of a student’s aptitude through academic performance alone and other such

methods continues to flourish today. English is the preferred medium of education.

When the English colonizers left India, they left the Orientalist perspective behind. It permeated into our education system as well and continues to show its traces all across the education systems in our country. There is an inarguable inferiority in the quality offered by public institutions such as Government schools and Government hospitals as compared to their private counterparts.

Another evil of this idealized standard of being is the issue of stereotyping. When there is a rigid definition of what development is, and what a successful, educated person is, the existing variations in society create stereotypes. For example, the 'native' variants of Hindi and its speakers are subjected to much ridicule and stereotyping. In his inspiring work 'Multilinguality and the New World Order', Agnihotri calls for action against stereotypes that are an inherent part of the nature of society and the individuals forming it. These individuals include our political leaders, educationists and all other people engaged in policy-formulation and its implementation (Agnihotri, 2009).

My submission is for all teachers, students, academicians, policy makers and everybody else. Only in continuously questioning what we know and in unlearning at a pace almost as fast as learning, will we be able to dream of realms beyond the existing world and the 'new world order' that Agnihotri (2009) calls for. It starts with honestly making efforts to eliminate the underlying element that exists in all of us: discrimination and the superiority quotient. The pedagogical implications of my submission are philosophical to some extent but also a practical reality in that they call for a change in mind-sets of each of us. There is no scope for the policy maker or the head of a school or the teacher or an academically-sound student to feel that she/he is above somebody else or for any

of them to feel that somebody else is above them. An effort to establish an egalitarian environment such as this is where diversity will thrive in all forms: as multilingualism, in the form of 'gender anarchy', as religious tolerance, in encouraging varied paces of learning in the classroom and in the vast multitude of diversity present everywhere in the world.

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Effectiveness of Certain Instructional Strategies Towards Strengthening the Metacognitive Awareness of Malayalam Language Students at Secondary Level

Sreevrinda Nair. N. and A. Sudharma

Introduction

Language is a system of communication that offers countless possibilities for representation, expression and construction of meaning and thought. It is constructed using interacting symbols of sounds, meanings and sentence formation and permeates human thought and life. Halliday (1978) has defined language as 'meaning potential' and has created the following model that shows the function of language developed by children by the time they come to school.

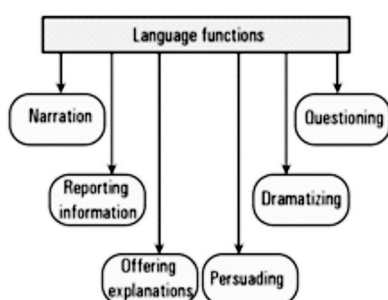


Figure 1: Language functions

It is clear from figure 1 that language unlocks the human minds and thereby extending to access information and entertainment. It also gives definite configuration to man's thought, feelings and emotions. Students in today's classroom are more diverse than ever and this diversity creates the need for inculcating differentiating instructions in the classroom. A metacognitive environment encourages awareness of the process of learning and thereby promotes self-regulation and self-

direction, which are the critical ingredients to successful learning (Dul, 2011). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills that may entail planning, monitoring or evaluating the success of a learning activity. These skills are the main recursive processes or parameters that contribute in the building of abundant learning environments that strengthen metacognition through the experiences shared in the classroom.

Need and Significance of the Study

In 2000, the National Reading Panel recommended some metacognitive strategies, which held the promise of enhancing student performance, but the intended changes in teaching and learning have still not been fully realized. When process instruction becomes the content of instruction, transfer is enhanced and learning becomes crystallized. This may come in the form of planning, monitoring and finally evaluating the content in a sequential mode of practice. In an interaction with the current transaction modalities of Malayalam Language curriculum at the secondary level, the investigator being a teacher educator in Malayalam Education felt that the prevailing classroom practices were not enough to cultivate a metacognitive classroom climate and thereby facilitate the growth of successful learning communities in both the classroom and across the school. The energetic experience involved in the teaching of Malayalam coupled with a proper

recognition of strategies provides the learner with ample opportunities for ensuring richness in language competence.

Hence, the investigator wanted to explore the effectiveness of metacognitive classroom practices in enriching the metacognitive awareness of students at the secondary level. Moreover, there is a paucity of literature on how metacognitive practices can be used for enhancing the academic outcome of Malayalam language learners at this level.

Review of Related Studies

Ahari et al. (2012) investigated the impact of metacognitive strategy training through the use of explicit strategy instruction on the development of lexical knowledge of EFL learners. Dul (2011) examined the effect of metacognitive strategies on achievement and retention in developing writing. Rahimi and Katal (2012) investigated metacognitive listening strategies awareness among Iraman University and high school students learning English as a foreign language. Clearly there is no dearth of studies that exploit the benefits of metacognitive strategies. However, there is no study on the interlinking of these strategies towards facilitating a self-directed approach in Malayalam language learning.

Getting to the hub of Malayalam Language Learning: An effective pedagogical practice that is designed to strengthen the skills and competencies required for the learning Malayalam language and literature will also provide learners with opportunities for exploration and exposure to new ideas. This in turn will spark their interest and motivation in learning the language. Expertise in handling Malayalam requires certain basic skills such as competency in communication, rich vocabulary and vibrancy in expression of ideas. In addition to that, a good language learner is an active decision maker in the learning process and a

creative generator of newly acquired information. Explicit and integrated strategy instruction illumines the thought and actions of the individual and verbalization of their experience triggers their learning which in turn makes them better performers in language learning.

Objective of the study

To assess the effectiveness of certain instructional strategies towards strengthening the metacognitive awareness of Malayalam language students at the secondary level, this study aims to understand:

1. To identify the prevailing modalities of classroom practices with respect to the development of metacognition at the secondary level.
2. To identify the metacognitive awareness of students selected for the study
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of select instructional strategies towards enhancing metacognitive awareness of students at the secondary level.

Hypotheses

1. The prevailing modalities of classroom practices are inadequate for developing metacognitive awareness among students at the secondary level.
2. The selected instructional strategies are helpful for strengthening the metacognitive awareness of students selected for the study.

Data

A total of one hundred and sixty five secondary school students from four schools across three districts of Kerala namely, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Kottayam were selected for the experimental and control groups.

Methodology

In the present study, a mixed method of research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis was used. A pre and post-test non-equivalent non-group design was selected for the study. An interview schedule, lesson designs based on metacognitive classroom practices and a metacognitive awareness rubric was used. In the first phase, a semi structured interview was conducted to gather responses from select school practitioners, language experts and teacher educators at various levels. An interview guide was created with a view to analyse the prevailing instructional practices of Malayalam language learning, and assess the improvement needed for creating an independent and autonomous learning climate in the classroom. The guide was prepared by analyzing the opinions and discussions with experts of Malayalam language education. The validity of the content was ensured by incorporating the comments and recommendations made by experts.

Most of the respondents (91%) supported the view that instruction and learning experiences require certain prerequisite skills on the part of the learner such as communication, analytical mindfulness, extended practice and the like. A handful of them (10%) opined that they were giving ample opportunities for learners to plan the content material by formulating strategies such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. A significant number (85%) stated that overcrowded classrooms and dearth of time are the main impediments that prevent teachers from becoming metacognitive instructional practitioners and structuring the task accordingly. From the interview, the investigator felt that a metacognitive classroom climate will help to create self-responsibility and a sense of ownership among learners. This result compelled the researcher to implement metacognitive classroom practices in the classroom set up.

In the second phase, the investigator prepared learning designs based on the metacognitive components and interlinked them with the routine classroom practices. These strategies included planning which emphasizes on articulating the learning task, 'monitoring' which deals with the conscious awareness about the topic and processes and 'evaluating' which helps in looking back at how the work has been done. The following section looks at these strategies in detail.

Planning: It is difficult for learners to become self-directed and independent when the procedures are planned by someone else. For nurturing a metacognitively oriented learning environment, there is an urgent need to make the learners the designers of their own learning through explicit guidance about the learning goals and to give them techniques to make the content unified and coherent. All of this is depicted in the 'Plan of Action Wheel' in figure 2.

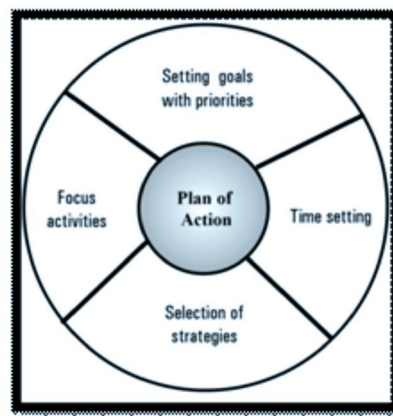


Figure.2. Plan of action wheel

Monitoring: Systematic monitoring is a part of self-regulation cycle that distinguishes novices from expert learners. The interactive classrooms provide ample opportunities and possibilities for the learners to engage in periodical recording and self-testing of their progress. Periodical assessments in the

form of monitoring questions in the worksheet act as a reminder about what is going on in the classrooms which really helps to open up the right path for learning. The focal points of the monitoring phase are given in figure 3.

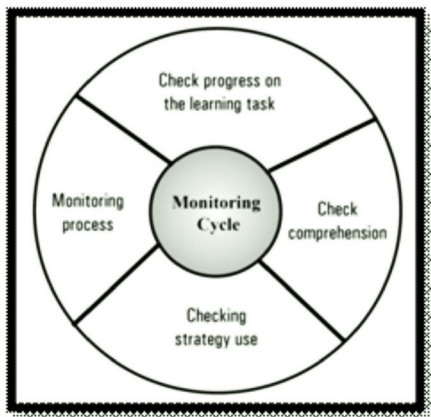


Figure 3. Monitoring cycle

Evaluation: Evaluation is more effective when it includes individual self-assessment and appraisal of the content material the learning processes. Self-assessment is an important devise in the tool kit of autonomous language learners and a mile stone in the ongoing process of reflection. The cognitive and metacognitive discussions and debriefing sessions allow the learner to expand the discussion on the practices they learn. The evaluation process is portrayed in figure 4 below.

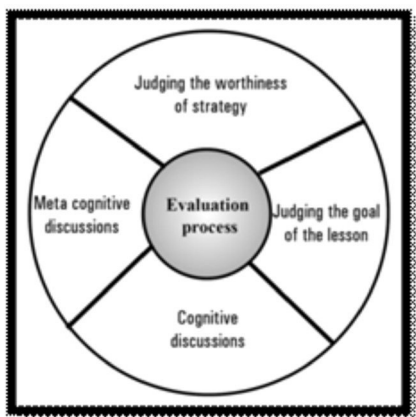


Figure 4. Evaluation process

Administration of Metacognitive Awareness Rubric

This rubric was developed in consonance with the phase specified by Deepka (2007) and Goodrich (1997). The authenticity of the rubric was checked in terms of clarity, comprehensiveness, utility and practicability of the selected components by a panel of experts from the field of language teaching. It was validated by eminent personalities in the field. The metacognitive awareness rubric was designed to assess the metacognitive awareness of secondary school students with regard to planning, monitoring and evaluation. It comprised of criterion levels such as 'Exceeds Expectations' (E.E), 'Meets Expectations' (M.E), 'Partially Meets Expectations' (P.M.E) and 'Doesn't Meet Expectations' (D.M.E). The pre-scores of students from both control and experimental groups revealed that none of them fell in the category, 'Exceed Expectation'. A negligible proportion of students from both control and experimental groups were in the 'Meets Expectations' category. The majority of the students (control: 89.66%, experimental: 86.66%) belonged to the 'Doesn't Meet Expectations' category. In the next phase, the classroom strategies were implemented following which the investigator assessed the performance of the students using the metacognitive awareness rubric. The following section deals with the change in the perceptions of students with regard to their metacognitive awareness.

Levels of performance	E.E		M.E		P.M.E		D.M.E	
	Contl.	Exptal	Contl.	Exptal	Contl.	Exptal	Contl.	Exptal
Planning	Nil	2	4	23	16	45	80	30
Monitoring	Nil	2	3	21	10	50	87	27
Evaluation	Nil	1	4	20	3	51	93	28
Average	Nil	1.66	3.66	21.33	9.66	48.66	86.66	28.33

Table.1. Post scores in the experimental and control groups on metacognitive awareness

It may be noted that there is no significant change in the performance of the learners in the control group. In the case of the experimental group, the levels of performance of the learners in the M.E.E.E and P.M.E categories increased considerably and that of the learners under D.M.E category decreased. Figure 5 represents the classification of students in both groups.

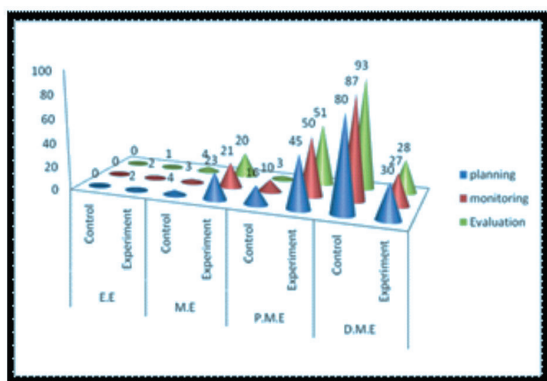


Figure 5: Classification of students in the experimental and control groups based on their post scores.

From the graphical representations it is clear that the students in the experimental group showed a remarkable change with regard to their metacognitive awareness.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that the instructional modalities that stemmed from metacognitive classroom practices could empower the learners to acquire the skills needed for self-directed learning and the dynamics around instructing students would offer a comfortable space for every learner to credibly improve in the process of learning. Awareness about metacognition created a feeling of relaxation in learning process that encouraged better retention of information by the learners. The study substantiated the fact that exposure to select metacognitive practices

sharpened the power of the learners and sparked their interest towards enhancing improvement and intellectual capacities of the learners. The findings of the present study have implications for learners, teachers, curriculum designers and textbook writers. Timely initiatives taken by the educational agencies with regard to the implementation of metacognitive practices will provide a valuable input for lasting success in the learning of Malayalam language.

The new trends in innovative practices and instructional designs need to focus on higher order forms of thinking which depict the process of learning rather than the product of learning. Developing a self-directive as well as a self-reflective behavior acts as the key contributor to such a type of learning. Even though the activity-oriented modes were being adopted in the school curriculum, there was no evidence of an increase in the confidence level of language learning. The mental steps or operations involved in each phase allowed the learners to regulate their efforts to attain the learning output.

It was hence concluded that the social experience and shared journey are influential architects and operators of the metacognitive instructional platform. The explicit training in metacognition gives opportunities to observe and interact with peers and to discuss the classroom practices with team mates and all of these create a fundamental rhythm in language learning.

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E-Learning: A Pedagogical Frontier or a Heterotopia?

Prem Kumari Srivastava

E-Learning: Defining it more...

Like any “‘new’ complex phenomenon”, (Carneiro and Nascimbeni, 2007, p. 2) e-Learning has been attracting a lot of interest from different stakeholders in the education sector. From postal tuition, part time-Learning, correspondence education to extra-mural studies, open and distance Learning was institutionalized in 1968 in UK.¹ Also known as blended learning or online e-Learning material/tutorials, it forms a part of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) of today. In India, it was started as a pilot project under CBSE and within three years had a success story to tell. Today, it has a decisive role in ‘Education for All’ and in the emerging ‘World of Knowledge Societies’.² Presently, a number of theoretical readings and attempts at analysis are primarily coming from the west.³ An informed critical apparatus in India is yet to take shape though Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) and others are making some serious attempts.⁴ The idea that inheres in most of them is that as an assistive technological tool for access and knowledge, e-Learning disavows the intimidation related to the persona of a live/physical teacher (in many cases) and re-centres a hegemony of the dominant discourse of rote and memory-based learning (Singh, 2010).⁵ Professor Roger McHaney⁶ calls it ‘the new digital shoreline’ with indigenous populations at its edges.

Much has been written about the language teacher and the pedagogical strategies used in

language classrooms. When conventional literature teacher becomes a de-motivated casual language teacher, it sure heralds doom for the students. Such teachers’ classroom lectures in literature are inspiring but the language classes are boring. In an attempt to help the really weak students pass exams, the language teacher supports rote-learning by setting familiar in-text questions, thus, causing great damage to the acquisition of the language. Because the evaluation is text-centric, attempts at innovation in classroom teaching are totally sacrificed. An analogy that has stayed ever since it was drawn⁷ is a cogent comment on the condition of language teaching:

*A teacher taught his student, the parrot, three languages. Once, his linguist friend visited him. In a show of pride, the teacher said that he would like his linguist friend to meet his student, the parrot whom he had taught three languages. When the linguist met the parrot, the parrot did not speak and remained silent. When asked, the teacher said, “I had told you that I had **taught** three languages. I did not say that the parrot had **learned** three languages!”*

So, the disconnect between teaching and learning needs to be bridged. Recently, in the wake of several online, technology-charged and media-rich Language learning courses made available on the internet and by many publishing houses, the language teacher is faced with another challenging task: to hone up their technological instinct and become computer

savvy! Technology offers a huge novel resource to teachers. Instead of being worried about its misuse, the teachers' time has come to 'rise and shine' and face the music which is indeed loud and clear. It is 'e' in nature!

How often have we witnessed classrooms where students have just walked out because the lecture was boring / ineffective or the teacher ill prepared or incompetent? Student absenteeism in the classroom across universities is common, but not always for the reason cited above. But in an e-Lesson, a student can actually skip a lesson if found boring and can write back to the facilitator, comment on his blog, or give a feedback. The hesitations that an Indian student faces to give feedback to a human teacher, might remain even in online feedback, the difference being that in an online feedback the student may not really know the evaluator. But the possibilities abound.

Heterogeneity, Self-paced Learning and Mutative Platform

Heterogeneous student composition and different proficiency levels of learner groups are a concern the world over. E-Learning provides customized learning with its inherent quality of preferred pace of learning. According to practitioners and e-content developers, it is very easy to update and change material depending on the needs of a particular course, class or student. For example, it is very easy to create several levels within the same topic, and attach quizzes at each level. The learner moves to the next higher level only after scoring satisfactorily in the attached quiz. Quizzes themselves can carry difficulty tags or tags that tell a student about the kind of learning that is being tested. This may range from simple reproduction of material learnt, or an application based on the materials or a higher order-thinking questions. The most important aspect is that the student can decide his or her own pace.⁸ In one of the

feedback sessions that were conducted at the English Language Learning workshop at the South Campus, University of Delhi, this became apparent. While approximately 40 students from the First Year undergraduate programme were looking at e-Lessons made on a qualifying language course that is taught to them at the undergraduate level, a noteworthy aspect of e-Learning emerged: self-paced learning. Two sets of student constituencies were noticed. One set of the students was more attentive learners in the actual face-to-face class and was distracted when engaged in e-lessons. Contrarily, some of the least expressive and quieter ones in the classroom were deeply engrossed in the e-Lessons. A conclusion that can be drawn is that the first set was so tuned-in to listening to a teacher in the classroom that self-learning for them was too new and a shocking experience to handle. They can be called the teacher/face to face communication dependant set. The other set was used to self-learning; each at their own pace as their face-to-face interaction in class with the teacher was very low. Thus, what emerged were unique and different learner groups for classroom learning and e-Learning.

For a Language Learner

For a language learner, this platform provides innovative pedagogical strategies like wiki-forums, keypals and shared 'talking books'. Rich in social learning content, one can even record and hear spoken stories. Also, e-Learning is not merely technology-aided learning/teaching as is mostly understood but it goes a step further in the sense that the 'e' could also be seen as Enhancing; Enjoyable; and Easily-accessible-learning⁹. The most significant contribution has come from the softwares like 'Moodle' that aids the e-Learning process because the learner can try and retry by the various options provided to them by this software. Within the ambit of

language skills, grammar exercises and its usage has received the greatest boost. A learner can attempt as many times, the same exercise (say in subject-verb agreement or prepositions) to improve the score.

Recently in the English language Proficiency Course at the University of Delhi, the use of e-learning was introduced. It was seen that in four sessions of one hour each, spread over two weeks, the students were made to attempt e-lessons only on prepositions. They were made to keep a record of their scores. They were instructed not to repeat the same exercise more than two times and also made to attempt at least 12-14 exercises. At the end of the fourth session, the students' score displayed a marked improvement. Above all, it was the excitement of using technology, the pictorial quality of the content and in some, the audio input that sustained their interest. Instant results were also the motivating factor. After all, in face-to-face learning, often a teacher takes time to correct the copies of 40-50 students and does it at her/his own pace. Students tend to lose interest.

Joining hands with e-Learning is SLM (self learning materials) an open learning paradigm often called a "teacher in print".¹⁰ As a teacher motivates, teaches and evaluates, so does an SLM. It can also diagnose learner weakness, offer remedial teaching and can also provide enrichment material to high achievers. In distance Learning, the idea of 'distance' actually weighs on the mind and 'learning' is associated with impersonal instruction; it is primarily postal learning.¹¹ Not really antipodal to distance-Learning, e-Learning provides ways in which it can simultaneously reduce the distance and bring the learner closer home in a collaborative e-Learning environment.

For Developers of e-Learning Courses

An attempt to give a practical shape to create an e-Learning course is given as an example.

1. Needs Analysis / Goals and Objectives

It is true that every learning and teaching emanates from a focused conduct of a needs analysis of the target audience. So, a questionnaire related to the students profile and expectations from such a course can be circulated. This helps in identifying the learning objectives of the course, which could be to equip learners with language in an interactive mode through a web-based e-Learning format.

2. Concept Note and Course Structure

A two-pronged concept and approach can be adopted. Often one comes across learners who wish to improve upon a particular language skill, for example hone up their speaking, grammar or vocabulary exclusively. For such learners separate lessons on the four language skills RWSL, grammar and vocabulary can be created. The other approach is the integrated-learning approach. This approach can make the course a stand alone course not based on any particular language skill or textbook but focused on components of language skills pitched at three levels: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. The next step would be to conceive a course structure, consisting of a number of units, lessons, activities and progress tests.

3. Identification of a Team

At the University of Delhi, the out-sourcing task of creating the on-line content (written material and audio-visual material), was done to its own teachers with the following basic prerequisites: ease with technology, open mindedness to content revision, creativity and imagination, a discipline towards delivery and honesty towards commitments. As a course coordinator, allow a lot of creative freedom to the team. This will result in multi-hued lessons under the broad uniform course structure. Let me illustrate this through some examples. One of the course

writers at Delhi University extensively used her own drawings and self-made graphics like “Mind maps” and “Language maze” as exercises. Before a warm up activity, she introduced a 5-minute “Think on your Own” activity. Similarly, another writer liberally used YouTube, audio-materials like recordings on mobile phones, conversations of the booking windows (movie, railway) to enhance listening skills, crosswords to improve vocabulary and word art (permissions sought) that captured the imagination of the students. In one of her innovative language exercises, she used an AV of the instructions of a flight attendant at a Kingfisher flight to teach an aspect of grammar and speaking skills. Yet another course writer creatively picked everyday situations from her teaching experience to exemplify her lessons. In one of her listening activities on pronunciation, she used the recordings of her own students’ pronunciation drill to teach stress and intonation patterns.

4. Choosing the Right Platform/Templates

Globally, many schools and universities use e-*Learning Management Systems (LMS)*¹² of one type or the other to present their e-courses on dedicated websites like MOODLE,¹³ many LMS are *open source*¹⁴ and are freely available for installation. This way, the content developers can visualize and adapt the written material, pictures, videos, audios, animations and quizzes to easily fit the LMS templates.

5. Issues of Copyright and Plagiarism

The need for meticulous referencing and acknowledgement of sources should be made clear to content developers before they begin. Generally ‘copyleft’ licensing like Creative Commons Licensing or GNU Licensing allows one to use and change or customize the material

provided there is acknowledgement of source and author. Permission must then be sought from the individual or institution.

6. Work-in-Progress/Feedback Workshops

Culturally, hesitation to give a ‘feedback’ is much implicit in the general ‘body politic’ of the young in India. Youngsters are brought up to respect older people and seniors, and ‘feedback’ is understood as unwarranted criticism. In the educational milieu, it is most unstructured and non-evaluative of the teacher’s pedagogy as also content. In the e-Learning mode, student feedback is possible and is an effective tool to augment the content too. Devise simple yet penetrating and anonymous feedback forms. So, e-Lessons indeed are like ‘unbaked earthen pots’ that become effective after they have undergone the dry fire of ‘field testing’.¹⁵ Though more and more language scholars today feel that maintaining anonymity in an online feedback is suspect.

7. Review

The next tier is an internal review by a senior scholar of the field. Once vetted, the material can be sent for an external review. Now the final copy can be submitted for uploading.

Thus far, I have been arguing that e-Learning is a kind of a cure-all or a sure step towards enhancing language skills. The question of it being a post-modern heterotopia (Srivastava and Kaushik, 2010, p. 2) is a traditional and conservative view of technology-challenged teachers. It looked untenable sometime back as there were many apprehensions related to technology and its accessibility but not today, particularly when two young engineers of this country have just designed laptops worth Rs. 5000 only!

Endnotes

- ¹ Lord Perry, a visionary and bold educator set up the Open University at Milton Keynes, which quickly became a world model. An instructional material that can be delivered on a CD ROM or DVD, on Local Area Network (LAN) or the Internet, e-Learning incorporates media-rich information peppered with multimedia forms of audio and video. Research has shown the several advantages that multimedia offers both in the classroom and in the ODL system (see Mayora, 2006)
- ² Dewal O S, "Sharpening the Saw: Developing Faculty Capability for Preparing Self Learning Materials" *Educomm Asia: A Quarterly of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia* Vol 14 no. 4 June (2009) p.6. (Inaugural Address at the 2nd SLM Development workshop organized by CEMCA and NOIS for the Assam State Open School, at the India International Centre at New Delhi on June 15th 2009)
- ³ A complete list is provided in the bibliography at the end. However the following are quite helpful. Tony Erben, Ruth Ban, Martha Castaneda (2008). *Teaching English Language Learners through Technology*, Routledge; Naidu Som. *A Guidebook of Principles, Procedures and Practices: E-Learning*. I ed. 2003, 2nd Rev ed 2006 CEMCA, New Delhi.
- ⁴ *Fortell* recently published the special issue no.19 on E-Learning in September 2010. It can be viewed at its website: www.fortell.org.
- ⁵ Singh S. (2010). "Virtual Learning Environment: Issues and Challenges in Higher Education Domain" *Fortell*, September. Issue 19 p. 12-15.
- ⁶ In the recently (March 7-10, 2011) concluded workshop on, 'Digital Distance Education' organized by Osmania University Hyderabad at the Centre for International Programmes, Professor Roger McHaney of Management Information Systems, Kansas State University gave new dimensions to this concept.
- ⁷ In February 2010, Professor Penny, conducted a workshop for teachers of English at the University of Delhi, on "Materials Production for Heterogeneous Classes". This analogy was drawn by Professor Rama Mathew of CIE, University of Delhi. Professor Penny Ur is a

well known author of ELT books and a teacher trainer at Oranim Academic College of Education, Israel.

- ⁸ Venkataraman, G. (2010). "E-Learning: From the Computer to the Classroom" *Fortell*, Sep. Issue 19, p. 6-8.
- ⁹ Srivastava P. K. and Kaushik R. (2010). "E-speak from the e-desk" *Fortell*, Sep. Issue 19, p. 2-3.
- ¹⁰ See the note on Dewal. p. 6.
- ¹¹ In the interview to *Fortell* in 2010 (refer note 1) Professor Malashri Lal spells out the difference between the two.
- ¹² Any LMS is seen as a framework or the underpinning within which e-material is presented. The freely available LMS can be customized to suit the needs of a particular institution, in terms of both appearance and content.
- ¹³ MOODLE is the acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, which was developed by a doctoral student from Australia. The Open University UK uses a customised MOODLE for its VLE. Many Universities world-wide use versions of MOODLE.
- ¹⁴ *Open source* is a term that is broadly used to describe software whose source code is made public for others to use and modify as long as the modified version is again freely available. This usually creates a large community of users that upgrade and fix the problems in the software and distribute it freely.
- ¹⁵ Refer note iii, p.6

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Call for Papers

Language and Language Teaching (LLT) is a peer-reviewed periodical. It is **not** an *ELT* periodical. It focuses on the theory and practice of language-teaching and English is only one of the languages one might consider. Since there are already many journals devoted to ELT, we particularly welcome articles dealing with other languages.

Papers are invited for the forthcoming issues. Please follow the Guidelines given in the current issue. The references must be complete in ALL respects, and must follow the APA style sheet. Papers may address any aspect of language or language-teaching. They **MUST** be written in a style that is easily accessible to school teachers, who are the primary target audience of this periodical. The articles may focus on the learner, teacher, materials, teacher training, learning environment, evaluation, or policy issues. Activities focusing on different languages are also invited. The article must be original and should not have been submitted for publication anywhere else. A statement to this effect must be sent along with the article.

No paper should exceed 2500 words including references and the bio-note of the contributor. The bio-note should not exceed 25 words.

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Interview

Mukul Priyadarshini (MP) talks to

Krishna Kumar (KK)

A noted historian and sociologist of education, Prof. Krishna Kumar teaches at the University of Delhi. Perhaps his most significant contribution has been to make education a serious issue of public discourse. His critical engagement with colonial interventions, local voices and modern ideas will leave a lasting impact on the shape of society we see in the times to come. As the Director of the National Council for Educational Research and Training during 2004-2010, he pioneered the development of one of the most impressive documents of modern Indian education system in the National Curriculum Framework, 2005.

MP: In the Indian context what are the issues and concerns involved in ‘language education’ and ‘language in education’?

KK: Language education has to do with what we do in the teaching of languages at different stages of a child’s education, and the other term that you have used—language in education—that is a larger term. It includes the role of language in shaping the teaching of different subjects in a school curriculum. So this second term includes the nagging questions typically faced by societies that have been colonized at some point—questions regarding the medium of teaching. What language shall we use for the education of different subjects—the education of sciences, social sciences, mathematics and so on. These two are very distinct spheres of policy making in countries such as ours. I say this because in the world that colonized others—that we might call today’s wealthier, so-called developed countries—these issues will not arise because their language education covers the territory of the second question as well. This is because the language that is most familiar to the child (and in many cases that is the language which is also used for political purposes and general communication in society) is also the language of education in all subjects; and distinctions are not made between sciences, arts, humanities and so on and so forth. So this is a very specific question,

about how our history of colonial exposure continues to shape the ways in which we think about aspects of education.

MP: I raised this question because the issue of language across the curriculum has yet to gain recognition among teachers. We still think of language as a subject in our language classroom and that has nothing to do with a science classroom or a mathematics classroom or a social science classroom.

KK: You see on this matter, as you know NCF 2005 floated a completely new idea as far as India is concerned. You have just used the phrase ‘language across the curriculum’. The idea of this particular phrase and its history is not very old. Even in the western world, the history of this phrase is barely three to four decades old, but in the context of India, its history is even more new. I think it should be seen as a very new phrase to be put into the mill of discourse; it will be a long way before ‘language across the curriculum’ idea will be seen as a worthwhile point of discussion in schools and policymaking circles; NCF has merely introduced it. This is because we have this very great commitment to the use of English as a medium of instruction in subjects where we feel that English is the language of mobility, and availability of material in English cannot be matched by availability of material in Indian languages. Therefore, how

can 'language across the curriculum' be adopted as an idea, because the teacher who teaches science is teaching it in a different language in a way, but in a more general sense, the idea still needs promotion? This is because although different languages are used for different parts of the curriculum we also need to look at what a language does in a child's life, in her cognitive life, in her way of using language to make sense of the world as well as her own experience of the world. If the science teacher is aware of the role of language in doing that, then I think the science teacher will become a better science teacher who will understand that even scientific terms have associations, have metaphors that are inbuilt; she will become aware that even in a physics or chemistry class, language has a developmental role and that without taking that role into account, science will be reduced to a set of technical terms to be crammed and utilized at given places. So the idea is worth promoting through discussions, trainings and publications etc., but it is a new idea that is going to take a long time since we have no tradition of discussing language related matters with people who are not teaching language in schools. And this is true of not just science and mathematics teachers but it is also true of humanities and social sciences. So there is a long way to go.

MP: 'Constructivism' as a term has been much in use in the past few years but it has been seldom practiced in classrooms. How would you visualize it and exemplify it in a primary and elementary language classroom?

KK: The current use of this term is unfortunately moving towards making it a slogan. In fact, constructivism represents a major psychological advance, which is not particularly new. It has been around at least since the 1960s. Basically, it explains how knowledge is formed in the human mind. The idea of using a constructivist perspective in teaching is to encourage children to participate in the

functioning of the classroom by bringing in their existing knowledge and experience into the interaction that takes place between the teacher and children, and children and children. Unfortunately, we are not yet used to the idea of letting children exercise their agency in the classroom. And hence, there is a tendency to treat constructivism as a term, to mystify it as if it is some kind of mantra. In some ways, it is a kind of mantra for a country that continues to adhere to very behaviourist practices in its education system. In a language class, the idea of using children's experience by means of talking, and by letting them write in ways where they articulate their thought processes permits them to communicate in ways that reduce self-consciousness. These ideas are obviously very central to making language classes come alive. Good teachers have always used such ideas without calling them constructivist. I think there may be some challenge involved in seeing how a textbook based pedagogy can also become constructivist, because as I said earlier in this interview, the textbook has become a kind of cultural code and teachers are made to feel hesitant to depart from the textbook. They don't see the textbook as a forum, or as a means by which ideas and images can be invoked, which would permit a much larger sphere of interaction to become manifest in the class. If the teachers could use a textbook in that manner, then the children's experiences, their perception, their memories, their arguments all of these will get a chance to be expressed through talk, through writing, and the ethos of the class will then permit such personal data to become collective data by means of attentive listening, and that is all that language is really about. Language is about constructing a social, shared universe with the help of personal data that we articulate by means of talking and writing. I think if this living universe of language is allowed to recreate itself in the classroom you could call it a constructivist classroom.

MP: In spite of a different perspective regarding early literacy that SCERT, Delhi books in 2004 and NCERT material post 2005 advocate, *qaayadas* (alphabet books) are being used to teach reading and writing.

KK: Now you are talking specifically about a subject and about a language. I can analyse teachers' discomfort or comfort in terms of the hold on their mind of a certain perception of what is Hindi as a language, and the hold of a particular tradition of what he/she might regard as the only way to teach Hindi. And *Rimjhim* challenges both of these—it challenges our received knowledge about what is Hindi and it also challenges the established pedagogy of Hindi. Perhaps this teacher was responding to those aspects. The question of *qaayada* is related to a particular tradition of introducing children to the alphabet. Now we are shifting our topic from learning of a language to learning or teaching how to read; and in the context of teaching how to read, the entrenched assumption is that this is impossible without first introducing children to the alphabet and making them cram it. Now this is a very old tradition that comes to us from an orally dominated understanding of what it means to be literate. The idea that each letter of an alphabet has to be sounded out correctly in an accepted or received fashion, that this sound has to be associated with the graphic design of each letter of the alphabet—this tradition goes back a few thousand years. If you are trying to challenge that tradition, it cannot happen with one textbook called *Rimjhim*. You need a very solid rain and not just *rimjhim* rain! To challenge that tradition, you require a vast programme of teacher training that would go into questions of what the alphabet contributes to a language. You will have to rake up a wide range of issues about how children learn to read in order to persuade teachers to see that the alphabet is actually not the heart of reading. In fact it is possible not to be a master of the alphabet and yet be a fluent

reader. So this debate is not really about *Rimjhim*, which is just one textbook that the NCERT produced. This debate is about a subset of the problem of the teaching of a language, and should be seen as such. Once again, I refuse to be dismayed by the fact that *Qaayada* is still selling. *Qaayada* represents a minimum of a 2.5 millennia old tradition. And we can't expect that tradition to go away in five years of the implementation of a document called NCF; it will take a much stronger, deeper effort and then it will take much longer. And in any case I am not sure we have any specific knowledge about how the teachers are actually using *Rimjhim* today after they have used *qaayada*. We don't know what kinds of interactions are taking place on that frontier of knowledge of the alphabet, and then introduction of *Rimjhim*. We need to know that because teachers do mix methods and approaches. If their goal is to make children literate, then teachers are very pragmatic and practical...and rightly so. Within the range of their own capacity and what they believe parents expect and what generally society expects, they are probably mixing a whole lot of things including this long held indigenous tradition of what it means to become a reader; the new ideas that books such as *Rimjhim* introduce with the help of poetry, and tactile and visual experiences; a lot of oral interaction in the classroom on children's own experiential life outside the classroom; and then cracking familiar kinds of settings with the help of texts which makes sense. The basic idea of *Rimjhim* is that all texts have some meaning for the child right from the beginning and I don't think this idea has been disliked even by those who are fond of *qaayada*.

MP: Schooling in our country is marked by a culture that silences children as soon as they enter schools. Often a chirpy and inquisitive child very soon learns to have control over her inquisitive and articulate nature. How is this culture of silence reflected and perpetuated by

the language of teacher - child interaction in the classroom?

KK: If you are calling it a culture that means it is a part of what is meant by the word *school*, what is meant by *education*, what is meant by *learning*. All of these cultural constructs that are embedded in the ethos of the school, I think, are responsible for what you are calling the culture of silence. The pedagogic culture in which this culture of silence is rooted is constructed in our system around the idea of the teacher being the person who delivers knowledge and the child being the receiver of knowledge, so it is this one way epistemic relationship that requires that the child be receptive, and by receptive is meant *silent* so that the child is able to pay full attention to what the teacher is saying. Now this kind of understanding of what knowledge is how it is learnt negates the way children think and the way they learn from each other; the way they talk, for example, enables a child to size up reality. Actually in chapter two of NCF 2005, many issues have been taken up which are about knowledge and learning. Once again, these ideas are anchored in cognitive psychology—what we call the cognitive revolution in psychology. Since our training programmes are by and large based on a behaviourist perspective, this chapter hasn't really gone very far in terms of wider appreciation even though behavioural changes in the teachers have been brought about to some extent. To some extent the system is showing awareness of this pedagogic culture that promotes the child's silence, but a deeper theoretical conviction in the teacher is needed if you want to totally break that culture and liberate the classroom from this culture of silence. Now that again, is a tall agenda especially when teacher training has yet to absorb all the ideas that are involved in child-centered learning—the kind of ideas which the 1986 policy of education was based on and what

later some documents have tried to further open up. But I think if you look at the extent to which the primary grades today allow children to speak, it is a considerable movement. And I think it is spreading at higher levels as well. There is hardly reason to feel very despondent about it.

MP: We know a teacher is the agent of change. Her intellectual liberation and pedagogic empowerment is necessary for her to think and take independent decisions in matters of pedagogy, assessment etc. and not feel constrained to follow uniformly what she has been directed to do by the higher authorities. What can be done in this regard?

KK: First of all we need to recognize that we have seriously undermined the position of teachers. In fact your question sounds so romantic in terms of where we are today. We are in a much worse situation than we were even ten years ago in most parts of India, certainly most parts of northern India. But even in southern India, where teachers have suffered less in terms of loss of salary and in terms of status, a larger professional undermining of teachers has taken place. So the question of pedagogic empowerment doesn't arise. I think the primary issue is of healing the teacher after the injuries that the profession has suffered during the neo-liberal period of the last ten to fifteen years. We need to accept how significant and serious these injuries are that the profession has suffered. How to heal the profession has to be the first step, and once we manage to come to some consensus in that respect then perhaps we [can] talk about empowerment. One of the areas of healing has to be in teachers' training, which is an area that to begin with was very weakly defined and very tenuous. Even that weak definition has now weakened further. So today the sphere of teacher training looks much poorer than it was in the 1960s even as the system is looking for a far greater number of trained teachers than it

has ever before. Our national capacity to produce teachers through a credible teacher training programme stands seriously defeated and much more vulnerable to the vagaries of the market. Eighty percent of our teacher training institutions are in the private sector, and that too not in the organized private sector; they are in the unorganized private sector in the sense that those who are running these institutes are not serious industrialists or businessmen who are investing in education. They are using teacher training as a means to make some extra money and that's really one of the worst of all possible worlds. You have first of all allowed the State's role in this sector to be nibbled away, and secondly you have not even made the sector capable of attracting serious private investment. I think in this respect also the profession of teaching will have to be first assessed in terms of how much injury it has received during the recent new economic era.

MP: A few years back English as a subject was introduced in class I in the Government schools of many states. Now in Delhi, new English medium sections have been added in the primary sections of state owned schools. What is your opinion on these moves of the government?

KK: These moves are clearly very political and pathetic. They are meant to appease the poor who form the largest proportion of those attending government schools now, to feel as if their children will have more equal opportunity in the market by getting exposure to English in Grade I. Again it is a kind of romantic manipulation of the market that the Indian State is indulging in because the introduction of English as a subject is not going to overcome the gaps between English medium schools and government schools. It is not going to overcome the very serious backlog of attention to teacher training nor is it going to overcome the very significant problems of providing children with a very rich linguistic environment. All of these

issues are not going to get resolved by that one period of English.

MP: Do you think there is a general decline in the discursive abilities of students? If yes, what would you attribute it to?

KK: Well, it is certainly a situation that needs to be inquired into by systematic research. In the absence of research what I will say will look like the observations of a teacher. Having said that, I have noted that the ease and the flexibility of students with English who used to come for our Bachelor of Education course or Master of Education course ten to fifteen years ago is not as evident in the students who are coming now. Today's classes are far more sharply divided between English medium and Hindi medium students, but this division also is not really reflective of what actually happens. The students' ability to use either language with ease and confidence is manifestly less evident. If this is what we mean by general discursive abilities, then I would say yes, there is a decline. What are the causes of this decline? I think only a wide-ranging research exercise can bring out some answers to this question. Personally I would have thought there are many reasons including the issues that have to do with the effort put in by teachers, and the security and confidence with which teachers work in today's environment. I think the decline in the teachers' own confidence and status in society has to do with the manner in which the process of learning is more and more restrictively defined as a preparation for reproducing in examinations what has been taught in the class. There is also the issue of the arbitrary use of communication technology as a substitute for learning over a period of time from different kinds of sources, and using language to make sense of what is learnt from these different sources. I think in our third world kind of setting, educational technology, and particularly communication technology has developed a kind of toy value

more than any educational value, and that has distorted both its potential and the goal of teaching at the level at which I teach. But these are all speculative responses.

MP: It is well proven by research that there is merit in introducing mother tongue or neighbourhood language as the medium of education in elementary schools. What in your opinion should be the medium of instruction in higher education—Hindi and other Indian languages or English, or both?

KK: A language is a repertoire of so many means by which learning is defined. Such a repertoire can only be developed in a language that is used by the largest number of people performing different roles in a society. That repertoire cannot be available in a language that is spoken by a limited number of people. And that is really what this question is at a deeper level. There needs to be no distinction at the deeper level between the language of maximized learning opportunities during childhood and the language of maximized learning opportunities during youth. The arguments for the two cannot be different except in an instrumentalist sense, which unfortunately we have made the only sense in a typical third world kind of post-colonial setting. Since we have a very instrumentalist view of higher education rather than a developmental view in the intellectual or psychological sense, we think that children should be allowed to transit to English language later on. I think these are problems of managing translation rather than conceptually authentic concepts/ideas.

MP: This is really a daunting task.

KK: I don't find it particularly daunting. The question is whether we accept that this task is worth attempting and whether we then achieve the platform and the institutional spaces where the task is taken up for deployment of both financial expenditure and academic or professional energy. If that consensus is

achieved then the task wouldn't look as daunting; it's a highly doable task and is well worth doing. The question is of accepting its importance and then deploying resources both intellectual and financial to see to it that it gets done.

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Landmarks

Harold Palmer

M.L. Tickoo

Harold E. Palmer (1877-1949), was a London-born early twentieth century linguist, phonetician, language educator, and author of over a hundred books, research papers and monographs. A school dropout, he started work as a learner-teacher at a school in Verviers, Belgium where he taught and experimented with teaching methods, and learnt several languages, both living and artificial.

A chance meeting with phonetician Daniel Jones on board a ship led to an invitation to teach phonetics at University College (UC) London. Palmer worked with Daniel Jones on several lesser-known languages, their grammars and methods of teaching. Jones was greatly impressed by Palmer's research on grammars and on the how of teaching languages.

Palmer's first published paper on language and how to teach it was entitled "Some Principles of Language Study", and came out in *Modern Language Teaching* in 1916. A critical study of this paper shows his exceptionally sharp eye for the hidden potential of long-forgotten ideas and a remarkable ability to transform such ideas for rich and rewarding use in language pedagogy. Several seminal ideas from the paper, and some of his other well-received publications, had their origins in the writings of an employee of the East India Company—Thomas Prendergast. In his two-volume *Mastery Method* (1864), Prendergast averred, "Sentences have within them a principle of vitality, (=generative potential) an inherent power of expressing many different ideas by giving birth to new sentences"

(p. 19). Prendergast's ideas on high frequency 'vocabulary islands', the importance of sounds as opposed to letters, and preference for the language of everyday use, also found a place in Palmer's work.

Years before Palmer, Prendergast knew the potential value of his ideas. However, he failed to exploit that potential in language teaching/learning mainly because of the restrictions he had placed on how best the learner should learn to master each type of sentence. Palmer transformed Prendergast's idea, produced his 'Substitution Method' and to show its use in formal teaching/learning, added to it his carefully worked-out plan on controlled and graduated progression of essential sentence types. The same year he brought out two practice manuals *Colloquial English* and *Colloquial French* (1916 a, b), for teachers in English and French classrooms. The 'Substitution Method', which Palmer conceived and was the first to explain the use of in planned 'substitution tables', has served several generations of language teaching practitioners.

Alongside his research with Jones and teaching at two colleges of London University, Palmer also published books on language and its acquisition. Several of those publications gained prominence at the time and over the years to come. Three of them are still referred to by applied linguists, language-teacher educators and students of English intonation. They are: 1) *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (1917), the first book that sought to

give language study a scientific base and design an 'ideal' curriculum and methodology built on it, 2) *The Principles of Language Teaching* (1921), which took forward the 'ideal' curriculum into a very meticulously explained practicable scheme of language teaching with a well-marked progression in neatly arranged stages, and 3) *English Intonation with Systematic Exercises* (1922), the first ever book on the English Intonation system.

In 1922, Palmer was offered a job as Linguistic Advisor to the Japanese Ministry of Education. Soon after assuming charge, he established a new institution and a new journal: 1) He headed the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET) from the beginning and used it to enable ELT practitioners to participate in its activities and 2) its journal, *The Bulletin of the Institute for Research in English Teaching (BIRET)*, which he edited for twelve years, ten times a year. The first research journal in the world of ELT, the *BIRET* served as a forum for research-supported and experience-driven answers to questions on language and its teaching/learning. These two endeavours marked Palmer's avowed commitment to research-based answers to issues of value in the study of English language, its teaching and learning. A rank outsider given his lack of minimum essential qualifications and training, Palmer was in fact the first outstanding ELT practitioner to give himself wholeheartedly to research-supported answers. Of particular interest to students of ELT should be the fact that the first ELT journal started in London by A. S. Horn by in 1946 was modelled on *BIRET*.

Palmer worked not just in the role of a leading thinker and the most outstanding practitioner of reform in ELT curriculum, methodology and materials, but also made a number of original contributions to major aspects of applied linguistic scholarship. His main contributions include the following:

On 10 December 1923, he presented a Memorandum with his views on language and its teaching, through which he achieved two things. In it, he presented for the first time ever a well-argued psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition. More, significantly, Palmer worked out the practical applications of this theory for the design and development of instructional materials and classroom teaching, its basic principles, and essential procedures. Despite the fact that this memorandum still remains an almost closed book in the world of ELT outside Japan, it was unique in the way Palmer related theory to the how and what of TEFL. A work of exceptional influence, it laid the foundations of a well-argued psycholinguistic theory and was even translated to serve the needs of a principled linguistic pedagogy.

Long experience of working with local teachers in local contexts of teaching in the Orient made Palmer aware of a significant fact—that whereas most of the work done by his predecessors and contemporaries was meant to be used to improve the quality of ELT in Japanese and other similarly placed classrooms, it appeared to rest on a major misunderstanding that English overseas was taught by native speakers who being born to it, had very few problems in its teaching. The truth however was that a) most English teaching in these schools was done by non-native teachers of English who needed to learn not only the language but also the how of its teaching and b) not everyone who uses English as their mother tongue is qualified to teach it to speakers of other languages. This was something that most native English speakers of the time and even those of our time seem to be unaware of. This awareness necessitated the preparation of new sets of materials for different objectives, aimed at teachers of English in Japanese Middle-Grade schools. The principles that governed the design of those new materials, including a few complete courses,

were explained in several reform-focused articles Palmer brought out during this period.

During his last years in Japan, Palmer continued to work towards his commitment to Japanese ELT. He encouraged and enabled Japanese-speaking teachers to appropriate the reformed methods of teaching associated with the IRET, Tokyo, with or without additions and adaptations. It is noteworthy that in a few cases, Palmer's efforts were successful in spreading the reform by helping the practitioners take ownership of the reform for successful dissemination. Palmer also became one of few pioneers in the fast growing ES(F)L world to collectively contribute to the movement for the reform of ELT at a time when English had begun to assume the role of a world language. He made outstanding contributions to the movement for vocabulary selection, distribution and control which resulted in *A General Service List of English Words* (1953).

Palmer also made sizeable contributions of great value to three aspects of English language—its grammar, vocabulary and sound and intonation system. A brief word on each follows.

Grammar

Palmer's books on English grammar show his great ability to work at several levels and towards several different aims. His first book *A Grammar of Spoken English on a Strictly Phonetic Basis* (1924), was the first ever book on English grammar with educated everyday speech as its aim. In the absence of any ready-to-use corpus of spoken English, Palmer made a systematic record of his own speech as a speaker of the language over several years which formed the sole corpus for this well-received first-ever book on the grammar of English speech.

Palmer produced two books of grammar for EFL classroom teaching. The first was entitled *A*

Grammar of English Words (GEW); that individual words have their own grammars may be seen as a contradiction since pedagogic grammar normally deals with rules of a language and their exceptions. However, Palmer's *GEWs* welled in his long exploration of problems faced by foreign learners in gaining mastery over English. The *GEW*, as also Palmer's articles (on the anomalous finites, count and un-count nouns, etc.),—once again the first of their kind—along with his work on verb patterns of English, stand out as highly valued additions for both teacher and learner in mastering the language. The *GEW* also served as a model for the *Advanced Learners' Dictionary (ALD)*, which has since grown into an unparalleled source of support for advanced learners and teachers of English.

Palmer's second book on English grammar for learners and teachers, *The New Method Grammar*, was unique both in its conception and execution. Through this book, he attempted to show how the sentences of English were comparable with the network of railway lines which made up a railway system. Palmer believed in pattern grammar with such dedication that he not only made it into a book for EFL teachers and learners, but he also built it in brick and mortar in his country house in Felbridge, Sussex, England. Of it he wrote:

Possibly those who will admire the miniature scenery will stop to examine the layout of the miniature railway, and by so doing will see how a complicated subject may be made easy by dint of showing it as it is. (*BIRET*, vol.134, May 1937, p.16)

Palmer thus made remarkably valuable contributions at different levels to the grammar of English and its teaching and learning.

Vocabulary

The study of selection, distribution and usage of vocabulary were paramount in Palmer's work

ever since he began work as a learner-teacher at the beginning of the century. He put together vocabulary lists from as few as 100-500 words, to as large as 3000 words. From 1904, he engaged with English vocabulary as both an enjoyable hobby as well as a significant part of his professional life. His contributions to vocabulary include: a) his work on defining the word 'word' and studying both what he designated as 'less than a word' and also the various combinations of words, b) writing books—singly and with others—using the minimum essential words and explaining the nature of problems and support mechanisms required in doing so, c) over the years identifying the factors that required attention in making lists for language teaching for different users and differing purposes, d) putting together the first ever classified lists of English collocations whose nature and uses he was also the first to make known, e) discussing the factors other than frequency, needed to put together the smallest and yet the most productive lists of words, and contributing to the ideas that governed the making of the *General Service List of English Words* which continues to add value among both ELT practitioners and lexicologists.

Phonetics

Palmer believed in phonetics with a commitment that at times came close to fanaticism. He wrote books and articles on a vast array of themes related to pronunciation, its study and teaching/learning. Apart from his belief in RP as the best model for learners, he firmly believed that phonetic transcription and teaching language as speech came first and had to form part of initial lessons in learning a language whatever the aim or circumstances of learning might be. Palmer stood by this theory in the case of his daughter, who he compelled to learn English through reading materials produced using phonetic

transcription. He did not allow her to make use of books written in traditional orthography.

Although Palmer's first book on English intonation (1922), the first ever on the subject, received high praise, he later gave it up in favour of a system which was based on drawings to serve as mnemonics (1933). Palmer wanted to make the English intonation system easily accessible to both the school teacher and the foreign learner. In fact the main objective of most of his work on phonetics was to provide reliable support to foreign language teachers. To this end, he worked hard and long, producing books and learning materials at various levels and for differing objectives. His love of phonetics was reflected even outside the language classroom. On several occasions in Tokyo as also in London, he changed the words in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta ending thus, "My mission, my ambition is to be the living model for the perfect phonetician" (Anderson, 1971, p.219-220).

In 1930, Palmer published his book, *The Principles of Romanization with Special Reference to the Romanization of Japanese*. Soon afterwards, the Imperial University of Japan in Tokyo conferred on him a doctorate degree for his books on spoken English, intonation and Romanization.

Despite having made a number of first-ever contributions to both language and its acquisition that covered a remarkable range and inclusiveness, and for being perhaps the first applied linguist to bring scientific scholarship to language teaching and learning, Palmer did not receive recognition among academics in his home country. ELT practitioners across the world, however, saw value in his work, as did several US-based scholars and practitioners. In recent times, Palmer has gained somewhat fuller recognition. In 2005, for example, Richard Smith

at Warwick University, England acknowledged part of the debt British ELT owes Palmer:

The main methodological roots of post-war ELT lie not in British experience in Asia and Africa, nor within the (at that time very limited) UK-based teaching operation, nor in any confident application of linguistics comparable to that which occurred during and after World War II in the U.S.A, but instead in work carried out before the war in Japan (p. xvii).

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*For a more comprehensive list see Tickoo, 2008.

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Book Reviews

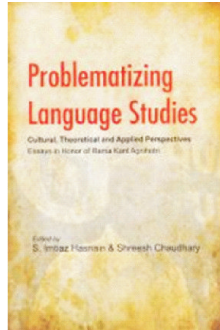
Problematizing Language Studies

Edited by Imtiaz Hasnain
and Shreesh Chaudhary
(2010)

Delhi: Aakar Books

ISBN 978-93-5002-084-5,
pp.601

Reviewed by: *Vandana Puri*



Problematizing Language Studies is an edited volume that consists of thirty-six essays written in honour of Professor Rama Kant Agnihotri. Language is a multi-dimensional field of study: from the politics of language, to the histories of the individuals and societies that speak them, to the theories of how language manifests itself at the sentence, sound, word and meaning level, to the application of language in teaching and language planning. This book brings forth all these diverse perspectives on the nature of language in the context of Indian linguistics and language studies worldwide. The papers in the book have been broadly categorized under three headings: cultural (form and use of language), theoretical (theory of grammar, syntax, morphology, phonetics and phonology) and applied (language pedagogy, language planning and data bases, etc.). All the themes in this book are topics that Professor Rama Kant Agnihotri has been involved with in one way or another.

The oriental linguists were very involved in understanding the Indian languages. The first two essays of this volume are concerned with the British colonial endeavors to understand the linguistic dynamics of the region. Franklin discusses the fascination of the orientalist with Hindu-Islamic art and the linguistic heritage of India; Dudney writes about the colonial views

on Indian vernacular languages, especially Braj Bâhâ. Some other papers look at language and identity issues; Rahman talks about Urdu being the language of the Muslim political identity or/and of love and erotica. Similarly, both McCormick and Bhatt look at the use of language in media and identity issues. Chaudharay and Kidwai's papers expose two different approaches towards the question of Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani being a continuum or (culturally) distinct languages. Varma and Bhattacharya and Basantarani raise concerns about the possibility of the local languages dying and about minority language rights, and plead for more support for these languages. Hasnain and Patnaik examine 'context' based analysis.

This book also provides the reader with linguistic descriptions and analyses at the morphological, syntactic, semantic and phonological level. Rangila, in his paper, looks at verbs in Jenu Kuruba. Rajendra Singh argues that the notion of 'morphological complexity' be expunged for simple concepts such as 'length' (or 'weight'). Dasgupta discusses the long vowel problem in Hindi. Fery argues that most Indian languages should be categorized as 'phrase languages' in terms of intonation. Fanselow explores German nominal compounds to see if there is only one mechanism that generates recursive structures or more. Kumar suggests that Hindi infinitives should be called a mixed category. Raina discusses compositional aspects of semantic restructuring in complex predicates.

Some of the essays in this book are theoretical in nature. Pandey talks about a certain way of reasoning as the main historical truth underlying the leading theories of today. Shailendra Singh suggests that Indian linguistics can be taken to new heights and can be 'destination next'. Udaya Narayan Singh raises concerns about the

future of literacy and education in plural settings, and argues that much needs to be done to bring the opportunities of the democratic world to India. He also suggests that we need to inspire people and not just impart knowledge. Ahmad discusses the notions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ as complex concepts in research, and asserts that social identities and boundaries change according to the context. Narang and Cha present an empirical study to explore whether there is a difference in the processes of acquisition of a second language and a foreign language.

A recurrent theme of this book is the history, impact and linguistic features of English in India. Montaut explores whether English can be the language that gives India an equal footing in the world culture and create an internal dialogue between Indian cultures. Kak looks at the Kashmiri-English contact situation and observes that there is a progressive phonological assimilation towards English, especially in the younger generation. Hosali looks at the lexico-semantic features in current day Butler English, which she considers to be an unstable pidgin, and compares it to other pidgins and creoles. Bhat provides an overview of the history of English in India, from the missionaries to the introduction of English in the educational institutions in the colonial era, to the present day English in India—the symbol of prestige, modernity and upward mobility. Gupta and Gurtu explore the different kinds of lexical phrases used by educated second language users of English in Delhi in their writing, and assess how correctly and appropriately these phrases are used.

The next set of papers are about language pedagogy, and would be of special interest to school teachers. Some instructors believe in using the learner’s L1 as a medium of instruction for teaching a language and others believe in using the L2 only. In his paper, Khanna presents

both sides of the picture and shows how both these views are supported by various convictions and limitations from both the instructor’s and learner’s viewpoint. Second language teaching has undergone an enormous change all over the world; however, teaching Indian languages abroad still has a long way to go. Nihalani’s paper is about comprehensibility, intelligibility and interpretability in the global context, and suggests pragmatic approaches towards language teaching. These include exposure to different varieties of pronunciation, fundamentals of general phonetics and the importance of supra-segmental features in learning a language. Koul presents various aspects, difficulties, limitations and suggestions for teaching Indian languages such as Hindi or Urdu in foreign countries. He further discusses various aspects of teaching that might be useful for teachers of Indian languages in India and abroad; these include texts, supplementary material (including audio-visual, online material, etc.), evaluation, teaching literature, translation and culture, problems in translation and translation tools, etc. Mathew’s paper is very insightful for primary school teachers in English medium schools who wish to explore different ways of teaching English to young children. Through his paper, Mathew sheds light on how teachers need to be trained in teaching English to young children, the need for using English for teaching at least one subject such as science or math, and the need to value and utilize the knowledge, culture and language that the child brings to the classroom. Prahlad, in his paper, discusses various issues relevant to English language curriculum renewal at the tertiary level in the context of globalization. Mohanty explains that in spite of being motivated, it is hard for learners to acquire English because the text books do not adhere to the major criteria of learnability in terms of vocabulary. He asserts that it is important to adhere to these criteria when learners are exposed to English for the

first time; otherwise it leads to poor learning. Aslam's essay is about the 'Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT) method of language teaching and its implementation in large class sizes. CLT draws on many language teaching methods where the teacher is a facilitator of uninterrupted and un-interfered use of language through games, role play, cue cards, activities, etc.

All in all, *Problematizing Language Studies* is a very interesting assemblage of ideas about language and pedagogy. The pluralistic and multidimensional nature of language in society is reflected in the various themes of this book. It represents most of the current themes in Indian linguistics, and is a reflection of the rapid social change, diversity, multilingualism and plural cultural ethos that India embodies.

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Real Writing

by Graham Palmer,
Roger Gower and
Simon Haines (2008)

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Reviewed by: *Saloni Jain*

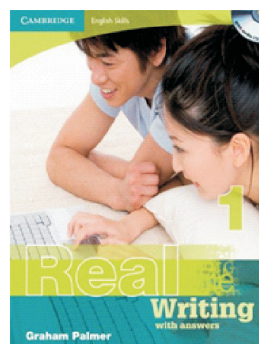
Real writing is multi-level course in writing for young or adult learners to learn day-to-day writing one would need to do when visiting or living in an English-speaking country. It

integrates reading, writing and listening in a way that learner's autonomy while learning to write remains a prime focus. The purpose of the book is to enhance the confidence of the learners and help them embrace different styles of writing.

The volume consists of four books ranging from elementary level to advanced level. Each book has sixteen units and is divided into two sections catering to formal and informal form of writing. Units 1-5 focus on social and travel situations whereas units 6-16 focus on work and study situations. Book 1 is an elementary level book of writing with simple gap filling writing or shortened messages. Book 2 is pre-intermediate level, a level for those who already have some knowledge of writing and takes them to the next level by introducing them to higher level tasks such as making presentations and process description. Book 3 is for upper intermediate level learners and book 4 is for advanced level learners; for those who want to have enough proficiency to interact in a competitive work environment.

From many books available, this shines a different light by providing a sorted layout which is not simplistic. Every unit, first introduces the topic, gives all the relevant information that a learner needs to work on along with practice questions and self-assessment checklist. The book also introduces the learner to new cultures while simultaneously increasing his/ her knowledge.

The variety of exercises given presents different ways of writing through brain storming exercises to practice exercises. Exercises in each unit are helpful for the learner to develop useful skills such as planning, organizing and checking the work. Every unit begins with 'Get ready to write', a pre-writing exercise which introduces the reader to the theme of the unit. This is followed by simple exercises to render scope of learning the conventions of writing and basic



vocabulary to complete the task. Planning exercises, writing exercises, check your work exercises, learning tip, class bonus that is group and peer work, extra questions and can-do checklist are found further in the book. This, supported by a colourful layout and pictures to enhance comprehension, provides clarity of presentation and organization.

The exercises are content based and are based on the principles of critical thinking allowing them to be friendly for the learner. Utmost care is taken to save the learner from spelling errors and inaccurate structures. Giving a closer glance, it would not be incorrect to say that these exercises view writing as an act of interactive process which takes place between the writer and the reader.

The text is well written, resourceful, stimulating and well organized. The simplicity of the language used adds to the interest level of the students as it is easy to understand.

Apart from the exercises, the book also has appendices, answer key, audio script and a CD thereby assuring that the reader finds everything required for self-study.

Although, the series seems to have covered all the areas of practical writing that is, from form filling to interpreting statistics there is repetition of activities and a general lack of grammar focused exercises for linguistic accuracy. Yet, in many ways, the book is able to accomplish its objectives and is a guiding tool for someone looking to learn how to write in English.

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Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students

by Bailey, Stephen
(2010)

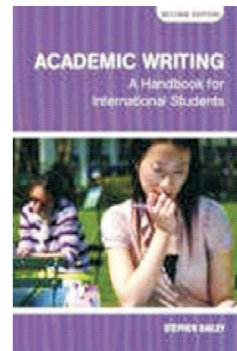
[Second Edition]

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Reviewed by: *Rajesh Kumar*



Bailey's handbook for academic writing is an exemplary source of help for international students in academic programs. Stephen Bailey, a trained professional with a long time teaching and research experience, has put this book together to help academic writings such as term papers, project reports, and dissertations for students who do not speak English with native competence. It is evident from the initial pages of the book that it primarily addresses international students in Europe and North America. However, it is claimed that this book will be helpful for any students who require help with serious academic writing in English in any part of the world. The issue discussed in this book and components of it can be helpful to native speakers as well. Writing is an essential component of every course. Effective and relevant writing for an academic course becomes a matter of concern for any student in general and international students in particular in any academic program. Recognizing the requirement of all academic programs in English, *Academic Writing* presents a handy solution.

This book is broadly divided into four parts. The first two parts i.e. the first half of the book focuses on preliminary issues in writing, whereas, part 3 and part 4 (the second half) takes students into minute details of writing such as revision and references along with examples.

Four parts of this book are organized in sixty one units dealing with practical and common difficulties. Each of these units is focused around a significant aspect of writing and is equipped with exercises and answer key. This book explains each aspect of writing from conceptualization to copy editing and proof reading. It describes how paraphrasing, indexing, and referencing are required components of academic writing. Twenty-three out of sixty-one units focus on accuracy in writing. The book progresses in a very organized manner. In the three broad areas in the first part, it draws attention to the foundations of writing. It talks about plagiarism and how to avoid it in a comprehensive way. Issues around plagiarism is an important part of academic writing and sensitizing students about them has been taken up in a very serious manner in this book. In the same section, it provides help in reading materials around the goal of a particular write-up. Taking notes and paraphrasing are important stages for getting ready to prepare for a particular format. This is made clear in a categorical way in this section. Making effective and meaningful notes and sound paraphrasing are keys to any impressive writing. Notes help in organizing a write-up whereas paraphrasing helps in making adequate change in the text while retaining the main points. It moves on to stages of writings such as planning, content in the main body, introduction and conclusions with a serious advice to proof-reading and re-writing parts necessary. The next part this book focuses on components that are abstract in nature. It talks about beginning an essay with defining a key term in the title, making generalizations about the topic, giving examples in the main area of examination, citing quotations, referencing, and being careful in style. The book deals with accuracy in the third part. Accuracy gives an edge to the essay. This section navigates students through substantial and crucial examples of possible areas where non-native

speakers may make mistakes. It emphasizes that a bit of careful attention can help avoid making an essay look trivial. Finally, it focuses on proof-reading a write-up; careful proof-reading removes most of the errors. The last part of the book shows all the suggestions made in the three sections with examples and samples of various kinds of writings.

This book should be acceptable to any course/program irrespective of their nature and duration of short and long terms for maximizing edge in writing and a careful understanding of how to write well.

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Suggested Readings

700 Classroom Activities: Instant lessons for busy teachers

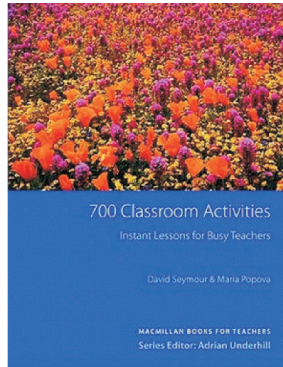
By David Seymour & Maria Popova

Macmillan Books for Teachers, Oxford

First published: 2003

Current edition: 2005

ISBN: 978-1-4050-8001-9



As the title suggests, this book consists of 700 activities for busy EFL and ESOL elementary and upper-intermediate teachers. It is an important tool for teachers who wish to make teaching English fun and engaging. The activities suggested in the book are intended to provide on-the-spot practice as part of the lesson plan, as supplementary material or when a change of focus is needed. Most of the activities do not require any preparation.

The book has been divided into four sections: conversation, function, grammar and vocabulary. There can be more than one activity in each section. Within the sections, the activities are organized alphabetically. The topics have been listed in the index at the back of the book. The timing of the activities can be decided by the teacher based on the size of the class and the aptitude and enthusiasm of the students. Some of the activities are in the form of projects that can be done by the students outside the classroom and may require research on the internet. In most cases, teachers are encouraged to write the title of the activity on the board in order to steer the conversation

towards the activity. The level of difficulty of the activity is marked next to the activity heading. Seymour and Popova suggest that grading be more restricted for grammar; for activities related to conversation topics, grading can be more class and level specific. It is interesting to note that topics that maybe sensitive or embarrassing for children have a danger sign next to them so that teachers can take the decision about using the activity with caution.

The activities are divided into four main categories:

- The teacher prompts students with questions, key words or phrases
- Cues are written on the board
- Activities are used by means of short dictations or through the allocation of roles
- An individual student prepares for an activity outside of the classroom and presents it in class.

Most activities have different parts to them that need to be done in pairs, groups or as an open class activity. These activities engage the students in different kinds of skills. Seymour and Popova suggest that team games are an integral part of many activities; such games encourage friendly competitiveness and increase the emotional involvement of the student in the class.

This book is an important tool for teachers looking to go beyond the planned course material in a bid to get their students involved in learning. The activities are innovative and engaging and seem to enhance learning English. Teachers can modify some of these activities as required to teach other languages as well.

Developing Materials for Language Teaching

Edited by Brian Tomlinson

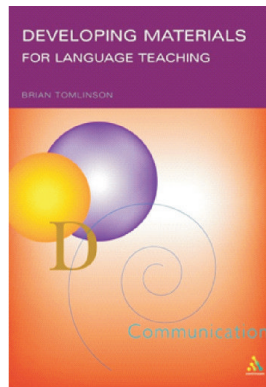
Bloomsbury, London

First published : 2003

Current edition: 2013

ISBN: HB: 978-0-8264-5918-3

PB: 978-0-8264-5917-6



There are many books that have raised important issues in the field of material development for language learning. However, this book is different from the others because not only does it provide a comprehensive coverage of the main aspects and issues in the domain of material development in language studies, but it also covers current developments in the subject through the eyes of developers and users of material throughout the world. Also, in addition to English, this book examines material development for language teaching from the perspective of other languages such as Spanish, Italian and Japanese. The authors of this book are both native and non-native speakers of English. They are from eleven different countries, speak different languages, have experience as teachers of a second or foreign language, have contributed to the development of L2 materials and have kept in touch with current trends in Linguistics.

This book deals with the principles and procedures of development, evaluation and the writing of materials, as well as personal and professional development of the teachers. There are five parts to the book:

- evaluation and adaptation of materials
- principles and procedures of material development (frameworks, writing,

publishing, humanizing, visual elements, electronic materials and creative approaches to a course book)

- developing materials for target groups (primary schools, L2, adult beginners, adults, etc.)
- developing specific types of materials (grammar, reading, speaking, vocabulary, literature, language awareness, cultural awareness, etc.)
- training in materials development (teacher training, materials development, textbook writing, etc.).

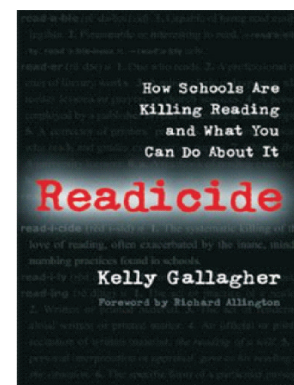
Most books on language learning materials focus only on print materials, however this book deals with visual, auditory, computer, internet and live materials. Some of the papers in the book discuss the requirements of a national and institutional textbook (Chapter 3, 30). Other chapters focus on the compromises necessary for commercial production of materials (Chapters 7, 8, 15, 19). Many chapters talk about how teachers can be good material writers with just a little training, experience and support (Chapters 6, 27, 30, 31). Some of the chapters also suggest ways in which mistakes in material production can be avoided (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5). In sum, this volume is a one stop shop for anyone looking for current trends in materials development for language worldwide.

Readicide: How Schools are Killing Reading and What You Can Do about It

By Kelly Gallagher
Maine: Stenhouse Publishers

Published: 2009

ISBN: 978-1-57110-780-0



The word *readicide* is coined by the author and is defined as ‘the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools’. Gallagher noticed in his twenty-two years of high-school teaching experience that there are various practices in schools that lead to kids disliking reading by the time they come to high school. He explains that if a study is conducted on kids from kinder garden, 5th grade and 12th grade, one would find that the attitude of the children towards reading, changes from enthusiasm to indifference to hostility.

Although schools are meant to encourage reading and teachers often feel that they are inspiring kids to read, statistics show that this is not the case. Teachers attribute this to things like poverty, lack of parental education, print-poor environment at home, second language issues, the era of the hurried child and other entertainment options. These factors do contribute to readicide, however, there are other factors within the school that are killing reading. Factors such as focus on test-takers rather than developing readers, ‘magic pill’ reading programs, limiting authentic reading experiences, over-teaching and under-teaching books and academic reading replacing silent reading are leading to readicide. Teachers do not intend to encourage readicide, however, it is these inane practices that invariably lead to it. Gallagher suggests:

“What do teachers and curriculum directors mean by ‘value’ reading? A look at the practice of most schools suggests that when a school ‘values’ reading what it really means is that the school intensely focuses on raising state-mandated reading test scores- the kind of reading our students will rarely, if ever, do in adulthood.”

This book has five chapters: the elephant in the room, endangered minds, avoiding the tsunami, finding the sweet spot of instruction and ending

readicide. Each chapter takes an in-depth look at the causes of readicide and ends with exploring what we can do to avoid graduating students who have no interest in books.

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Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Miming a story

Objective

Develop LSRW skills in general and simple structures, use of linkers, vocabulary and adjectives in particular.

Material

Story “The cranes and the tortoise”

Preparation

The preparations for the teachers included using certain gestures for the common words that appear in the story. Select a story that is short and can be easily mimed. The story should be interesting and one that could be enacted with gestures and body language.

Procedure

- Give instructions that it is a story-telling session but the story should be narrated by the students/participants after watching the gestures of the teacher/resource person.
- Repeat the gestures till you get the correct word/s or the structure/word pattern that is required for the flow of the story. After a few tries, you will get the words you want and write them on the black board (e.g. Tortoise, pond, hot summer day, trees, crane etc.).
- Begin the story with gestures in chunks and repeat it till you get the correct word/s.

This is how the story may be narrated:

Once upon a time there lived a tortoise in a pond, there was tree close to the pond two cranes lived on the tree. The tortoise and the cranes were friends. One hot summer day the pond got dried up, the birds flew far away in search of water, returned to the pond in the evening happily. They found the

tortoise very sad/ asked the reason/tortoise said no water in the pond, they have wings they can fly but he cannot. The bird felt sorry for their friend, they thought of a plan they said that the tortoise can also fly like them. The next day they took a stick, one crane held one end in its beak and the other the other end, and the tortoise had to hold the stick in its mouth in the center and the three can fly far away. They also warned the tortoise not to open its mouth. The three flew in the same way in the sky, the tortoise was so thrilled with this experience of flying, was very exultant to see people looking at them with great astonishment and it opened its mouth to share its wonderful sight, but fell down and died.

- This can be further extended by asking the participants/students to retell the story with proper linkers/ cohesive devices.
- May ask one of the participants to write it on the blackboard as it is elicited and later may ask the groups to edit it on the blackboard.
- Ask each member to rewrite the story in their own words.
- You may also ask them to write the script in a dialogue form and enact it in groups.
- You could also ask the students/ participants to change one of the characters in the story/ the ending of the story.
- You could also ask them to write the story in the form of a poem.
- The poem given below can also be given to read to give them an experience of how the story can be written in a poetic form.

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Activity 2: Vocabulary building through story telling

Objective: to build listening skills, comprehension, creative thinking, vocabulary enrichment and using vocabulary in sentence structuring

Level

4-6 years

Material

Cards of words: Huge, large, big, enormous,

Picture cards: Giant, ship, elephant, rock

Story: Enormous Turnip

Procedure

Read the story “Enormous Turnip” with the students. While reading the story use synonyms like “Big”, “Large”, “Huge” and “Enormous” while describing the turnip. Encourage the students to use these words also during the story time.

Once the story is over, place the 4 vocabulary words on board and scatter picture cards (ship, elephant etc.) on a table. Now you can ask the students to describe each picture with the appropriate word. For example you can ask them ‘How is the ship looking?’. If they say ‘BIG’ then you ask them to say the first sound of the word ‘big’ and then place the ‘big’ card before ‘ship’ and read aloud “A big ship”. Now make the students pick the other picture and place it under the correct word and frame a phrase or a sentence, for example, enormous, giant, huge rock. Through this activity you can also teach (older students) the appropriate use of each vocabulary item (example: ‘huge’ will be more apt for ‘rock’ rather than ‘enormous’).

Activity 3: Listen and guess

Level: 6 years olds

Objective: to develop listening skills, phonetic discrimination, comprehension, making inferences and thinking skills.

Material: Picture Sheet, letter cards, picture cards,








Instructions

Give the picture sheet and a set of letter cards to children. Ask them to look at the picture sheet and follow the instructions carefully. The instructions can be as follows:

“Look at the boy in the first box. What do you think he needs to carry? Choose the correct picture card and then place the letter with which the word ‘umbrella’ starts.”

Similarly all the instructions will be given and the child who places all the picture cards correctly is the winner.

Picture sheet

		
		
		
B	U	C

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Activity 4: Matching the titles

Level: Beginning readers (in groups of 4-5)

Objective

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

Material

1. 50 or more books
2. Slips of paper

Preparation

Classify the books based on the length of the titles in 3 or 4 groups. Write the title of the books on slips of the paper. If possible, get the children to sit around you and read out what you are writing before folding. Put all the books according to the level, in a line with the cover page visible.

Procedure

Mix the slips and ask children to pick one. They will open the slip and then quickly match the title with the book. Ask them which book is it and then either repeat or read out the title on your own. Before the next round, change the positions of the books.

Activity 5: Finding the book

Level: This is a variation of activity 6, but aimed for children who are able to read.

Objective

The activity expects children to read a small portion of the book and guess which book it would be from.

Materials

1. 30 or more books (almost half of these books should be known to children)
2. Slips of paper

Preparation

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

Procedure

Mix the slips and ask children to pick one. At a time 2-3 children will participate in this game. They have to read the paragraph and then look at the books and find the right book from which the story has been picked. Children use visual

cues, read the title, sometimes flip the pages, and sometimes start reading the book till they find the paragraph and many other things.

Activity 6: Riddle corner

Objective

The activity requires children to read and think about it to get an answer.

Materials

1. A chart paper
2. Slips of paper

Preparation

On slips of paper write the riddles that you think are appropriate for the class. On the chart paper write the answers of these riddles. One child at a time will pick the slip and then find the answer from the chart.

Activity 7: Making sentences

Objective

Develop the ability to make sentences

Materials

1. Slips of paper
2. Chart paper



Preparation

Take some commonly spoken sentences and jumble the words. Write these jumbled sentences on the chart paper. On small slips of paper, write the words of the sentences. Make a packet of words used in one sentence.

Procedure

From the chart paper, children choose a jumbled sentence that they want to un-jumble. Then they are given the word slips. They assemble them in different patterns to get the right sentence.

Activity 8: Making a poem

Objective

To un-jumble the sentences or words to get a meaningful poem

Materials

1. Chart papers
2. 10-15 known children's poems/rhymes

Preparation

This activity can be done at two difficulty levels.

- A. Write the poem on a chart paper; tear off different lines of the poem to make different slips. These slips can be kept separately or 2/3 poems can be mixed to raise the difficulty level.
- B. Write the poem on a chart paper, tear off each word of the poem and make small slips. Again, you can decide to keep the poems separately or mix 2/3 to raise the difficult level.

Procedure

- A. Mix these slips and give them to one or two children. They have to segregate them and arrange them in the right order to get the complete poems.
- B. Mix these slips and give them to one or two children. They have to segregate these words and arrange them in the right order to make correct poems.

Activity 9: Making words

Objective

Develop the ability to make words

Materials

Slips of paper

Preparation

On the slips of papers write the words in and then cut them into smaller pieces.



Procedure

The packets of these cards are given to children and they can then make any word that they like from it. Usually only one or two words are possible.

QUEST Team, Vidya Bhawan, Udaipur

Reports

Workshops on English Language Teaching in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

July 4 - September 27, 2013

Partha Sarathi Misra

The State Institute of Azim Premji Foundation, Bhopal conducted three English language workshops in Madhya Pradesh in the months of July and September 2013. Nivedita from Azim Premji University, Bangalore, and Pallavi, Sudhir and Bharti from the State Institute, Azim Premji Foundation, and Bhopal were facilitators at these workshops.

The first workshop held at Dewas from 4th–9th July 2013, was attended by twenty-seven secondary school teachers and two head teachers. At this workshop, all the sessions were woven around the themes of perspective and pedagogy, subject teaching versus language teaching, first and second language acquisition and the basics of reading and writing.

The second workshop, held at the Institute of Advanced Study in Education (IASE) Bhopal from 3rd–7th September 2013, was attended by 48 participants comprising three faculty members from the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and 45 primary school teachers. The sessions at this workshop were also a blend of perspective and pedagogy and the nature of language, subject versus language teaching, first and second language acquisition, reading for meaning and communicative language teaching.

The same themes were repeated at the third workshop held at Khandwa from 24th – 27th September 2013, which was attended by 21 secondary school teachers.

All three workshops aimed at building the capacity of the participants who were expected

to be resource persons in English language teaching in the State of Madhya Pradesh in the near future.

(This report is based on inputs provided by Pallavi Chaturvedi, State Institute, APF, Bhopal.)

Workshop on Kannada Language Teaching in Yadgir, Karnataka

August 28-29, 2013

A two-day workshop meant for members of the Kannada Co-development group of Azim Premji Foundation was held at the Azim Premji District Institute, Yadgir, Karnataka on the 28th and 29th of August, 2013. It was attended by members from the Karnataka State Institute, Bangalore; District Institute, Yadgir; and the Child Friendly School Initiative, Surpur, Karnataka. The objective of the workshop was to review the progress of the members involved in studying language in general and Kannada in particular, and to share their learning experiences with reference to language and language pedagogy related to the teaching and learning of Kannada.

On the first day of the workshop, the focus of the presentations and discussions was on

1. What is language?
2. Origin of language, and
3. Nature of language

Discussions centered around ‘Bow-bow theory’, whether thought came first or language

came first, development of knowledge through signs, language learning through repetition and reinforcement, the meaning of *moortha* and *amoortha*, and language death.

Gururaj presented a paper titled “NCF Position Paper on Teaching of Indian Languages”. It was followed by a lively discussion. Devraj’s paper on “The Structures of Letters in Kannada” added a valuable contribution to the deliberations of the workshop.

On the second day of the workshop, the participants embarked on the task of translating the NCF position paper on the teaching of Indian languages. It was further decided that Kalandar would write a paper on “The Nature of Language”, Hanumanth on “Language Learning”, Showrish and Gururaj on “The Constitutional Provisions and the Three Language Formula”, Shreedevi and Shambanna on “Other Language Issues in the School Curriculum”, and Janaki and Zabeer would write on “Multilingualism and Scholastic Achievement”.

The two-day workshop was indeed a rewarding experience for the participants as they could share their readings on language and language pedagogy as a collaborative endeavor, there by sharpening their understanding of the different theories and approaches towards language acquisition and language pedagogy.

(The report is based on the inputs provided by Roopa Koti, District Institute, APF, Yadgir, Karnataka.)

Pratha 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 Kolkata. He is at present working as a specialist with the academics and Pedagogy team at the Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

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Language and Language Teaching Workshop 2 in Jaipur, Rajasthan

September 14-19, 2013

Nandini V. Badadur and Rajni Dwivedi

The second workshop of Language and Language teaching for fifty members of the Azim Premji Institutes focused on the development of reading skills.

Objectives

1. To understand the concept of reading and the development of this capacity in children.
2. To understand how children acquire emergent capacities of reading from the environment.
3. To understand the role of the parents/teachers in supporting an emergent and developing reader.
4. To understand the theories of reading and the pedagogical implications of the strategies of reading.

The workshop commenced with a discussion on the experiences of the first workshop on the nature of language and a re-examination of some questions. These questions were: What are the metalinguistic rules that a child hypothesizes and acquires? How does it help to understand this process? If children do not learn through imitation, how do they learn? If children already know so much about language before they enter school, is the teacher needed?

Emergent Literacy

This session re-examined the literacy capability of children with a focus on the environment. The participants discussed the signs of literacy that children notice in their environment. They talked about rich and poor literacy environments: children who have a print-rich environment are often engulfed with a whole world of print that includes sign boards,

hoardings, wrappers, etc. They also got a feel of how children unconsciously acquire metalinguistic knowledge about reading by handling authentic materials. The facilitator collected many wrappers, tickets, advertisements, labels and photographs of shop signs and hoardings. These materials which children handle every day and know how to 'read', was examined from the viewpoint of the child. It was discussed that children understand 'letters' as signs or symbols which signify meaning. While handling authentic materials, the participants raised seminal questions such as: What is literacy? What is emergent literacy? Does emergent literacy happen only once in a life time? If a person becomes literate in one language, does she / he go through the same process again while learning another language? How do metalinguistic skills of emergent reading get transferred from one language to another?

The debates were referred to Dr Khanna who in answer to the questions above explained that we cannot become literate every time we learn a new language. Literacy can happen only once in a lifetime. Professor Agnihotri further suggested that this is because the metalinguistic capabilities acquired during our first engagement with literacy are deep structure universal rules. For example, a child who acquires the concept of grapho-phonemic relationships and its connection with meaning need not acquire that knowledge once again for another language. The knowledge of these relationships, once understood, is available throughout life for learning any other language. The only difference will be that the relationships will be expressed in different ways in different languages.

In the next session we examined case studies of some children who were emergent literates and others for whom literacy was a challenge. These case studies led to the discussion of getting the support from parents and teachers in developing literacy. Through the case study

of Donny from "Other People's Words" by Victoria Purcell Gates, and "Confronting Stereotypes" by Mini Srinivasan, it was deduced that culture plays an important role in making literacy acquisition meaningful by giving value and functional importance in daily life.

The participants discussed the theories of restricted and elaborate code by Bernstein. They also examined the debates arising out of a comparison of the ideas of Bernstein and Lisa Delpit. Basil Bernstein developed a the theory of linguistic codes which posited that the upper and middle classes have an elaborated code with greater vocabulary while the lower classes follow a restricted code. This distinction raised a storm as it was taken to mean that the lower classes have lower language abilities. Lisa Delpit in her book *Other People's Children* challenges educators to break the stereotypes about the language of marginalized cultures. These discussions gave rise to the discussion of linguistic insecurity amongst children from marginalized communities in schools who share the burden of incomprehension as they do not understand the dominant language.

Developing Reading

To understand the concept of developing reading habits in children, the participants worked on different texts. The components of reading were culled as: capacity to understand relationships between graphemes and phonemes; word-meanings; ability to understand the structure and organization of a text; the importance of predicting words and their meanings through semantico-grapho-phonemic cues, syntax and structure; and vocabulary development for speed and fluency.

The groups also discussed how to choose a text for children. According to the group, the text should be a mirror of time and society. Moreover, it should not contain words or ideas beyond the capacities of children, and should be examined

for conceptual density. The significance of the readability test and its implications for text choice were also discussed.

Reading Strategies

The participants discussed the qualities of a good reader. This was followed by a discussion on how these qualities can be developed. The groups put forth their ideas: exposing children to different types of texts, encouraging children to talk about and question the text, asking open-ended questions and responding to them in an analytical manner, synthesizing the ideas in the text, etc. It was agreed that teachers could scaffold the strategies of prediction, interpretation, questioning, visualizing by creating well-designed learning experiences.

It was further discussed that children should be encouraged to read not just the words of the text but also read the world through the words of the text. For example, while reading R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, Swami's troubles in school can raise class discussions on school life from the child's point of view as against the point of view of the adult. Children may think about the two world views and talk about similarities between Swami's struggles and their own. For this, children need to make connections between the text and life, the text and the world, and the text and other texts. The group created activities to understand how these strategies could be acquired by children.

Theories of Reading

The final session of the workshop was on theories of reading. The participants went through an experiential journey of what happens when children are exposed to a bottom-up approach to learning. This led to an understanding of how such approaches actually distance the child from opportunities to make meaning of a written text. The second exercise

brought home the realization that reading is a cognitive activity that puts together an understanding of the world and the word, i.e. our experience, knowledge and culture, to reorganize the text in our minds. No text is read as it is. Understanding a text involves a reconstruction of the text according to the schema in our minds and with reference to our experience of the world.

This was followed by a short discussion on the theories of reading. Participants appreciated the fact that both top-down and bottom-up models need to be taken into consideration when thinking of scaffolding/ facilitating the development of reading in the class room. The teacher is the best judge of which approach will work with her students.

Reading Sessions

Daily reading sessions were conducted using the compendium of readings relevant to the sessions. Some interesting questions emerged from these readings which were addressed by Professor Ramakant Agnihotri in an audio mode.

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A Story Telling Workshop

in Association with Dinkar Society
Ojas Institute of Management, Rohini, Delhi.
March 29, 2013

Suneeta Mishra and Vijay Kumar



There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories. —Ursula K. LeGuin

Introduction

Stories and folklore lie at the heart of Indian culture. For centuries, the first exposure to children about the world has been through the tales they heard from their family members, especially their grandparents. These tales not only enriched their imagination, but also allowed them to observe the different hues and colours of the world and get an idea of the languages spoken around them. The present generation seems to be losing out on this opportunity. *Katha Manch*, a group dedicated to the use of stories as a pedagogical tool, aspires to fill this gap.

Katha Manch is an informal group comprising of school teachers, teacher trainees, field facilitators, university professors, students, etc., associated with the field of education. Most of the group members have experienced the power of stories and storytelling, not only in capturing

childrens' attention, but also in improving their reading and writing skills, furthering their imaginative and cognitive skills, sensitizing them and developing tolerance towards different cultures and world-views. *Katha Manch* organized a one-day workshop with the following objectives:

- To create a network of people interested in storytelling
- To demonstrate various modes of storytelling
- To discuss the use of stories as a pedagogical tool
- To appreciate the cultural richness exhibited in the forms of folklores
- To invite suggestions for possible future activities of the group

Participant Profiles

The participants included school teachers, teacher trainees (B. El. Ed., B. Ed., JBT, etc.), school principals, assistant professors from Delhi University, field facilitators and people interested in story telling.

Sessions

The workshop started with an introductory session where the anchors discussed the importance of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, with examples from their own and their students' teaching experiences. They emphasized on the importance of linguistic and cultural components in storytelling. They also observed on the basis of personal and teaching experience that there is a gradual decline in the use of storytelling and that it needs to be revived. With the advent of ICT (Information Communication Technology), multimedia, etc., people are not exposed to the feeling of warmth and coziness that comes from telling and listening to stories, and this is especially true of children. In the absence of this, children have taken refuge in television and other media.

The next session was conducted by B. El. Ed (Bachelor of Elementary Education) students from Delhi University. They focused on the various modes of story-narration. The first presentation was a solo theatrical performance of the story “Pinku Piggy”—a fable that explains why pigs prefer filthy surroundings. This was followed by a role-play of the famous Panchatantra story “The Monkey and the Crocodile”. Three participants played the roles of the monkey, the crocodile and the monkey’s wife, and delivered spontaneous dialogues that gave a comic sense to the traditional setting of the story. The next presenters also put up a comic performance that was based on a famous folklore about a bird whose grain got stuck in a grinder. This was in the form of an interesting rhyme that was really enjoyed by the audience. The last presentation was based on the story of a little girl who was saved from the jungle animals by her presence of mind and her mother’s advice. It was in the form of a puppet show and involved rhymes. Thus, the participants got an idea of how stories could be performed in different forms, individually as well as in a group, to make them more lively and natural for the learners.

The presentations were followed by a discussion on the different modes of storytelling, and the purpose they serve. The presenters who had used these narrative styles in their teaching internship, elaborated on the specific pedagogical aspects of each of these modes. While role play had been found to be extremely useful in developing creative dialogue-writing and situational writing, rhyming folklore used repetition as a strategy to build on reading and writing skills among beginners.

Other participants shared their experiences of how story-narrations had helped them build basic language skills of their students. The representation of socio-cultural aspects in stories was also discussed. Participants noted how the last stroke the stereotype of the male

figure always being the action hero and dealing with tough situations.

This was followed by a lively musical performance by three participants who sang folksongs from three different languages using the keyboard, harmonium and tabla. The performance brought back the point of traditional storytelling being deeply entwined with the creative arts of a society and culture. After this, a teacher recited a poem that he had written.

The post-presentation discussion started with the CIE school principal sharing her experience of introducing storytelling as a pedagogical tool in her school. She talked about the struggles and the successes that she had encountered and emphasized on the change in the attitude of the teachers once they saw the drastic improvement in their students’ performance after the use of stories in their classes.

Feedback and Further Direction

The participants, who had thoroughly enjoyed the presentations, noted that the narrative styles that had been discussed would prove extremely helpful in the pedagogy of not just language but all subject areas. One participant was of the view that stories as pedagogical tools could replace textbooks if taken seriously. Regarding the folklore, a teacher-educator pointed out how oral history tradition was being revisited and used in contemporary sociological studies.

A student of teacher-education asked about the criteria for selecting a good story. This was responded to by various participants who recommended the book *Child’s Language and the Teacher*. They further endorsed an article on storytelling by Krishna Kumar in which he discusses in depth, the criteria for choosing good literature for children.

Finally, the participants concluded by agreeing that teachers should be encouraged not only to use stories as a tool in their teaching but also to weave stories of their own. The stories they

create would have strategies underlying them to make learning more enjoyable. The group that had attended the workshop offered to work with teachers to help them innovate in different forms of storytelling. These new forms could then be tried out in the classrooms, and reviewed periodically and improved upon. In addition to this the children of elementary grades could be encouraged to write and perform stories in their classroom. Once they are skilled in creating stories, the next step would be to improve their writing skills so that they are able to present stories in a written form with illustrations, etc.

Participants expressed the need to organize more such workshops and include more school teachers in such workshops so that storytelling could become a way of teaching rather than being limited to a single period in the library. They added that most teacher-education courses were also not giving much space to storytelling, and pressed for it to become a compulsory part of teacher-education curriculum.

Storytelling can be done in various forms, which may be poem, songs, narrations, etc. Stories can be told using these forms independently or by mixing them as needed.

“Children played at those stories; they dreamed about them. They took them to heart and acted as if to live inside them.”

- Gregory Maguire, *A Lion Among Men*.

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Forthcoming Events

6th N.E.A.R. Language Education Conference

Date: 24 May 2014

Organization: North-East Asian Regional Language Education Conference

Location: University of Niigata Prefecture, Niigata

Last date for submission of paper: 16 February

JALT 2014 International Conference

Dates: 21- 24 November 2014

Organization: The Annual International Conference of the Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: Tsukuba International Congress Center, Ibaraki Prefecture

Last date for submission of paper: 11 February 2014

ICLLTL 2015: International Conference on Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning

Dates: 28-29 March 2015

Location: Madrid, Spain

Last date for submission of paper: 31 October 2014

ICLLTL 2016: International Conference on Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning

Dates: 28-29 March 2016 Location: Madrid, Spain

Last date for submission of paper: 31 October 2015

TESOL 2015 - 49th

Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit

Date: 25 March 2015

Location: Ontario, Canada

Last date for submission of paper: 01 June 2014

Website: <http://www.tesol.org>

The 2nd Task-Based Language Teaching in Asia Conference

Dates: 17-18 May 2014

Organization: Task Based Learning Special Interest Group, Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: Kinki University, Osaka

Last date for submission of paper: 31 January 2014

6th N.E.A.R. Language Education Conference

Date: 24 May 2014

Organization: North-East Asian Regional Language Education Conference

Location: University of Niigata Prefecture, Niigata

Last date for submission of paper: 16 Feb 2014

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ADMISSION PROCEDURE - KEY DATES

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Personal Interviews in March 2014

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