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Literacy Education: Need We Start Early?

Stephen Krashen

Most people are convinced that children will have a powerful head start in reading if they are introduced to sounds and letters well before they start school. The conclusions of this paper are these: For the development of English literacy, early explicit teaching fails, but later, absorption in interesting and comprehensible reading works very well.

Early Literacy: Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness (PA) is the ability to divide a word into its component sounds, i.e. the ability to take the word 'pit', and divide it into 'pe' 'i' and 'te'. It is thus an aural ability. It is frequently claimed that phonemic awareness is a prerequisite to learning to read, and children must be "trained" in phonemic awareness in kindergarten and grade 1, and even in preschool. Research and observations have however cast doubts on this claim, and suggest that phonemic awareness, beyond the most basic level, is the result of reading, not a cause.

No Evidence that PA Training Improves Reading Comprehension

Children who receive training in phonemic awareness improve on tests of phonemic awareness, but there is no evidence to suggest that PA training benefits reading comprehension, i.e. performance in tests in which children have to understand what they read. A review of research literature (Krashen, 2001a) produced only six studies and eleven comparisons in which researchers attempt to see if PA training has an impact on reading comprehension. Only

three of the six studies dealt with English-speaking children. These studies revealed low, zero and even negative scores for the impact of PA training on comprehension, and in some studies the number of children who underwent the training was very small. There was only one study that reported substantial impact as well as statistically significant results in favour of those trained in phonemic awareness. This study was conducted in Israel with only 15 Hebrew-speaking children, who underwent PA training (Kozminsky and Kozminsky, 1995).

Another review (Krashen and Hastings, 2011) concluded that there is no evidence that PA training improves reading comprehension in a second language.

Low PA Reads OK

It has been widely observed that many children with low or even no phonemic awareness learn to read quite well. Also, many children judged to have low phonemic awareness when young, develop good reading abilities later in life, and some adults who are excellent readers do poorly on tests of phonemic awareness (Krashen, 2001b).

A clear example of this is provided by Campbell and Butterworth (1985). Their subject, R.E., was a university student who "reads at least as well as her fellow undergraduates" (p. 436). This university student graduated from London University with second-class honours in psychology, and performed above average on standardized tests of reading. She had great difficulty in reading nonsense words, and while

she knew the names of all the letters, she had difficulty with the sounds corresponding to the letters. She also performed poorly on tests of phonemic awareness and phonemic segmentation. Campbell and Butterworth concluded:

“Since R.E.’s word reading and spelling are good, strong claims based on the necessity of a relationship between phonemic segmentation and manipulation skills, on the one hand, and the development of skilled reading and writing, on the other, must be weakened” (p. 460).

For additional examples, see Krashen (2001b).

These results cast a doubt on the claim that phonemic awareness is a prerequisite to learning to read.

PA the Result of Reading

Phonemic awareness beyond the initial levels appears to be the result of reading, not the cause. This conclusion is consistent with the observation that all but the most rudimentary aspects of phonemic awareness emerge at about the age children learn to read (Krashen, 2003). To test this hypothesis, I conducted an informal research project. I asked a number of people to perform the classic PA task of stripping the initial consonant from a word such as “pit.” Of course, everybody got this right without a problem. Then I asked them to do the same with the word “split.” After some hesitation, most people got it right. I then asked them how they did it. Universally, people reported that they spelled the word in their mind, removed the /p/ sound, and pronounced the remainder. This confirmed that the ability to do complex PA tasks is dependent on the ability to read.

What all this suggests is that PA need not be taught. It is not essential for learning to read, and those who develop it do so from reading itself.

Phonics

Phonics is the study of the rules relating sounds to spelling, i.e. the fact that the letter “b” is generally pronounced as in the first sound in “bomb”, but is sometimes silent, as the last “b” in “bomb”.

There are several possibilities about the role of consciously learned phonics in reading—intensive systematic phonics, basic phonics and zero phonics.

Intensive, Systematic Phonics

“Phonics instruction is systematic when all of the major letter-sound correspondences are taught and covered in a clearly defined sequence ...” (Ehri, 2004, p. 180). According to intensive systematic phonics, we learn to read by first learning the rules (“all the major rules”) of phonics, that is, learning how letters are pronounced (“sounding out”), and by practising these rules while reading out loud (“decoding to sound”). Also, our knowledge of phonics must be deliberately taught and consciously learned, and intensive instruction is “essential” (Ehri, 2004).

Basic Phonics

Basic phonics includes straight-forward rules, the ones that work well and that students can remember. According to basic phonics, we learn to read by actually reading and understanding what is on the page. In fact most of our knowledge of phonics is the result of reading; the more complex rules of phonics are subconsciously acquired through reading (Smith, 2003).

A conscious knowledge of some basic rules can help children learn to read by making texts more comprehensible. Smith (2003) demonstrates how this can happen: In the sentence, “The man was riding on the h_____”, the child is unable to read the final word. Given the context and

knowledge of the sound ‘h’ makes, the child can make an intelligent guess as to what the final word is. This may not work every time (some readers might think the missing word was “Harley”), but the knowledge of phonics can restrict the possibilities of what the unknown words may be.

Zero Phonics

This view claims that direct teaching of phonics is not necessary or even helpful. I am not aware of anyone who holds the opinion that no phonics should ever be taught.

Complexity of Phonics

An argument against intensive systematic phonics is that many rules are very complex and do not work very well. As Smith (2003) notes, a considerable number of phonics rules are “unreliable...there are too many alternatives and exceptions...300 ways in which letters and sounds can be related” (p. 41). His most famous example is the fact that each of these uses of “ho” has a different pronunciation: hot, hoot, hook, hour, honest, house, hope, honey, and hoist. Smith notes that even if a reader knows the rules, the words cannot be read accurately from left to right, letter by letter. The reader needs to look ahead. Smith also notes that different phonics programmes teach different rules, a stunning counterargument to the claim that teaching complex rules is necessary.

The Limited Impact: The Garan Effect

The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) concluded that experimental research supports intensive systematic phonics. Garan (2001, 2002), in an examination of this report, noted that the impact of intensive phonics is strong on tests in which children read lists of words in isolation, but it is miniscule on tests in which children have to understand what they read.

Thus, intensive phonics instruction only helps children to develop the ability to pronounce words in isolation. Garan’s results agree with the results of many other studies that show that intensive phonics instruction has a positive impact on tests of decoding but not on tests of comprehension (Krashen, 2009).

Reading experience results in both reading ability and the ability to do well on tests of “decoding”. Children who have been given the opportunity to do a great deal of interesting, comprehensible reading and have been given less decoding instruction, perform as well as or better than children in decoding-emphasis classes on decoding tests. Moreover, they typically score higher on tests that assess what really counts in reading—comprehension (Morrow, O’Conner and Smith, 1990; Eldridge, 1991; Klesius, Griffith, and Zielonka, 1991).

Which Rules?

If the basic phonics position is correct, what are the rules that are teachable and useful? Experienced professionals agree that the rules for pronouncing most initial consonants and a few other rules can be learned and applied to the text by small children, but some rules will be impossible for six year olds (and most adults). An example of one such rule recommended by Johnson (2001) is: “the a-e combination is pronounced with the long vowel and the final e silent (except when the final syllable is unaccented, then the vowel is pronounced with a short -i sound, as in ‘palace,’ or the combination is ‘are,’ with words such as ‘have’ and ‘dance’ as exceptions”).

The Great Misunderstanding

There is a strong support among the public and the media for “phonics” instruction. What is not clear however is whether the support is for intensive systematic phonics, or basic phonics. Whole language advocates are regularly

accused of supporting the zero phonics position, but they actually support basic phonics, maintaining that basic phonics is one way to help make texts more comprehensible. Public opinion might be quite close to the whole language view.

Late Starters

In contrast, professional literature contains a significant amount of evidence showing that starting late can also result in successful reading.

Countries that Start Later

Elley (1992) noted that "... countries which begin instruction in reading at age seven have largely caught up with the 5- and 6-year old starters in reading ability by age nine" (p. 37). Table 1 presents reading test scores for 9-year olds across four countries in which reading instruction began at age 7. Clearly, students who were introduced to reading after age 7 had average reading scores above the norm by age 9.

	Score	Rank	Economic Development**	Books in Home*
Finland	569	1	5	135
Sweden	539	3	2	174
Norway	524	7	3	157
Iceland	518	8	4	118

Table 1: Reading Scores at Age Nine for Countries in which Reading Instruction Began at Age Seven. From: Elley (1994)

*Books: average number of books in the home

**Economic Development: calculated from GNP, expenditures for education, life expectancy and other variables

Mean reading score for all 32 countries = 500

It is interesting to note that Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland rank among the highest in the world in economic development. All four reported that their communities have a plentiful supply of books in homes and school libraries,

and that public libraries and bookstores were also available to students. Elley's findings suggest that a late start is not a problem when children have access to reading materials.

McQuillan (in Krashen and McQuillan, 2007) reported a number of cases of children who started reading late, but who had no trouble "catching up", including home-schooled and dyslexic children, but who learned to read very well.

Home-schooled Children

Mason (1993a) reports that her daughter, K.M., "could not/did not want to read" at eight and a half. Having tried earlier to push her to learn math, and finding that the pressure made her "hate arithmetic," Mason decided not to intervene when it came to reading. Around K.M.'s ninth birthday, "she began to read, and two months later she could read at the level of her literate friends. Then she extended her reading, and now (age 15) she reads the way very literate adults do" (p. 28).

Mason (1993b) describes the case of her son, D.M.. The summer D.M. turned 10, he could only read a word or two. By fall, according to his mother, D.M. began "to read store signs and notices with a vengeance...(One night) sometime past midnight, he read his way through a fat Spiderman annual his older brother Luke gave him for his birthday" (p. 11). D.M. also began reading the sports page of the local newspaper. One day, Mason took D.M. to the local science museum, where he read aloud "long paragraphs of technical writing discussing 'atmospheric conditions' and 'helium gases in the stratosphere'" (p. 11).

H.K. (Kerman, 1993) was reading at a "bare Cat in the Hat level" at the age of 10 and a half. Her mother reports:

"During the course of the next year, she did learn the basics about reading,

although I shall never know how, since she refused instruction as much as always. We continued to read out loud to her, and she rarely read to herself. My main consolation was that she loved books and didn't think badly of herself. At the age of 14, she started to read Scott O'Dell's books. The first one took her two months to read. Two months later, she was reading full-length adult fantasy novels . . . She reads voraciously now at the age of 16" (p. 27).

These cases have several features in common—little or no formal instruction was required, the parents put no pressure on the child to read, and all of the children made rapid progress once they began reading material they were genuinely interested in of their own volition. Finally, all the children had the advantage of having access to a lot of reading material.

Recovered Dyslexics

Another set of cases of readers who started late but caught up through voluntary reading comes from Fink (1995/1996). Fink studied 12 people who were considered dyslexic when they were young, who all became “skilled readers”. Out of the 12 people, 9 published creative scholarly works and one was a Nobel laureate. Eleven out of these people reported that they finally learned to read between the ages of 10 and 12 (p. 273), and one did not learn to read until the 12th grade.

According to Fink, these readers had a lot in common:

“As children, each had a passionate personal interest, a burning desire to know more about a discipline that required reading. Spurred by this passionate interest, all read voraciously, seeking and reading everything they could get their hands on about a single intriguing topic”.

Cases of “Late Beginners” in both Literacy and Creative Work who Make Profound Contributions

Michael Faraday is a good example of someone who had little schooling but developed high levels of literacy (academic literacy) as well as subject matter knowledge. Faraday came from a poor family, left school before he was 13, and worked for seven years as an apprentice bookbinder. This meant he had access to a lot of books. His employer “was a sympathetic and helpful individual who did much to encourage his apprentices' interests” (Howe, 1999, p. 266). According to Howe, Faraday “read voraciously” and also attended lectures and classes on his own.

Clearly, Faraday never studied, and never prepared for examinations. He did a lot of extensive reading when he was a teenager, including *The Arabian Nights* and other novels. Howe speculates that Faraday's interest in science grew gradually, and became firm when he was around 18 (p. 88). Around the same time, deeply influenced by the work of Isaac Watts, Faraday began a rigorous self-study program. Watts emphasized critical and creative reactions to reading, “...it is the exercise of your own reason and judgment upon all you read that ... affords your understanding the truest improvement ...” (as cited in Howe, p. 93).

Working as an assistant to a famous chemist Humphrey Davy, Faraday took advantage of the facilities available to him and “plunged into research of his own” (Howe, p. 102) at age 21, and published his first paper at age 25. Faraday's stunning career after this consisted of a series of problems he attempted to solve, with great success.

The case of Michael Faraday is consistent with creativity researcher Simonton's conclusions: “omnivorous reading in childhood and adolescence correlates positively with ultimate adult success.” (Simonton, 1988, p. 11). We must however, add a commitment to problem-solving.

Mary Sommerville “could scarcely read” at the age of ten, having grown up in Scotland in the late 1700’s, a time during which girls were often not schooled. A year at a “fashionable” and very strict girls’ school produced no effect, and she returned home and started pleasure reading, a habit her family disapproved of. By chance, at age 14, she heard about algebra and geometry, was fascinated by them, and managed to get a copy of Euclid’s *Elements of Geometry*, which she studied with great interest every night.

“Her mother was appalled and shamed by such aberrant behavior, and the servants were instructed to confiscate Mary’s supply of candles so that she could not study at night. However, by this time Mary had gone through the first six books of Euclid...” (Osen, 1974, p. 56).

After years of independent study of math and some astronomy, Mary was able to dedicate herself to serious scientific work at the age of 27. She won an award for an original contribution to a problem published in a mathematics journal, and the editor became her mentor. The result was a stunning career in mathematics, astronomy and other areas. Mary Sommerville remained productive until she was 89 years old.

Conclusions

The cases and research presented here are consistent with the following generalizations:

1. Early direct instruction is not effective.
2. Comprehensible, compelling reading works at all ages.

Early direct teaching of skills is based on the premise that in learning to read, skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics must come first; they are prerequisites to learning to read. There is, however, an impressive amount of evidence that shows that such “skills” are the result of reading,

not the cause. This is supported by a large number of studies that indicate that self-selected reading results in greater development of many aspects of literacy (Krashen, 2004). The cases presented earlier in this paper also suggest that “late readers” who learned to read by self-selected reading, and who became quite literate, even though they ignored formal instruction or had little of it.

3. We can add as a corollary: Compelling problem-solving produces cognitive development at all ages, as evidenced by the cases of Michael Faraday and Mary Sommerville, who never “learned their basics,” and never studied for tests.

The True Basics

One point that was common to all the successful late starters described in this paper was that they all had an environment that provided the essentials—a good diet and adequate health care. All those who learned to read late, including Fink’s recovered dyslexics, had access to books. Faraday had the good fortune to work for a helpful bookbinder, and Mary Sommerville had access to lighter reading and was eventually able to get the texts she was interested in.

In conclusion, those who are interested in giving children an early start would be better off focusing on supplying the essentials. In the US, there appears to be more concern around early direct teaching rather than with providing the essentials—24% of children in the US live in poverty, which means inadequate diet, inadequate health care, and less access to books. American educational policy, however, is currently focusing on early direct teaching enforced through intensive testing, starting in preschool.

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Learning Puzzles with Indian English Tags

Pritha Chandra and Anindita Sahoo

Introduction

Second language learning (L2) is a unique and interesting domain of research. Most learners have an existing knowledge of one or more first languages (L1), which sometimes aids and sometimes hinders the acquisition of a new language. We present here, the case of Indian English question tags that seem to have been influenced by both ‘standard’ (American and British) English and Hindi-Urdu, and yet exhibit some unique features. Our primary contentions are, (a) Indian English has its own grammatical system, and (b) the learning of Indian English does not crucially rely on the learners’ first language competence¹.

There are three ways of asking ‘yes-no’ questions in Indian English, as illustrated by the following examples. The first technique involves a high intonation over a declarative sentence that makes it a yes-no question. The second technique involves standard subject-auxiliary inversion [1] below. The third technique, unique to Indian English, places a question particle *na/ no* at the right periphery of a declarative sentence [2a]. We will henceforth refer to this question particle, which appears alongside the ‘standard’ or ‘regular’ tag question [2b] as the Indian English Tag.

1. Are you leaving?
- 2 a. You are leaving, na / no?
b. You are leaving, aren’t you?

In this article, we will focus on Indian English tags [2a], and study its syntactic and semantic

properties vis-à-vis similar questions in ‘standard’ English and Hindi-Urdu.

Comparison with Standard Tags

Tags in both varieties of English are generally used for confirming already known facts. In question [3], the speaker is confirming her knowledge of the event (*the boys are playing*). In the Indian English tag [2] also, the speaker does not expect any new information, since she is already aware of the answer.

3. The boys are playing, aren’t they?

When it comes to structural properties, ‘standard’ tags and Indian English tags vary greatly (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish, 2007). In ‘standard’ tags, the question tag is a statement followed by a mini question consisting of an auxiliary and a subject in an inverted word order. The tag in Indian English on the other hand, comprises a statement followed by a negative particle *no / na* (borrowed from Hindi-Urdu), and there is no overt realization of a subject or an auxiliary verb [4a]-[4b].

- 4a. You are going to the market, no / *are you no?
- b. You enjoyed the movie, na / *did you no?

‘Standard’ tags can be either positive or negative and are in complementary distribution; contrast example [5a] with [5b].

- 5 a. John is threatening to leave, is he?
 b. John is threatening to leave, isn't he?

Indian English tags however have a mandatory negative question particle [6a]. A positive particle, *haan* 'yes' yields unacceptability [6b].

- 6 a. They are dancing na?
 b. *They are dancing, yes / haan?

'Standard' tags have obligatory auxiliary verbs in their second clauses, which morphologically agree with the main clause subjects as shown in [7].

7. He is going to school, isn't he?

Auxiliaries on the other hand are absent from Indian English tags, as can be seen from the infelicitous structures in [8a] and [8b].²

- 8a. *You are going, are no?
 b. *The child is crying, is no?

In 'standard' tags, the pronouns in the mini-questions are required to have the phi-features (person, number and gender) of the matrix subject³.

9. The boys are playing, aren't they / *he?

Once again, this structural property of 'standard' tags is absent from *na/ no* questions; the pronouns are obligatorily absent [10].

10. *The boys are playing, they no?

Standard tags can also be used as abbreviated forms in informal speech as shown in [11]; the subject and the auxiliary have been dropped in the main clause.

11. Been cheating all the time, haven't you?

Similar abbreviations are also possible in Indian English tags. Questions such as the one in [12] are acceptable without an overt subject and an auxiliary.

12. Been cheating all the time, no?

However, there are some constraints on the nature of the deleted subjects in such abbreviated forms. A structure such as the one in [13a] is permitted only when the deleted subject is understood as a second person pronominal. The main clause subject cannot be a first person pronoun, as illustrated by the unacceptable example [13b].⁴

- 13 a. Playing, no?
 b. *We playing, no?

In 'standard' tags, the matrix subjects are deleted if and only if the auxiliary verbs are contracted onto them. In [14], 'you' and 'are' must be simultaneously deleted.

14. Getting pretty excited, aren't you?

Conversely, in Indian English tags, the matrix subjects are permitted to stand alone without the auxiliary as indicated in [15a]. However, the auxiliary must not appear without the subject as seen in [15b].

- 15 a. You (are) getting pretty excited, no?
 b. *Are getting pretty excited, no?

Lastly, in 'standard' tags, modals cannot be deleted [16] and [17]. This feature is replicated by Indian English tags.

16. *~~Could~~ get on your nerves, couldn't it?
 17. *~~Could~~ get on your nerves, no?

To summarize, we have demonstrated that although semantically similar, there are some crucial syntactic differences between ‘standard’ and Indian English tags. This indicates that Indian English has structures that are not found in its ‘standard’ variety.

Comparison with Hindi-Urdu Tags

In this section, we will investigate whether Indian English tags share any similarities with tags in Hindi-Urdu [18], which are mini-questions involving an auxiliary and a question particle.

18. Tumhe ye pasandhai, (hai) na?
 You this like be, (be) no?
 You like this, don’t you?

The question particle can either be positive or negative. The positive tag is used for a force of challenge and the negative tag is used for request confirmation (example 19).

19. Tum khaanaa khaanaa chaahte ho,
 chaahte ho kyaa?
 You food eat want be want
 be what?
 You want to eat food, do you?

20. Tum khaanaa khaanaa chaahte ho,
 chaahte ho naa?
 You food eat want be want
 be no?
 You want to eat food, don’t you?

These tags, optionally, have lexical verbs in their second clauses as shown in [21].

21. Tum kal ghar aaoge, aaoge naa?
 You tomorrow home come-will come-will
 no?
 You will come home tomorrow, won’t you?

Moreover, the lexical verb is required to agree in phi-features (person, number and gender) with the matrix subject [22].

22. Tum kal mere ghar aaogi, aaogi /
 *aaoge naa?
 You tomorrow my house come-will (fem)
 come-will (fem) / (mas) no?
 You will come to my house tomorrow, won’t
 you?

In Hindi-Urdu tags, the pronouns are obligatorily dropped [23].

23. *Ladkekhel-rahe-hain, ladke / vena?
 Boys play-ing boys / they no?
 The boys are playing, aren’t they?

Hindi-Urdu tags can also be used as abbreviated forms in informal speech in which the subject can be deleted but not the auxiliary in the matrix clause [24].

24. Itne din se cheating karte aa-rahe-ho,
 naa?
 Many days since cheating do been no?
 Been cheating all the time, no?

Finally, modals cannot be contracted onto subjects and deleted from the main clause; their presence is mandatory [25].

25. Nas par char *(sakta) hai, hainaa?
 Nerves on get *(could) be, be no?
 Get on your nerves, couldn’t he?

The properties of questions in ‘standard’ English tags, Hindi-Urdu tags, and Indian English tags have been summarized in Table 1.

It is clear from Table 1 that Indian English tags share some features with both ‘standard’ English and Hindi-Urdu tags. However, it also has features not found in either of these two varieties. This suggests that Indian English has a grammar, which is independent of both Hindi and Urdu, and is acquired through a learning

process that is not completely controlled by the speaker's L1 knowledge. It also proves that Indian English is not an aberration of a 'standard' variety, and should be considered as a language in its own right.

Acquisition Puzzles

With the structural properties of tags in place, we will now move on to an acquisition puzzle. As is well-known from the time of Chomsky (1981), L1 acquisition is assumed to be a fast, sub-conscious process, with the learner using her / his innate (universal) language learning principles, and fixing parameter values with reference to the linguistic input. L2 learning,

'standard' varieties of English in the construction of Indian English grammar. The problem is elaborated as follows:

As is well-known, Hindi-Urdu is an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) language, and its question (Q) particles are generally placed at the sentence-final position [25].

25. tum aam khaate ho kyaa?
 You mangoes eat be Q
 Do you eat mangoes?

On the other hand, Indian English is an SVO language. Its questions have a question particle (an auxiliary, modal or a dummy *do*) at the left periphery [26], never at the right periphery [27].

	'Standard' English Tags	Hindi-Urdu Tags	Indian English Tags
Semantics	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Positive / Negative tags	Yes	Yes (but different structure)	No
Overt realization of subject and auxiliary	Yes	Subject missing (pro drop language) and auxiliary optional	No
Presence of matrix verb in tags	<u>No</u>	Yes (optional)	<u>No</u>
Deleting subject and auxiliary in main clause with multiple auxiliaries	<u>Yes</u> (the first auxiliary deleted)	No (auxiliary not deleted, subject deleted)	<u>Yes</u> (the first auxiliary deleted)
Modals deleted with subjects in main clause	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>
Deleting subject and the only auxiliary in matrix clause simultaneously	Yes	<u>No</u> (auxiliary not deleted)	<u>No</u> (Auxiliary verbs can be deleted, not the subject)

Table 1: Comparison of 'Standard' English, Hindi-Urdu and Indian English Tags

however, is more contentious. Some researchers claim that the parameters of L1 are reset on learning L2. Others suggest that L2 settings are attainable without prior adoption of L1 settings (White, 2003); i.e., L1 interference in L2 learning is minimal. In the case of Indian English tags, the important question is whether the learner uses knowledge from Hindi-Urdu and

26. Do you eat mangoes?
 27. *You eat mangoes, do / will / can?

Schematically, this can be represented as shown in [28]:

28. Will you (will) eat mangoes?

A learner who is learning any variety of English, on receiving this input, will set a value for the yes-no parameter, and conclude that all questions are formed by subject-auxiliary inversion. This rule is also extended to mini questions in tags of 'standard' English [29] and [30]:

29. He is not a genius, is he?
30. He loves mangoes, doesn't he?

This presents an acquisition problem. As a variety of 'standard' English, Indian English should have the same value for the yes-no question parameter. It should impose subject-auxiliary inversion as a rule in its grammar, and apply it to all questions. However, that cannot be the case, since some of the tag questions in the language have only negative particles in the mini-questions, and hence nothing to apply the rule to. This suggests that Indian English speakers have some extra rules over and above the 'standard' variety, which allows them to make 'standard variety' tags as well as 'Indian English' tags. Furthermore, the grammar underlying Indian English is not exactly that of the 'standard' language. Indian English parameters are given values independently of their values in the 'standard' variety.

Similarly, we can infer that the speaker's Hindi-Urdu knowledge does not interfere with the grammar formation of Indian English. If that were the case, the structure of Indian English tags would resemble that of Hindi-Urdu tags. The data discussed earlier however, suggests otherwise.

Conclusion

Through this paper, we have tried to establish that Indian English has tag questions that are structurally different from 'standard' English varieties as well as Hindi-Urdu. Therefore, while the *na / no* particle used in the tags could

be a lexical borrowing from Hindi-Urdu, there is no evidence to suggest that Indian English is structurally equivalent to either of them. This comparative study also helps us establish that it is possible to learn a second language without much interference from 'standard' varieties.

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Endnotes

¹ By Indian English, we refer to its dialect spoken in the northern (Hindi-Urdu) belt. Other dialects may have different features. Existing work on Indian English include Bhatt and Mesthrie (2008), Sedlatschek (2009) and Lange (2012), among others.

² An anonymous reviewer suggests that the following sentence (i) is grammatical in Indian English. However, our informants find this structure completely unacceptable. We therefore assume this to reflect a dialectal variation in the language and put it aside for future research.

(i) He is so innocent, he is no?

³ Some exceptions to this rule are listed below.

(i) There is a mosque in that street, isn't there?

(ii) There are some girls in your class, aren't there?

⁴A third person reading for the absent subject in such constructions is also not attested easily by native speakers of the language. A reviewer points out that given appropriate discourse / contexts, this reading may become available.

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Multilingualism as a Classroom Resource: Teachers' Experiences

Suneeta Mishra

Introduction

India, like some other countries in the world, is highly multilingual, with a large number of languages belonging to five different language families. The 1961 census (considered to be the most reliable till now) recorded 1652 different languages, of which 87 languages are used in the print media, 71 on radio and 47 as the medium of instruction in schools. That could be astounding for someone belonging to a country that follows a 'more or less monolingual' policy or pretends to be monolingual. However, in the Indian education system, there are different sets of issues for different stakeholders.

For policymakers, it is not just the sheer number of languages that presents a challenge. They have to simultaneously deal with several concerns—the need for mother tongue instruction, moving towards the mainstream language in trying to keep up with technological advancement, preservation of the native languages while also providing space for modern and foreign languages and maintaining a socio-political harmony in trying to achieve all these goals. For the parents, the issue of utility and employability of education is the most important. However, it is the teacher and the students who play a pivotal role in deciding what finally happens to all the policies and principles in the real field. This paper presents some case studies based on the classroom experiences of some teachers from the primary classes of some government schools in Delhi.

A Typical Situation

A typical primary grade classroom of a government school in Delhi has quite a varied population of children in terms of region, religion, caste and language. Among these factors, linguistic variation has the most far-reaching pedagogical implications. Multiple languages are seen as a 'nuisance' not only for teaching and learning, but also for assessment, despite the fact that most studies based on the impact of multiple languages on learning have proved otherwise.

Numerous studies in India (Pattanayak, 1990; Mohanty, 1989; Dua, 1986; Jhingran, 2005) and abroad (Cummins, 1981; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008) have shown beyond doubt how the neglect of their mother tongues leads to acute performance problems among children from the marginalized sections, while encouraging education in mother tongue medium along with the teaching of other language(s), improves their learning considerably. NCF 2005 clearly states that "Education in the mother tongues will facilitate richer classroom transaction, greater participation of learners, and yield better learning outcomes." This observation is borne out in Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) where she elaborates on how one's language is a powerful marker of identity which in turn is linked to learning performance.

Acharya (1984) traces the reason for 26% dropouts at the level of elementary education to the lack of 'cultural content' relevant to the child, a very core part of it being the child's

mother tongue. On a similar note, Jhingran (2005) points out that over 12% children suffer severe learning disadvantages because they are denied access to primary education through their mother tongues.

Present Study

This paper attempts to bring forth the attempts of some teachers (who showed a positive response to the idea of multilinguality as a norm, and the scope of using it in a positive way in the classroom) to use multilingualism in their classrooms as a resource and asset rather than as a deterrent in teaching and learning. The data used here consists of observations and informal discussions on the issue of multilingualism with these teachers, some of whom have been my colleagues.

Case 1

Ms Aruna was a class V teacher when these classroom interactions took place. There were 38 students in her class, about one-third of whom had migrated to Delhi in the last 3-4 years. In her class, she came across at least four regional variants of Hindi, apart from Bengali. She tried to incorporate this multilinguality in her everyday teaching by adopting a holistic approach in all subject areas while focusing on lexical and syntactic levels. For example, in one of her classes, there was a discussion on the various kinds of fuels used in rural and urban areas. She asked her students to talk about the fuels used for cooking food, for driving vehicles, etc., in their native regions. The children came up with lots of examples from their regional dialects. For instance, 'cow dung' had many names such as 'uple', 'gose' and 'kande'. Many other colloquial terms were also discussed in the class.

Case 2

Ms. Shashi had a tough time dealing with some older children (about 5-6 years older than the other children) in her class IV as she herself was quite young when she started teaching them. These children also belonged to a different linguistic community from the other children. They were from Haryana, and the other children could not speak their language. They had formed a separate group, and were quite aggressive even towards the teachers. One day, Ms. Shashi, who happened to belong to the same linguistic community as this older group of students spoke to them in their language. This interaction allowed Ms. Shashi to instantly bond with these students as they could now identify with her, and moreover they felt more comfortable using their language. This incident also had a major impact on the general behaviour and classroom participation of these children. Following this, Ms. Shashi planned her lessons keeping in mind not only the linguistic needs of the rest of the class but also of this group of children.

Case 3

Preeti had a student from Uttar Pradesh in her class, who spoke a different dialect from that of the other children in the class. The student's family had migrated from UP just a few months ago. She did not participate much in the class and seemed lost when anyone tried to interact with her. One day, while on the topic of 'mapping', there was a discussion on what different parts of a house are called. Preeti asked everybody what 'toilet' is called in their homes, villages, etc. The girl from UP hesitantly said that 'toilet' was called 'gusalkhana' in her language. Preeti encouraged her to tell the class some more words used for other parts of the house, repeated the words and wrote them on the board to give her language due recognition. This recognition gave the girl so much

confidence that she started sharing a lot of things from her culture. Preeti observed that she had a much deeper knowledge about plants and animals than her classmates, and she used this as a resource for discussions on these topics.

Case 4

Mr. Akshay had 5-6 languages in his class population, with at least 4 variants of Hindi. He incorporated a multilingual approach in his teaching by way of story-telling and retelling in different languages. He observed that when children narrated stories in their mother tongues, they mixed up many languages (code-mixing). He also tried to make children compare different languages (available in the class, plus English) in terms of their lexicon and sentence structure. He took up film songs and poems from a few dialects to work on reading and writing skills, and found that children were much more interested in writing when the text was contextualized.

Some interesting commonalities that were observed across these case studies were as follows:

1. Giving space to the learners' home language has a tremendous psychological impact on his/her motivation for learning. In all the cases, the teachers reported a substantially enhanced participation from students whose home language was given space, and in one case it even resulted in a much better teacher-student relationship.
2. Incorporating a multilingual approach has a positive impact on the overall learning atmosphere of the class and benefits not just the minority group but also the majority group whose knowledgebase is widened and enriched. Psychologically, it results in mutual tolerance and respect among peers, which is essential for a positive learning environment.

3. A point of concern noted by the teachers was that children in the lower grades seemed to be more open to accepting others' languages and expressing in their home language (if different) than those in the upper grades, typically class V. This acceptance however, was dependent on the teacher's motivation. This seems to stem from the fact that assessment criteria, including the norm of using 'proper' and 'standard' language, are much more strictly followed in the higher grades. Also, the students are more aware of the expectations in higher classes, hence the resistance to using the home language which is considered as a 'non-standard', 'non-exam' language.

Conclusion

The case studies discussed in this paper give us some hope that the gap between the philosophical foundations of education and actual practice can be reduced, and that the education system can become a little more tolerant of the heterogeneity which marks the very nature of Indian society. Though these case studies and similar experiences of some sensitive teachers seem to present a rosy picture for the future, a bitter fact is that this change cannot happen only in the classroom and only by the teachers. This argument is substantiated by the third observation discussed above. Why is it that younger children are more open to accepting variation than the older children? This is because the teacher or the students alone cannot change the whole system, the expectations, the language hierarchy and the feudal mindset pertaining to linguistic inequalities. On the one hand, the teacher is expected to be sensitive towards the multilingual aspect of the Indian classrooms. On the other hand, the written assessment still expects monolinguality, school systems are still going ahead with separate English-medium sections and higher education material is still not available in minority languages (ironically,

even Hindi is marginalized when it comes to the availability of written texts).

This scenario is not just limited to the education system. There is a larger issue regarding the preservation of the 'cultural capital' that the previous generations have accumulated over a period of time. Each day, a number of languages are dying, and this 'linguistic genocide' as Skutnabb-Kangas calls it, is taking place at exponential rates due to the shrinking space of home languages of a majority of school-going children and migrating adults.

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Language, Education and Society: Multilingualism in India

Ankit Saraf

Introduction

India is said to be a sociolinguistic giant, and this giant is huge and different from the ordinary. The nerve system of this giant is multilingualism. Indian multilingualism is enormous in size, with over 1600 mother tongues reducible to about 200 languages for a population of about 1.27 billion people, with the population of many of the linguistic minorities being larger than many European countries (Annamalai, 2001). According to Li Wei (Wei, 2000), “Language is a human faculty: it coevolves with us” and monolingualism, which even in normal circumstances is a rare phenomenon, is beyond imagination in a context such as India where English has coexisted with indigenous languages over a long period. In fact, the magnitude of multilingualism in India has made scholars wonder about how communication happens and how social cohesion is maintained (Annamalai, 2001).

Since time immemorial, India has been a multilingual country. Through more than four millennia of known history, the linguistic families which co-existed together have continuously interacted with each other and achieved a pan-Indian character which is unique in itself, firstly, in the matter of sentence structure and, secondly, in the number of shared items of vocabulary (Prasad, 1979). In fact the world itself has now entered a phase of globalization where the phenomenon of bilingualism/ multilingualism has become the norm.

Multilingualism, Language Inclusion and the Role of Schools

Multilingualism in India is a product of its history and a reflection of its diverse cultures. Schools play a vital role in maintaining multilingualism and in changing its nature. Planning for the development of Indian languages starts at the school level to ensure, in theory that it allows the multilingual base to continue. For the students, the motivation to learn several languages arises from advantages which might possibly act as incentives for learning more and more languages. These advantages range from better jobs to enjoying diverse cinema, reading magazines and travelling.

The difference between the language that minority children speak at home and the language they use in school is one of their distinguishing features. If the language the child brings to the classroom is derided and stigmatized, and no academic strategy is adopted to give such children competence in the school language so that they may study as equals to the majority language children, they develop an inferiority complex. This in turn affects their personality. Language is therefore both the cause and the symptom of an inefficient education system. In the latter sense, language is only an indirect cause of lower opportunity, low social status, and therefore, discrimination (Pattanayak, 1981).

The multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural character of India necessitates the inclusion of several languages in the curriculum for school

education. Studies reveal that for the stakeholders in school education, the inclusion of several languages in the school curriculum is not considered to be an additional load. However, in the fulfilment of their objectives, students come across several difficulties from the pedagogic, curricular and environmental areas. The most important ones among them, in order of descending difficulty are:

- confusing to learn grammars of different languages (pedagogic)
- no occasion to use the language for practice (environmental)
- no extra coaching at home (environmental), and
- many other subjects to learn (curricular).

Teachers mostly emphasize the environmental and curricular difficulties, and attribute the least number of problems to the pedagogy of language teaching. However, according to the students, the least number of problems arise from the curricular front. In spite of the difficulties, the students continue to work since they are highly motivated to learn several languages and are encouraged in this task by their parents (Srivastava, Shekhar, & Jayaram, 1978).

Multilingualism: Individual and the Classroom

The economics of monolingualism is such that two languages are considered a nuisance, three languages uneconomic, and many languages absurd. But when many languages are a fact of life and a condition of existence, restrictions on the choice of language use is a nuisance and one language is not only uneconomic, but absurd. Our current education system tends to make people monolingual in a dominant language. According to Pattanayak (1981), the notion of one dominant language as the medium of instruction leaves thousands of children illiterate

in their mother tongue and fosters low achievement levels in the dominant language itself. There is no doubt that language is a major factor in the case of school dropouts and stagnation in education. To a great extent the high rate of illiteracy, especially in tribal areas, can be attributed to the acceptance of the notion of one dominant language in a state and the lack of proper language planning.

We often hear educators making statements such as “Multilingualism may be a great asset in life but it is a major obstacle in pedagogy”. Such statements make two claims about multilingualism: one in the context of real life and the other in the context of pedagogy. In both these contexts, although the construct of multilingualism is the same, it is applied to different spaces—the individual and the classroom respectively. The construct appears to be that multilinguality implies the presence of more than one distinct language in a given space. There is an old saying, “A man who knows two languages is equivalent to two men”. This is because a person who can speak many languages can communicate with people from those language backgrounds easily and hence have a wider social life and effortlessly fit in a new place. Therefore, multilinguality offers a lot of autonomy to an individual, and is an asset in terms of acceptance into a different language culture. If an immigrant can speak the language of the natives, he or she is considered a member of the native community, albeit tentatively. This acceptance offers a sense of security to the individual and hence becomes very important for his / her wellbeing.

Multilinguality also brings with it the opportunity to read and understand the literature of different languages which is a great asset as it offers a variety of perspectives and the key to a huge repository of codified knowledge. In a world where knowledge of the codified form is power, and access to that knowledge is limited, a

multilingual literate is indeed privileged. A multilingual literate enjoys a greater privilege than one who can only speak different languages. In fact, in a world of disappearing geographical boundaries, it is hard to find people in positions of power who are not multilingual. Multilinguality offers a political edge and is hence a great advantage.

A multilingual classroom, however, is not the same as a multilingual individual. In a multilingual classroom context, students belonging to different language backgrounds sit together under one roof, but they may or may not be able to communicate among themselves. This becomes challenging for the teacher as she cannot teach students who do not understand the language she speaks. There are several instances of such challenges and teachers, therefore, enter a multilingual classroom of the above nature hesitantly. Moreover, pedagogy also includes spaces beyond classroom interaction such as writing textbooks for a multilingual audience and incorporating sensitivity to different language speakers. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the teacher, through pedagogy, to cultivate the right kind of milieu because second language acquisition also depends on the formal language acquisition contexts (Agnihotri, Khanna, and Sachdev, 1998). The teacher is hence faced with an insurmountable challenge.

The reason for such fears, however, is not unfounded but only uninformed. We forget that children are adaptable and that there is a mutual relationship between the learner and his environment. It is highly exaggerated that multilingual classrooms offer no communicative possibility among the students themselves, and between the students and the teacher. The “multilinguality is an obstacle” claim presumes a high degree of non-communicability. Situations with a high degree of non-communicability have no sustenance and lead to adaptation. Both the teachers and students adapt to the

circumstances and learn to communicate with each other eventually. This adaptation of our language behaviour is due to our multilingual nature.

A common argument against this adaptability could be that it is difficult to teach a foreign language in a classroom where it is a huge challenge to communicate. It would require the individuals to possess instrumental or integrative motivations (Agnihotri, Khanna, and Sachdev, 1998) for learning to happen. This may be true of monolingual classrooms—an opposite of the above construct—but in multilingual classrooms, the motivation to communicate would already exist in children because of their multilingual milieu. This is especially true of children growing up in cities where the population comprises of immigrants from different language-speaking backgrounds. These children adapt to speaking in one common as well as many languages, and develop the required motivation to learn more than one language.

The problem also lies in how we commonly construct the idea of multilinguality—it is seen as the acquisition of more than one language. However, since language boundaries are porous, there is no “a language” (Agnihotri, 2007) and everyone is multilingual. After all, sounds are the basic components of all languages and these sounds are shared between languages. Again, all human languages function in terms of constituents that have an internal consistency and the patterns of these constituents are not infinite. They vary, for example, along the parameter of a language being verb-final or verb-medial. Verb-final languages such as Hindi have postpositions, e.g. *mez par* ‘on the table’ but verb-medial languages such as English have prepositions, e.g. ‘on’ comes before and not after ‘table’. Hence, language teaching can benefit immensely in a multilingual classroom.

The question then boils down to teaching other subjects, and the challenges associated with

them in a multilingual classroom. The argument for this is that when it comes to words and meanings, the relation between them is arbitrary and therefore there is no commonality between languages. This argument holds ground if we do not dig deeper into how multilingual children associate words with languages. The multilingual mind looks at words in a very different way. When the idea of 'one pure language' is absent, multilingual children acquire a new vocabulary without language categorization.

Conclusion

Education is probably the most fundamental monopoly element in an in-egalitarian social and economic stratification. Language is the key to understanding the mutually reinforcing relationship between language use, elite formation and vertical growth of education, unequal opportunities, and greater social and economic inequality. Taught mother tongue (different from home mother tongue), imposed standard and superposed languages do not only accentuate the existing inequalities, but also introduce inequalities where none existed before.

Accepting the fact that the linguistic landscape of India is extremely complex, we have not paid enough attention to the language problems in education in proportion to their primacy and functional importance in the entire framework. It is necessary to adopt a pragmatic approach to linguistic usage in education, and take into account the mechanisms of standardization of language in plural societies. Multilingual and multicultural education requires, apart from positive attitudes to speech variation, a degree of planning, proficiency in the language of the classroom and that of learners, and a high level of skill in teaching. The understanding of the socio-cultural process is considered incomplete without an understanding of the dialectical relationship between language, education and society.

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Reflective Journal Writing

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As a part of their pre-service for the four year teacher-training programme, my students in college are required to engage in practice teaching for four months in their fourth year. The final year is quite demanding for them as they prepare themselves as interns for their first teaching assignment. The preparation includes making weekly lesson plans, writing journals and doing two projects, along with attending classes for three theory papers. While all of this is an essential requirement of the programme, it also is a great opportunity for them to learn and grow personally and professionally. As they engage with elementary school children, they begin to weave valuable and meaningful threads of learning experiences, insights and perspectives.

While everyone reflects on a daily basis about many things under the sun, not many people maintain reflective journals. It is not an easy task by any measure. I have included a few vignette accounts of our student teachers that describe some aspects of their language teaching, and what they have learnt from it. Though many of us have often remarked that journal entries tend to be more descriptive than reflective in nature, we all agree that reflections take time to be written well. As our student teachers evolved and developed, they started to reflect critically and creatively about their teaching, and write reflectively about it, often making connections between theory and practice. This paper attempts to highlight the practice, the importance and the benefits of writing reflective journals and to also offer suggestions that could make journal writing more effective and reflective.

What are Reflective Journals?

Journals are accounts or records of classroom teaching, and whatever goes on in the school. They serve as powerful personal archives that can be used to revisit, review, analyze, and evaluate from time to time one's teaching and teaching styles, and the complexity of students' learning with a view to inform future judgment and action. Self-inquiry becomes crucial in the process as one begins to record not only 'what happened in the classroom' but also question 'why and how it happened', and 'what can be done to resolve an issue or to approach it differently?' It is when one starts thinking in terms of 'why', 'how' and 'what next', that reflections become purposeful. Just the way we sometimes 'think aloud' and speak, reflective journal writing helps teachers to 'write aloud' explicitly what they have been thinking about implicitly.

Why Reflect?

My students have always commented that although they find writing their reflections a difficult task, they find this exercise to be very useful and insightful. They realize that writing journals helps them to:

- Capture their teaching goals and achievements in a systematic manner
- Increase their sense of pride, confidence and ownership of ideas, methods and strategies that they use
- Observe patterns in their own teaching

- Question themselves, solve problems and develop critical thinking skills

To put it in Socrates' words, reflections help to "Know thyself". More than eighty years ago, Dewey (1933) also valued the role of reflection as the road to learning. He described a reflective teacher as the one who "seeks meaning from teaching practice and students' learning and creates from this a theory to live by, a story that provides structure for the growth of the students and the teacher."

Areas of Reflection

Reflective journals broadly tend to focus on the following areas:

- Observations and evaluations of lessons transacted
- Defining teaching goals and beliefs
- Assessing students' needs
- Implementing lesson plans
- Assessing teaching methods and strategies
- Issues of classroom management
- Factors leading to personal and professional growth

The following vignette reveals the observations and comments of a student-teacher on the basic infrastructure within the classroom, and what she did to make it flexible and suitable to her teaching and learning environment.

The First Vignette

The classrooms in the school are spacious, airy and well-lit. The blackboard is visible to all. However, the seating arrangement is highly rigid and not suitable for any kind of group activities. The bulky desks and chairs are difficult to move around. The students, 45-50 in number, stay confined to one place throughout the day. Piaget has talked about the importance of flexibility in the classrooms to allow students and the teacher

to move about freely. Being inspired by him, I wish to create an environment that is conducive for active learning. For operative, connotative and figurative learning to take place, furniture should be arranged in a way that it allows for active participation and mobility.

Though I knew that a group activity was going to be challenging since it was not feasible to move the furniture, I still decided to try it out by doing an activity called 'Word Bricks'. I wrote words from different parts of the speech on thick pieces of paper. Working in groups of 4-5, the students had to use the word 'bricks' to build a story around a particular theme. The groups were formed in a way that two students in each alternate row had to turn themselves on their chairs to face two other students. A lot of time was wasted as the students who had to turn around were uncomfortable. I then told them to stand and participate in brainstorming with their group members. Somehow, the students remained distracted. Finally, I decided to make it a pair activity. I will have to be careful in the future and avoid planning group activities because of the seating constraint.

Parul Nadar

Reflection

- Do you think Parul could have thought of other innovative ways to do this activity?
- Should she have given up the idea of doing group activities in the future? Why or why not?

The following vignette is an example of an approach adopted by a student-teacher to meet her goals of providing ample language exposure to her students, and creating opportunities to foster interaction.

The Second Vignette

I had decided at the beginning of my primary internship that I would begin each day with circle

time and a *baal sabha* in which I wanted to include poems, *baalgeet*, stories, jokes and incidents from daily life. This would give an opportunity to the students to talk about and share their experiences. They generally love to share their experiences. I wanted my students to have a lot of language exposure to both Hindi and English, and become confident speakers and participants, without thinking of the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of their comments. I wanted to keep the desire to learn alive in them.

I planned to get some visitors during circle time with whom the children could interact and get some information about different professions. I invited the school sweeper one day. I had shared this idea of interacting with different people with the children, and they were excited about it. They made greeting cards to welcome sweeper uncle and prepared questions for him. His wife, also a sweeper in the school, came along as well. The children asked them about their working hours, whether they liked their job, the problems they faced and the salary they earned. I did not have to intervene while the children interacted with ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunty’. After they left, we had a discussion so that we could collectively sum up our learning.

Meenu Yadav

Reflection

- What were some of the beliefs that Meenu had about her students?
- As a language teacher, apart from her goal of making her students confident speakers, how was Meenu integrating linguistic skills?

The following vignette shows how the student-teacher determines the needs of her students through a survey and offers suggestions.

The Third Vignette

For my first class with class 7, I planned to conduct a survey. I wanted to assess the reading habits of the students, and find out which type of genre and authors they enjoyed reading. I also wanted to gauge their reading level. I designed a short questionnaire and asked them to take 10-15 minutes to fill it. When I read their responses, I concluded that most of them do not read anything except their textbook chapters. Many students named Rabindranath Tagore as their favourite author but could not name any literary text written by him. Some filled in names of magazines such as *Champak*, *Tinkle* and *Nandan*. Some students mentioned Ruskin Bond.

I wanted to motivate the children to read more. So in my next class, I asked them to pay attention to the little things, to read what is written in newspaper advertisements, wrappers of biscuits, signboards, hoardings, posters, etc. I also suggested some names of books and authors that could interest them.

Parul Nadar

Reflection

- Parul made a few suggestions. How else would you have motivated the students to read more?
- Why is it so important to read? Why did Parul feel that the students needed to read beyond their textbook chapters?

The following vignette is an example of a teaching strategy that the student-teacher uses to deal with difficult words:

The Fourth Vignette

While doing the ‘The Bear Story’, a few difficult words such as ‘slain’ and ‘amiable’ had come up. The students had not heard these words before. I wanted them to guess their meanings

contextually but they were unable to do so. So I gave them these examples: between a deer and a lion, who would be able to overpower whom, and what would be the consequence of such an action? The students immediately guessed that 'to slay' also means 'to kill'. I then asked them to guess the nature of friendship between two friends. Their response was 'friendly' and this helped them to understand the meaning of the word 'amiable'.

Meenu Yadav

Reflection

- What would you do as a post-reading task to deal with new vocabulary?
- How do you provide contextual clues to aid comprehension?

The following vignette is an example that shows how the student-teacher was confronted with a classroom management and discipline issue because of her plan not working out, and how she decided to tackle it:

The Fifth Vignette

I finished writing the plan of the day and the news of the day that my students give to me every day on the blackboard. Once this was done, I started reading the poem 'UunThCalaa' from their Hindi textbook. I read aloud each line, and asked the students to repeat after me. I also stopped after each line to discuss it, and raise relevant questions. A few students began to answer my questions together. In no time, most of the students had lost interest. While the students seated in the first two benches were still listening to me, the ones at the back started to talk and do other things. Soon, the class became very noisy and my plan failed. No one was listening to me anymore. My supervisor was also in the room at that time. She advised me to stop doing the poem, and first manage the class. The following day, I decided that I

had to make some ground rules so that this would not happen again.

Sarla Tanwar

Reflection

- What suggestions would you give to Sarla for classroom management?
- How else could Sarla have done the poem?

Some Suggestions

Journal writing is quite complex. It requires a structure, purpose, audience and deep introspection. How can we make our students reflect better?

Sample Vignette Accounts

Before the student-teachers begin with their internship, the teacher educator, in addition to briefing them about the practice and importance of writing journals, should carry a few journals to the classroom that she considers as weak or strong reflections. Depending on the class strength, the students may be divided into groups. Each group should be given one vignette to read. After reading, they should discuss the elements—the format, the questions raised, the insights discussed and the comments made. This would help the student-teachers to get familiar with various methods, approaches and strategies that other students have used to implement or transact their plans, and explore classroom management techniques. Since journal writing is a reflective process, this exposure is an important first step that should help the student-teachers to develop reflective sensibilities, enhance their ability for self-analysis and the capacity to gradually reflect as they begin their journey as teachers.

Checklists

The teacher educators, in collaboration with the student-teachers could prepare checklists of

questions based on their reading of the journal accounts. What are the issues that these journal accounts discuss? Are these reflective accounts about evaluating teaching, about the teacher's role, goals or beliefs?; or about student roles, behaviours or needs?; or about teaching methods and strategies? Once the checklists are ready, the student-teachers will get ideas about the potential areas of reflection that they could write about in their journals.

Presentations

Once each group has gone through at least one vignette, they could make a presentation on what it was about, what they learnt from it, their comments and suggestions that could have made the reflections better. Other groups could participate by responding to each presentation.

Summary Thoughts

The teacher educator must provide a closure to these presentations by summing up the various observations and findings. By engaging in this process, the student-teachers will discover the significance of peer interaction and reflection, learn to construct their own knowledge, reflect critically on their learning and become reflective practitioners.

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Reading in First and Second Languages

Sawan Kumari

Introduction

India is a linguistically diverse nation. This linguistic diversity can be attributed to colonization, migration, political influence, and the presence of different ethnic and religious minorities (Sridhar, 1996). Consequently, there is a presence of multiple languages in different parts of the nation, which adds complexity to the education system in India. The choice of language in the school curriculum is a major concern of language education. In this multilingual country, English has attained a distinct position. It is considered as a “library language” and “a window on the world” (NCF, 2005).

Reading is one of the key components of the language curriculum. According to Sinha (2012, p. 22), “The ability to comprehend is especially critical in schools because all the subjects require literacy to successfully develop knowledge”. Therefore, learning to read in two languages including English is a major challenge in India.

Bilingual classrooms are no longer an exception in India as almost every classroom is bilingual in some manner. However, defining bilingualism is not easy. Two extreme views are present on bilingualism. On the one hand, Edward (2000, p. 7) states that “Everyone is bilingual”. He explains that there is no one in the world who does not know at least a few words in a language other than the native language. On the other hand Bloomfield (1933) defines bilingualism as “native like control of two languages” (Hamers and Blanc, 2005, p. 56). In between the views

of Edward and Bloomfield, many definitions exist. According to Macnamara (1967), a bilingual person is one who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills, in a language other than his mother tongue (Hamers and Blanc, 2005). His definition is close to that of Edward. Li (2000), after listing more than thirty distinct types of bilingualism, interpreted the term bilingual as implying the use of two languages.

In India, both extremes of bilingualism are present. However, categorization of classrooms on the basis of bilingualism is not possible because extensive variations are present in terms of the two languages being used in classrooms. The reasons behind this can be many. One reason could be the presence of diverse types of schools—Private schools, English medium schools, Government schools, Government-aided schools, etc., all of which practice bilingualism. Of course, their degree of bilingualism may be different from one another. Irrespective of this diversity, every learner is supposed to function in two languages.

Not only is defining bilingualism complex, but the terms, L1 and L2, under consideration in this paper, also have various ranges. First language, native language and mother tongue are often used interchangeably. In this paper, L1 is considered as the first language acquired by the child, or the mother tongue, or the native language of the child. So far as L2 is concerned, that also has multiple definitions. Stern (1983) defines it as a language of official recognition

(cf. Meija, 2002). Eliss (2003, p.3) explains L2 as "...language other than their mother tongue..." Therefore, in a multilingual country such as India, many second languages are possible. However, in this paper, I will focus on English as the second language.

As stated earlier, in this paper, I will examine reading in L1 and L2 with special attention to English. The paper is divided in two parts; in the first part I will focus on reading processes, and in the second part, I will discuss the differences between L1 and L2 reading.

What is Reading?

Text is not completely explicit; the reader makes the text meaningful. Text, context and reader all interplay together to construe meaning; the role of the reader is very important in reading (Goodman, 1967; Anderson, 1984). Goodman (1967) views reading as a process in which the reader deals with information and constructs meaning continuously using various pieces of information including the text. While reading, the reader first makes predictions, and then conforms to or disagrees with them. Readers use their existing background knowledge information to help to make predictions, and retain what they learn in part by integrating their new learning with what they already know. Background knowledge has a very large range. It includes language, context, content, text and culture. In the following section, I will discuss the role of graphic, syntactic and semantic information in the process of reading.

Graphic, Syntactic and Semantic Information

In Goodman's words:

Three kinds of information are available to the reader. One kind, the graphic information, reaches the reader visually. The other two, syntactic and semantic

information, are supplied by the reader as she begins to process the visual input. Since the reader's goal is meaning, he uses as much or as little of each of these kinds of information as is necessary to get to the meaning. (Cambourne, 1977).

For example, in the sentence, 'Ram is playing football', when the reader sees the word 'Ram', she / he can guess the next word 'is' without seeing it. The reader may be helped in this by the rules of auxiliary and the syntax of the language. Again, after reading 'is', the reader's syntactical knowledge gives a hint that a main verb is supposed to follow 'is', and not a preposition, noun, conjunction or any other word generally. More proficient readers may also expect a negative element 'not' or an adverb owing to their syntactic knowledge. The reader now sees the first letter of the next word—'p'. This 'p' eradicates many other possibilities, such as 'writing', 'eating', 'smoking', etc. Further, not all sounds can follow 'p' in a consonant cluster in the initial position; for example, English does not allow the combination such as 'pb' or 'pz'. These two important parts (semantic and syntactic) develop in different degrees in first and second language reading. In first language reading, the language system is completely developed, whereas in the second language it is still evolving. Also, in the second language the reader is more dependent on the text as she / he is not able to provide any of the language inputs independently which makes second language reading more challenging. The knowledge of syntax of language which is quite accurate in first language gives the reader a boost in his reading which is missing in second language reading. However, the main purpose of reading is to get the meaning and the reader uses as much or as little of each of these kinds of information as is necessary to get to the meaning. According to Goodman(1973), "He makes predictions of the grammatical structure; using the control over language structure he

learned when he learned oral language.” (Cambourne, 1977).

In the next section, I will explore the differences in the learning processes of L1 and L2.

Comparison: Reading in L1 and Reading in L2

Reading itself has many challenges, whether it is in L1 or L2, although L2 is more challenging. Let us attempt to look at why L2 is more challenging. Although differences emerge naturally for various reasons, this paper will focus majorly on linguistic and processing differences, different amount of exposure (Grabe, 2012), and the differences between acquisition and learning (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 2003).

Linguistic and Processing Differences: Vocabulary, Grammar and Discourse Knowledge

Beginner Readers in L1

According to Grabe (2012), the starting point of reading is immensely different for a learner in terms of his / her linguistic knowledge in L1 and L2. The learners begin reading in L1 after learning to communicate in the first language. This means, that by the age of six or seven, learners have a considerable amount of vocabulary (around 6000 words) when they are formally introduced to reading. In addition to this rich vocabulary, they also have a tacit knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language. So, they have already acquired a well-established language system. Now, children need to learn to make a connection between the language and its mapping system. This is itself a very complex process. However, they have considerable help in this from their well-developed oral language.

Beginner Readers in L2

In contrast with the learners of L1, beginners of L2 reading do not have the resource of several thousand words stored in their head to be matched with the newly sounded out word (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Thus, the benefit of developing letter-sound correspondence as a support of reading is lost in most L2 settings; second language students cannot match a sounded out word to a word that they know orally since they do not know the word orally (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Here for L2 learners, the task doubles—to know the word and then to identify the mapping of that word. Reading in L2 therefore also involves knowing / learning the new mapping system of L2, which the learner is still in the process of acquiring.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) explained that knowledge of discourse organization sets the way or strategies for acquiring reading skills. Readers not only predict the structure of language, they also predict the development of the text. Familiarity with text structure facilitates reading comprehension as text structure convention can vary from one language to another and awareness of those variations makes comprehension easy.

Different Amount of Exposure

A major difference in second language reading and one that strongly influences the linguistic knowledge differences mentioned above is the learners' exposure to second language reading and print. Most second language readers do not get enough exposure to second language print through reading to build fluency. Nor do they have enough exposure to build a large recognition vocabulary. These differences between first language and second language reading situations are significant because first language readers, over the years, get enough exposure to print to develop fluency automaticity (Grabe, 2012). Smith (1983), in his essay

“Twelve Easy Ways to Make Learning to Read Difficult” states, “Learning to read is a complex and delicate task in which almost all the rules, all the cues, and all the feedback can be obtained only through the act of reading itself. Children learn to read only by reading.” He further suggests that for facilitating their learning to read is to make reading easy for them. He gives the example of riding a bicycle; a child can only learn how to ride a bicycle by practicing it. Similarly, reading can also be learned only through the act of reading.

Acquisition vs. Learning

Krashen (cf. Ellis, 2003) explains the difference between acquisition and learning. Acquisition implies a natural language development process. A target language is used in meaningful interactions with a native speaker, while learning is formal and conscious. In learning, the focus is on the form and function of the language rather than on meaning. Krashen claims that learning cannot be turned into acquisition. Only an acquired language can be used for natural and fluent communication. The first language is always acquired in a meaningful context and in a real situation. As we have discussed earlier, a fully-developed language system helps in developing reading comprehension, which is available in the first language but not in the second. It is therefore clear from this argument that reading in the first language is different from reading in a second language.

Conclusion

Evidently reading in L2 has many more challenges than L1. A well-developed language system is not built only on the mechanism of language but also on the culture, context, usage and history of the people who speak it. Reading in L2 not only uses the first language literacy but also the culture, context, history, etc., of L1, because the reader is armed with all this

knowledge along with the language itself. Using all these resources to construct a new language system is what a reader has to do. Again, the new language system is not only the mechanism of the language, but like L1, it also has a culture, context, and a history of its own. The Indian culture shares a long history with English language. Utilizing the resources of both the languages enhances learning and understanding. Moreover, language is best acquired in a meaningful context; hence all teaching in a sense is language teaching. Teaching of English, therefore, can be strengthened by using the resources of L1.

To conclude, Indian classrooms are multilingual. Reading in L2 is different from reading in L1 in many ways. Linguistic and processing differences are just some of them. Apart from these important factors between L1 and L2, it is quite apparent that the L2 reading process involves the interplay of two language systems (Grabe, 2012). However, it is not only the language system that helps learners comprehend text. There are other factors that influence the reading process, such as the role of the reader, context, the purpose of reading, task, topic, goal, training, etc.. All these factors come into play when reading in L2.

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The Politics of English Language in India

Ujjwal Banerjee

Language is intrinsic to our existence. The role of language in politics can be only understood, if we realize what language means for an individual at a personal level, as only then can we perhaps appreciate its role in collective forums where politics gets manifested.

According to Sapir (1933), language may not only refer to experience or even interpret experience, but that it also substitutes for it in the sense that in those sequences of interpersonal behavior which form the greater part of our daily lives speech and action supplement each other. Language and experience are closely intertwined and this is an important reason of symbolism in language.

In a society, we live together expressing our thoughts and feelings and understand the thoughts and feelings of those around us. We pursue common ends, and engage with the people around us for working and living together. There is an innate need to make ourselves understood and to understand what others are saying around us, about things happening around us, about possibilities for the future, and about solutions to problems around us. How can that need be met but through the use of language?

According to Britton (1971), “We become experienced people in the light of other people’s experiences as well as our own”. We learn through others’ experience largely through language. We can see how important language is in making us who we are. It is to be noted that all this is possible because there is a

community of people that is able to comprehend and communicate in that language. The more the number of speakers of a given language, the higher the repertoire of experience that the language carries with it. Hence over time, this leads to a self-reinforcing mechanism of strengthening that language further.

The other question to be looked at is: what makes language such an important marker of identity?

There are several markers of identity of an individual. But in a society, some identities play a more dominant role than others. Things such as one’s food habits, or the sports one likes, or the kind of movies, are apolitical markers of identity. However, language essentially allows us to relate to the world around us, and predominantly if not completely, determines our social presence. The second aspect that gives language such a significant position is that as human beings, we essentially grow into a language and also through it much before we actually start looking at some other language speaker as different from us. For example a 3-4 year old child cannot have any political inclination. However, by the time the child becomes capable enough to start seeing how language is used as an instrument to shape societies, the language/ languages in which he can express himself best, become his own. Thus he /she interprets the larger world through that lens. Therefore, unless a person does not adopt an objective view to the linguistic issue, that person is highly susceptible to the political rhetoric of a language. An example of this is

the connotation around the phrase '*Marathi Manos*' in the state of Maharashtra. The two words collectively refer to one singular identity; that of a person who speaks Marathi or considers it as his own language.

In a multilingual country like India, children are exposed to a few languages. Our capacity to orient ourselves for any given political issue is the highest when we relate to people who share the same situation as ours. Language is one of our main identity markers. Thus even though one may not be talking about linguistic politics, whenever people have to collectively voice their opinion on any matter that is of a larger interest, it is more than likely that they would approach people who they can understand and who can understand them linguistically. Language plays an important role in politics. This is commonly witnessed during mass mobilizations by groups, where one sees a very strong unity of language or the presence of a language community.

Impact of English on the Indian Democracy

It is interesting to note how English is perceived in India, even though it does not have the privilege of a state being carved from its essential speakers. Although the use of English in India is actually a colonial legacy, the fact that colonialists spoke this language is not the key reason why many families teach their children this language today. In a way, it carries the stamp of the past but with the weight of the present day socio-economic realities.

English has assumed a position of authority in today's globalized world. According to a recent article by Mohanty (2012)

English is used by about 750 million people, only half of whom speak it as a mother tongue. More than half the world's technical and scientific periodicals are in English; English is the medium for 80 per cent of the

information stored in the world's computers.

Three quarters of the world's mail, telexes and cables are in English. (The Hindu, 2012)

This has led to a widening and deepening of the digital divide, thereby exacerbating the power relations based on access to information.

Thus access to English can also be seen as a proxy of access to major sources of knowledge relevant for work in the modern day economy. In today's global economy, the demand for skills in English language would naturally be high. Along with that, since command over English is still the privilege of a few who have access to this language at school or at home, the people who can speak this language for communication and access to knowledge, run parallel to the socio-economic structure in the country. Like two parallel lines, their lives are disjointed from the concerns of the larger society and perhaps inadvertently they end up in maintaining a constant distance in terms of access to resources, sources of knowledge and opportunities at work. Rural India, where agriculture remains the mainstay economic activity, still remains alienated from English, as it is not used in the transactions in rural lives. It is not surprising then that private schools in rural India are mushrooming in the name of providing 'English medium education' to children. The fact that English is construed as a vehicle for upward social mobility is a clear indicator of the status that it enjoys amongst the majority of the nation.

The flip side of this situation is that along with other social divides, language has become another tool for creating a hierarchy, as people who are not able to communicate in English are considered inferior by those who are fluent in it. In fact one of the regional political parties of India—the Samajwadi Party—in its election manifesto prior to the general elections of 2009 in India, took an anti-English and anti-computers stand which did not go very well with the electorate. (The Times of India, 2009)

This ability of English to further stratify society has not been examined well enough in our schools, and perhaps at some level, it threatens the very foundations of our democracy. When language, which plays such a fundamental role in uniting people, is itself the reason for social division, the distance between social groups will only increase. According to Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2003),

The peculiar characteristics that accompany competition for status often impede effective collective action. In a sociological sense, this is true: states where there is a greater social distance and inequality between citizens often find collective action in politics more difficult. (p.94)

In bigger cities, English conversation and private sector employment mostly go hand in hand. In fact people working in private sector extend the boundaries from their work place to their lives, as they do not depend on public services for their education, healthcare, etc. They turn to the government only when they have no choice, e.g., for payment of tax, police service, compliance to regulatory norms, getting licenses, etc. The experience of dealing with a private service provider is mostly so different from that of the Government in terms of convenience. In a way they end up leading 'privatized' public lives. This is evident when we see how many such people come out and vote during an election. In the 2009 elections, for example, the voting from a prosperous and educated community in Mumbai (referred to by its geographical location—South Mumbai) was less than forty per cent while the city average was around 41.4 per cent. by Mukherjee (2014) This particular community within Mumbai comprises of mostly well-off people who mainly communicate in English.

Implications for School Education

For children who lead lives surrounded by English, there is a risk of elitism and alienation, and this risk can have immense repercussions for our democracy. The ability to relate to the lives of the vast milieu of people with varied degrees of access to resources and opportunities should be a fundamental prerequisite to the idea of democracy in a complex nation such as ours. This idea has to be defended from any parochial attitude in the name of language, social status, caste or religion. Children should not construe competence in English language as a marker of privilege that they have over others- as is commonly seen when students from some international boards leading completely diametrically opposite lives, visit impoverished communities for teaching kids, as part of their 'social responsibility' sessions. They believe that not knowing English itself is actually a sign of poverty. This feeling of me vs them as against 'us' is a distance that children need to cover and schools can facilitate this journey. The school has a pre-eminent role in ensuring that language does not make the task of attaining social equality even more distant in an already highly unequal society such as India. A key feature of democracy is for people to relate to each other's issues and search for space for change which should be beneficial for a large section of people. And language plays a fundamental role in bringing people together. We can ill afford to subsidize an increase in opportunities leading to greater economic progress at the cost of weakening our democratic framework. In unequal societies, getting people to stand up for a common cause is difficult. More so if certain sections are wary of others on account of factors such as language, religion or caste. An essential part of democracy is not just understanding how the triad of judiciary, executive and legislative works (as is taught at a basic level in senior secondary), but relating to the problems that are part of our everyday existence and not allowing language to become an impediment.

For teachers particularly, who work with children from families who live insulated lives in the bigger cities of the country, there is a need to consciously work towards eliminating the psychological attitude that such children develop towards people who do not speak English. This is particularly important since, it is precisely around that attitude that our capacity to relate to people from other socio-economic background develops.

Finally, this is not an argument against English, but an appeal to examine the sociological forces that accompany the growing popularity of English, and the caution that needs to be exercised by its practitioners. In the process of strengthening the country on the global map, we must not get weakened in our own backyard.

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Interview

Jacob Tharu (JT) talks to
Geetha Durairajan (GD) and
Lina Mukhopadhyay

A student of psychology with a special interest in educational assessment, Professor Jacob Tharu retired after thirty years of service in the Department of Evaluation, CIEFL, (now known as EFL University). Post-retirement, he has been working with various NGOs in the education sector, and has also been associated with assessment-linked programmes of the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), some state SCERTs and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

Geetha Durairajan and Lina Mukhopadhyay jointly transcribed and edited the interview.

GD: Good morning. One of the most current 'topics' in the area of evaluation is continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). Could you tell us something about your views on CCE and how important it is for a classroom teacher?

JT: Yes. We have been talking about continuous and comprehensive evaluation for the last two to three years, but we seem to have forgotten that this is a slogan that has been around for nearly 30 years. It was first mentioned in 1985-86 in the new National Policy on Education, and has been slowly taking shape. CCE, for me, is much more than frequent classroom testing. In fact, I regard the current CCE post-National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 as something very different from the older pre-NCF scheme; it has a new philosophy about the nature of knowledge gained by the student. It was in the NCF that a lot of ideas were first put together to form a new vision. Some of these are especially relevant for CCE and are briefly explained as follows:

Firstly, **the child is a co-constructor of knowledge and so a participant in the transaction of the curriculum.** This is not a very new idea, but as a curricular statement it is very important. Secondly, there is an emphasis on going **beyond the textbook**, and relating knowledge to life outside the school. The third

idea of **valuing, even celebrating diversity** is linked with the first two ideas. These ideas were linked creatively in the NCF document to support the assertion that **the learning trajectory of a child is not pre-determined.** The low pedagogic value of conventional achievement is shown up here. Tests such as those conducted at the end of the unit or term or year at any grade level assess **only** learning of what has been pre-specified and nothing beyond it. They are summative, and describe the student's status after the teaching is over. What pedagogic value can they have? It is only in the NCF's overall approach, which recognizes unpredictable learning, that the wider scope of CCE becomes relevant, and I would add, possible.

GD: Could you clarify this point?

This is a strong statement, I agree. But take the old fixed syllabus and the fixed question paper and the pre-determined marking guidelines; where was the need for the flexible testing associated with CCE? When the aim is to ensure that learners are learning what they are supposed to learn in a predetermined way, without any space for diversity and openness, teaching becomes like conventional coaching for an exam. Neatly structured, syllabus-based unit tests are best for this purpose. CCE with its

flexibility, which can look messy, is a waste here. But if we believe that children could also be learning different things in different ways, and want to capture such unexpected learning, then the flexibility of CCE is indeed of great value. Another quality of CCE is that it captures the spirit of another old slogan ‘formative assessment’ in a powerful way.

GD: This is an idea about which there is much confusion. Can you shed some light on it?

JT: A test serves a formative purpose when the information it provides is taken as feedback, and changes in ongoing teaching made if needed. Any test early in a term, say, a unit test in July, is initially in a summative position since it comes after the unit. It is only if the results of the test lead to reflection about how the students performed, and how teaching can be modified following the test that it fulfils a formative function. This is where the ‘continuous’ in CCE becomes very important. It creates a space for the teacher during the class, to note what is happening, whether individual learners are doing well or not, and take fairly immediate action. Although this may sometimes be corrective, so-called remediation is not a major concern. The teacher may choose to respond to student performance in an appropriate manner, either in the same lesson or in one of the following lessons. Now that is the space that CCE represents to me.

In contrast, when CCE comes as a set of orders from the SCERT, it is just another set of rules for the teacher to follow, which is what external testing is. So unless we can ensure that CCE is located in the teacher’s space, it is not genuine CCE. If we have a school with parallel sections, A, B and C, we would expect the assessment in each one to be different. This is because the students in each section are different, and we value such diversity and their personal

contribution to curriculum transactions. This is an idealistic statement, but I think that it is a very powerful statement. **It is only the teacher who can do CCE.** However, for this to happen, the teacher has to be helped to become autonomous, empowered and skilled, and for that the teacher has to find the space, the resources and the time. The rich feedback CCE can yield would help her / him to enhance the quality of learning experiences of students with diverse needs.

So, I see CCE essentially as formative. At a practical level, a clear distinction has to be made between recording and reporting performance. In the context of the teaching of writing, let us look at diary-writing. If you take the word ‘diary’, as it is commonly understood, it is something personal. The diary is not for somebody else to look at, except maybe a research scholar who may want to analyze it. Neither is it for some external or higher authority to judge. So, the diary gives the teacher some amount of freedom to record whatever she / he wants or finds meaningful. Now, what the teacher notes during CCE has to be captured in the image of a personal diary. The entries or notes would be meant essentially for her / him to use formatively. But if this same diary is squeezed into a reporting format, it becomes external and standardized because all teachers would be expected to report in the same manner. Between recording and reporting, recording is within the teacher’s own space. Some of her / his observations can be reported, but reporting in itself has no pedagogic value. In most cases reporting is done only to satisfy requirements and regulations, not to share useful information.

In her own records (diary), the teacher needs to build some sort of picture of the child, which may be shared with the parents when required. But it is important to remember that the information does not have to be captured and recorded for posterity. The details that go into

the CCE are simply a record of what is happening in the classroom in a flexible manner, and are for the teacher's internal use. So, this is where the teacher's skill lies—to be able to pay attention to what is going on, make a note, an entry, a tick or a little underlining. By doing so, the teacher fairly quickly, gets a sense of what is happening, and can record it to the extent that it is feasible, and then may be, do something about it.

GD: What according to you is 'comprehensive evaluation' in the context of CCE?

JT: The word 'comprehensive' was also used in the New Policy on Education. We have always said that it is not only the mind but also the affective and psychomotor domains that we are concerned with, and the development of values. These are all part of the objectives of education of a child. Until now, we only looked at the cognitive or the logico-mathematical part, and the formal or scholastic part in evaluation. Everything else was devalued. You got a character certificate, and a certificate saying "active in sports", but those were not part of the formal record of the child. So, the idea was to make the record of the school **comprehensive**—to capture the other dimensions of growth. We have been making statements about these other dimensions of growth, but they have always been neglected as far as evaluation is concerned. Therefore people do not pay much attention to them. So, articulating about the types of development we want in areas other than scholastic was important. I think **CCE represents a response to the need to monitor, assess, pay attention to and thus promote development of these various other qualities.**

GD: How do you capture 'growth' in areas other than the cognitive and scholastic?

JT: Until we encourage teachers to do continuous comprehensive evaluation, and sit with them, with a tape recorder, and record some of the things that they do, growth cannot be captured. Experts from outside do not know. The recordings will give us a sense of what children in class 3 or class 4, in big and small towns and rural areas do, and the different ways in which they develop. In the spirit of CCE, you may say to the teacher, "the child who is very hesitant in class, is unwilling to stand up and give an example, is not answering questions, is also one of your responsibilities; you need to find ways of making this child a little more confident". Now, this is the signal that has to go to the teacher. This is the middle C part of CCE. The other areas are also important.

GD: But if a child remains silent what should a teacher do? How can this confidence-building be made to happen?

JT: This is teaching rather than assessment. What the teacher can do is to gently push/nudge the child in the right direction. The teacher does not have to take any ultimate or final decision and award a grade to the child. Children participating in a language discourse need to have the resources, such as the vocabulary and grammar, so that gradually they use fewer gestures and more vocabulary items. The teacher also has to consider the context in which children interact with each other. For instance, in class 9, we want the students to feel comfortable expressing themselves. For this, a small group is useful because standing up in front of a large class, where the other students may laugh at you, or you may say the wrong thing is difficult. So, the idea of working in small groups is important. Group/pair work has to be used to help students talk to each other. **In the context of CCE, we need to create nurturing conditions where students are able to feel**

free to talk. The skill of participating in a spoken discourse, and more importantly, listening to others is a discipline. Therefore, one needs to look at it more holistically. Here, the **level** is very important: what do class 3 and class 4 students do when they are chatting with each other, what do class 5 and class 6 students do, and what do class 10 and 11 and college students do? Obviously, these levels cannot have the same template; but a model of language resources has exactly the same features, with the same set of grammar items, fillers, honorifics and statements of politeness, and all that is useful. But if you specify them for a particular group or level, then you have a much better picture.

GD: What is this ‘nudging’ and what is its role in evaluation?

JT: All evaluation involves some sort of a value judgment of a gap between what is desired and what is. If a linguist has to observe a student’s language performance in class, he/she can use a recorder and take notes to capture the corpus of the child’s language output and interaction. However, this is only a descriptive statement. The teacher, by contrast, is dealing with expectations—our expectations in class 3 are more than our expectations in class 2; our expectations in class 12 are more than our expectations in class 10. Now this is a fact of life when we are talking about education. It is important to make sure that we understand this notion of an expectation and possibly of discrepancies. So, if a teacher has a sense that this is roughly what a student of a particular class/level should be doing, because other students are doing it, that means he/she knows that it is feasible and possible to achieve. The teacher will nudge the child in that direction. If the student sees that it is possible, and maybe gets the idea, “I can also try” and, “I can also

eventually do that”, or “that is worth trying”—these are the nurturing parts of CCE. Now it is important, that it is not always the toppers in the class who are held up as an example or as a role model. This is really the problem with CCE, that if there is any standard for the teacher to follow, it is the topper, because of the competition and pressure. What I want to say is that, in areas such as social interaction, some children are basically quiet while some are garrulous. Teachers need to find each child’s comfort zone. A sensitive teacher should say for a quiet child that here is a child who would have liked to participate some more, but is held back because of a new concept or because of a social situation that is not conducive and supportive, and then assess how and when to intervene. That is what inclusive education is all about. I think it is inclusion into a context where one can participate not only in physical social terms but also by comprehending and contributing to the ongoing discourse.

GD: How do you link evaluation, which is what CCE is all about, to teaching?

JT: CCE or formative assessment should, in my view, be looked at as an extension of teaching and not an extension of examination reform. When we say teaching and testing should be seamlessly integrated, it means testing and teaching should happen simultaneously and not one after the other. The evaluation part comes in when the teacher notices that there is some sort of a discrepancy between what seems desirable and what the child is doing. Then the teacher may want to do something immediately or take it up later. The teacher may tell herself “this child I’ll let him/her be, and I’ll come back a little later”. The coverage in assessment has to be in small circles. The teacher must gradually move from paying attention to the students who are more

visible, to the students who are less visible, such as the backbenchers. That can only happen over time. We need to look at increasing skills in CCE in the teacher's developmental path as something that happens over 2 or 3 years. But nearly every state in India is thinking of implementing a CCE package in the next 2 months. Orders maybe issued, but there is a big difference between the implementation of plans and realization of CCE. The realization of CCE will happen when the teacher will be able to say, "With all this support I feel I'm paying more attention to more of my students now, and I am becoming aware of more dimensions". If the teacher feels that he/she is reaching out to more children, then CCE is indeed taking shape. The evaluation in CCE does not have to be judgmental or penal. It is more a clarifying and an enabling practice where we see something as possible and we try to bring about a change. That is where CCE brings evaluation into the classroom as a resource.

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Landmarks

Kothari Commission, 1964-66 on Language Education: In Retrospect

Shreesh Chaudhary

Background

Kothari Commission, 1964-66, was created to find a model of education for an integrated socialist and secular India. Mid-1960s saw some of the worst language riots in India. The elder statesman C Rajagopalachari cautioned that without English India's federal structure may be under threat¹. Since independence, there had been two commissions and numerous committees, with little progress in finding a nationally acceptable model of education. The government resolution appointing the Education Commission, 1964-66, noted:

... a wide and distressing gulf persists between thought and action and programmes concerning the quality of education, even where these were well-conceived and generally agreed to, could not be implemented satisfactorily..²

The Commission

Including its chairman, Daulat Singh Kothari, the 17 members of the Commission were eminent educationists³. Besides, the Commission spent about a 100 days going round the country and finding out. In 1966, it submitted its recommendations to the Government of India (GoI), suggesting a system that would promote "national prosperity and integration". The Commission dwelt upon the desirable objectives, method and medium of general, vocational, religious and teacher-education and

remuneration, school and college buildings and other related issues. Summary of its recommendations is a 140-page document⁴. Annexes and enclosures account for another thousand pages.

Highlights of some of the important recommendations of Kothari Commission, relating to language education, are given below.⁵

1. Evolution of a Language Policy (Section 1.49): To help social and national integration, a language policy must be evolved. ⁶
2. Development of Modern Indian Languages (1.50): It is essential for development of community feeling. Energetic action is needed to produce books and literature. UGC should provide guidance and funds.
3. Medium of Education at School and College (1.51): The development of the modern Indian Languages is linked with the place given to them in the educational system. About thirty years ago, Rabindra Nath Tagore had said:
In no country of the world, except India, is to be seen this divorce of language of education from the language of pupil...⁶
In general, India wanted to bridge this gap.
4. Language of Communication: The country should have one language as the medium of higher education (1.53), so that students and teachers can move from one part of the country to the others.

5. All graduates will need to have some proficiency in a library language (1.60), which will be English for most students. Other languages should also be developed besides Hindi (1.62). We should create B A and M A programmes where students can study two Indian languages together.
6. Policy for Urdu: Urdu should be taught, because it is “spoken by certain sections of the people in different parts of the country” (1.56).
7. Role of English & Foreign Languages: All India institutions can continue using English for the time being (1.55). A change over to Hindi may be considered in due course. Just now, a student should possess an adequate command over English. The Commission felt that India would need a small but proficient group of people knowing some foreign languages (1.57).

Critique

Due to lack of space, discussion is limited to the following issues, namely,

- (1) a. Mother Tongue, & Medium of Education,
- b. Role of Hindi / Urdu and Regional Languages, and
- c. Role of English and Foreign languages.

Mother Tongue (MT) in Education

Since Charles Wood’s despatch of 1854⁷, all commissions and committees have supported the use of MT in the early years of education⁸. Learning is not smooth where both medium and message are new.

But we choose medium of instruction in view also of things other than students’ familiarity with the language. Primary education also needs methods, materials, teachers and teacher education. We, therefore, take a language which has a tradition of use in education, rather than another without such a tradition. That is where

the pinch comes. Of the nearly 1700 mother tongues enumerated by the Census of India, over a 1,000 have no tradition of use in schools⁹.

Kothari Commission says that relevant material be prepared in these languages. Japanese do so¹⁰. But the task in India is stupendous. Printed collections of even native poems and stories are unavailable in many modern Indian languages. Birhor and Kurukh, spoken in Jharkhand plateau, for instance, do not have enough of even these. Even Maithili, Santhali, Konkani, Nepali, Manipuri, etc., relatively developed, with a tradition of written literature, do not have a body of academic writing¹¹. They do not have books in Natural and Social Sciences, Economics, Geography and History. Textbooks come out of a tradition of academic discourse.

Besides, people speaking many of these languages are many and poor. Printing even an alphabet book for all school-age children in all of these languages may cost a fortune. Where is so much money going to come from? Will all or only some mother tongues be used in education? Shall we do so in a phased manner – producing a quota of books in some languages this year, in some others next year, and so on? The Commission has no word on these issues.

Consequently, many modern Indian languages are not taught in schools even today. Census figures for Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, etc., besides those for languages of many scheduled tribes in Central and peninsular India, such as *Lambadi* or *Lamani*, show that there are more languages in this region than those used in the (government) schools.

Promotion of Hindi and Regional Languages

Commission recommended encouragement to Hindi and regional languages as the media of internal, regional and national communication,

But this was selectively implemented in different states. In Bihar, for instance, study of English was made optional in the late 1960s, but no language from another region was introduced. Mother tongue and Hindi are generally taught enthusiastically, but the place of the third language, to be taken from another region, is either left vacant, or, is generally filled with lip-service to Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit. This policy created an unnecessary over-load of languages, and was criticised¹².

The Commission recommended that books could be specially written in and for those languages that have no tradition of academic books. But text book-writing is a skilled-job. They come out of a certain culture of reading and writing in the community, they take shape in the network of authors, publishers and distributors, all catering to a reading public. Where are the readers of academic books in many modern Indian languages? Do we have enough people who can write books on various subjects for various classes in various languages? Experience of the Children's Book Trust¹³, National Book Trust, Sahitya Akademi and the other government bodies engaged in the business of book-production is not quite encouraging. They are always behind schedule, their show rooms are burdened with unsold copies. Whereas this is true that some deliberate effort is required to create appropriate literature in some languages, it must be recognised that state has hardly ever been the best producer of literature of any kind.

Kothari Commission also recommended creation of appropriate books through translation. But a good translation is no easy job. The translator needs to know the subject and the source and the target languages involved. Again, experience of the National Translation Mission at Mysore has not been very encouraging¹⁴. Creating academic resources may take time, skill and money. Voluntary organizations can take them as campaigns, if possible, with help from the

government. We can encourage book production in our languages, by both translation and original writing. *Amar Chitra Katha*¹⁵ series of books have been both literary and commercial success. We may learn from them.

Kothari Commission would like Hindi to replace English as the language of Pan-Indian communication, and as the sole medium of instruction at the university level. But, being pragmatic, the Commission recommended support to both Hindi and the regional languages. Theoretically, the policy is sound. The student will continue to have education in the familiar language. UGC must encourage preparation of text books in these languages¹⁶. Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil seem to have some academic and technical literature even in natural and social sciences. But many other languages have few books of this kind in them.

Then there is the problem of attitude. Even when an occasional academic paper or book appears in a modern Indian language, it remains unrecognized¹⁷. It is possible today to write in Hindi and other regional languages many all India examinations for admissions to institutions of higher education, and for recruitment in government service. Yet, in actual practice, only a few choose from Indian languages¹⁸.

Kothari Commission recommended preparation of terminology in Hindi and other regional languages. The Council of Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) has prepared glossaries of administrative terminology¹⁹, none of which significantly furthers the use of Hindi in non-conventional domains. The question once again is how it can happen. Must we translate "collector" and "commissioner" and "atom", etc. which have through usage become parts of modern vocabulary, just as many words from Persian, Portuguese and other foreign languages in use in India have become²⁰?

So has it been for the administrative terminology. Even all so called "Hindi-speaking" states have

not agreed upon the Hindi rendering of administrative terms. They are one thing in Bihar, another in U P, and yet another in M P and Rajasthan, etc.”Grievance” is “wyathaa” in one place, “shikaayat” in another²¹. Agreement among other states is farther away. Even among various authorities of the Government of India even “limited co-ordination” has not been achieved²².

Kothari Commission recommended creation of institutions for training of teachers who would teach Hindi and regional languages in “other” regions. Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, and its regional centres, and sister institutions were created. But once again needs were under-assessed, and recommendations remained unimplemented²³. The following table shows how many students have expressed any interest in learning another regional language.

Native Speakers of / in City	Language I	II	III	IV
Tamil, Chennai	English 100%	Hindi 20	Malayalam 05	Sanskrit 05
Kannada, Mysore	English 80	Hindi 40	Tamil 20	Sanskrit 05
Telugu, Hyderabad	English 100	Hindi 60	Tamil 50	Sanskrit 10
Hindi, Delhi	English 100	Urdu 40	Punjabi 20	Sanskrit 10
Punjabi, Patiala	English 100	Hindi 80	Urdu 20	Sanskrit 10
Kashmiri, Jammu & Udhampur	English 100	Hindi 60	Urdu 80	Dogri 05, Sanskrit 05
Dogri, Jammu & Udhampur	English 80	Hindi 80	Urdu 20	Punjabi 10 Sanskrit 10
Oriya, Bhubaneswar & Cuttack	English 80	Hindi 80	Bengali 20	Sanskrit 10
Bengali, Kolkata	English 100	Hindi 80	Oriya 10	Sanskrit 5, Assamese 5
Marathi, Nagpur	English 80	Hindi 80		Sanskrit 5

Table: Language Preference in Education²⁴

The Central and Sainik schools, created by the GoI for its nationally transferable employees’ children use English for instruction¹. Following the recommendations of the New Education Policy in 1986, Navodaya Vidyalayas were created as model schools for rural students. They also use English as medium of instruction. On the whole, thus, there seems to have been little change in the status of Indian languages as subjects and media in education.

English and Foreign Languages

The Commission recommended continued use of English for technical education and by all India institutions. The IT boom in India, India’s popularity as an outsourcing destination, etc. are acknowledgements of its relatively long and strong tradition in English language education². But English continues to be a foreign and

inaccessible languages to an overwhelmingly large number of students, particularly from rural and disadvantaged sections. We have to take English to them³.

The Commission also recommended creating institutions for research in learning and teacher-education in English and other foreign languages. In over 50 years since its creation, the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad⁴, and its branches and sister institutions have produced a few thousand trained teachers of English, and a few dozen books. This hardly answers the needs of the country. India needs far too many teachers far more quickly. Possibly, it needs modules of pre- and in-service teacher education that equips its English teachers to work and innovate in difficult circumstances. English continues to remain a badly taught and difficult to learn language.

Experts say that given the exposure and motivation, learning of any language is inevitable. For English, there is motivation. Exposure is required, through both books and electronic media. Where is a child in an urban slum, or in a hamlet in the hills, going to see or hear any English, if not even at their school? These children have no or limited access to books, journals, television, internet and other mass media. But with some effort, the situation can be reversed. In each cluster of schools, as the Commission said, resource centres can be created. If the government does not have enough money, public-private partnership in this area can be encouraged.

Among foreign languages, Kothari Commission advocated special place for Russian. It also recommended creation of institutes and university departments across India to teach Russian. Keeping Russia's eminence in the world politics in the mid-1960s in mind, and keeping its work in atomic and space sciences, and ocean technologies in mind, a student would have profited by learning Russian. Today German and Chinese can also be learnt. Indian universities and schools anyway teach few foreign languages⁵.

Conclusion

Constituted in the shadow of the Chinese Aggression of 1962, and of the rising language tension in Bengal and in Southern states, recommendations of Kothari Commission appropriately reflected the secular-socialist-nationalist thinking of the time, and recommended a kind of education which would produce citizens well-grounded in the local tradition and well-groomed to take their place in the global community. It had the vision of a world-class education in a mix of English and the local languages. But the problem was that India was neither small and monolingual like Japan, so that it could invest in the development

its native resources; nor was it a totalitarian state like China, so that it could impose the will of the state upon all its people. Its recommendations, particularly for language education, remained largely unimplemented.

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Endnotes

¹Shah (1968:59)

²Cited in the Report of the Kothari Commission, Chapter on Implementation, P.138

³H L Elvin was then Director of the University of London's Institute of Education; Sadatoshi Jhara came from the School of Science and Engineering, Waseda University, Tokyo; Roger Revelle was Director, Centre for Population Studies at Harvard University, U S A; S A Shumovsky was at the Ministry of Higher and Special Education and in the Department of Physics at the Moscow University, Moscow; and, M Jean Thomas had been Inspector-General of Education, France, and an Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, Paris. Among Indians, besides Prof Kothari, himself a world-class Physicist and Chairman of the University Grants Commission of India, the Commission had three Vice-Chancellors – Prof M V Mathur of the University of Rajasthan, Dr B P Pal of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, and Dr Trigun Sen of the Jadavpur University⁴. It had all the senior bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education of the Government of India, and a handful of eminent professors of Education.

⁵*Report of the Education Commission*, 1964-66, Summary of Recommendations, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, 1967

⁶Chapter I, Paragraphs 49 to 62,

⁷delivering the convocation address of the Calcutta University

⁸See Chaudhary (2009: Ch.5, Pp.380-82)

⁹For a survey of them, see Koul(2001) &(2005), Chaudhary (2001), Hasnain (2001), Lakshmi Bai (2001) and references there. .

¹⁰See Koul (2005:72-83)for a list of languages used as the medium of instruction in India.

¹¹See Horseley, William & Buckley, Roger (1990)

¹²Recently I came across a 10-page book by Dr Prem Mohan Mishra on Chemistry in Maithili, where equations are given in Roman, but linking phrases are in Maithili. That is a welcome exception. But can we, on this basis, say Maithili is rich in Academic literature?

¹³Shivaram Karanth, the Jnanpitha award winning Kannada novelist and a former member of the UNESCO's Executive Council, was highly critical of the language over-load on children in India. See his interview in *The Hindu*, April 29, Sunday, 1984

¹⁴ . In the 50 years since its inception, Children's Book Trust has published close to 1,000 titles on General Fiction, Science Fiction, Indian History/Heritage, Natural History, Travelogue, Non-Fiction/Information, Popular Science, Great Institutions, Short Stories/Humour Stories, Short Plays/Dramas, and Read-Aloud Books/Picture Books. These are published not only in English and Hindi, as was the case earlier, but in various Indian languages to a certain extent, says the website of the Trust <<http://www.childrensbooktrust.com/about.htm>>. And all this at commercially unviable costs

¹⁵NTM was created in July 2008. Till October 2013, it has two translated publications. Ten books are nearing publication. These include six bilingual dictionaries.

¹⁶ A popular series of books produced for children in the 1980s in both English and many Indian languages

¹⁷Some money was set aside by the UGC for the purpose of book writing. But this was more in the nature of tokenism than business. No accomplished writer would write a book for Rs 5,000/-, as was the case until the last years of the last century. Now, at least at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras it has been revised to Rs one lakh.

¹⁸Personal experience.

¹⁹In 2007, 221,385 examinees opted to write Joint Entrance Examinations to IITs in English. But only 39,856 people chose to do so in Hindi. See Chaudhary (2009:530).

²⁰ See Bai (2001). CSTT published a glossary of 13,000 terms in English-Hindi in 1991 and in Hindi-English in 1992 (p292). The glossary contains administrative terms like "allowed, collector, director", etc.

²¹See Chaudhary (2009)

²²See Bayer, Jennifer Marie (1986)

²³Lakshmi Bai (2001:290)

²⁴ See Koul (2005), (2001) and Lakshmi Bai (2001) for some details on this issue.

²⁵From Koul (Ed., 2005 : 10-59)

²⁶Koul (2005:52)

²⁷Chaudhary, Shreesh (2007) Also see Saxenian, Anna Lee with Motoyama, Yasoyuki&Quan, Xiaohong (2002)

²⁸ “17 % Indian employers and 25% American employers surveyed by this World Bank team expressed dissatisfaction with the English communication skills of Indian engineering graduates. ...command of English is a barrier for many students, in particular from rural areas...”, say Blom, Andreas & Saeki, Hiroshi (2011 :21-24)

²⁹Since 2006, called English & Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad

³⁰As an exception, Kerala offers a choice of the following languages in its secondary schools: Arabic, French, German, Greek and Latin, besides English, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil in its primary schools. Many other states, particularly in North India, offer no foreign language in schools. Their list of classical languages is limited to Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, without necessarily requiring a pass at the final examination.

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Book Reviews

Second Language Teaching and Learning with Technology: Views of Emergent Researchers

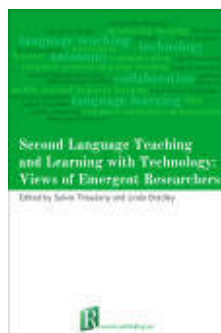
Sylvie Thouesny and Linda Bradley (Eds.) (2011).

Dublin: Research-publishing.net. (217 pages).

ISBN 13:978-1-908416-00-1 (eBook)

ISBN 13:978-1-908416-01-8 (print on demand)

Reviewed by: **Ruchi Kaushik**



There are several reasons why this book should compel readers to pick it up and read it from cover to cover. It deals with various topics of current relevance related to Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), brought to the fore by young emergent researchers from across the globe, who have worked collaboratively over the internet to produce this peer-reviewed eBook.

The idea to write such an eBook evolved from the need to make free research publications more accessible, and share with readers the works of young researchers from all over the world examining issues of language learning by means of internet technology and web-based computer applications.

In the introductory chapter of the book that comprises ten chapters in all, the editors (both pursuing their PhD's and teaching simultaneously in Ireland and Spain respectively), highlight how different interactive technologies in CALL have been widely used to promote language learning. These technologies have helped learners

contribute to the knowledge base rather than act as passive participants in the teaching-learning process.

Chapter 2, entitled “Personal Learning Environments in Higher Education Language Courses: An Informal and Learner-Centered Approach”, authored by Ilona Laakkonen (Finland), discusses the rich potential of personal learning environments (PLE) based on Web 2.0 applications for language courses in higher education. Student PLEs are seen as countering the disadvantages of institutionally controlled learning systems that dominate the educational set-ups by placing control of the learning tools and processes in the hands of the learners. The article substantiates this point by describing the F-shape project at the Language Centre, University of Jyväskylä, where PLEs have been successfully integrated in language courses, thus equipping the students with the requisite skills to seek information and construct knowledge. The author concludes the article by stressing that adopting the PLE approach on a larger scale is a big challenge as it requires building on sound pedagogical principles on the one hand, and sufficient support and flexibility from the institution on the other.

“Quick Assist: Reading and Learning Vocabulary Independently with the Help of CALL and NLP Technologies” by Peter Wood in Chapter 3 is based on his findings of a user study in Canada. According to this study, the available tutorial CALL software enables learners of a foreign language to become independent only to a limited extent, and therefore he recommends a shift to natural language processing (NLP) technologies, and more specifically to an application called Quick Assist that promotes independent language learning at an advanced stage.

Chapter 4, entitled “Self-Assessment and Tutor Assessment in Online Language Learning Materials: In Genio FCE Online Course and Tester”, is a research study conducted in Spain by Ana Sevilla-Pavon, Antonio Martinez-Saez and Jose Macario de Siqueira. This study examines two main modalities of assessment of basic skills—student self-assessment and tutor assessment—through the Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE) examination, using the FCE online course and tester. The article demonstrates how this content manager and courseware delivery platform contributes to an efficient assessment of skills. The flexibility of the online materials allows learners to choose between these two different kinds of assessments depending on their needs, preferences and learning styles.

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is the next issue that the book brings to the fore by reporting on a design-based research study by Agnieszka Palalas (Canada), aimed at enhancing ESL students’ aural skills with the help of mobile devices. The writer explains how the project began with evolving m-learning language solutions which relied heavily on audio and video podcasts, but soon expanded to offer flexible language learning tools which had the potential of being interactive, engaging, authentic, contextualized, connected and supported by appropriate feedback and scaffolding.

Chapter 6 by Linda Bradley, Berner Lindstrom, Hans Rystedt and Magnus Gustafsson (Sweden) is entitled “A Design for Intercultural Exchange - An Analysis of Engineering Students’ Interaction with English Majors in a Poetry Blog”. In this article, the authors examine an intercultural student exchange on poetry over the discussion forum of a blog between native and non-native speakers of English in Higher Education. The authors argue that using social software such as a blog in a targeted way in

language education encourages self-expression and creativity. The results of this study show that there are several features at play in an intercultural environment where language and translation issues figure predominantly in the students’ discussions. Mathy Richie (Canada) continues in the same thematic thread in her article “Developing Sociolinguistic Competence through Intercultural Online Exchange” in chapter 7. She investigates conditions for the development of the sociolinguistic competence of second language learners in a computer-mediated intercultural exchange such as discussion forums and chats. The findings of this study based on interactions between native and non-native speakers of French from different universities suggest that intercultural CMC exchange offers great opportunities for the development of second language learners.

“Second Language Learning by Exchanging Cultural Contexts through the Mobile Group Blog” by Yinjuan Shao (China) in the next chapter, explores the usefulness of mobile group blogging amongst Chinese students learning English. Under this project, two studies have been conducted separately with two different groups, one in the learners’ country and the other in the target language country. Learners’ real experiences in the target culture have been recorded to help enhance the understanding of ‘real’ language use in ‘real’ culture for learners who are far away from the target language surroundings. Results show an improvement in students’ learning motivation and language efficacy.

Sylvie Thouesny (Ireland) with “Dynamically Assessing Written Language: To what Extent do Learners of French Language Accept Mediation?”, addresses learners’ contribution to dynamic assessment, and investigates how French learners respond to assistance by means of a computer-based application. Results demonstrate that learners’ acceptance of

mediation is unsystematic. Moreover, learners may refuse or argue with the mediation offered. Thus, the author concludes by suggesting that further research needs to be undertaken at the level of negotiated interactions, as opposed to interventions, between a computer and a learner. The concluding chapter of the book by Cedric Sarre (France) is entitled “Computer-Mediated Negotiated Interactions: How is Meaning Negotiated in Discussion Boards, Text Chat and Videoconferencing?” Cedric records the findings of a comparative investigation of the potential of three different CMC modes—discussion board, text chat and videoconferencing—to foster negotiated interactions as well as the influence of task type on such interactions. The results of the study reveal that all CMC modes allow negotiation, but videoconferencing is conducive to more meaning than the other two modes. The author emphasizes the need for more empirical studies on the role of videoconferencing in second language acquisition.

This book is a fine amalgamation of the multifarious CALL techniques being used in different parts of the world to foster second language learning. A distinctive feature of the book remains its inclusion of recent research studies in the field. The format of this eBook as well as the nature of its content embraces the openness of the internet (accessible online, free of charge)! A must read for all those who are interesting in keeping abreast with the latest developments in second language teaching using technology.

Ruchi Kaushik is Associate Professor of English at Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi. Her research interests include materials development and adaptation, English for Special Purposes and teaching language through Literature. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Materials.

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Handbook of Intellectual Styles: Preferences in Cognition Learning and Thinking

Edited by Zhang, L., Sternberg, R. J. and Rayner, S.

Dublin: Research-publishing.net

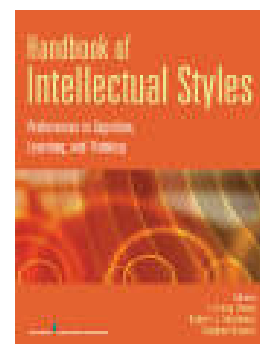
First Published: 2011

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ISBN 13:978-1-908416-01-8 (print on demand), pp. 217

Reviewed by: Shruti Pal



‘Intellectual Styles’ is an umbrella term for all types of styles. It takes into consideration, the concepts and constructs of ‘cognitive styles’, ‘learning styles’, teaching styles’ and ‘thinking styles’. This is done in an attempt to give a less complicated and single reference point for ‘styles’ research in general, and is itself the product of recent research aimed at a unification of the plethora of styles.

Handbook of Intellectual Styles is a collection of carefully selected articles that give a holistic account of various intellectual styles. The book begins with a preface, in which the editors define intellectual styles as “a generic term for all style constructs, with or without the root word ‘style’, and refers to people’s preferred ways of processing information and dealing with tasks”. The editors identify the goal of the book as: “to provide a complete, definitive, and authoritative single volume on intellectual styles”.

The book is designed to achieve three main objectives:

- To create a reference for scholars and students, who wish to understand more

about intellectual styles and their related constructs such as intelligence, creativity, metacognition, personality, and human development.

- To provide an up-to-date, panoramic picture of the current state of research on intellectual styles.
- To make resources available to anyone who is interested in applying the notion of styles to his/her work or personal life.

With these objectives in mind, the book has been divided into nineteen chapters, which are further sub-divided into seven sections, covering a wide range of issues and topics in the field of intellectual styles. The contributions have been drawn from experts who have either constructed conceptual frameworks, or published studies based on empirical investigations, or done both.

The chapters present a detailed and comprehensive picture of intellectual styles, and deal with the history and development of cognitive styles; learning styles and learning strategies; and the relationships and applications of styles to a range of psychological, educational, organizational and cultural topics. Each chapter contains a detailed reference list. The book ends with an epilogue and a twenty page detailed index of the terms used in the book.

The key features of the book include:

- It provides a comprehensive review of intellectual styles from multiple perspectives.
- It is written for students and scholars in diverse academic arenas, as well as practitioners in education.
- It includes contributions from researchers from diverse disciplines, such as psychology, business, education, and health sciences.

Though the book provides a ready reference to the readers, I would recommend it with a fair share of warning for various reasons.

Firstly, handbooks are intended to provide ready reference. They are generally contain a compendium of information in a particular field or about a particular technique. They are designed to be easily consulted, and provide quick answers in a certain area. Although this book ensures that all aspects associated with intellectual styles have been taken into consideration, it mainly revolves around the works of Zhang and Sternberg. While it is true that their works have brought the concept to its current form and status, they are not the only people associated with the construct. Therefore, their dominance in a handbook seems a little unfair.

Secondly, the text can be divided into two broad categories—content and supporting in-text citations, and the two share text space approximately in the proportion 40 : 60 respectively. While it is understandable that in-text citations are necessary to back a claim, lack of content comes out as a prominent drawback of the book.

Another reason why the book may not be able to quench your thirst for knowledge is that very often in the chapters, points are mentioned but not elaborated upon. In fact the basic requirement of defining a concept has also been skipped at certain points.

The chapters are quite repetitive in their content. More than a half of them have a definition of the terms ‘Intellectual Styles’ and the ‘Zhang and Sternberg model’. While it may be useful to remind the readers about the constructs, but is very un-handbook like.

According to *PsycCRITIQUES*, “Because of the thoroughness of the literature reviews and the comprehensive coverage of the chapter topics, this book should be required reading for any scholar working in related areas of personality or intelligence”. Every word of this comment is true as the book seems to excel in these two areas only.

Finally, the understanding of intellectual styles as a concept for both individuals and groups has far-reaching implications for practitioners in education and researchers in cross-cultural psychology, multicultural education, organizational behavior and work performance, and many other academic disciplines. I would recommend this book to students and practitioners of education, psychology and the allied fields.

Shruti Pal is a PhD scholar at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi. She has a dual masters in Linguistics and Education. Currently she is working in the area of learning styles in the language classroom.

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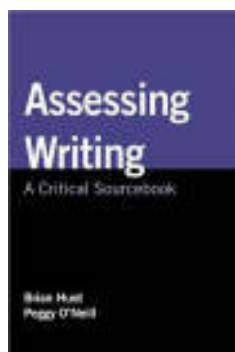
Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook

Brian Huot & Peggy O'Neill (Eds.). (2009)

New York: Bedford/ St. Martin's.

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-47596-3.

By *Praveen Singh*



This is a collection of already published papers (twenty-four) aimed at researchers and teachers of composition/writing and (writing) assessment. The editors discuss the need for and the challenges of writing assessment. They notice that even though no one denies that assessment is a critical component of teaching writing/composition, there exists a paradox. While on the one hand it is important that an effective writing teacher knows the writing assessment needs of the students, faculty and institutions, on the other hand some view it as a “punitive force”.

The papers in this book aim at helping the audience “understand the theory and practice

of writing assessment” (p.1). The contributions range from scholars who are part of the academic setup to those who bring fresh insights as administrators or executors of the findings within the field. This volume, however, does not concern itself with the “assessment [that] writers do as they write” and even “the responses and classroom evaluation” have [also] been left out (p.1).

The book is divided into three sections, Foundations, Models and Issues. Here I discuss some of the papers.

The first three articles in the “Foundations” may be seen as a dialogue on some of the common goals. The first paper discusses the “differences between holistic, analytic and primary trait scoring”, helping one to understand and compare common writing assessment procedures. The second paper offers a strong argument *for* holistic scoring and the third paper discusses the “reliability issues in holistic assessment”. Therefore, these help the reader understand at least one of the major approaches in writing assessment.

Moss’s paper titled “Can there be validity without reliability?” is an interesting read. Moss argues for a more flexible understanding of reliability as a measurement concept and challenges the traditional notions of it. Camp’s paper on the “development of writing assessment from an educational measurement perspective” offers a perspective on the act of balancing the requirements of Reliability and Validity and concludes by “moving toward the new models of writing assessment”(p.122). Yancey discusses the developments of writing assessment in “over a fifty-year period” as different waves where the first three take the form of “objective tests”, “the holistically scored essay” and “portfolio assessment and programmatic assessment”. In the final wave, Yancey hopes, assessment programs will focus on individual assessment and also include “topics that are only now forming” (p. 146).

Among the papers in the “Models” section, the study by William L. Smith discusses how writing assessment requires that the raters be equally well-trained if they are to do justice. Durst et al.’s model allows for “exit testing” in which three-teacher teams read student portfolio and make “discussion about students’ written work” central to assessment (p.218). It makes them “open to interrogation” (p.218) and allows them to see how discussions lead to “new interpretations” and also to “attitude entrenchment” (p.228).

Royer and Gilles’ paper on “Direct Self Placement” shows how the students may be allowed to choose from the courses. Royer and Gilles’ confession that “writing ability... is far complex to measure so quickly and easily” is every evaluator’s dilemma (p.234). The paper describes why and how they arrived at the strategy. The model can be used advantageously by others caught in a similar fix.

Among the papers in the “Issues” section, Freedman’s paper raises the rare question about the influences that affect the evaluators. She discusses the factors and sets up three variables, i.e. essay variables, reader variables and environment variables, for a collection of sixty-four essays at four different colleges. The findings suggest that the “raters were the chief influence on student’s scores”. There are three other papers in this section that sensitize the reader about “Portfolio Scoring” by drawing their attention to many of the assumptions behind such assessment measures.

Hamp-Lyons’ paper may appear a bit outdated since a lot has been published on the challenges of assessing the writing of non-native speakers of English; nevertheless, it is a good introduction to more recent literature. Ball argues for including the voices of teachers from different cultures as it can help “not only to inform, but also to reshape current assessment practices, research priorities, policy-debates ... as they relate to diverse populations”(p. 357). The study by Has well and Has well raises alarm as it

shows how the knowledge of gender affects the rater’s evaluation. This has implications for a country such as India which is still trying to come to grips with inequalities in almost every sphere of life.

Overall, this book offers a panorama of different studies that the teachers and researchers in the field of language teaching, in general, and writing assessment, in particular, would like to be exposed to. It offers various models that can be used to check whether the analyses are at par with the latest standards. It not only informs us about many assessment issues and approaches but also urges us to rethink some of the unexamined assumptions that have long been part of our evaluation system.

Some caution nonetheless is warranted. The book is largely US-centric, i.e. it has studies that focus on the issues, raters and students from the US where the language being assessed and studied is English. There are a few papers that seem to go beyond such limitations but that does not make up for the English-centricism. A non-U.S. reader might feel that the book is not for her. However, one must remember that such studies offer windows to newer insights and can be adapted to suit one’s context. Given the Indian multilingual contexts, there is a lot of potential for a dialogue and research in the area of Writing Assessment. The results and interpretations even if different, would only take us a step closer to the reality of writing and writing assessment in the country.

This book successfully shows that writing assessment is much more than an act of scoring to strings of scribbles. I would recommend this book to researchers, language teachers and policy-makers in the assessment field.

Praveen Singh is a professionally trained English language teacher. He has an M.Phil. in Linguistics and looks forward to exploring further areas in Micro-Linguistics to get an understanding of the workings of Language.

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Suggested Readings

The Grammar Activity Book: A Resource Book of Grammar Games for Young Students

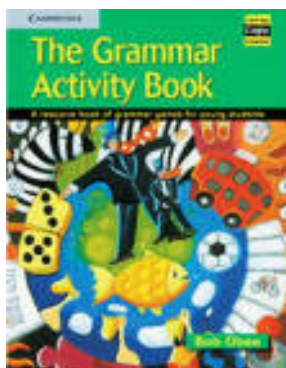
By Bob Obee

Cambridge University Press

First published: 1999

Current Issue: 2011

ISBN: HB: 978-0-521-57579-9



Games are a fascinating way of learning for children. *The Grammar Activity Book* is a resource book for teaching grammar to young adults using games. Games can provide purposeful contexts for language use by stimulating interaction, promoting focus, and inspiring enthusiasm for learning. This book is meant for teachers of English whose students are in the age group 12-16 years. It provides a range of activities for learners, from elementary to upper-intermediate level of language learners. The activities are designed to encourage learners to observe new aspects of the structure and use of language, to manipulate new forms and integrate them with the linguistic skills that they already have. They also help the learners to use their skills in meaningful tasks in order to experience the interplay of the language complexities with a view to achieve communicative competence.

There are 15 units in this book. Each unit focuses on one language area, and has 4-5 activities covering different aspects of that language area. The book is organized on the basis of the various aspects of language rather than activity type. The activities include board

games, puzzles, card games, racing games, deduction games, question games, etc. These activities utilize various types of classroom procedures such as working in pairs, groups, mingling in larger groups, collecting things around the room, finding partners, etc. The units include topics such as present tense, questions, past tense, comparisons, describing things, future tense, perfect aspect, things we can count, conditional meanings, obligation and possibility, indicating time, movement and place, passive voice, functional exchanges and what someone said. The last unit consists of revision games that review the previous 14 units.

Vandana Puri

Emergent Literacy: Children's books from 0-3. Studies in Written Language and Literacy 13

Edited by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer

Amsterdam/
Philadelphia

First published: 2011



ISBN: HB: 978 90 272 18087

Eb: 978 90 272 8323 8

There are very few studies on the impact of books and picture books on children under the age of 3 years. Picture books and stories have a great influence on young minds in terms of developing a sense of literacy and a love for reading. *Emergent Literacy* looks at how we know what very young children between the

ages of 10 months and 3 years learn by looking at pictures in a picture book with someone or by listening to a story from a children's book? What are the mental prerequisites that enable such learning processes? These are also the main questions in the emergent literacy research today. The chapters in this book are revised versions of papers presented at an international conference held at the Picture book museum Burg Wissem in Troisdorf near Cologne, Germany in March 2009.

This book has a total of 14 chapters divided into 3 sections. The first section "Premises of early literacy" consists of 3 chapters on textual representations of fictional and everyday events by children under three; colour perception in young children and basic designs in picture books and modern art. The second section entitled, "Picture books for children under three" consists of 6 chapters on how literary appreciation begins; acquiring nominal and verbal concepts; reading as playing; metaphors in picture books from 0-3; paths to literacy in young children; and linking behavioural training and scientific thinking. The third section entitled "Child-book interactions: case studies" consists of 4 chapters—early object and action concepts during picture book reading by the mother; reading without any accompanying descriptions; developing literacy and a sense of self through play, talk and stories; and how response to picture books reflects and supports the emotional development of young bilingual children.

There are many books on the pragmatic aspects of emergent literacy and early literacy. However, this book has a multidisciplinary approach (art history, children's literature research, picture book theory, linguistics, cognitive psychology and pedagogy) and stresses on the strong relationship between early literacy and children's books for young readers under the age of 3.

Vandana Puri

Assessing Young Language Learners

By Penny McKay

Cambridge University Press

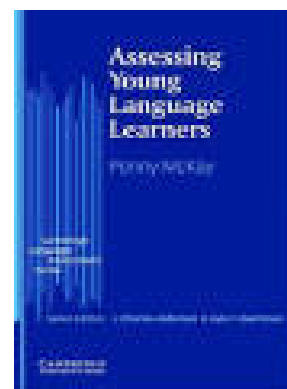
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Assessing Young Language Learners provides a framework for assessment of language learning in the early years of formal education (5-13 years), in both foreign language (language rarely heard outside the classroom) and second language (learning a language to communicate with the community at large) learning situations. It comprises of 10 chapters. The first chapter introduces the readers to the importance of assessment in the case of young language learners. In terms of cognitive growth, the author suggests that children between the ages of 5-7 years learn by direct experience; from 8 to 10 years students can manipulate ideas, but direct experience is still important; and from the ages of 11 to 13 years, they are able to talk about recent events, plans for the future and career aspirations. It is important to take into account all these cognitive stages of development for appropriate assessment. Moreover, effective assessment should also take into account the child's likes and interests, the impact of peer influence, and his / her physical growth and culture. In chapter 2, the author discusses the theoretical background for 'language use ability'. She also discusses the ideas of social language, academic language and the concept of linguistic interdependence. Chapter 3 outlines the current research in the assessment of young language learners. Chapter 4 is about the

assessment of language through tasks. Chapter 5 deals with classroom assessments such as formative, summative, on-the-run and planned assessment. Chapter 6 talks about learning objectives and assessment of oral language. Chapter 7 looks at writing and reading. Chapter 8 examines how young language learners can be evaluated, and the characteristics of good scoring rubrics. Chapter 9 weighs the pros and cons of large scale tests for young learners of second languages. Chapter 10 concludes the book by giving broad directions in the field of assessment of young language learner assessment. Overall, Penny McKay's book has

many hands-on strategies from all around the world for teachers involved with assessment of young language learners. In fact, she won the Kenneth W Mildenberger Prize in 2006 for this book.

Vandana Puri

Vandana Puri has a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include acoustic phonetics, intonation, prosody, bilingualism, New Englishes and sociolinguistics. Currently, she is a consultant with Vidya Bhawan, Udaipur.

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Forthcoming Events

November, 2014

Second International Conference on Language, Literature and Community 2015 (LLC 2015)

Date: 21-22 February, 2015

Location: Bhubaneswar, India

Call Deadline: 15-Sep-2014

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

March, 2015

National Multidisciplinary Conference on Current Issues of English Teaching and Learning (NICCIETL)

Date: 4-6 March, 2015

Location: Ahwaz, Iran

Call Deadline: 31-Oct-2014

Web Site: <http://elt-kh.ir/>

International Conference on Language Form and Function

Date: 27-29 March, 2015

Location: Suzhou, China

Call Deadline: 31-Oct-2014

Web Site: <http://sfl.suda.edu.cn/ICLFF>

April, 2015

IATEFL Conference 2015: Manchester

Date: 11 - 14 April 2015 - PCEs 10th April

Join us to enjoy great plenary speakers, network with ELT professionals from around the world and choose from over 500 presentations.

English Linguistics and Corpora: Research Issues and Language Teaching Innovations

Date: 8 - 10 April 2015

Location: Créteil, France

Call Deadline: 20-Oct-2014

GUST English Language and Literature 2nd International Conference (GELL)

Date: 21 - 23 April 2015

Location: West Mishref, Kuwait

Call Deadline: 30-Nov-2014

Web Site: <https://gellconference.gust.edu.kw>

May, 2015

Receptive Multilingualism: Multilingual Resources in Service of Mutual Understanding (REMU)

Date: 28-29 May 2015

Location: Joensuu, Finland

Meeting URL: <http://www.uef.fi/en/remu2015>

June, 2015

Sociolinguistics of Globalization: (De)centring and (De)standardization

Date: 3-6 June, 2015

Location: Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Call Deadline: 30-Sep-2014

Web Site: <http://www.english.hku.hk/events/slkg2015>

July, 2015

2nd International Conference on Sign Language Acquisition

Date: 1-3 June, 2015

Location: Amsterdam, Netherlands

Call Deadline: 01-Oct-2014

Web Site: <http://www.icsla2015.nl>

Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Big to Small

Objective

To make small words using letters from a larger word.

Level

6-8 years

Materials

Blackboard, chalk, notebooks and pens

Procedure

- Write a long word such as ‘hippopotamus’ on the board, and ask the students to write down as many smaller words as they can using the letters of the long word.
- Fix a time limit for the exercise.
- A few examples of words written by children could be: hip, pot, top, must, pop, mat, etc.
- Once the time is over, ask the children to read out the words they have written and then explain their meanings.
- If the meaning of a word is not clear, help children derive it by writing a sentence on the board in which the contextual meaning of the word is clear, e.g. *I have no garden but my plants grow in pots on my terrace.*
- Ask the children to consult a dictionary to understand the meanings of the words that they have written.

Outcome

- This activity helps children to identify words from a series of letters, and as there is a time limit imposed on the exercise, they treat it as a game and enjoy it.

Activity 2: Story Bag

Objective

To help children make up stories, thereby improving their oral skills.

Level

8-10 years

Materials

A small bag that can be fastened containing small objects such as erasers, pencils, pens, sharpeners, coins, toffees, etc.

Procedure

- Narrate a story of your choice to the children.
- Hold the bag containing the objects in your hands and approach the students. Ask the first six children in a row to close their eyes and pick up any one object from the bag.
- Pick up an object yourself.
- If you have picked up a pencil, start a new story about the pencil, e.g. “Once there lived a tall pencil with a black and red coat. She lived with her friends in a trendy pencil box....”
- Let the child sitting next to you continue the story by introducing the object he/she has picked up. If the child has picked up a sharpener, for example, he/she could say, “One day, the pencil saw a wicked sharpener with a sharp, shiny blade who wanted to cut off her head. The pencil got scared and ran away followed by the scary sharpener into....”
- The other students have to continue the story by introducing the objects that they have picked-up from the bag.

Outcome

- By doing this activity, the children not only improve their spoken skills but also use their imagination and sequencing abilities to link different parts of a story. Also, this being a class activity, the story that is created is enjoyed by all.

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Activity 3: My 'Menu Card Dictionary'

Skill

Reading (Dictionary work)

Learning objective

The learners will be able to arrange a given set of words in alphabetical order as in a dictionary.

Grade

For all grades (Primary, Middle, Secondary or Senior Secondary)

Materials required

Menu card of a restaurant or a worksheet (the worksheet is in the form of a menu card of a restaurant. Each learner has to be given one worksheet.)

Time

30 minutes (including 15 minutes for the worksheet)

Methodology /Procedure

- a) Give a worksheet/menu card to each learner in the class.

- b) Ask the learners to arrange the food items (given in the worksheet) in alphabetical order.
- c) The learners should do the task individually.
- d) Explain the assessment criteria to the students.

Marking and Feedback on the Task

Once all the students have completed their task,

- a) the teacher discusses the correct alphabetical order of the given set of words and writes them on the blackboard.
- b) either the learners themselves, or their peers or teacher assigns marks in accordance with the answers (1 mark is awarded for each correct answer).
- c) the teacher assesses the performance of the learners.

Unique Special Point

In the above mentioned task, the learners arrange the names of food items in alphabetical order using colourful menu card pamphlets. These are easily available free of cost at various eating places (McDonalds, Bikanerwala, etc.). No cost or low cost teaching aids are developed by locally available resources. These resources expedite the process of learning in a language classroom. Use of colourful pictures in the worksheet serve as an enrichment source and sustains students' interest in the task over a length of time.

(Note: The difficulty level of the worksheet must be in accordance with the linguistic level of the learners.)

KWALITY RESTAURANT MENU CARD



Name of the food item

Rate (in Rs)

Fruit salad

70

Green salad

60

Sprouted Dals

60

Cheese balls

80

Vegetable sandwich

55

Sweet corn soup

70

Tomato soup

70

Custard

40

Vanilla Shake

80

Butterscotch Shake

80



Activity 4: My 'Word Mountain'

Skill

Vocabulary enrichment (Writing)

Learning objective

To enrich the active and passive vocabulary of the learners

Grade

For all grades (Primary, Middle, Secondary and Senior Secondary)

Type of participation

Individual

Time

30 minutes (The time may vary according to the learners' linguistic level)

Methodology /Procedure

- Each learner begins the word mountain by writing a letter. For example, 'A'.
- In the next step, the learner adds another letter to the previous letter to form a meaningful two letter word. For example, 'AT'.
- The learners then keep adding letters to form three-lettered, four-lettered and five-lettered words. Letters can be added anywhere, before, after or in between the letters of the previously formed word.

For example- A

AT

EAT

EAST

BEAST

BREAST

- Encourage the learners to keep adding letters until they are able to form new words.
- Explain the assessment criteria to the students.

Marking and Feedback on the Task

Once all the students complete their task,

- the teacher discusses and allows the learners to share their word mountains with the rest of the class.
- either the learners themselves, or their peers or teacher assigns marks in accordance with the answers (1 mark is awarded for each correct answer).
- the teacher assesses the performance of the learners.

Unique Special Point

In the above mentioned task, the learners build 'word mountains'. This is a simple activity that enriches the active vocabulary of the learners and helps them to recall the words from their ad-hoc and passive vocabulary. Building vocabulary words is the key to oral expression, reading and writing. Also, vocabulary enrichment is the key to building analytical and critical thinking amongst the learners. Some examples of Word Mountains are given as follows:

S	B	G
SO	BE	GO
SON	BED	GOT
SOON	BEAD	GOAT
SPOON	BEARD	GLOAT

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Reports

A Workshops on Storytelling and Creative Writing

Under the Banner of Katha Manch Katha Manch, 30 January 2014

Kusuma Foundation



Image 1: Workshop in progress
“A good story is always more impressive than a glittery picture”

Introduction

Storytelling is one of the most ancient art forms, and continues to this day as a vibrant part of culture throughout the world. However, the traditional Indian custom of passing down epics and village folklore from one generation to the next through storytelling is slowly dying due to increasing globalization and the all-pervasive media. At one time, stories were a part of the day-to-day teaching-learning processes, but in the current educational system, storytelling has become a lost art; it is considered nothing more than a leisure activity. This workshop on storytelling and creative writing was organized by Katha Manch to reinvent the art of storytelling and story writing.

Katha Manch, a group dedicated to the use of stories as a pedagogical tool, aspires to fill the

gap between storytelling and learning. Katha Manch is an informal group comprising school teachers, teacher trainees, field facilitators, university professors, students, etc., associated with the field of education. Most of the group members have witnessed the power of stories and storytelling, not only in capturing the attention of children, but also in improving their reading and writing skills, furthering their imaginative and cognitive skills, sensitizing them and developing tolerance towards different cultures and worldviews. A one-day “Storytelling and Creative Writing Workshop” was organised by Katha Manch in collaboration with Kusuma Foundation on the 30th of January 2014, in Hardoi District of UP, India with the objective of encouraging children to:

- (a) Read and listen to stories,
- (b) think scientifically and critically on different aspects of stories, and
- (c) learn to develop and write stories on their own.

Participant Profile

The participants included 50 students of class IX and X, and teachers from 25 schools of Hardoi District, where Kusuma Foundation has been carrying out various intervention programmes. The teachers accompanying these students also actively participated in the workshop. Experts (Yashika Chandna, Madhu Gupta and Vijay Kumar) from Katha Manch were invited to conduct the workshop from Delhi.

Sessions

The workshop was divided into two sessions, pre-lunch and post-lunch. The pre-lunch session started with introductions. Participants were encouraged to introduce themselves by adding a qualifying noun starting with the first letter of

their name, for example, charming Chanchal, sweet Shreya, *ashavaadi* Akash (optimistic Akash), etc. Children were encouraged to share things that they like doing. The idea was to help the participants overcome their hesitation and encourage them to interact freely with the resource persons and with each other. Familiarity with the hobbies of the participants helped the resource persons to understand the inclination of the participants towards reading and writing stories. After the introductions, the experts asked questions related to different aspects of stories—characters, characterization, contextualization, narrative style, flow of the story, etc. Participants were encouraged to think and express their views on why stories were important. They were asked to express their opinion on various kinds of stories such as historical, social issue-based, biographical, horror, fantasy, investigative, science-fiction, etc. There was a discussion on how stories impact a person's worldview, how stories are part of our daily life and how the same story can be read through different perspectives. How stories can be developed was one of the most pivotal points of the discussion. Through this discussion, it was concluded that a story needs to have full-bodied characters, and a problem which needs to be resolved or an experience to be shared. The language should be such that it enhances the impact of the story; literary tools such as personification, description, metaphors and similes, etc., make a story worth a read.

After the discussion, a story based in Rajasthan entitled “JalPari” was narrated. The central theme of the story was gender discrimination, and to illustrate that many other sub themes were brought into play such as female feticide, gender-related stereotypes, superstitions, and power equations and how these marked the societal construct. Elements such as mystery, bravery, power relations, social problems, etc., were interwoven in the story. The children were encouraged to identify and verbalize various

aspects of the story. After initiation, they were successful in identifying most of these components.

In the post-lunch session, students were divided into six groups. They were given different themes such as betrayal, helping each other, concealing truth from elders, etc., and were asked to discuss these topics in their respective groups and develop a story. Resource persons facilitated the process of story formation. Teachers were also divided in two groups and were asked to discuss and write a paragraph on “Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool” based on their experiences. Teachers and students made a presentation and feedback was given to each group. Finally each participant was asked to share her / his learning experience.

Outcome of the Workshop

All the participants were very appreciative of the workshop. Some of them remarked that this was the first time in their life that they had written a story. One of the participants said that she had learnt how to develop a story by working in the group. “*Pehli baar group me kaam karke humein bahut accha laga. Ye pehli baar hai ki maine koi kahaani likhi hai. Mujhe na keval accha laga, balki bahut kuch seekhne ko bhi mila*” (I liked working in a group. This is the first time that I have written a story, and I have really learnt from the experience.). While working on the ideas for story writing, the children brainstormed and discussed enthusiastically amongst themselves. Another participant commented “*Apne man ki jo baat main kaafi samay se kisi ko nahi bataa paa rahi thi aaj kahaani ke madhyam se likhkar bataana mujhe kaafi aasan laga*” (The thoughts that I have not been able to share with anyone, I could easily express through story writing). The teachers regarded stories as an

important pedagogical tool. However, opinions were divided on whether stories could play a similarly important role in teaching Sciences and Mathematics as compared to Social Sciences and languages. This needed further debate to arrive at a consensus. Finally, the workshop concluded with the recitation of poems by two participating teachers. These poems had a deep underlying message that life is itself like a story.

Feedback and Further Direction

Participants expressed the need to organize more such workshops in future. They commented that they had enjoyed the process of story writing, and it was not as difficult as they had thought it would be. Moreover, teachers also saw it as one of the most powerful pedagogical tools for language teaching, and dealing with multiple concepts at different levels. Another misconception which was busted was regarding the age appropriateness for using story telling as a pedagogical tool. Before the workshop, most of the teachers were of the view that story telling as a tool could only be used for children at the primary level. However, after the workshop, this idea changed when they saw that it had been conducted with and for children of classes IX and X.

“It has been said that next to hunger and thirst, our most basic human need is for storytelling.”
–Khalil Gibran

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A Short Report of the English Language Capacity Building Workshop

State Institute, Jaipur, 3 - 8 April 2014

The English capacity building workshop comprised 21 participants, 10 facilitators, 9 Hindi co-development participants and 9 English co-development participants. It commenced with a recapitulation of the topics and reflections from the previous workshop during which an insightful summary of ideas and concepts on the nature of language, language acquisition, reading strategies and the concept of reading emerged. The context setting was done by recapitulating the learnings from the previous workshops and introducing the topics of the forthcoming interaction.

Kamleshji introduced the topics for the current workshop. He reiterated that in continuation with the previous workshops, we would explore the different perspectives on literacy, reading and writing, and their relevance in the classroom.

The first session was on the “Origins of Writing”. In this session, the participants explored how man must have created symbols for communication through many interesting experiential activities. This gave the participants a sense of the journey of the written word from early man’s symbolic pictographic representations of thought to the present day alphabetic and syllabic systems. This was

followed by insightful discussions regarding the difference between writing systems and writing symbols. There was an inconclusive discussion on whether a child's journey from picture writing to conventional writing recreates the journey of evolution of writing. The participants were curious to know more about the origins of writing. In the feedback session, they clarified their doubts on syllabic and alphabetic writing, the discovery of symbolic representation by man, the evolution from pictograph to ideograph and the politics of the development of writing systems.

In the second session, the participants explored many different perspectives on literacy. They discussed at length the distance between functional perspective of literacy and the sociological and critical pedagogy perspective. The participants appreciated how texts could be explored through critical literacy perspectives, and many examples emerged where elementary level students could analyse and comment upon their situation either by questioning the text or through critical interpretation. The participants saw the texts with all their layers of meanings; they saw the connection between the text, the world and the child's identity; they examined the effect of social stratification and power, and the intention of the author. Some of the questions that arose out of this session included: What is the connection and difference between education and literacy? Should education and literacy be seen in binaries? Is literacy only a skill? Where do aesthetics and literary language fit in the critical literacy paradigm?

In the third session, the participants explored the reading-writing relationship through an innovative task of 'transforming' stories. This task was much appreciated. The participants realized that reading and writing were interconnected. They also explored the relationship between reading, writing and learning. This led to reflections about the

underlying processes which inform reading and writing. These were further categorized under linguistic, cognitive, discourse and critical processes. There ensued a discussion on whether critical thinking can be introduced at the initial level. The session concluded with an analysis of children's writing, an enriching discussion on classroom processes that enhance learning through reading and writing, and the participation of children in democratic processes through reading and writing. Participants expressed their desire to know more about critical processes in reading and writing. Two books were recommended for further reading: *Reading the Word and the World* and *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, both by Paolo Friere. Some of the questions that emerged from this session included: What is the connection between reading, writing and learning? What do we mean when we say that writing concretizes our experience? What is the role of the teacher in the classroom in process writing?

The fourth session dealt with different approaches to writing. The participants were engaged in a discussion on the four models of writing and a review of these models in the understanding of the normative and ideological nature of texts. This discussion then led to an experiential exercise on product and process writing. The participants realized as a result of the exercise that there cannot be any binary divisions, and both approaches have their own importance. However, in schools, process writing needs to be encouraged as it is a constructive process. This is also because divergent thoughts (of the marginalized) need to be voiced and not silenced. The reading reviewed the four models of writing, and placed them in the perspective of how texts represent certain norms which usually belong to a dominant ideology. Thus, it was concluded that texts are not neutral, they mirror society. Some of the questions that came up during the course of this session were:

- Is the choice of approach a personal choice?
- Do some people write better through the product approach?
- Does the process approach not deal with grammatical accuracy?

The fifth session was on cohesion and coherence, and its relevance in writing. The participants found this session new and informative since many of them had not looked at writing so closely. They also realized that there is a close connection between analysis of cohesive devices and assessment. There was a debate on how cohesive texts may not necessarily be coherent. There was a vibrant discussion around coherence at the level of thought and structure. Some questions that emerged during this session were:

- Does coherence depend on the author or the reader?
- What is the connection between coherence and comprehension?

The sixth session was on genre. It was an interesting session, and gave rise to many debates about the difference between genre and style, and the classification of genres. The participants discussed various categories for classification, and found a lot of overlap between the categories. This led to a discussion on the historical, social and cultural evolution of genres. There was a lot of dissatisfaction with the fact that canonical genres were now being eroded; the participants wished that genres could be defined. Some questions that came to the fore during this session were:

- What are the boundaries between genres?
- If we say that genres are constantly evolving, does the death of the author become the death of a genre?
- There are some canonical genres, Is there a need to describe them.
- Can a text be written in all genres?

- Should we remove the word ‘standard’ from our dictionary?

The final session took the participants into the classroom. Classroom observations were analysed, and observations were made on classroom language, attitude of the teacher, pedagogy and resources. These observations were further analysed while exploring different types of texts from language textbooks. The classroom pedagogy that emerged took into consideration linguistic, cognitive, sociological and critical perspectives on reading and writing.

On the whole, the participants gave a positive feedback for the workshop. They appreciated the depth of content and the interesting ways in which it had been explored, the participatory mode of the workshop, the discussions and pointed questions that followed and the holistic viewpoints of the facilitators which revealed the strong conceptual underpinnings of the workshop. Some constructive suggestions that stemmed from the workshop included: objectives of the session or an introduction of the session needs to be given, the readings need to be explored deeper and for this more time is required many perspectives have been examined, but we need to evolve a common foundation perspective. Many participants suggested some topics for further research.

Summary

This workshop was successful in achieving its objectives and was better organized than the previous capacity building workshop. The concepts discussed were explored in depth. A wide range of topics were explored, ranging from the origin of writing to critical literacy. The various paradigms and approaches to literacy provided connections between the sessions, and built a multifaceted understanding. We also discussed perspectives on texts and literary texts. Finally, the concepts were tried out in the classroom from the perspective of the teacher. Prior to the workshop, we believed that reading and writing were two different skills, but through

the discussions in the session, we understood the relationship between them. We have now begun to understand the processes underlying them. In the session on approaches to literacy we realized that we needed to read books by Bama and ZitkalaSa. The discussion on genre was very interesting. The discussion on coherence and cohesion brought out some new points which will be useful in the classroom both from the point of view of teaching as well as assessment. The observations sheets of classroom practices opened up multiple avenues for discussion which led to rich interactions with the participants.

We realized that although we had examined capacity building from various perspectives, we were not clear about their position and stand on any issue. We also need to have a common consensus. We need to discuss the objectives or introduce the session at the beginning so that participants develop an interest. Also, a bibliography of the works pertaining to the session should be circulated to everybody. Moreover, the readings of both codev groups should be made available to the entire language group.

All the facilitators were very open, thus allowing for good facilitation. The discussions were very sharp and engaging. The connections between sessions were well established. The workshop was well structured, yet there was enough flexibility for discussion. Flexibility in reading, presentation and discussion allowed for better understanding of concepts. As the number of participants small, everybody had plenty of opportunities to voice their views.

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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.

Last date for the submission of articles:

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They may also be posted to:

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