

# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 4 Number 2 Issue 8

July 2015

ISSN: 2277-307X



Vidya Bhawan  
Society



Azim Premji  
University

# Language and Language Teaching

## Editors

Rama Kant Agnihotri, *Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, India (Formerly at the University of Delhi)*  
A. L. Khanna, *ELT Consultant, Delhi, India (Formerly at the University of Delhi)*

## Guest Editors

Rajesh Kumar, *Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India*  
Suranjana Barua, *Indian Institute of Information Technology, Guwahati (IIITG), Assam, India*

## Editorial Committee

Haobam Basantarani, *Language Consultant, Delhi, India*  
Rajni Dwivedi, *Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India*  
Devaki Lakshminarayan, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*  
Praveen Singh, *University of Delhi, Delhi, India*

## Executive Committee

H. K. Dewan, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*  
S. Giridhar, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*  
Partha Sarathi Misra, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*  
Ramgopal Vallath, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*  
Prasoon Kumar, *Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, Udaipur, India*

## International Review and Advisory Board

R. Amritavalli, English and Foreign Languages University,  
Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

Rakesh Bhatt, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign,  
Illinois, USA

Tanmoy Bhattacharya, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Jim Cummins, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Ganesh Devy, Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and  
Communication Technology, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

Kathleen Heugh, University of South Australia, Australia

Ayesha Kidwai, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India

Stephen D. Krashen, University of Southern California,  
Los Angeles, California, USA

Kay McCormick, University of Cape Town,  
Cape Town, South Africa

Rajend Mesthrie, University of Cape Town,  
Cape Town, South Africa

K. P. Mohanan, IISER, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Ajit Mohanty, formerly at the Zakir Hussain Centre for  
Educational Studies, JNU, Delhi, India

Aditi Mukherjee, former Director, National Translation  
Mission, CIIL, Mysore, Karnataka, India

Minati Panda, Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies,  
JNU, Delhi, India

D. P. Pattanayak, Founder Director, CIIL, Mysore,  
Karnataka, India

Robert Phillipson, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

N. S. Prabhu, former Head of English Language, National  
University of Singapore, Singapore.

Tariq Rahman, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Anju Sahgal Gupta, Indira Gandhi National Open University,  
Delhi, India

Itesh Sachdev, School of Oriental & African Studies,  
University of London, UK

Rajesh Sachdeva, formerly Acting Director, CIIL, Mysore,  
Karnataka, India

Sadhna Saxena, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Udaya Narayana Singh, Tagore Research Chair, Visva Bharati,  
Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

M. L. Tickoo, formerly at the English and Foreign Languages  
University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

Mahendra K. Verma, formerly at the University of York, UK

*Copy editor: Preeti Jhangiani; Cover and Layout: Rajesh Sen*

*Thanks are due to Pankhuri Arora and Arindam Chakraborty for their help in finalising this issue of LLT.*

**Language and Language Teaching**  
**Volume 4 Number 2 Issue 8 July 2015**

**Contents**

**Articles**

- Multilingualism and the English Classroom  
*Nivedita Vijay Bedadur* 1
- Saying 'You can Use Your Own Language in the Classroom' Can Make a Change  
*Dripta Piplai* 7
- Using Many Kannada Languages in a Classroom: Illustrated with a Context of Yadgir Kannada  
*Geetha M.* 12
- Examining Classroom Talk  
*Rajni Kumar* 17
- Animated Movies and Spoken English: A Blockbuster Experience  
*Venu Mehta* 23
- The Mother, the Other and Language Education: Making a Case for Critical Language Awareness  
*Reva Yunus* 28
- Integrating New Media Platforms in Language Teaching-Learning Process  
*Om Prakash* 34
- Effect of Teaching Sentence-Level-Formal Schemata on Inferring Meaning  
*Lakshmana Rao Pinninti* 38
- Interview**  
Rajesh Kumar (RK) talks to Professor Rukmini Bhaya Nair (RBN) 43
- Landmarks**  
English as a Second Language: Pedagogy, Paradigms, and Politics  
*Rakesh M Bhatt* 54

**Book Reviews**

- Research on Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Professional Development  
*Pushpinder Syal* 62
- Cognition and Second Language Instruction  
*Iqbal Judge* 64
- A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning  
*Achla Raina* 67

**Suggested Readings**

- Reading Development and Difficulties  
*Rajesh Kumar* 70
- Games for Language Learning  
*Rajni Dwivedi* 71

**Classroom Activities**

- Deducting for Inference  
*Devaki Lakshminarayan* 73
- Name Game  
*Rajni Dwivedi* 74

**Reports**

- A Seminar on Different Aspects of Children's Literature  
*Vijay Kumar* 75
- Writing Workshop Report  
*VBERC Team* 78

**Forthcoming Events**

- LLT Team* 80





# Multilingualism and the English Classroom

*Nivedita Vijay Bedadur*

## Introduction

This article is intended for teachers teaching English along with other languages at the primary and secondary level in state government schools. It will answer the following questions:

- The Concept– What is multilingualism?
- The Process– What is multilingual pedagogy?
- The Practice– How does a multilingual pedagogy translate into classroom practice?

It will also attempt to address some important questions raised by teachers:

- How can we teach English to the children who speak minority languages when they do not even know Hindi?
- The minority child in our school does not have any support from home; her speech is very different from the languages of the school and the home. How can we teach English to such a child?

Let us begin by looking at these two cases:

Before entering school, children interact with people all around them – adults, children, shopkeepers, etc. The languages they speak or acquire, may not necessarily be the same as their home language(s). For example, Maithili lives on the border of Bangalore which is a few kilometres away from Kadappa in Andhra Pradesh. Maithili's maternal grandparents are from Kadappa and speak Telugu; Maithili's

parents speak Kannada but they drop Maithili at her grandparents' home every morning and go to work in the cloth mills nearby. They have many friends who drop in with their children, in the evening. These friends speak Kannada with Maithili's parents but some of them speak Tamil with their children as they are Tamilians settled in Bangalore. Everyday Maithili goes to a Rajasthani shop with her grandfather and plays with her friend who speaks Marwari while her grandfather chats with his Rajasthani friend.

When Maithili went to school she was quite happy with her teacher who spoke both Kannada and Tamil. Why do you think Maithili was happy? Very soon Maithili started learning English. She had already begun to pick up some English from the television, pamphlets and advertisements. She also noticed that the auto drivers who were her father's friends always spoke English with the people who they ferried. So she started paying attention to what they were saying. Would you say that Maithili's first language is Kannada or Telugu or both? What status would you give to Marwari and Tamil and what would be the status of English with respect to these languages?

This is the case with many suburban children who migrate from the rural areas bordering the metropolitan cities and encounter several languages. They automatically become multilingual and so the transition from home language to school language does not create a burden of incomprehensibility.

Let us now take the case of a small town child who belongs to a minority community.

Suleman's parents' work has brought them to Barmer, Rajasthan where the languages of the street are Marwari, Barmeri, Sindhi and Gujarati. Suleman comes from the Laman Tanda (community) which speaks a dialect of Telugu. In school, the language of communication as well as the medium of instruction is Hindi, but none of the children speak Hindi. They speak Marwari or Barmeri. The school teaches English from Class II onwards. The teachers speak Dhundhari, Shekhawati, Jhunjhunu and Churu languages at home. In the classroom, all transaction is done in Hindi; the children learn English in the English class. Suleman is baffled – he finds no support from home where his parents speak only their version of Telugu which does not have a script. His parents can manage because they are constantly with a group of labourers who speak the same language. In school, Suleman has no friends from his tanda. He has no clue about what is going on in the class. His teacher thinks he is dull because he cannot pick up the language. At home Suleman can do many things; he tends to the sheep and keeps count of them, measures various quantities of grains given out by the group's distribution system and looks after his younger brother and sister.

Suleman finds it difficult to cope in school because his language is not valued. Neither is there any place for his system of knowledge in school. While Suleman surely has the ability to learn any number of languages and gain knowledge through those languages, there are no bridges between his prior knowledge and his new learning. Eventually, Suleman will learn the languages of the street. But will he learn the language of the class room if his identity is denied?

### **What is Multilingualism?**

Multilingualism has been defined by different scholars in different ways. A multilingual person is someone who has “the ability to use three or more languages, either separately or in various degrees of code-mixing: different languages are used for different purposes, competence in each varying according to such factors as register, occupation and education” (Kemp, 2009, p. 15). Therefore, a person who switches or mixes codes to communicate effectively, or speaks many dialects, or is conversant in a diglossia ambience of the same language is considered multilingual according to this definition.

It is also necessary for our purposes to distinguish between additive and subtractive bi/multilingualism. Additive multilingualism enriches both the languages by their usage. Subtractive multilingualism on the other hand refers to the gradual loss of the first language as the second language dominates the learner's functional space in which case the speaker's language loyalty gets shifted to the newly acquired language. For example, if Suleman began to speak Hindi more and more, and soon forgot the Telugu dialect spoken at home, we would say that Suleman's language use demonstrates subtractive bilingualism. On the contrary, if Suleman's family retained use of their dialect of Telugu and even read some literature in it, while being fluent in Hindi and Barmeri, it would be an example of additive bilingualism.

In India, multilingualism has always been part of our cultural and social ethos. The richness and complexity of the Indian multilingual situation characterized by both individual and societal bilingualism may be ascertained from the fact that over 1652 ‘mother-tongues’ belonging to four different language families are spoken in India; the print media uses 87 languages, the radio 71, the schools 47 as media of instruction (Agnihotri, 2007, pp. 79-88).

The government of India always felt that ‘the one and only way to introduce multilingualism through a system of education is to make provision for the study of several languages in the curriculum’ (Srivastava, 2007, pp. 37-53). The Three-Language Formula emerged out of this consideration. The original principles that gave shape to the three language formula were that the mother tongue is the first language which the children must study from the very beginning in their school both as a subject and as the medium of instruction in order to derive maximum advantage from education (Srivastava, 2007, pp. 37-53). Apart from this, the formula also provided for the study of the regional language, Hindi and English. English was to be studied from class V onwards. However, giving in to the people’s aspirations, English is being taught from class I and many of our State Board schools are now using English as the medium of instruction.

Let us now look at the following case study and discuss the approach we should follow in the classroom.

A child from the Tharu community enters a school for the first time in a village in Uttarakhand. The child speaks Tharu at home. She has heard Punjabi spoken in the street. She is baffled when the teacher speaks to her in Hindi. She does not understand anything the teacher says, and amongst the forty children in the class, some of whom speak Tharu, some Bengali and some Punjabi while some speak a little Hindi, she is completely lost. She becomes more and more withdrawn day by day. The teacher thinks she is dull. Soon she drops out of school and helps her mother take care of her new born brother.

Let us now look at the Laman Tanda community.

The Laman Tanda (community) live on the outskirts of Pune. They are a migrant community, but they have been living on the outskirts of Pune for the last thirty years. They speak Laman dialect and in this generation at least one parent is educated. They are eager to send their children to school. However, the only school which will accept them and which they can afford is the municipal school where Marathi – the regional language of Maharashtra – is the medium of instruction. The Laman children have picked up a little Marathi in the streets but this is not the standard Marathi of the school. The teachers consider the Laman’s language to be vulgar and uncivilized. The children do not understand the teacher’s instruction yet they are very supportive of each other and manage to escape punishment by helping each other (Adapted from Shrinivasan, 2009).

Looking at these two cases, it is clear that children from marginalized communities speaking minority languages face huge challenges when they enter school. Some of the challenges include:

1. Children from marginalized communities come equipped with indigenous knowledge which is gained in their home language. The teacher may not know the language which may hamper such children’s ability for comprehension.
2. They usually have no literacy environment in their homes. They may thus not be able to participate in literacy activities which do not create a suitable environment.
3. It is possible that they may not have encountered the language of the school in their homes and street.

4. As language is tied to identity, these children may withdraw when they find their identity being denied.

Also, in both the cases discussed above, the home language of the child can never become the language of the classroom because there is no provision, at the implementation level, for tribal and/or marginalized languages to become languages of instruction in schools due to lack of affirmative action policies and politics. Therefore, in order to counter these problems, we have to create an inclusive space for minority language children when they first come across the language of the school and English. We cannot expect to make any progress by denying the children's home language and their prior knowledge. While this denial of home languages in school is never a deliberate process, it happens because we all have prejudices about the languages which we speak. We believe that standard and accepted languages are 'good', and those that the children from minority community speak are non-standard and hence 'bad'. Teachers also believe that standard languages are grammatical while non-standard languages lack grammar! However, the only person who can help these children is the teacher in the classroom and the best way in which the teacher can do so is through a multilingual pedagogy and by adopting a multilingual approach to teaching English.

### What is a Multilingual Approach?

Multilingual approach believes in affirming the identity and culture of the child by welcoming her language in the classroom. We know that the best way for a classroom practice to make meaning to the child in the early years is through her prior knowledge which is couched in her language. Thus, welcoming the child's language in the classroom, helping her to express and celebrate her prior knowledge is the underlying principle of this approach. Secondly, the multilingual approach that we subscribe to believes in affirming and creating spaces for the development of the child's language along with the development of the target language in the early years. This approach works on the principle of cognitive development – in simple words, from familiar to unfamiliar, from context related to context independent. We shall see now how this spans out in pedagogy.

### Theoretical Framework for a Multilingual Pedagogy

We will now examine why a multilingual pedagogy affirms the principles outlined earlier. What is the theoretical basis of this pedagogy? Let us look at the simple theoretical framework for language development given by Jim Cummins:

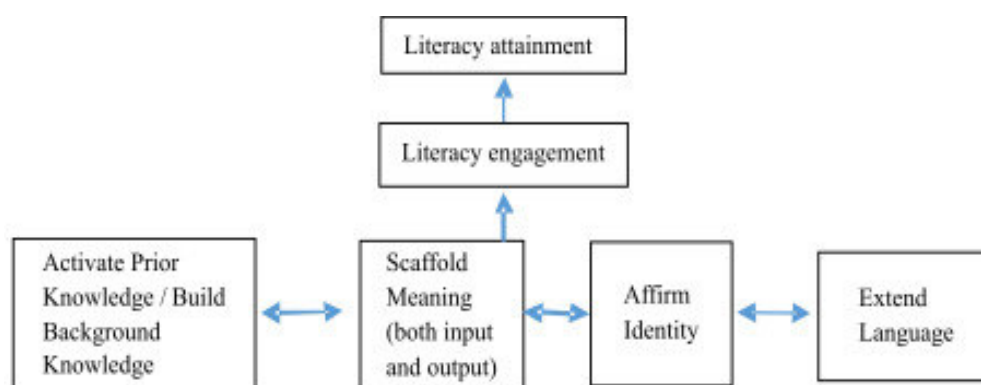


Figure 1. A pedagogical framework for promoting academic development in multilingual contexts. (Cummins, 2009, pp. 21-35).



Following this framework, I would like to suggest the following examples of multilingual pedagogy in the classroom for classes I to V.

### **Multilingual Pedagogy**

Create space in the timetable of the school for a language activity class in which the following activities may be undertaken. This is a class where the home languages of the children and school languages are nurtured side by side. Hence, along with acquisition of the school language, maintenance and respect for home languages also happens in the classroom.

- Use the languages of children in the classroom: Begin with the child's language and introduce the school language through code mixing and code switching. For example: Begin your Monday morning class by discussing what the children did at home on Sunday, encourage the children to speak in their language, ask questions in the languages that children understand. Help every child to express himself / herself in his/ her language. Write what they have been saying on the board. Introduce some English words related to their talk on the board. Keep a stack of cards ready. Ask the children to think of one word they want to know related to the theme of the talk just recorded on the board. Write the word in their language (choose any script) and in English on the card. Give the card to them. Let them exchange cards, play with them take them home and bring them back. Do this every Monday.
- Create a Pictionary with the help of the children: A Pictionary is a picture dictionary. Ask the children to identify a word which they like in their language. Ask them to draw an image related to the word. Create cards with these words and images, add the English equivalent to the card, speak the word aloud in English and give the card to the children to examine and talk about.

- Make theme-based word walls in all the languages of the classroom: Ask the children to select a theme of their choice. Ask them to give as many words as possible related to the theme in their languages. Encourage a child whose language is very different from that of the other children in the class to speak. Now ask the children if they know English and Hindi words for the words used by the child. In fact, encourage the children to think of English and Hindi words along with the words in their languages. Welcome words in all languages based on the theme. Put them up on the walls. There will be different scripts –one for English and others for the different languages. This does not create a problem for the children. Remember the boundaries between scripts and languages are artificial boundaries. Modern advertising has overcome these boundaries. Once a word wall is ready, do several activities around it.
- Storytelling in the children's languages: This multilingual practice will slowly extend to storytelling in all the languages of the classroom. Introduce English through code mixing and code switching.
- Initiate projects to collect songs, stories and jokes from the children's languages by inviting parents to the school and follow through to create small picture books of stories from the children's languages rewritten in English and other school languages.

### **Some Questions**

Q - Development of language needs practice along with acquisition of words. How will a multilingual pedagogy help?

A - We need to teach each language deeply and intensely; a multilingual pedagogy may lead to an inclusive classroom and the development of basic interpersonal communication skills but

each language requires to be learnt as well as acquired – we need to work with sound-letter relationships, vocabulary development, understanding of word formation and syntactic strategies, reading strategies and writing workshops. This is a very valid concern, but two languages can work together once the bridges are built. Most of our academic communication too can afford to be more multilingual to promote greater space for understanding and accepting different languages. We can have separate spaces for language development once the bridges have been built. However, maintenance of home languages must always be a part of this exploration.

Q - Is a teacher required to know all the home languages of the children?

A - This question is part of the paradigm that believes that a teacher teaches and a student learns. A teacher needs to create a space for the home languages of the children in the classroom. She/he need not be proficient but *receptive* to the home languages. Respect and value can be created by becoming a learner and learning together in the classroom. A teacher should be proficient in creating activities and spaces for such explorations and should have an open attitude rather than knowledge of children's languages.

## Conclusion

Firstly, if we believe that multilingualism is constitutive of our identity, and that human beings are essentially multilingual, we cannot have monolingual classrooms. Secondly, education that begins with a denial of children's home languages has been proven to 'push out' children leading to a large number of uneducated youth, and huge inequalities in the social and economic life of the nation. A multilingual pedagogy will create spaces for larger choices for children who have been hitherto marginalized. It will lead to inclusive classrooms, more children in schools and higher maintenance of minority languages.

This will also lead to the minority languages and speakers having a fair chance of participating in the economic, political and social life of the nation.

## References

- Agnihotri, R. (2007). Towards a pedagogical paradigm rooted in multilinguality. *International Multilingual Research Journal* 1(2), 79-88.
- Cummins, J. (2009). Fundamental psycholinguist and sociological principles underlying educational success for linguistic minority students. In A. K. Mohanty, M. Panda, R. Phillipson, & T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds.), *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local* (pp. 21-35). New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited.
- Kemp, C. (2009). Defining multilingualism. In L. Aronin, & B. Hufeisen (Eds.), *The exploration of multilingualism: Development of research on L3, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition* (pp. 11-26). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Shrinivasan, M. (2009). Confronting stereotypes. *Pragat shikshan sanstha*. Retrieved from [http://www.pragatshikshansansta.org/article.php?category=4f795\\_f38e6665](http://www.pragatshikshansansta.org/article.php?category=4f795_f38e6665).
- Srivastava, A. K. (2007). Multilingualism and school education in India: Special features, problems and prospects. In D. P. Pattanayak (Ed.), *Multilingualism in India* (pp. 37-53). Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited.

**Nivedita Vijay Bedadur** is Assistant Professor and Specialist in Academics and Pedagogy in the University Resource Centre at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. She has taught English in Kendriya Vidyalayas in India and Nepal. Presently, she is engaged in designing courses for teacher educators. Her research on Teacher Development and Mobile Learning is available on [http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/tec\\_13\\_publication\\_final\\_version.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/tec_13_publication_final_version.pdf), <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/ec/files/CPD%20Lessons%20book.pdf>.

[nivedita@azimpremjifoundation.org](mailto:nivedita@azimpremjifoundation.org)

# Saying 'You can Use Your Own Language in the Classroom' Can Make a Change

*Dripta Piplai*

## **Introduction**

This article focuses on the initiation of awareness of dialectal sources among teachers in areas where non-standard languages are spoken. I believe that it is possible for teachers to work on the structure of languages spoken by the children, plan bilingual teaching strategies and concentrate on the instructional language of the classroom. However, it is important to keep in mind that children's regular language use exhibits a lot of variation.

## **Language Variation in the Classroom**

As a part of this study, some children from a remote village in Purulia district of West Bengal were asked to fill up some gaps in a worksheet in a simple text using Bangla words. The primary aim for giving them this worksheet was to identify the problem areas of the concerned children while writing in Bangla. These children spoke Kurmali at home, which is structurally quite different from standard Bangla – the school language for the children.

It was found that most of the children from classes 6 to 8 constructed a number of sentences using first person pronouns with third person verb forms. Sentences such as the following were common among a number of children (gloss provided below each word):

1. ami kOla khay.

I banana eat

(third person simple present tense)

After scanning the worksheets of some more children, it was found that children of the village hardly knew which verb form is to be used with first person pronouns in Bangla. Kurmali has a different set of verbal inflections from Bangla.

In different corners of Bengal (primarily in rural areas), a huge number of elementary level school teachers think that all their students speak the same language; the factors of language variation are ignored. The teachers use a text book written in standard Bangla, and they try to plan most of the lessons by using the regional standard. In fact concepts such as heterogeneity or variability in the languages of the children in a classroom are not considered as a resource by the teacher in many instances.

In reality, children in a classroom either speak different languages, or they speak different varieties of the same language. None of them use one single set of linguistic items (or words and constructions) from the same language in everyday speech. When the children speak a non-prestigious variety of a language, it is generally considered that the teacher and her class should focus on the standard language – Hindi, Telugu, or Bangla – whatever it may be. As a result of this, the use of local languages in classrooms is not encouraged. In many instances, the manuals for the teachers are quite authoritative, and direct the teachers to teach using the regional standard only. The children who speak various dialects of a language are viewed as a member of a community X, and it

is assumed that the community is homogeneous in nature. In reality, such a linguistic group and such a community is an 'Imagined Community' (Anderson, 1983).

Avoiding use of the local language or the home language of a child in class is indirectly telling the child that his/her language is inferior. Not only does it disrespect the students' cultural rights, but it also creates a barrier in the child's spontaneous creativity. The so-called non-prestigious language varieties are rarely used in classes by elementary school teachers for explanations or descriptions. However, it is extremely convenient to use them in regular classroom interaction. Moreover, it is really important to talk in the home language of the children, to allow the children to construct new sentences in their home language, and to use it in writing along with the language of formal schooling.

### **Linguistics Features versus Errors: Learning for a Classroom**

This paper describes an awareness campaign for teachers with an aim to share the view that the children's knowledge of local language can be used as a resource in the classroom. In the 'using your own language in classroom' tour in West Bengal, I visited teachers and children in four different corners of West Bengal during the last few months. The aim of the tour was to get an idea of the children's home language, and to help them overcome language problems in the classroom. The tour targeted meetings with children who speak Kurmali, Rajbanshi, Khotta Bangla and East Bengali dialect influenced Bangla in four districts of Bengal (Purulia, Jalpaiguri, Malda and North 24 Parganas).

The teachers in the four selected districts helped us with the project by informing us about the basic structural features of their languages. After getting an idea about their language, a list

of major differences between the children's home language and school language was prepared, and worksheets were designed for children keeping in mind the differences between the two. The assumption was that, if the differences in language become predictable, it will be possible to get an idea of why children make 'errors' in classroom tasks and/or classroom interaction.

Informal interviews with students were also conducted. The students came in groups to their schools in the morning. The meetings also took place at their education support centre classes in the afternoon. The students filled up worksheets designed to diagnose their everyday language problems. In some cases, the children wrote a sentence or a small paragraph (along with drawing pictures). After accumulating all the writing samples and worksheets, the patterns of errors became clearer.

How can we describe the patterns of errors? For example, worksheets filled up by students at a village of Malda district showed a few patterns of verbal errors. A number of students wrote sentences without verbs. As Bangla is a verb final language, the sentences exhibited only the subject, and the object followed the subject. The slot for verb was empty in many cases. For example, one child wrote the following sentence:

2. ami EkTa phul (verb omitted)  
I one (classifier) flower

The child perhaps tried to write that she has seen/drawn a flower. But as she was not sure which inflection to use, she dropped the verb entirely. There were some instances where the children had used the verb of the matrix clause in local language, and the verb of the embedded clause in Bangla. The teacher judged their answers as wrong. But in reality, the child had used two verb forms where both the forms belonged to his/her mental grammar.



Variability of language has been viewed as a resource to develop learning material for teaching. Meetings with teachers were organized so that they could share their views on the possible use of different languages in classroom. It was suggested in the meetings that the patterns of errors frequently or occasionally made by the students be used as an important resource for remedial teaching. It was also possible to develop material for use in class by explaining the reasons behind the errors. For example, if a child's home language has a different pattern of verb use in first person, the child tends to make errors while writing sentences using first person pronouns in Bangla. The example cited at the beginning for the Kurmali children becomes relevant here, where the child uses verbal forms for third person with a first person subject.

The local language awareness tour aimed to convey a simple fact to the teachers – it is possible to use the language of the children in the classroom, in different ways. It was also an opportunity to learn about local languages from the teachers and offer a linguistic perspective to them on the so-called errors of students by showing that these 'errors' could have a variety of sources and could be treated as steps in the process of learning. In fact the tour aimed to prepare a tool kit for teachers which they could use as a classroom aid, and shared the idea that different kinds of materials could be produced with a home language-school language combined resource. The materials included bilingual or bi-dialectal texts, exercises involving written tasks using words/constructions from two or multiple linguistic varieties, bilingual worksheets, etc.

### **Language Use of Children**

If one interacts with children of different geographical regions even within a state, it will be found that they use different plural markers,

different tense markers, and different forms of verbs. The verbs of the regional standard may not vary according to number or gender, but the child may use different verb forms for singular and plural subjects, male or female subjects. In many cases, children use pronouns which are completely different from the pronouns of the regional standard. Also, a pronoun used in local language may refer to some other pronoun in regional standard.

An attentive observation of children's everyday language use reveals that children use a lot of linguistic items (sounds, words, phrases, etc.) in everyday speech which are different from the language of the text book. If a teacher regularly carries a notebook to the class and notes down the basic differences between the sounds, words and phrases of the child's home language and the regional standard, he/she could then start to create a record of the resources, and this could be used to develop materials for classroom use later.

It is also important for teachers to observe if the child is showing enough variation in natural language use in day-to-day life, both in a formal classroom situation and casual play time speech. If we carefully listen to the children around us, we will find that a child uses a local language/languages in different situations. For instance, a child uses a local variety while playing with other children, but tries to use the prestige variety while visiting a book shop located in a town. The child uses the lingua franca or the standard link language when needed, and in some cases also creates new forms of speech. The new set of words are sometimes the result of a failure to reach the target level of regional standard, and sometimes a venture to show to the city people that 'I do not belong to a dialect speaking group'. In many cases, the teachers observe that the children do not use new forms, mix different forms of speech together, or shift from one set of forms to another very

frequently. It has also been observed that if a child resides in a village near a bordering state, the child tends to use the regional standard of the other state, as he/she may have a playgroup of children from the other side of the border. Therefore, in different situations and at different places, the child exhibits different patterns of variation in everyday speech and also changes the speech pattern strategically. On the one hand, the use of different linguistic varieties at different times and spaces reflects the child's attitude towards different language forms. On the other hand, if a teacher prohibits the use of local language in school, that affects the child's identity.

### Negotiating Classroom Variability

The teachers' understanding of language variation and heterogeneity needs to be a ground for classroom practices. Does the teacher pay attention to the fact that the child has enough potential to show a high degree of variation? In many instances, the answer is, 'yes'. The teacher in certain instances even tries to interact using both the child's home language and the language of formal schooling. Some resources can be created by utilizing two or multiple linguistic varieties in the following manner. The list of pronouns in table may be considered as a resource by a teacher who teaches the Kurmali speaking children of Purulia at Jhalda region.

With the help of Table 1, the teacher can create a table on the blackboard and write all possible first person pronouns available in the child's vocabulary. Another table may be created on the blackboard for all possible verb forms that match the first person forms. Now the teacher can ask the students to construct sentences using words from the two tables. The students will possibly create sentences by mixing and matching the different slots (Bangla, Kurmali and in some cases Hindi forms too). This gives freedom to the student to explore different constructions by alternative use of forms accessible to him or her.

A set of materials similarly developed with the corpus of both the local language and the regional standard can be used as a major classroom resource. A simple understanding of the language structure and variation in children's language can be helpful in developing teaching learning material. The teachers themselves can create easy-to-use materials which are bilingual or bi-dialectal. A simple story creating session can be conducted with the children where bilingual stories can be shared, noted down and preserved for future use. Description of a school text using local language can also be recorded and preserved. Vocabulary games can be created using words from both regional and standard dialect. All these bilingual texts can be used as a resource in future.

Table 1  
Resource Created by Combining Two Linguistic Varieties of Bangla in Jhalda Region

	Bangla		Kurmali	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
<b>First Person</b>	ami	amra	mOi	hamra
<b>Second Person</b>	tui/tumi/apni	tera/tomra/upnara	tNOi	tera
<b>Third Person</b>	Se	ora	ONoi	Ora

## **Promoting Awareness for Bilingual Use in Classroom**

Encouraging the use of local language in classrooms has a huge potential for benefitting the children. If the local language is promoted by using bilingual text development and bilingual tasks on a regular basis, it will lower the chances of the children facing prohibitory guidelines for local language use. It can even help them overcome their fears of a 'powerful' language. Punishments for speaking what teachers call 'bad' language in school can be stopped. Hence encouraging the use of the children's 'own' language can make a huge difference.

Our everyday language reflects the social realities and inequalities inherent in our society. In fact, children do not use their home language in social settings because of the stigma associated with it. Children also suffer if the teacher exhibits a negative attitude towards their local linguistic variety. New innovative practices are being used in classrooms by teachers aiming to modify the nature of language use. By practicing bilingual or bi-dialectal teaching on regular basis, linguistic discrimination in classroom may be prevented. By modifying the nature of interaction patterns and promoting the use of different linguistic forms in classrooms, one can initiate awareness of the bi-dialectal resources at the disposal of the teachers.

## **References**

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

**Dripta Piplai** did her Ph.D. from the Centre for Advanced Studies in Linguistics, University of Delhi. She is presently a fellow with Wipro Applying Thought in Schools, Bangalore. Her research interests include language conflict and syntactic variation, bilingual and bi-dialectal curriculum development and language rights of children. She has taught Linguistics at the University of Delhi and the University of Calcutta.

*driptap@gmail.com*

# Using Many Kannada Languages in a Classroom: Illustrated with a Context of Yadgir Kannada

*Geetha M.*

## **Introduction**

All languages that are alive have undergone changes, produced variations and continue to do so; languages react and respond to cultural and societal changes. While there are some rules under which a language family exists, it continues to exhibit variations within that framework. There is constant exchange and movement of words and forms of languages between communities resulting in either a completely new language or a variation of it. Variations depend on the interactions, occupations, cultural practises, influences and movement of the community. Also the migration any place has experienced. I do not claim that these changes happen so quickly or drastically that one might not be able to capture the sense and rules of the language. They may have taken place over decades or even centuries, but it is important to acknowledge that spoken language is not stagnant or monolingual in nature. According to Agnihotri (2007), 'census-takers in India find themselves confronted with array of language names when they ask people what language or languages they speak'.

The growth and status of a language is dependent on the spread, political power and the socio-economic status of its speaking community and the influence of other languages, etc. This gives rise to the terms such as language and dialects. Haugen (1966) writes, 'language and dialects are ambiguous terms'. A careful peek into the history of an official language in parts of India would make it clear that the status

of a language may not remain stagnant forever. Changes in the use of Parsi, Urdu, and Hindi as court languages are some such examples. It is equally important to note that such changes were influenced by changes in dynasty, notion of national integrity, etc.

In current times, it is useful to see how the status and growth of a language is influenced by education. For the purpose of this paper, I will not discuss the influence of mediums such as entertainment, news media, socio-cultural and political processes, etc. on language. One of the key goals of education is "to produce literate individuals". Literacy is a means to most other learning since reading and writing skills underlie most learning in- and out-of schools. Also, these skills become integral for critical engagement with the world. These literate individuals in turn become agents who influence language use in the present global market economy. Repetition of such a cycle of validation may result in valuing or devaluing a kind of language usage. It is of interest to see how languages are validated, depending on whether or not they find space in this literacy medium.

## **Classroom Observation**

The following are the observations from a class of Learning Improvement Programme in Yadgir. The focus of the programme was on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. One of the key principles of the programme was to be sensitive to the child's word and world, and to allow space for them in the classroom.



### **Illustration 1**

A set of sounds and their symbols in Kannada were introduced in the class. Students were prompted to give examples of words containing that sound. Students gave examples from both local vocabulary and from the list of words encountered in the textbook. Students also came up with vocabulary used in colloquial language which is generally avoided in textbooks; the word list was endless (Jackendoff, 1993). The teacher wrote all the words on the board and students copied them down in their notebooks. This process validated the child's world and word to an extent and made language learning a more meaningful process (Freire, 1972).

### **Illustration 2**

One of the students said the word "aalanchi". Only two students in the class knew the meaning of this word despite the fact that all students came from the same village. The teacher asked for the meaning of the word. The child explained that the word is used to pluck a certain kind of fruit from the tree. The teacher then wrote the word on the board. This example illustrates how language can change even within a close proximity, based on the practises of the community.

### **Illustration 3**

Children gave examples of the words "tamTe" and "TamTe", both meaning a musical instrument similar to a drum made out of animal skin. Similarly "DoLLu" and "Doolu" refer to some musical instruments. The pronunciation varied depending on the community. The teacher was confused and wrote the words in the standard form by referring to the text book.

### **Illustration 4**

Students were allowed to write words from their local language. They were also encouraged to

write sentences. When conflicts around what was acceptable and what was not arose, to resolve the conflict the teacher prompted the children to write in the textbook language. For instance, a child attempted to write "Grandmother is taking flowers". The child had written "avva hoov", meaning "grandmother - flowers", and asked the teacher how to write "oytaaLe" "taking". The teacher was confused about the correct way of writing it, because it can be pronounced both as "oytaaLe" or "voytaaLe". The teacher was a little unsure of how to guide the child; she tried and later ignored the problem (not sure if my presence also impacted). However, the way in which it is written in the text book is "ajji hoovannu tegedukonDu hoodaLul", i.e. "Grandmother has taken the flowers and gone".

The above examples illustrate how attempts were made to validate the children's words and the conflicts that arose as a result of these attempts. I will now try to understand the variations in Kannada language with a focus on Yadgir Kannada.

## **Kannada Languages**

The Kannada language is largely divided into four types after the official regional divisions of Karnataka. The four types are Kalaburgi, Dharwad, Karavali and Mysore Kannada. However in the following paragraphs, we will see that attempts to name the languages are endless and sometimes futile yet difficult to put into any one larger bucket.

Based on the geographical location-coastal areas, bordering lands, Western Ghats which have influenced communication possibilities / limitation- spoken Kannada varies (Savadatti, 2014). Moreover, the existence of the mountain ranges of the Nilgiris, Kodachadri, Brahmagiri, Kuduremukh, and Bababudangiri have limited the communication between these regions and allowed for rich variations in Kannada in its

immediate neighbouring area before industrialization. In addition to this there is a strong influence of Konkani, Tulu and Malayalam in coastal Karnataka; of Marathi in Belgaum division; and of Marathi and Telugu in the north-eastern parts of Karnataka. A few dialects based on the differences that arise from these influences are:

Coastal and Western Ghats - Karaavali Kannada, Malenad Kannada, Kasargod Kannada, etc.

South Karnataka - Mysore Kannada, Mandya Kannada, Davanagere Kannada, Kodagu Kannada, Kolar Kannada, etc.

North Karnataka - Bellary Kannada, Raichur Kannada, Bidar Kannada, Bijapur Kannada, Belagaum Kannada, Akkalakot Kannada, Aadavani Kannada, etc.

Based on economic, religious, caste, education and other socio-political aspects, many dialects of Kannada may be found. The Kannada spoken by the Brahmin community is considered as the language of the educated and is sacred or right form; however, that has variations too. In the Hassan region, the Sanketi Kannada spoken by the Sanketi Brahmins and the Kannada spoken by other Brahmins are very different from each other. Similarly, the Kannada spoken by the farming community Vokkaligas and the farming community of Kurubas in the southern are different from each other too. Many such caste-based variations of the language are named after the community in which they are spoken. For example-Soliga Kannada, Diiwara Kannada, Badaga Kannada, Banta Kannada, Muslim Kannada, Kodava Kannada, Haalakki Kannada, Koota Kannada, Korava / Koracha Kannada, Gowda Kannada, etc. However, all these variations remains only in the oral form, literature has not given space for such rich diversity and variation. This richness seems to be strained by the process of standardization.

In civilized society, standardization is a process which one cannot escape, but it is also crucially important to see how close this is to oral language, to ensure that it allows for other variations to find place. Standardization is a socio-political process involving the legitimization and institutionalization of a language variety as a feature of sanctioning of that variety as socially preferable (Williams, 1992). A language has more power than any of its dialects. It is the powerful dialect but it has become so because of non-linguistic factors. Unfortunately, those who think you can standardize and fix a language for all time are often quite influential. They often also find ready access to the media. People in power are therefore perceived as speaking normally. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called to be different or of a lower order. A similar strain happened in case of Kannada.

For the sake of this report, my research is limited to the history of standardization of Kannada from post-independence. After the state reorganization act in 1956, states were formed on the basis of linguistic boundaries. Mysore had a powerful dynasty ruling most of the regions of Karnataka. Nizamuddin were ruling the north-eastern parts of Karnataka speaking various dialects of Kannada; Hindi and Urdu, were later forced to join the state. The Mysore court was adorned by Brahmin and Veerashaiva writers and composers. The Kannada written by them was heavily influenced by Sanskrit and English. Linguists in Kannada critique that the use of Sanskrit and the retention of aspirational sounds which are not used vocally is evidence of the effort of retaining Sanskrit (Narayan, 2000). A form of Kannada spoken by Mysore Brahmin then became the administrative language and also the language for state education. I will be referring to it as "textbook Kannada" in this paper.

## Kannada Spoken in Yadgir Region

Yadgir is a new district carved out of Gulbarga in northern Karnataka. It is also one of the most backward districts in Karnataka both economically and educationally. The Kannada spoken in Yadgir is Kalburgi Kannada, which is broadly divided into Chincholi, Alanda, Yadgir and Shahpur (names of the Taluqs) variations. This is a very broad framework based on regional division; the languages spoken by the communities vary in many ways. As my classroom observations are derived from a part of Yadgir, I will discuss a few generic and broad variations between standard text book Kannada and Kalburgi Kannada. In the following variations, the first form represents textbook Kannada and the latter represents Kalburgi Kannada. The differences in their grammar rules include:

- (1) Words (mostly nouns and verbs) end with *i* sound instead of *e*.  
*maLe* – *maLi* ‘rain’  
*shaale* – *shaali* ‘school’  
*onTe* – *onTi* ‘camel’  
*mane* – *mani* ‘house’  
*aane* – *aani* ‘elephant’  
*emme* – *emmi* ‘buffallo’
- (2) Special use of sounds *ya* and *va* can be observed in this region.  
*ee* - *ya*  
*meele* – *myaali* ‘up’  
*beeDa* – *byaaDa* ‘don’t want’  
*beeTe* – *byaati* ‘Hunt’  
*beele* – *byaaLi* ‘Fence’  
*oo* - *va*  
*gooDe* – *gwaaDi* ‘Wall’  
*tooTa* – *twaata* ‘Farm’  
*dose* – *dwaasi* ‘Dosa’
- (3) Words end with *ri* with a plural/respectable sense.  
*banni* - *barri* ‘come’  
*hoogi* - *hoogri* ‘go’  
*nintkoLLi* - *nindari* ‘wait/stand’  
*kutkaLLi* ? *kundri* ‘sit’

In case of a complete verb form, the words end with *haana* (for male), *haaLa* (female), *haara* (Plural form). Complete directing nouns end with *kalli*, *killi*, *kava*, *kiva*, *kadu*, *kidu*

The presence of these forms in the speech clearly points to the language being Kalburgi Kannada.

In the following illustrations the former word/form is standard Kannada while the latter word/form is from the Kalburgi region.

- (4) In many cases, following replacements of consonant sounds may be found.  
*n* - *L* *unnu* - *uLLu* ‘eat’  
*n* - *l* *munjaane* - *munjaale* ‘early morning’  
*s* - *ch* *sanji* - *chanji* ‘evening’  
*r* - *d* *urdu* - *uddu* ‘fry’
- (5) *deeru/deru* is used for plural masculine form  
*aNNandiru* - *aNNadeeru*, ‘elder brothers’  
*tammandiru* - *tammadeeru* ‘younger brothers’
- (6) In case of the plural form of objects use of *gooLu/goLu* is instead of *gaLu*  
*kurigaLu* - *kurigooLu*, ‘sheep’(plural)  
*manegaLu* - *manigoLu* ‘houses’
- (7) Use of *sh* sound is not found in this region  
*ashTu* - *aTTu* ‘that much’  
*kashTu* - *kaaTu* ‘that’s all’  
*ishTu* - *iTTU* ‘this much’
- (8) In case of 5th inflectional suffix as in Kannada grammar *inda* ? *linda* form is used  
*maneinda* - *manilinda* ‘from house’  
*Peeteinda* - *bajaarlinda* ‘from market’  
*kaaDinda* - *kaaDlinda* ‘from forest’
- (9) 4th inflectional suffix - instead of *ge*? *g*, *gi*, *k* is used  
*manganige tinisida* - *baalyaag tinsida* (Baaluu = monkey local dialect)

holavannu bittabeeku - valak bitbeeku  
'harvest the field'

magaLannu kaLuhisu - magaLig khaLsu  
'send the daughter'

(10) Similarly instead of 7th inflectional suffix  
(alli) ? (aaga / oLaga) is used

kaalinalli - kaalaaga 'using your leg'

maneyalli - maniyaaga 'in the house'

(11) Most of the nouns starting with *ha* are  
replaced by *a, va, o* sound

*haal* – *aal* 'milk'

*haN* – *aN* 'fruit'

*hoL* – *voL* 'field'

*hoT* – *VoT* 'stomach'

*huN* – *uN* 'full moon'

*hebbu* - *ebbu* 'suffix for 'big'

*hoDada* – *oDda* 'hit'

There many such differences in the grammar rules too far apart from the huge differences in vocabulary, however, only the standard Kannada grammar is taught to be correct in school (Chalapati, R., 2012). Keeping such differences in mind, I continued to observe and reflect on the classroom language.

## Conclusion

Instances from classroom observation and the awareness of language variations throw light on the need and also the possibility of bringing in the children's word in the classroom. It also re-emphasises that there is strong need for independence and localization in curriculum development and classroom transactions (NCF, 2005). The teacher's preparation and his / her knowledge about linguistics to facilitate such variations in the written form at the elementary level will be very useful. When all these practises are implemented, the question of how teaching should be facilitated gets into larger a discussion

and debate. This in turn leads to new pedagogies that support and facilitate a child's language in the classroom. Simultaneously, there must be efforts on the part of the writers and other institutions to produce more work in regional variations.

## References

- Agnihotri, R. K. (2007). Towards a pedagogical paradigm rooted in multilinguality. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 1(2), 79-88.
- Chalapati, R. (2012). *Tanti meelina nadige*. Bangalore: Sakhi Prakashana.
- NCF (2005). *Position paper on language teaching*. New Delhi: NCERT
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.
- Haugen, E. (1966). Dialect, language, nation. *American Anthropologist*, 68(4), 922-935.
- Jackendoff, R. (1993). *Patterns in the mind: Language and Human Nature*. New York: Harvester.
- Narayan, K. V. (2000). *Kannada jagattu, ardha shatamaana*. Hampi: Vidyananya Press.
- Savadatti, S. (2014). Kannada bhaasheya prabeedhagalu mattu upabhaashegalu. In *Kannada bhaasha swaroopagalu*. Hampi: Vidyananya Press.
- Williams, G. (1992). *Sociolinguistics: A sociological critique*. London: Routledge.

**Geetha M** is a student of MA Elementary Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her interests include language and literacy acquisition at elementary level and the social dynamics involved in such an effort.

*gekgeetha@gmail.com*



# Examining Classroom Talk

*Rajni Kumar*

## **Introduction**

All of us growing up in traditional schools have undergone "an apprentice of observation" (Lortie, 1975) lasting many years. We are so inured to the patterns of classroom talk that we consider them "normal" and they have become invisible to us. Fortunately for us, there is research that serves to 'unpack' conventional classroom talk, and that focuses on the characteristics of dialogic talk that promotes student learning. In this article, I will highlight the key features of this research in order to help teachers examine their own practice.

## **Characteristics of Talk in Conventional Classrooms**

In most classrooms, talk is monologic, as teachers stand and deliver information while students are mostly passive. Goodlad's study of more than a thousand classrooms found that "teachers at all levels apparently did not know how to vary their instructional procedures, did not want to, or had some kind of difficulty doing so" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 105). More recently, Lefstein and Snell posited, "Teachers dominate classroom interaction, talking most of the time, controlling topics and allocation of turns, judging the acceptability of pupil contributions and policing inappropriate behaviour" (Lefstein & Snell, 2011, p. 167). Goodlad's study also revealed that predominantly the emotional tone of classrooms was flat. Joy, anger and enthusiasm were kept under control (Goodlad, 1984, p. 124) Most classroom talk is structured

as Initiation, Response and Evaluation (IRE) cycles. Teachers initiate topics, asking mostly closed-ended questions of previously transmitted information, students answer, and the teacher evaluates their answers as right or wrong. Holt describes how this sets up a competitive dynamic, where students vie for the teacher's attention and approval, and try to avoid the embarrassment of being wrong. In such a scenario, the work itself loses intrinsic meaning for the children (Holt, 1964).

Most teacher talk is characterized by certainty and closure. Feldman as quoted in Bruner found that teachers used modal auxiliaries (like "might", "could", etc.) more when talking with colleagues than with students (Bruner, 1986, p. 126). Teacher talk in class rarely reflected uncertainty, an invitation to further thought, or a sense of the hypothetical nature of knowledge. The world that the teachers were presenting to their students "was a far more settled, far less hypothetical, far less negotiatory world than the one they were offering to their colleagues" (Bruner, 1986, p. 126).

Alexander describes classroom talk in English primary classrooms as having the following characteristics:

Interactions were brief. Teachers moved rapidly from child to child, from close-ended question to question, to maximise participation. Children focussed on providing or identifying correct answers. Teachers ended the IRE exchange with praise or correction. They glossed over wrong answers instead of using

them to further the children's thinking. There was little speculative talk, thinking aloud, or attempts to develop sustained arguments. Teachers' questions were on content, but the children's were mainly about procedures. The questions tested recall, and were rarely authentic. Children were given only enough time to recall but not to think (Alexander, 2008, p. 99).

Alexander finds this to be the predominant pattern of classroom talk in the US and UK but not necessarily in all countries, and contrasts it with the more sustained conversation found in Russian and French classrooms (Alexander, 2008, pp. 100-101).

In a study of secondary classrooms in the 1960s, Barnes found technical language being widely employed without adequate bridges to help students make sense of it. He states:

Some fluent children ... adopt the jargon and parrot whole stretches of lingo. Personal intellectual struggle is made irrelevant and personal view is never asked for. Language and experience are torn asunder. Worse still, many children find impersonal language mere noise (Barnes, 1969, p. 12).

Nell Keddie wrote about how the more "successful" students, largely of middle class origin, accepted the school's framing of questions and problems and did not confuse it with problem-solving in real life. However, children from working class families were often stumped by the teacher's criteria and categories as they could not reconcile them with their everyday knowledge. (Keddie, 1971). This was also expressed in the Yash Pal committee report where the "burden of non-comprehension" was found to be "more pernicious" than the "gravitational burden of the school bag." (GOI, 1993, p. iv)

Kumar (1988) found that in the "textbook culture" of Indian classrooms not only content and assessment, but also classroom talk derives from the textbook. "Once the right answer was established [from the textbook], it then functioned as the only acceptable answer. Even the word order could not be changed." (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 114). The "teaching" voice was "slow and deliberate-in the mode of making announcements," giving everything the teacher said the stamp of "ought-to-know" knowledge (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 132). What teachers said counted because they had the knowledge to "crack the exam," and to secure the future. Those who answered correctly rose in status, however absurd and meaningless the question.

### **Characteristics of Dialogic Talk that Promotes Learning**

Different studies show that dialogic classroom talk not only promotes student learning but also improves the participation and performance of less able children. (Nystrand, 1997; Alexander, 2008, pp. 108-109). The characteristics of such talk include:

**Shared control:** Dialogic talk implies shared control between the teacher and the children over the direction of the talk. The students ask genuine questions and the teacher allows them to modify the topic under discussion. The main aim of monological talk, however, is transmission of knowledge and it shows a high degree of teacher control.

**Social constructivist talk:** Vygotsky described how observation of, and participation in social talk by children becomes internalized over time as "thinking". Language constructs our picture of the world, and is a key tool through which children make sense of the world and their experiences (Vygotsky, 1962).

Barnes proposed that classroom talk must connect to children's experience of the world,

requiring that children be exposed to concrete experiences, not just talk (Barnes, 2008, p. 4). There must be space for "exploratory talk", through which children explore ideas, possibilities and understandings. Such talk is hesitant and broken, and has frequent changes in direction. Children bring to mind new and old ideas, and information and experiences from different sources, examine them from different angles and find connections. They look for examples and counter-examples, and formulate rules and find exceptions. Barnes contrasts this kind of talk with "presentational talk", a more considered, rehearsed, polished talk meant to demonstrate understanding rather than discover it.

Cumulative talk: An important characteristic of cumulative talk is that "contributions refer to and build upon what has gone before (by agreeing, disagreeing, adding, qualifying, etc.), thus enabling an advance in the collective understanding of the topic in question" (Skidmore, 2006, p. 506). Teachers have the most difficulty with cumulative talk, because they have to build bridges from individual student understandings to established disciplinary understandings of the topic in a way that is integrative (Alexander, 2008, p. 111). Far too often, disciplinary understanding sits as an inert memorized layer on top of students' unexamined naive understanding of a concept.

Wells proposes that the IRE sequence can be used in a situation where the teacher asks a question which requires the student to deploy a higher order thinking skill (e.g. clarify, justify, exemplify, explain or expand) rather than only recall. The teacher's evaluation too could build on the student's response, in similarly complex ways (Skidmore, 2006, p. 507).

Authentic talk: Nystrand's study on authentic talk found that dialogic instruction included the use of authentic questions by the teachers (i.e., there is no pre-determined answer the teacher

has in mind). This seems crucial in creating a real community of learners.

Meta-cognitive talk: People's concept of learning often draws from quiz shows, master mind, spelling tests and other instances of rote learning and "getting the right answer" (Barnes, 2008, p. 8). Learning is understood as copying down what is written on the blackboard and memorizing the wordings of scientific principles instead of trying to understand them (Alexander, 2008, p. 111).

Researchers emphasize the need for meta-cognitive talk in the classroom. This involves questioning: What is learning, or thinking? How is a discussion useful? How can we know if what we are reading is true? What are the criteria by which we can say that something is a good answer? What have I understood and what is not clear to me? What have I learnt and how do I know that I have learnt it? Why should I know this, why is it important? Discussions on these types of questions are very important in building classrooms where learning rather than recall happens.

Talk that creates a safe atmosphere: All researchers emphasize the need for a respectful and safe atmosphere. How the teacher "validates-or indeed fails to validate-that pupil's attempt to join in the thinking" is crucial to whether children use talk to think and learn (Barnes, 2008, p. 8). In dialogic classrooms, turns are managed more by shared routines rather than through competitive bidding, i.e. teachers and students together devise the ground rules for management of discussion and keeping order (Alexander, 2003, p. 37).

According to Barnes (2008) questions that are likely to encourage dialogic learning oriented talk include (p. 10):

If that is the case, how come so and so happens?

I don't get that. What do you mean by -A-?

Is -X- an example of what you are saying?

If you changed -Y-(one of the elements in the statement or situation) would you get the same result?

Is it like -Z-(i.e. suggesting an analogy)?

Therefore, students must be involved in both producing and evaluating evidence to support arguments. Teachers on their part must give the children materials (maps, pictures, texts, science equipment) that form the basis for discussion.

### **Reasons why Conventional Classroom Talk is Resistant to Change**

Monologic forms of talk are extremely resistant to change. Why is this?

Structural factors: Secondary school teachers encountering larger numbers of students have fewer opportunities to probe the thinking and learning styles of each child, than primary teachers who have more hours with fewer children. The combination of large class size and extensive testing pushes teachers towards "teaching to test", aiding retention and reproduction rather than exploration and understanding (Skidmore, 2006, p. 511).

Socio-cultural milieu: Alexander found that in central European countries where the notion of the collective is strong, teachers focus on joint understanding of the class. They tend to nominate turns and encourage children to think aloud. In the UK and US, where individual achievement is highly valued, teachers encourage bidding for turns and speed, and correctness of student response is emphasized.

The teacher's philosophical stance: Enumerating strategies and characteristics of dialogical talk may not be sufficient to bring about change. Talk arises from stances and values internalized by teachers, which needs examination. Here are some axes for reflection:

Do teachers recognize the incredible drive and ability of children to learn and make sense of the world, and not view them as "empty vessels" to be filled? It matters "how far students are treated as active epistemic agents, i.e. participants in the production of their own knowledge" (Skidmore, 2006, p. 505).

Knowledge is often viewed "as an assemblage of isolated facts memorized in more or less the same verbal form in which they were learned ..." (Dearden, 1968, p. 61). Much of school knowledge is taught as a collection of facts and skills without much reference to the structure of the underlying disciplines. However, each discipline has its own set of interconnected concepts, and "validation procedures for determining the truth, rightness or adequacy of various ideas entertained" (Dearden, 1968, p. 63). Also, knowledge is always provisional, there are scope and limits of its application. It is political and contested, especially in the social sciences and humanities. The "key procedures, concepts and criteria in any subject are...problematic within the subject," they are objects of speculation and not objects of mastery, and this is precisely why they are important (Stenhouse, 1997, p. 85). Even in the sciences, "facts" may not be what they seem to be. For example it is not entirely true that the sun rises in the east. The exact direction in which the sun rises depends on the latitude of the place and whether it is in the northern or southern hemisphere, and the exact time of year. Teachers' stance towards knowledge crucially impacts classroom talk.

However, enough has been said on teachers' lack of understanding of the social constructivist nature of learning. The affective and relational dimensions of learning have been largely ignored (Skidmore, 2006, p. 512). The teacher has a crucial role in fostering curiosity and excitement of learning, in helping children manage anxiety, uncertainty and confusion, in encouraging them



to take risks, in creating a sense of solidarity and inclusion where children feel safe, hopeful and free to explore. How does the teacher perceive this aspect of her role?

Does the teacher perceive her job as equipping children to fit into the world, to gain social mobility through education, to become future workers of the nation state? Or does she have a more critical agenda, where her aim is to help children be reflective, inquiring, able to think for themselves, empathize with others, and mobilize themselves and others towards necessary action. Each of these stances would shape classroom talk very differently.

Henry chillingly describes how public school system teaches students to sit in one place for hours, listen to boring lectures, be labelled as winner or losers, compete in meaningless tasks, and learn to suppress their authentic feelings and responses. The hidden lesson is patience to face absurd demands. His claim is that this forms a good training for their future jobs (Henry, 1963, pp. 283-321).

### **How Teachers can Learn about Dialogic Talk?**

Bruner writes "Language not only transmits, it creates or constitutes reality ... The language of education is the language of culture creating, not of knowledge consuming or knowledge acquisition alone" (Bruner, 1986, pp. 132-133). How do we bring about a richer classroom culture and talk that facilitates education in a deep sense?

Teachers, like non-native language learners, learn new cultures and talk by immersing themselves in it. Hence dialogic classroom talk must be modelled for teachers in their own pre-service and in-service education. Authentic questions and more reflexive and critical lines of enquiry need to be incorporated in the teaching. Teachers need to interrogate their own

stances and beliefs rather than simply learning new theories and information.

Culture and talk can be consciously reshaped by observation and inquiry of our own classroom practices and talk. According to Bruner (1986), one needs to turn around ... "on one's use of language to examine or explicate it, as in the analytic mode of philosophers or linguists who look at expressions as if they were, so to speak, opaque objects to be examined in their own right rather than transparent windows through which we look out upon the world." (p. 125).

Teachers in London and Yorkshire dialogic teaching development projects started videographing their classrooms to study and evaluate their own practice. Some teachers also invited children to analyse their videos as part of their classes. They found that the children developed a metalinguistic awareness, where they could discuss

... with increasing sophistication and sensitivity the dynamics and mechanisms of interaction: the use of eye contact, listening, taking turns, handling the dominant individual and supporting the reticent one, engaging with what others say rather than merely voicing one's opinions and so on. (Alexander, 2008, p. 107).

This study gives us great hope in the capacities of teachers and children to bring about change.

### **Conclusions**

The dialogic nature of classroom talk, we may speculate, is not simply present or absent, but is found on a continuum depending on the depth and breadth of the teacher's stance, her values and beliefs, and the skills and abilities she is able to deploy. It is also further constrained or enabled by the larger structures of education



and policy and by the social milieu in which the school is located.

1. Different researchers have used different terms for talk that facilitates learning, such as dialogical instruction (Nystrand, 1997), dialogic inquiry (Wells, 1999), dialogical pedagogy (Skidmore, 2000), dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2004) and exploratory talk (Barnes, 2008). There are some differences in these concepts but also significant commonalities.

## References

- Alexander, R. (2003). *Talk for learning: The first year*. North Yorkshire County Council. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from <http://www.lec.ie/media/docs/Talk%20for%20Learning%20Robin%20Alexander.pdf>
- Alexander, R. (2008). Culture, dialogue and learning: Notes on an emerging pedagogy. In N. Mercer, & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talk in school* (pp. 91-113). London: Sage Publication Pvt. Ltd.
- Barnes, D. (1969). Language in the secondary classroom. In D. Barnes, J. Britton, & H. Rosen (Eds.), *Language, the learning and the school* (pp. 7-11). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- Barnes, D. (2008). Exploratory talk for learning. In N. Mercer, & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talk in school* (pp. 1-15). London: Sage Publications.
- Bruner, J. (1986). The language of education. In *Actual minds. Possible worlds* (pp. 121-129). Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dearden, R. (1968). Forms of understanding. In *The philosophy of primary education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- GOI. (1993). *Learning without burden: Report of the National Advisory Committee appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development*. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from [http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/Reports/CCR/Yash%20Pal\\_committe\\_report\\_lwb.pdf](http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/Reports/CCR/Yash%20Pal_committe_report_lwb.pdf)
- Goodlad, J. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Henry, J. (1963). Golden rule days: American schoolrooms. In *Culture against man* (pp. 283-321). New York: Random House.
- Holt, J. (1964). *How children fail*. New York: Pitman Publishing company.
- Keddie, N. (1971). Classroom knowledge. In M. F. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and control* (pp. 133-160). London: Collier Macmillan.
- Kumar, K. (1988). Origins of India's "Textbook Culture". *Comparative Education Review*, 32(4), 452-464.
- Lefstein, A., & Snell, J. (2011). Classroom discourse: the promise and complexity of dialogic practice. In E. Ellis, & E. McCartney (Eds.), *Applied linguistics and primary school teaching* (pp. 165-185). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Nystrand, M. (1997). *Opening dialogue: understanding the dynamics of language and learning in the English classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sarangapani, P. (2003). *Constructing school knowledge: An ethnography of learning in an Indian village*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Skidmore, D. (2006, December). Pedagogy and dialogue. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36(4), 503-514.
- Stenhouse, L. (1997). A process model. In *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. (pp. 98-115). Oxford: Heinemann.
- Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.

**Rajni Kumar** has a B.A. in English Literature, a diploma in counselling, and an M.A. in education from TISS, Mumbai. She was a teacher in The School K.F.I, Chennai for more than a decade. She has also worked in the Teacher Education Wing of Azim Premji Foundation.

[rajnidivya@gmail.com](mailto:rajnidivya@gmail.com)

# Animated Movies and Spoken English: A Blockbuster Experience

*Venu Mehta*

## **Introduction and Background: The 'Plot and Setting'**

Teaching and learning a language is like Alice in Wonderland or Harry Potter! Languages have a constructive and creative setting for endless opportunities. There is no end to the possibilities of using different approaches, methods, practices and materials. Learning English language is broadly divided into two aspects; first is grammar and vocabulary and the second is speech and communication. The first aspect is mostly delivered through textbooks but the second aspect requires special attention. Objectives of learning English language range from common to particular across the world. One of the chief objectives for learning English language in the contemporary period is to learn to speak and communicate in English. Spoken English is quite different from the kind of English children learn at school from textbooks. The natural method of acquiring a language is to learn to speak it first. But, in the case of second language learning of English, learners generally learn to write first, rather than to speak the language fluently and thus they produce written English before they are comfortable with speaking it. This process obviously turns the natural method of language learning upside down.

Speaking in English should not feel like a journey to some unknown planet for non-native speakers. It is very important that learners feel comfortable while speaking in English. Communicating in English in a natural way can boost learners' confidence to a higher level.

Elements of Spoken English include pronunciation, tone, rhythm, pause, stress, phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms, contextual vocabularies, and sentence structure. Moreover, Spoken English also calls for learners to use various expressions for happiness, wonder, anger, agreements, disagreements, questioning and so on. While previous research (Gardner, 2000; Veenema & Gardner, 1996) has shown that there is a match between media and students' intelligences, the present article will focus on how Spoken English and its related elements can easily and effectively be taught and learnt with the help of animated movies at the school level.

## **Animated Movies and English Language Learning: The 'Theme and Cast'**

Technically, an animated movie is a film produced by photographing a series of gradually changing drawings, etc., which gives an illusion of movement when the series is projected rapidly. Animated movies are not a strictly-defined genre but rather a film technique and although they often appeal to children, they can easily be enjoyed by all.

Many theories of language learning support the use of animated movies as a learning tool or medium. According to the cognitive approach to language learning, a lot of importance is given to access to the target language input. Gass (1997) emphasizes that language acquisition is shaped by the input one receives, and animation movies allow for a strengthened input for language learning. Al-Seghayer (2001) and

Sherman (2003) suggest that a video helps learners build a mental image better; curiosity increases their concentration, and a video's combination of modalities facilitates recall. Moreover, English language words are learned better when directly associated with appropriate nonverbal referents (objects, events, emotions, context, etc.). This efficient association can only be found in real life or in an authentic video.

Many features of animated movies create connections and conditions for learning Spoken English. These features allow the movies to be used as wide-ranging applicable materials, tools or sources for teaching and learning Spoken English. To start with, the themes and characters of animated movies range from specific to universal and contain social and human concepts as well as events. Further, they are woven through manifold story-lines and plots, and this characteristic of animated movies allows representations of diverse events of human life and dialogues corresponding to them. In turn, the dialogues of animated movies are realistic and very close to real-world events and incidents which offers learners and teachers to have access to many different sets of dialogues for various situations and events. Characters in animated movies are closely designed to represent all sets of human personalities which also allows bringing out variety in dialogues.

Moreover, animated movies are generally made for children and for young audience, and this feature makes their dialogues easy yet authentic.

Given the above discussion on features of animated movies, we can see that all the important elements of Spoken English such as pronunciation, tone, rhythm, pause, stress, phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms, contextual vocabularies, body language, facial expressions and sentence structure are very well featured in animated movies. But above all, to reiterate the main point from the above discussion for our present purpose, animated movies give various verbal expressions for different human and social events and situations which allow learners to get exposure of manifold versions of Spoken English and language in use.

Over the past decade, a corpus of studies has accumulated that investigates the effects of multimedia strategies on learning. Multimedia typically refers to the presentation of material in two forms: auditory/verbal and visual/pictorial (Mayer, 2001). Animated movies, as a form of multimedia, proffer many reasons to be suitable source/material/tool to learn Spoken English. Various features of animated movies, approaches to language learning, and elements of Spoken English learnt through animated movies are highlighted in the following table:

**Table 1: Features and Benefits of Animated Movies, Learning Approaches Used, and Spoken Elements Covered through Animated Movies**

Features and Benefits of Animated Movies	Approaches to Language Learning Applied through Animated Movies	Spoken English Elements Learnt through Animated Movies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interactive</li> <li>• live</li> <li>• interesting</li> <li>• authentic</li> <li>• natural</li> <li>• familiar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• natural approach</li> <li>• discovery-based learning</li> <li>• constructivist approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• phonemic awareness</li> <li>• stress</li> <li>• pause</li> <li>• tone</li> <li>• rhythm</li> <li>• sentence pattern</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contextual</li> <li>• easy and simple</li> <li>• option for repetition and pause (manageable/navigable)</li> <li>• text-audio support</li> <li>• visual</li> <li>• real environment</li> <li>• accountability</li> <li>• diversity of language in use</li> <li>• variety of expressions</li> <li>• human and social themes</li> <li>• active engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inquiry-based learning</li> <li>• functional approach</li> <li>• communicative approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contextual and general vocabulary development</li> <li>• phrases</li> <li>• phrasal verbs</li> <li>• idioms</li> <li>• expressions</li> </ul>
---	---	--

### Animated Movies and English Language Learning: The 'Production and Reception'

This section of the paper comprises two parts: in the first part I will explore the approaches and methods of language learning which should be applied while using animated movies for learning Spoken English. In the second part, I will discuss the classroom application and practices of animated movies to teach Spoken English. Developing tasks for Spoken English based on animated movies can be an interesting activity for teachers and doing the tasks would certainly be an interactive experience for learners.

The following are the approaches and methods of language learning applied through animated movies:

**1. Natural approach:** Use of animated movies replicates the natural language acquisition setting, and it emphasises communication. Moreover, it makes the learning environment as stress-free as possible. Such movies allow for comprehensible language input, and hence language output is not forced but allowed to emerge spontaneously. The meanings of words/phrases are recognized in their context.

### 2. Discovery-based and inquiry-based learning:

Learning elements of Spoken English through animated movies allows for discovery-based or inquiry-based learning as learners can discover dialogue patterns and spoken elements independently by watching/listening and thus enter a self-learning environment. While observing various events and situations in the movies, learners can infer what kind of vocabulary, phrases, tone, pause, stress, pronunciation and non-verbal features of Spoken English can be used in a particular set of events or situations.

### 3. Constructivist learning approach:

Animated movies allow interaction in real life scenarios by giving learners an opportunity to put their imagination into practice and to construct awareness for particular use of language. Learners find characters and their dialogues familiar and in this way, learners can comfortably relate with the elements of spoken language. Also, learners can explore and experiment with speech varieties which makes the learning more desirable and attainable. For example, while designing tasks, teachers can ask learners to explore a situation from a movie and ask them to identify appropriate dialogue patterns on their own.

#### 4. Functional and communicative

**approach:** Animated movies allow for a communicative view of language teaching which considers the learner not only as a receiver but also as a producer of the teaching content. It focuses on the essential needs of learners bearing in mind that they are naturally inclined to communicate and interact with others. This concept is facilitated by a previous 'individual needs' analysis in society, which leads to contemplate language acquisition both as a means for social integration and also as a tool for comprehending and expressing every single thing that surrounds and determines daily life. Learning spoken English through animated movies adheres to this functional view of language learning; it is more about social norm than linguistic norm.

Developing tasks for Spoken English based on animated movies can thus be an interesting activity for teachers and performing these tasks becomes an interactive experience for learners. The following are certain useful tips and some examples of tasks that may be followed by teachers while using animated movies in the classroom to teach Spoken English:

##### • Steps

1. Choose an animated movie with an interesting theme.
2. Watch it first before you show it in the class.
3. Use subtitles while you watch and also while screening it in the class.
4. Make a list of dialogues, and other Spoken English patterns that you wish to teach in the class.
5. Identify some interesting events and incidents and related dialogues from the movie for more focused teaching.
6. Break up the movie while you show it in

the class.

7. To begin with, show part of the movie (only if classroom setting permits, show the entire movie).
8. Maintain a movie journal for your own record.

##### • Examples of Some Tasks

We will take the example of the movie Ice Age. The story of Ice Age is set during the time when the Earth was overrun by glaciers, and animals were scurrying to save themselves from the upcoming ice age. Under the circumstances, a sloth named Sid, a woolly mammoth named Manny, and a sabre-toothed tiger named Diego are forced to become the unlikely heroes of the movie. The three reluctantly come together when they have to return a human child to its father while braving the deadly elements of the impending ice age. This movie has many situations and events to learn various sets of dialogues and elements of Spoken English. These include introduction, initiating friendship, forming a group, arguments, expressing opinions, expressing sympathy, courage, mischief, polite sarcasm, humour, being responsible, etc.

The following are some example of tasks based on which exploration and experience of dialogues and elements of spoken elements can be set as classroom practices by the teacher:

1. Finding appropriate dialogues for a particular event/situation from the movie. Such tasks may be done through quizzes, puzzles, match-a-situation game, etc.
2. Preparing a movie scrapbook where the learner makes a note of vocabulary, phrases, phrasal verbs, expressions, idioms, and proverbs for particular events and incidents from the movie.
3. Enacting the scenes by using dialogues with appropriate pronunciation, stress, rhythm, tone and expression.



4. Constructing a new situation in which learners can play various roles to use the learnt elements of Spoken English. Teachers can help the students by coming up with various situations similar to the movie they have watched.

There can be more such creative tasks to facilitate learning through animated movies. Moreover, teachers should provide enough explanation of contextual and cultural meanings of the dialogues and other elements of Spoken English to the learners.

The following are some dialogues from the movie Ice Age for teaching various elements of Spoken English.

1. **To express humour:**

Sid: For a second there, I actually thought you were gonna eat me.

Diego: I don't eat junk food.

2. **To learn a phrasal verb/ idiom:**

Manfred: Diego, spit that out. You don't know where it's been.

3. **For learning exclamation, questions and other expressions:**

Diego: The baby? Please. I was just returning it to its herd.

Sid: Oh, yeah. Nice try, Bucktooth.

Diego: You calling me a liar?

Sid: I didn't say that.

Diego: You were thinking it.

Sid: I don't like this cat. He reads minds.

4. **For learning new words:**

Sid: Sorry, fellas. He got a little frostbite.

Sid: Hey, widebody, curb it next time!

## Conclusion

Picking up elements of Spoken English through animated movies allows for learning and using English in context with an authentic flair. Animated movies can provide a live and

interactive environment where learning is done naturally in an interesting manner. Moreover, when teachers use animated movies as a teaching tool, they can have a diverse range of materials to be used in the classroom to enhance the learning experience. The experience of learning a language through animated movies may be new for young learners but it creates an enduring and interactive environment which is very comfortable for quick and natural learning. The teachers may go beyond what is given in the example tasks and steps in this article.

## References

- Al-Seghayer, K. (2001). The effects of multimedia annotation modes on L2 vocabulary acquisition: A comparative study. *Language learning and technology*, 5 (1), 202-232. Retrieved from <http://llt.msu.edu/vol5num1/alseghayer/>
- Gardner, H. (2000). Can technology exploit our many ways of knowing? In D. T. Gordon (Ed.), *The digital classroom: How technology is changing the way we teach and learn* (pp. 32-35). Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- Gass, S. (1997). *Input, interaction and the second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Mayer, R. E. (2001). *Multimedia learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sherman, J. (2003). *Using authentic video in the ELT classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Veenema, S., & Gardner, H. (1996). Multimedia and multiple intelligences. *The American prospect*, 29 (Nov-Dec), 69-75.

**Dr. Venu Mehta** is a Fulbright Scholar and she teaches at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Charotar University of Science and Technology (CHARUSAT) as an Assistant Professor. Her major areas of research include Multiculturalism, Literature Education and Teaching Gujarati as a non-native language.

[venumehta1982@gmail.com](mailto:venumehta1982@gmail.com)

# The Mother, the Other and Language Education: Making a Case for Critical Language Awareness

*Reva Yunus*

"The 21st-century citizen will work in media-, text-, and symbol-saturated environments. For the unemployed, underemployed, and employed alike, a great deal of service and information-based work, consumption, and leisure depends on their capacities to construct, control, and manipulate texts and symbols."

(Luke, 1995, p. 5)

## **Introduction**

This paper is study of a co-educational, Hindi-medium, government-run middle school in Indore in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. This was a classroom ethnography conducted with a class VIII classroom<sup>1</sup>. I have taken a critical pedagogic<sup>2</sup> approach to interrogating classroom processes and my discussion of language classrooms in this paper is framed by the assumption that education has a role to play in furthering equality and inequality, and social justice and injustice for learners and their communities.

Based on the evidence of children's experience of language classrooms as well as of social relations and representations (texts/images) outside school, I would like to argue that in addition to the very narrow purpose of teaching grammar and literacy skills, the study of language itself-as envisaged in Critical Discourse Analysis perspectives (Fairclough, 1999) must become part of language education in schools. Instead of being developed as sites where learners reflect on patterns of language use and develop the ability/skills needed to unpack power relations underlying texts, language classrooms remain embedded in marginalizing discourses around religious and gender identities. Due to restrictions of space, I will focus on the Hindi

language classroom, even though similar concerns arise with regard to the English language classroom as well.

## **Education, Difference and the Question of Representation**

Post-independence, mass public schooling became the norm, and despite the inequalities and infrastructural and curricular issues plaguing it, formal education has become accessible to an increasing number of sections who were traditionally denied access on the basis of gender, caste and region. However, this expansion of education has not been accompanied by a systematic interrogation of the purpose, content and practice of education; i.e. "what education is for, and for whom" (Fairclough, 1999) and "[w]ho succeeds and who fails in schools? How and why?" (Luke, 1995).

These questions arise because schools value a certain cultural capital and reject or deny others. Since, we are still struggling with questions of access and retention, raising the issue of how (language) education tackles issues of representation and social justice may seem like jumping the gun to some. However, whether we are ready for it or not, the world around us has changed. The world that adolescent students

are negotiating today-as workers, learners and consumers<sup>3</sup> is drastically different from what the existing education system prepares them for. Language classrooms are still focused on making students memorize, recite, and reproduce lessons and the 'right' answers. But, as interviews with students revealed, this is a terribly narrow and unrealistic version of what they actually have to accomplish through their linguistic abilities: such as dealing with employers and abusive male members in families, negotiating identities as members of violent gangs<sup>4</sup> and other peer groups, listening to songs, watching daily soaps on television, viewing/reading text messages and video-clips on WhatsApp.

Here are a few examples of the kind of texts and images learners routinely process:

- 1) The following are the lyrics of the song, "Manali Trance", composed by Yo Yo Honey Singh for the Hindi movie *The Shaukeens*. Honey Singh is a particular favourite among boys in my study. Many of them have the song on their phones and seem familiar with the video accompanying it. The song has been available on radio and television for some time:

It opens with a girl swaying amid a mass of apparently "high" young men and women, mouthing these lines (sung by Neha Kakkar):

*Badla mizaaj mera phookte hi grass  
Grass lage hai mohe sabka ilaaj  
Thoda toh main jhoom loon iske nashe mein*

*C'mon DJ laga de dubstep trance*

(A rough and ready translation would be: soon as I smoke grass, my mood lifts / grass feels like a cure for all ills / while I'm on a high, let me sway & dance / DJ, put on some dubstep trance).

- 2) Many boys reported having seen videos of cows being slaughtered by Muslim-looking men on their smart phones, via WhatsApp. These videos typically show images of how cows are tied up brutally in a prelude to being slaughtered, struggling cattle, gory details of cows/bulls being restrained and killed, bloodied floors and butchers' knives, etc.
- 3) Add to these videos, graffiti scattered across the city, more ubiquitous in areas inhabited by the poorer sections but also highly visible at some prominent squares in the city: "*gau mata ke hatyaron ko fansi do*", "*gau mata ko rashtra pashu ghoshit karo*", and "*shakahar apnao, bacchon chartiravan ban jao...*" ("hang the killers of the cow-mother", "declare the cow-mother our national animal", "adopt vegetarianism, children, become moral").
- 4) Television is a major source of entertainment, at least for girls<sup>5</sup>. The shows that most girls reportedly follow are family dramas broadcast on Hindi television channels such as Colors. Gender roles and images perpetuated by these shows are usually circumscribed by patriarchal values and worldviews. Women are often portrayed in the roles of dutiful, religious, caring and self-sacrificing wives, mothers and sisters (e.g. the main characters, their mother and aunt in television drama *Sasural Simar ka*). Even if women/girls are shown to be high-spirited or wilful, they are not very independent or rebellious. There are the usual negative stereotypes of women as well: spiteful aunts, autocratic grandmothers or scheming mothers-in-law. However, there are also a few unconventional role models in these shows. For example, *Diya aur Bati Hum* revolves around the life and work of a policewoman and seems to have inspired some girls to desire this role for themselves.

While it would be difficult-indeed even incorrect-to draw a blanket conclusion regarding all entertainment offered by Hindi channels, there is certainly an urgent need to create a space where learners can reflect critically on the images and messages conveyed through these shows.

Whether it is sensual voices and erotically swaying bodies supposedly on a grass-induced high, bleeding and dead cows, or high-spirited but self-sacrificing wives and daughters, how are the children to make sense of these images and texts? How might these interpretations affect the way they negotiate their religious and gender identities and "others"? What worldviews, values and experiences shape their processes of meaning-making? What do these questions and these representations have to do with language education?

We might begin to answer these questions if we recognize that "language is a social practice, that language is shaped by and shapes values, beliefs and power relations in its sociocultural context, and that language use can contribute to discursal and social change" (Clark and Ivanic, 1999, p. 64). And that, "...visual images in particular are an increasingly important feature of contemporary discourse [.]" (Fairclough, 1999, p. 71). This is the view of language and language education advocated by critical theorists of language in the interests of a *critical* pedagogy of language. They propose "critical awareness of language" as a goal of language education "at all ages and levels" arguing that this would help students understand how they view themselves and how they are viewed by others, that is, help them become conscious of how they come to be positioned in particular ways within various discourses. They can then, perhaps, begin to critique and challenge the social roles, positions and relationships assigned to them.

As the examples described earlier reveal, learners are besieged daily by "representations .... produced elsewhere" (Fairclough, 1999, p. 75). As children watch/hear/read these representations, they need to be able to raise questions regarding their purpose, production, distribution and content. For example, who owns various television channels? Who produces, directs or sponsors these shows? Who is the intended audience? Whose cultural capital gets "air"ed; why only particular gender roles and relations are endorsed; and whether alternatives can be imagined, enacted and aired. Similarly, one may ask why only one animal's life is sacred. What cultural and political interests does proliferation of cow-slaughter videos serve? Whether the kind of food we eat should be a factor in determining our moral superiority/inferiority. Learners must be encouraged to raise such questions if they are to reflect on the social relations they are embedded in.

### **Evidence of Differentiation and Marginalization from the Classroom**

What I found in the language classroom was an endorsement of the very social relations that often prove oppressive for learners because of their gender or religion<sup>6</sup>.

The teacher, Sharma sir (not the real name), spends most of his time lecturing the children on good habits and "moral" values. He punishes them (hits, calls them names, orders them out) and yells at them for not sitting properly or in the places he assigned them to, for talking or laughing. Seating boys and girls next to each other is a punitive strategy he adopts in order to curtail movement and conversations; more than other teachers, he insists on making the children sit this way.

His usual non/verbal approach to children is perceived as undignified and resented by many children, particularly, girls. He often addresses students as animals (*jamwar!*), uses curse words



(*abbe, saale*), and makes rude comments about their posture, ability, etc. Another characteristic of his interaction with students is his constant moral policing, from disciplining every movement of the learners' bodies, to their interaction with each other and possibly romantic or sexual aspects of this interaction<sup>7</sup>.

### **The "Mother" and the "Other" in the Hindi Classroom**

While Sharma sir sometimes praises individual girls, his references to women/girls are usually in the negative<sup>8</sup>. He also makes derogatory comments about some of the girls in the class. He and the English teacher both seem particularly disapproving of two girls - Pooja and Sapna (cousins). Pooja's mother is a sweeper in the school. The girls belong to the SC community<sup>9</sup>. Neither girl's behaviour is disruptive, but both teachers seem to disapprove of their friendships with boys. Sharma sir regularly finds opportunities to humiliate Sapna, making her answer questions almost every day. He tends to test her memory and general knowledge, not her knowledge of grammar or usage. Clearly, he finds it permissible to shame girls in front of the class by commenting on their academic inability or moral character. He harasses Pooja with comments like: "*kise dekh ri hai mud ke, ---- ko ya ---- ko..?*" (who is it that you are turning to look at all the time.... --- or ---?), naming two boys sitting behind her. Even if she were looking at a boy, it is not a crime but he makes it sound like one, in order to embarrass and reproach her.

The only instances where he shows respect and admiration for women is when he talks about ideal forms of motherhood. Textbooks and teacher alike employ the trope of the sacrificing, nurturing mother when talking about rivers such as Narmada (*punya salila Narmada maiya*) and historical figures such as Ahilyabai Holkar (*lokmata Devi Ahilyabai*). In other words, right

alongside television shows watched by the children, teacher and texts also end up perpetuating the particular (limited) roles and images imposed upon girl-students by their families and communities.

Sharma sir also goes to considerable trouble to regularly mark Muslims as the "other", while simultaneously establishing "natural" binaries for Hindus, through references to Hindi as "our" language and English and Urdu as "their" (foreign that is, British and Mughal/Muslim rulers') language. While he praises some Muslim children for their academic ability and good behaviour, he also carefully and frequently marks them as Muslim by underscoring Urdu as "their" language. This seamless connection between Muslims, foreign rule and Urdu is as problematic as the connection between Muslims, non-vegetarianism and cow-slaughter. Any mention of non-vegetarianism elicits collective groans from the students, with some students offensively caricaturing meat-eating. I never saw Sharma sir object to this attitude. He does not directly bring up cow-slaughter but often mentions the holiness of the cow and its importance to "us". Specifying this "us" seems superfluous given the propaganda audible/visible in the city<sup>10</sup>. A couple of boys often mock their Muslim classmates by addressing them as "mutton", *kasai* (butcher), and with comments like, "*ye hamari gaayen kha jate hain na..!*" (these people devour "our" cows). Coupled with wider anti-Muslim propaganda, the teacher's silences and pronouncements assume greater significance.

### **Conclusion**

Given such classroom scenarios, and wider socio-political changes sweeping across the Indian society, an approach to language education that is rooted in the paradigm of Critical Language Awareness seems eminently desirable and equally difficult to accomplish. The notion of developing the study of language itself



as part of the purpose and process of language education in schools necessitates taking on urgent questions of state-spending on education, pedagogic practice, curriculum, teacher-education and resources available to teachers and learners. Language classrooms can become sites of critical awareness of language/discourse only if we are willing to rethink the very purpose of education. The choice is between serving the needs of the economy or "education for life within which a critical awareness of discourse is necessary for all" (Fairclough, 1999, p. 81).

## References

- Brian, M. & Ramanathan, V. (2005). Critical literacies and language education: Global and local perspectives. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 25, 151-169.
- Clark, R. & Ivanic R. (1999). Raising critical awareness of language: A curriculum aim for the new millennium. *Language Awareness*, 8 (2), 63-70.
- Fairclough, N. (1999). Global capitalism and critical awareness of language. *Language Awareness*, 8(2), 71-83.
- Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, 21, 3-48. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1167278>.
- Pennycook, A. (1990). Towards a critical applied linguistic for the 1990s. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 1 (1), 8-28.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this work is to critically explore and understand the ways in which classroom (big 'D') 'D'iscourse empowers and/or marginalizes learners from various sociocultural backgrounds, through its texts, pedagogic practices and social relations. My work involves classroom observation over a period of seven months as well as in-depth interviews with teachers and students.

<sup>2</sup> "There is by now a fairly large body of work under the rubric of 'critical pedagogy' . . . Viewing schools

as cultural areas where diverse ideological and social forms are in constant struggle, critical pedagogy seeks to understand and critique the historical and socio-political context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society." (Pennycook, 1990, p. 24).

<sup>3</sup> My study reveals that they are enacting all these roles every day. Most boys are already part of the informal economy, particularly through the ready-made garment industry, while girls are either working outside or at home, bearing the brunt of an alarming informalization of our economy. In addition, as users of mobile phones and flash drives, etc., and as audience of television shows, they are also consumers in their own rights.

<sup>4</sup> Many boys are also part of groups of young men in their locality. Often these men are also party workers for political parties active in the neighbourhood. The boys become involved in conflicts between groups and also rely on the groups to back them up in their individual conflicts. When such group or individual conflicts erupt, boys report that they try to resolve these through talks before resorting to violence. Thus their own and others' wellbeing sometimes depends on how well they can talk their way out of a potentially violent situation.

<sup>5</sup> Most girls report having their movements heavily policed and see themselves as having the most freedom in school. It is only in school that they can talk to friends, share secrets and move about without their every movement being under the judgemental eye of adults (one girl even reports being spied upon by her younger brother at the behest of the mother). The private/public divide shapes girls' lives, desires, freedoms, opportunities and fears most significantly, and girls realize it very well. Since, unlike boys, they cannot go out to work or play (even if they can there are often restrictions on dress, voice, games, playmates, etc.), watching television is an important part of the lives of those girls who are not deprived of some free time due to a heavy domestic workload.

<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly, caste and class are equally significant indices of difference and oppression and

it is only a restriction on space that is preventing me from discussing all aspects of inequality in the language classroom.

<sup>7</sup> For example, he has sometimes complained to the class teacher (also the Sanskrit language teacher), that some of the boys hug and kiss a lot. His tendency to always be suspicious of children's relationships and disapprove of romantic attachments is noted and commented upon by the children.

<sup>8</sup> For example, sometimes, he has mentioned women only to make fun of their alleged tendency to talk too much, their inability to focus on the task in hand, (e.g. to be thinking of all sorts of domestic chores when sitting for pooja), or getting free samples from fruit vendors.

<sup>9</sup> While Sapna is a bit more vocal and assertive, Pooja is a quiet girl. Pooja seems more interested in school work than Sapna but both enjoy reading stories. Sapna also seems to have body image and skin-colour related issues. She is more heavily built than other girls in the classroom and quite dark; and some students routinely made derogatory references to her skin colour or mimicked her, which may account for her extreme self-consciousness and nervousness when asked to read out aloud in class.

<sup>10</sup> For example, religious sermons in temples, graffiti on walls, public speeches.

**Reva Yunus** is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick, Coventry, UK. She has studied Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Her interest lies in Sociology of Education.

*R.Yunus@warwick.ac.uk*

# Integrating New Media Platforms in Language Teaching-Learning Process

*Om Prakash*

## **Introduction**

The exponential growth in information and communication technology has ushered in a new age of virtuality where the demarcation of real time and space has ceased to exist. Virtual reality is now the new reality, influencing every aspect of our life. Human life is now reconfigured around this wired (networked) society and language classrooms are not outside this space. Through this paper, I would like to propose a complementary role of new-media platforms in language teaching and learning process. This proposal is not in conflict with the basic tenets of communicative language teaching method. In addition, it also tries to emphasize the significance of integrating the learning experiences of virtual space with real time teaching and learning processes. In this paper the term new media has been used to refer to developments and emergence of digital media technology and available media communication platforms post web 2.0.

## **Virtual Classrooms**

The physical classrooms are on the verge of being replaced by more democratic and dynamic virtual spaces of learning. This process has already been initiated and is being appropriated by pervasive digital technology. This idea may be regarded as an arrogant statement and wistful thinking by a digital technology enthusiast; however, it cannot be completely discounted. The pervasive effect of the web 2.0 (internet and subsequent

developments of digital media platforms collectively referred to as new media) can be summarized in the following prediction made by Crystal (2004, p. 241) a decade ago as:

“...the sheer scale of the present Internet, let alone its future telecosmic incarnations, has convinced me that we are on the brink of the biggest language revolution ever. Whereas in the past we have had speech, then writing, and throughout the 20th century debated the relationship between the two, now we are faced with a new medium and one which could be bigger than either of its predecessors.”

This prediction by Crystal a decade ago has become a reality now. The emergence of new media tools has proved to be more of a sweeping social phenomenon than a technological one. The process which started as a technological revolution has turned into a sociological development, enveloping every aspect of our life both in the public and private sphere. The structural changes in the new social order in the backdrop of the exponential growth in communication technology are very comprehensibly documented by Manuel Castells in his three monumental volumes known as *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. He defines a network society as

“...a society whose social structure is made of networks, powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technology. By social structure, I understand the organizational arrangements of humans

in relations of production, consumption, reproduction, experience, and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture (Castells, 1997, p. 3).

Therefore, we are now essentially living in a society which is organized around information, and which may also be referred to as an information society.

Whether we call it an information society or a network society, it can be inferred that we are essentially referring to interconnected societies which organize themselves around information rich networks and language classrooms are located well within it. In this context, I will attempt to underline the complementary role of new media technologies and available platforms, which can be used and capitalized upon in the language teaching-learning process.

### **Developments in Language Teaching Methods**

If we look at the development of the methods in language teaching over almost hundred years, they have changed considerably. These include Grammar Translation method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Suggestopedia, The Silent Way, Total Physical Response, with The Natural Approach to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) being the recent practice in the field. All these methods have been practiced and evaluated in terms of their merits and promised outcomes. However, it is still difficult to claim any of these methodologies as to be "the methodology" in language teaching. In fact the limitations and helplessness with these methods have led to the recent development in the field of language teaching-the Postmethod Pedagogy. Postmethod pedagogy claims to go beyond the literal understanding of the concept of method and promises greater autonomy to the teacher and learner. Kumaravadivelu observes that:

...postmethod pedagogy must take into account the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. The first relates to the advancement of a context-sensitive pedagogy based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities. The second seeks to enable and encourage teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize. And the third emphasizes the importance of larger social, political, educational, and institutional forces that shape identity formation and social transformation" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 184).

The centrality of the learner in the pedagogy remains common in the two proposals namely, CLT and Postmethod. The term "communicative competence", drawn from Hymes (1972) is in contrast with Chomsky's idea of linguistic competence. This paper draws from these two distinct theoretical developments in the field. Both Chomsky (1965) and Hymes (1972) use the notion of competence however, their theoretical positions are distinct. Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence refers to the tacit knowledge of formal linguistic characteristics (subsumes phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic subsystems), whereas Hymes' position extends beyond and includes in it the sociolinguistic competence. In other words, the actual knowledge and ability of the language user govern successful communication. Hymes' concept of competence is the point of reference in this paper for discussion and locating the role of new media technology in the language teaching pedagogy and methodology. For theoretical grounding, the paper argues in the framework of the CLT, which enjoys popularity among language teachers in general and as practicing methodology in the classrooms in particular.

## **Role of New Media Technology in Language Teaching and Learning**

Over the past two decades, the language teaching paradigm has witnessed a huge shift from a controlled and guided classroom setting to a more democratic, flexible and open learning environment with a learner-centric pedagogy and methodology. A comprehensive study carried out by Jackson et al. (2006), brings out some interesting findings. According to him, the students who used the internet more, got higher scores and grades. The finding may be debated over, but the point it makes, remains significant. In this continuation, another study by Chandrasegaran & Kong (2006) demonstrates that discussion forums on the internet substantially enhance the learner's argumentative skills. The data for this study came from 192 online forum postings on 8 different topics from 15-year old students in a secondary school in Singapore. The study concludes: "Students who appear to their teachers to lack argumentation skills may have the problem of bridging the divide between their capabilities in social practices and the demands made on similar capabilities in school writing" (Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006, p. 379). The implication that may be drawn from the results of this study is that "...students' knowledge of social practices in everyday argument can be harnessed in writing lessons to initiate them into the less familiar discourse practices of the expository essay..." (Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006, p. 389). Although this study was focused on stance-taking and stance-support among secondary school students, it clearly demonstrates the effect of new media platforms in enhancing argumentative and linguistically challenging structures being acquired skillfully in a natural habitat for second language use. Another study by Ahmad (2012) carried out on English language teaching and integration of media technology, proposes an interesting finding, in which he statistically explores EFL learners' response towards new media

technology in general and its impact in improving accentual patterns of individual English words in particular. Ahmad also explores the impact of internet and the teacher's role in improving the writing skills of learners. A number of similar such studies suggest that the extension of physical classroom teaching-learning to a flexible, natural and virtual space for learning the second language has immense potential to produce effective results.

## **Discussion**

Developments in digital technology and the emergence of new media platforms have facilitated access to worldwide network and have created a truly emancipated network society. The members of the society are connected to this network of information through internet and mobile technology. The proposal to extend the physical classroom learning to the virtual space created by digital technology is not a departure from the fundamental tenets of the CLT method. In fact, it complements the process of creating socio-cultural contexts of language use for a variety of purposes. Digitization has transformed the process of socialization. According to a sizeable volume of research on the usage of language forms and patterns in this digitized new media sphere, this phenomenon has been termed as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The studies in CMC are essentially centred around politeness, civility, flaming, trolling and other behavioural aspects of communication, and have established the fact that intervention of digital technology has a deep impact on the way we learn, socialize, behave, and respond. In this context, the impact of internet and digital technology on language and its use cannot be undermined.

This virtual space also creates substantial opportunity for experimentation and creativity in the second language beyond controlled and guided curriculum. The availability of new online media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter,



LinkedIn, Blogger, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest, etc., can be used and capitalized upon to create a natural habitat for language use extending beyond the confines of a physical classroom. These readily available internet tools, as the studies demonstrate, may act as an important means in the way learners receive and spread information, express their feelings and emotions, and share ideas and experiences. Now, this is the takeaway point in the field of language teaching. CLT essentially assumes learners' engagement with language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning. The essence of this assumption can be captured in this virtual space which guarantees a more democratic, flexible, and natural setting for language use. The new media platforms can provide the learner with a real socio-cultural environment, where they actually negotiate meaning in a real-life context. The teacher can create an intra group media platform and facilitate language use in a variety of ways such as, group chats, blog postings, group discussion forums, posting opinion and comment trails on an issue, video sharing and registering responses on the discussion forums, etc.

### Conclusion

The integration of new media technology in language teaching classrooms will create a natural habitat for using language for a variety of purposes. This integration is a complementary extension of the language teaching classroom with a virtual learning space that provides new avenues for creating a learning environment beyond the physical confines. This can facilitate language use in "ideational, functional and textual functions and developing competence in each" (Berns, 1990 as quoted in Savignon, 2002, p. 6). In this environment, the teachers and learners are equally empowered to take charge of constructing knowledge in the target language.

### References

- Ahmad, J. (2012). English language teaching (ELT) and integration of media technology. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 47, 924-929.
- Castells, M. (1997). *The information age: Economy, society, and culture*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Chandrasegaran, A. & Kong, C. K. M. (2006). Stance-taking and stance-support in students' online forum discussion. *Linguistics and Education*, 17(4), 374-390.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Crystal, D. (2004). *Language and the internet*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & L. Holmes (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Jackson, L. A., Eye, Biocca, A. V., Barbatsis, F. A., Zhao, G., Zhao, Y. and Fitzgerald, H. E. (2006). Does home internet use influence the academic performance of low-income children? *British Journal of Development Psychology*, 42 (3), 1-7.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding language teaching: From method to post-method*. London/ New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Savignon, S. J. (2002). *Interpreting communicative language teaching: Contexts and concerns in teacher education*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

**Om Prakash** teaches in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida. His primary research interests are applied linguistics and the relationship between language, media and society.

om@gbu.ac.in

# Effect of Teaching Sentence-Level-Formal Schemata on Inferring Meaning

*Lakshmana Rao Pinninti*

## Introduction

When a student comes across an unfamiliar word while reading, it is natural for her to ask her teacher or a friend, or to refer to a dictionary for its meaning. However, the friend / teacher, or dictionary may not always be available. Even if a dictionary is available, one has to not only interrupt the thought process but also reduce the reading speed to refer to it. As rightly argued by Nuttall (1996, p.69), “constant need to refer to a dictionary makes effective reading very difficult and an effective reader can cope with these occasional interruptions by inferring meaning from context”. Therefore, the ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words is a vital aspect of effective reading comprehension, especially for L2 students. Accordingly, Nuttall (1996) calls for developing the ability to infer meaning from the context to make students independent of a dictionary or informant. She lists two objectives of a specific training programme for L2 students to infer meaning from context must include (p.70):

1. To show that it is possible to understand unfamiliar words without referring to a dictionary or being told by someone as most students are not aware that is possible.
2. To encourage students to adopt a positive attitude (“I can understand if I try”) towards unfamiliar words instead of a negative one (“Help! I need a dictionary”).

The background knowledge of a language learner plays a significant role in understanding the inferential meaning of an unfamiliar word.

The background knowledge plays an important role in distinguishing ‘inferring’ from ‘guessing’. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the former is “to form an opinion or guess that something is true because of the information that you have”, whereas the latter is “to give an answer to a particular question when you do not have all the facts and so cannot be certain if you are correct” (emphasis is mine). The above definitions suggest that while ‘inferring’ involves deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words with confidence and from the available contextual clues, ‘guessing’ involves speculating the meaning without certainty and confidence. Though the word ‘guessing’ is popular among educational circles, ‘inference’ has been used in this study considering the role of background knowledge in both the processes.

The theory that examines the role of background knowledge in language comprehension is known as the schema theory, according to which, comprehending a text is “an interactive process between the reader’s background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one’s own knowledge” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 556-557). A distinction is made between *content* schemata and *formal* schemata (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Content schemata refers to the background knowledge of the content domain of a text. For example, knowledge of religion can be a significant determinant of how much a reader understands and gets pleasure from reading a religiously loaded literary text such as John Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’. Formal

schemata refers to the background knowledge of the formal organizational structures of different types of text and the different discourse markers used in them. For example, previous research identified five types of discourse structures: collection, description, causation, problem/solution, and comparison (Meyer & Freedle, 1984). Each discourse structure has a distinct purpose and a rhetorical organizational construction. From an instruction perspective, the formal schemata of students can be enhanced practicably in the classroom whereas content schemata cannot. Carrell (1985) examined the effect of teaching rhetorical organization on comprehension and found optimistic results even though much of the research centred on examining the effect of formal schemata on comprehension at a text level. An experiment carried out by Li (1988) on discrete, semantically disconnected sentences is particularly relevant to this study as it pertains to the sentence-level schemata. Li (1988) found that students who received cue-adequate sentences performed significantly better on both inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words and remembering them, than students who received cue-inadequate sentences.

### **Need for the Study**

Li's study was primarily necessitated by the participants who were attending classes of the UGC Remedial English Programme as they had asked the researcher to assist them in dealing with unfamiliar words while reading. It was assumed that the participants were not utilizing the context when dealing with such words, nor were they confident about dealing with them. Confidence plays a vital role in reading because if students do not trust their own inferences, they will abandon their attempts and stop reading (Mathioudakis, 2009). Considering the above two assumptions, an intervention on raising participants' awareness of the sentence-level-

formal schemata was designed, so as to develop their ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context and build their confidence in doing so. Concurrent to the pragmatic need, the theoretical rationale was provided by Li's study (1988) and Schema theory (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). The present study fills the research gap since not much research has been carried out to examine the effect of sentence-level-formal schemata on inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.

### **Methodology**

**Objectives:** 1) To find out whether the participants were using context when they came across unfamiliar words and, 2) To study the effect of raising the participants' awareness of the sentence-level-formal schemata on their ability to infer meaning of unfamiliar words from context and their confidence in doing so.

**Method:** All participants were pre-tested, took part in the intervention and were then post-tested.

**Subjects:** All seven participants are male students (aged between 21 and 26 years) and are studying Masters Programmes at the University of Hyderabad. All of them enrolled for the UGC Remedial English Programme to improve their English language skills.

**Materials:** 1) A test of inferring ability was constructed for the pre and post-tests. The test comprised ten items. In each item, one expression was put in bold for the participants to infer its meaning from the context. The participants were asked to: a) write their inference, b) indicate their confidence level regarding their inference in percentage terms, and c) describe the rationale behind their inference, 2) one sentence each for cause and effect, contrast and similarity was given in that order at the interactive intervention session for raising the participants' awareness of sentence-

level-formal schemata. In the following examples the underline indicates the discourse marker and the bold unfamiliar word indicates the inference:

- a. *I didn't sleep well because my neighbour's dog **was yelping** all night.*
- b. *Although some old people **abhor** change, most of them enjoy new things and experiences.*
- c. *The land was as arid as the Sahara desert.*

**Procedure:** The ten-item test was administered as a pre-test. The average time taken for the pre-test was 33 minutes. After the pre-test, an interactive session was conducted for 20 minutes. First, the participants were asked whether they knew the meanings of the words assumed to be unfamiliar to them. Then, each sentence was written on the blackboard and a discussion on inferring was initiated. Finally, the different discourse markers used for expressing cause and effect, contrast and similarity were discussed. Participants were requested not to prepare notes during the interactive session; this was because we did not want them to refer to their notes in the post-test. After the intervention, the post-test was administered. The average time taken for the post-test was 26 minutes. Both in pre and post-tests, participants were asked to write their inference for the expressions in bold, report their confidence in their inference in percentage terms, and give the rationale behind their inference. The entire process of the pre-test, intervention and post-test was completed in one hour and forty minutes.

**Analysis:** Analysis of the responses of the participants was carried out both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis was carried to find out whether the participants were using context or not when they came across unfamiliar words. The assessment of the accuracy of the inference was quite challenging as there was more than one correct answer.

Following Mathioudakis (2009), the accuracy of the inferences was placed on a continuum of an assessment bar rather than just marking 'correct' or 'wrong'. The continuum runs from completely inaccurate (0%), to completely accurate (100%). The accuracy of their inferences was rated by two raters one of who (a PhD student) was independent of this study; the other was the current researcher. The correlation between the two raters was 0.92 after resolving the difference between them. A T-test was run to find out the difference between pre and post-performances. The rationale of the participants expressed in the pre-test was compared to that of the post-test to see the effect of intervention on their reasoning of inference.

## Results and Discussion

To find out whether the participants were using the context or not when they meet unfamiliar words, the data of the pre-test was examined. The analysis revealed that neither were the participants utilizing the available contextual clues, nor were they accomplishing etymological analysis appropriately. For example, one of the subjects, S6 inferred the meaning of 'censure' wrongly as 'perfect'. The explanation offered for this inference was that since the words 'censure' and 'cent percent' have 'cen' in common, and 'cent percent' indicates 'perfectness', he wrote 'perfect'. Previous knowledge about the root 'cent' was applied to the word 'censure', which was actually not derived from that root and therefore resulted in an erroneous inference. Another word 'earnestness' was also inferred erroneously by three participants by connecting it to 'earn' than activating the root 'earnoste'. The inferences they gave were: 'make money', 'purpose of earning' and 'willing to earn'. Since 'earnestness' contains 'earn' in it, some participants thought that this word relates to

earning money. These two examples indicate the participants' preference for etymological analysis over contextual analysis for inferring meanings of unfamiliar words. Participants were not making use of the context even though sufficient contextual clues were available to them. The assumption of the researcher that the participants were not making use of the context in dealing with unfamiliar words seems to be true in light of the above finding. Hence, the need for intervention to raise the participants' awareness of the sentence-level-formal schemata in order to enhance their ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context was justified.

To examine the effect of raising the participants' awareness of the sentence-level-formal schemata on their ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and their confidence in doing so, a t-test was run on pre and post-scores. The results revealed that the accuracy and confidence of the inference improved significantly from pre-test to post-test as a result of the interactive session. The following are the results of the t-test:

T-test results revealed that the participants performed significantly better in post-test. They improved their accuracy of inference significantly from pre-test (M = 75.46, SD = 18.05) to post-test (M = 79.51, SD = 15.82),  $t = 3.67$ ,  $p = .005$  at 0.01 level of significance. Participants also improved their confidence in inferring meaning from context significantly from pre-test (M = 76.27, SD = 10.08) to post-test (M = 89.44, SD = 7.76),  $t = 10.75$ ,  $p = .000$  at 0.01 level of significance. This establishes that the intervention on raising participants' awareness of the sentence-level-formal schemata has improved their ability to infer meaning of unfamiliar words from context and their confidence in doing so.

A closer analysis of the scores of the pre and post-tests revealed that the average score of four items was similar in pre-test (90.1) and post-test (90.7). Since the accuracy of inference in the pre-test itself was above 90, there was not much scope for improvement. However, for the remaining words, there was a significant improvement from pre-test (65.66) to post-test (72.05). As these words puzzled the participants

Table 1

*Paired Sample t-test for accuracy and confidence of inference*

Variable	Test	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
Accuracy	Pre-test	75.46	18.05	3.67	.005*
	Post-test	79.51	15.82		
Confidence	Pre-test	76.27	10.08	10.75	.000*
	Post-test	89.44	7.76		

\* Significant at 0.01 level

in pre-test, they had scope to improve their accuracy of inference in post-test. It suggests that the intervention has come in useful to participants when they are really struggling to infer meaning of unfamiliar words.

In addition to the above findings from quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis was carried out to examine the effect of the intervention on the rationale of the participants. It was found that

the participants offered a better rationale in post-test. For example, S5 in post-test reasoned that the meaning of 'earnestness' should be the opposite of the word 'fun' since the sentence is connected with 'whereas', which expresses contrast; in the pre-test, he offered no rationale. Another participant, S3 offered a better explanation for his inference of the word 'tedious' in post-test, reasoning that "the word



‘similarly’ is indicative of a common quality in both words, so ‘tedious’ and ‘boring’ are nearly the same, and thus used.” However, he simply declared that “the word boring is appropriate here” in pre-test. In both the examples cited, the participants used the schemata of discourse markers they were taught during the intervention to explain the rationale behind their inference in post-test. Thus, this study has demonstrated that explicit teaching about the sentence-level discourse marker scan facilitate L2 students’ ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context and also improve their confidence in doing so.

### Implications for Teaching

The following implications can be drawn from this study.

- Though the clues for inferring meaning from the context exist in the texts students read, it is the teacher who has to explicitly teach the learners how these clues can be used in inferring meaning of unfamiliar words. Hence, teachers may have to state explicitly how contextual clues can be used in inferring meaning rather than leaving it to the students.
- This study shows that inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words by utilizing contextual clues can be taught to students to enable them develop a positive attitude towards unfamiliar words.
- Students may be made aware of other possible ways of dealing with unfamiliar words, for instance, root analysis, relating words to everyday experience, etc.

### Conclusion

Before concluding, the limitations of the study need to be mentioned. This study is limited in its sample. The same test has been used for both pre and post-tests. It should also be mentioned that every unfamiliar word cannot be inferred just by analysing the context as many unfamiliar words occur outside of a context.

However, even though the study has its limitations, it has revealed that students were not making use of the context when dealing with unfamiliar words. This study has also established that raising students’ awareness of the sentence-level-formal schemata helps to develop their ability to infer meaning of unfamiliar words from context and their confidence in doing so.

### Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks are due to the participants for their cooperation, to Kandharaja KMC for rating the responses and to Dr. Appa Swami for his comments on an earlier draft.

### References

- Carrell, P. L. (1985). Facilitating ESL reading by teaching text structure. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (4), 727-752.
- Carrell, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Li, X. (1988). Effects of contextual cues on inferring and remembering meanings of new words. *Applied Linguistics*, 9 (4), 402-413.
- Mathioudakis, N. (2009). The fuzzy areas of accuracy and confidence while guessing the idiosyncratic vocabulary of Nikos Kazantzakis' 'ΟΑΥΣΕΙΑ'. In *Proceedings from the 9th International Conference on Greek Linguistics (ICGL9)*. Chicago, IL: Ohio State University.
- Meyer, B. J., & Freedle, R. O. (1984). Effects of discourse type on recall. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21(1), 121-143.
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. London: Heinemann Educational.

**Lakshmana Rao Pinninti** is a Ph D (ELT) student at the University of Hyderabad. He has an M.A. in English Language and Literature, and an M.Ed. in Elementary Education. His research interests include reading strategies and sociocultural theory of language learning.

*lakshman\_ma007@yahoo.co.in*

# Interview

**Rajesh Kumar (RK) talks to**

***Professor Rukmini Bhaya Nair (RBN)***

*Rukmini Bhaya Nair has been called 'the first significant post-modern poet in Indian English'. The standard reference volume Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry which covers the world century from 1910-2010 and includes all time greats like T.S. Eliot and Pablo Neruda says of her work that "it has been widely admired by other poets and critics for its postmodern approach to lyrical meaning and feminine identity." Prof. Nair herself says that she does research for the same reason she writes poetry. that is, to discover the possibilities and limits of language. She is Professor of Linguistics and English at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and received her Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. Since then, she has taught at universities ranging from Singapore to Stanford, and delivered plenary addresses worldwide from Aarhus to Xinjiang. Awarded a second honorary doctorate by the University of Antwerp for her contributions to linguistic pragmatics, Nair has published about one hundred papers, articles and books. Of her books, Narrative Gravity: Conversation, Cognition, Culture is perhaps representative. Her research interests are in the fields of cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, English studies, philosophy of language, techno-cultures, literary, narrative and postcolonial theory, gender and creative writing.*

**RK:** Though I know about your work in some detail, I'd still like to hear from you the major landmarks in your academic journey in both linguistics and other major areas of your interest.

**RBN:** Thank you for this opportunity, Rajesh. Let me begin by saying that I often compare life not to a Greek tragedy where you already know the ending, but to a television serial where you are always in the midst of life's episodes. So I will try my best to tell you about some of the landmark episodes in my still incomplete journey. To begin with, I studied in various parts of India, growing up in multilingual settings and, of course, this is true of people in our country in general. In college, I studied English literature and there was always this question in my mind about the relationship of English to the other languages of India. When I got a scholarship to study at Cambridge University, I therefore switched from doing English literature, a subject I loved, to doing linguistics, a subject I knew nothing about. At this point, I asked a basic question of myself and of the texts I read. It was: *what* does language mean, *how* does

language mean? And this has been a central motivating question for me throughout. I have looked at the relationship of languages to each other, at language and perception, and the idea that there is a hierarchy of languages in social space rather than necessarily a democracy of languages. How does one remedy this natural tendency towards what one might call 'linguistic elitism', where in certain social contexts, we privilege the written over the spoken, English over Hindi and so forth. So, one landmark was going to Cambridge and realizing that I could try and study linguistics and philosophy as well as literature to understand these conundrums. Then the next landmark, I suppose, was coming back to India and trying to teach linguistics.

Linguistics as it stood then - and more or less as it stands now! - is often a narrowly defined discipline. One of the things I wanted to do was to discover the relationship of linguistics to other disciplines. We always describe ourselves as a richly multilingual, plural culture and I see interdisciplinarity in academia as a cousin of multilingualism in society. This is one of the important things that I learned. Teaching

linguistics at IIT to students with a mathematical bent was another revelation - and very rewarding.

**RK:** Do you think that language teachers need to know about the nature and structure of language, even if it is in a preliminary way?

**RBN:** Yes, I definitely do. Just as I would recommend that maths and physics - or possibly basic logic - be taught across the board, with the underlying assumption that integration is needed across a curriculum. Do language teachers need to know about the intricacies of linguistics? Well, of course Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch have made a famous distinction between the faculty of language narrowly defined (FLN) which involves studying recursion and the automatic processing of language in the brain, and the faculty of language broadly defined which involves the conceptual intentional system (FLB). Now, FLB covers, in a sense, the relationships of all types of knowledge, since language is the primary instrument of thought and regulates the process of thinking in humans. Therefore to my mind, everyone needs to know about the principles of this faculty of language broadly defined even if they are not concerned with the narrow definition which is the study of the arbitrary syntactic rules which govern recursion. All teachers need to understand that language is the central backbone, the spine, so to speak, of all the other forms of knowledge.

**RK:** Which branch of linguistics is more useful for language teachers?

**RBN:** It goes without saying that language is invariably a critical element in a classroom. Teachers have to use language to communicate with students, whatever subject they teach. But

language teachers in particular would benefit from knowing about linguistics. Linguistics tells us exciting things about language. That it has structure. That it connects words to the world. That it enables you to think of yourselves as beings who can navigate their way through social structure. These sorts of insights about language are critical. You ask: which particular branch is most important? In my opinion, although we have always said: let's begin with grammar, this is no longer necessarily an accepted view. I think we should experimentally begin to reverse these old norms and perhaps begin with disciplines such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics. We should bring user knowledge into the classroom. And above all, we should bring the child's knowledge into the classroom. But how do we do this?

Well, here's my 'LANGUAGE' mnemonic. When a child begins to learn a language, she always needs some initial 'live' input from a previous user or user. The language machine will not work if you do not have this input. In short, we need some sort of a 'Lexicon' to begin with. What next? Well, a child needs to grasp early on that language is arbitrary, that there is a quite arbitrary relationship between words in a language and concepts in the world. A bilingual child, for example, may realise fast that 'cheez' in Hindi means something other than 'cheese' in English. That's 'Arbitrariness'. Thirdly, you need to understand that language is always novel. Survey studies show that educated adults have about 40,000 or so words in their minds. We also know that through recursion we can, in theory, combine all these words into one very long sentence and also that each time any sentence is uttered by a speaker, it will never be uttered again in the history of the world! That is the remarkable property of novelty captured by the 'N' in the word 'Language'. And I think that, so far, these 'literary' aspects of language, that is, novelty and creativity, have not been emphasised nearly enough. So here's how I

define language. L stands for the lexicon and lexical semantics; A for arbitrariness, ambiguity and abstraction; N for novelty; and G for grammar and syntax, which are at the heart of language. Then we have U for usage, while A stands for what I call language ‘anomalies’ which constitute another neglected aspect of language that has importance for pedagogy. For example, a child may have a stammer, or autism or dyslexia other conditions that interfere with language production, spoken and written. In these cases, we need to study the anomalies connected with language. Another aspect worthy of study, especially in language teaching, are the developmental processes in language. We need, that is, to look at language acquisition or growth, which is the G in my language mnemonic. Finally, E stands for both evolution and emotion, the fact that language learning goes alongside and promotes overall emotional growth. If you look at each of these features in my mnemonic ‘LANGUAGE’, I believe you will be able to connect them to FLB - or the ‘broadly defined’ aspects of language which every single language teacher deals with all the time.

**RK:** Given the diversity of learners in our classroom, how do you think a teacher should handle it?

**RBN:** If one compares diversity in a classroom in America with a classroom in India one finds the following interesting difference. In America, although Spanish, Chinese, Hindi and Gujarati and other ‘immigrant’ language are protected inside the classroom, the default language, the language of the street and marketplace, is almost always English. In our situation, this is reversed. There is diversity all around us, but in the classroom we actually try to tame that diversity. We say: now, this is an English class, so you learn English in it; this is a mathematics class, so it’s reserved for mathematics; this is a Hindi

class, so you now learn Hindi. Ideally, though, the Indian classroom should reflect the diversity in our streets, so many languages in so many forms and registers. The question you are really asking is: how might we deal with all this diversity and how we might bring it into our classrooms. There are many approaches to this and this is where ‘child-centred’ learning becomes critical.

The classroom is a place where we make explicit certain arrangements of the relationship of languages to each other. I think what we should do now is to also to bring into the classroom the child’s notions of ‘language’. In a dominantly Hindi classroom, for example, which has just one Tamil child, the Tamil-speaking child is extremely valuable as she can add to the self-reflexivity of Hindi speaking children. This single child’s output may show to us how the structures of Tamil may differ from Hindi, tell us about different communicative repertoires. So, in this respect, I think it is really critical that the teacher picks out individual children’s language use and doesn’t homogenize the classroom. Learn from our diversity and never neglect children who are different; who are either differently abled or speaking a different language - or the child who sits in a corner and refuses to speak at all! All these differences need to be focalized, not forgotten. They must be brought into the mainstream of the class because these linguistic practices may be sufficiently and interestingly different so that we can learn from them, theorize them. The child can then be a critical source of knowledge in the classroom that increases and does not stifle diversity. This method of ‘learning from children’ is relevant in an Indian classroom because the diversity of the street is quite naturally found in an Indian classroom as well. Teachers can develop innovative teaching methods whereby languages can be compared and contrasted with each other simply by drawing upon knowledge that is already present in the classroom.



**RK:** I am sure you are familiar with the NCERT's document NCF 2005. It has been suggested in NCF 2005 that languages of children could be used as a resource. What are its pedagogical implications for the practising language teachers in their day to day teaching?

**RBN:** Of course. In practice, however, we all know that teachers are under considerable strain in our classrooms. They have concerns about 'covering the syllabus' and completing various time-bound activities. So we cannot expect teachers to be persistently innovating and coming up with new methods which they can try out. However, I do think corpora collected in classrooms can be used in interesting ways for research. For example, in one study, we have looked at some material where longitudinal samples over three years were collected from monolingual Hindi and Tamil speaking children. One of the things that we can do is to begin to make such corpuses of stories, children's language, etc., which can be used as a basis for creating classroom teaching materials as well as for research. We could start across the various regions of India collecting corpora of ordinary conversations, not necessarily just child language - because these are good materials for observing how language interaction works in evolving multilingual contexts. In fact, this goes back to the point I was making about pragmatics—that maybe we should begin with usage and the relationship of words to the world rather than the strict relationship of grammar to language. So in this respect, I think that we need much more to work across the regional diversity of India collecting the kind of materials we can use in the classroom if we want develop the notion of a 'child-centred' multi-lingual and multi-faceted approach to language learning.

**RK:** While talking of language teaching methods some language researchers dub the modern era

as the post-method era. What are its implications for the language teacher?

**RBN:** This is an interesting question. Actually, an important aspect of 'methodology' is what you manage to do with a method inside the classroom. The method spelled out in the text book is one thing, but when you bring it to the classroom, that's a 'post-method' space, in effect. In India, I feel that we haven't experimented sufficiently with linguistic methods in this 'post' space. For example, one familiar method is to use narratives, stories, as pedagogic devices in the classroom. But why are stories important in the first place? This is a research question as well as a pedagogic one. My own argument in my research has centred on 'recursion', which as we have already discussed, Chomsky considers the central feature of the defining faculty of language in humans. You know of the recent controversy between Dan Everett and Chomsky. Dan Everett maintained that the Amazonian Piraha did not have recursion in their language and this went bang against the central tenet of Chomskian linguistics. Everett said the Piraha only produce simple sentences but not embedded sentences allowing for recursion. Here, then, was a language which didn't have recursion! However, one interesting thing that got missed in the course of this argument was that Everett *did* find recursion in Piraha language, but it was there in the form of *narrative* structure and not in the form of *syntactic* structure. So the syntax was that of simple sentences but the relationships of concepts to each other was in the form of an embedded, recursive narrative. Now, we know that narrative is a discourse universal found across all known cultures and it is also good for teaching causality and logic. So to teach through narrative in a classroom would not only introduce interesting content but would also enable a focus on the nature and scope of those



all-important 'recursive' properties of language, both narrowly and broadly defined.

**RK:** Is there an ideal method of teaching or is eclecticism our best bet?

**RBN:** On eclecticism, begin by observing the teaching methods of mothers! Mothers have an almost 100% rate of success. Almost all children manage to learn language from mothers and other care givers, without fail. It's been said that the 'immersion method' works better with the first language and mothers naturally use this method. They immerse their children in whatever language they know. Children, in turn, learn to swim naturally in this bath of language. And when we look at the mother-child dyad, what we find that the mother is able to teach quite complicated concepts to her child in a very simple manner indeed. For example, she points to a bird and says "*dekho ciDiyaa*". Well, she's pointing somewhere but the child cannot know *exactly* where the mother's finger is pointing. How can it? Neither does the child doesn't know whether there exists a category called '*ciDiyaa*' in the world. Slowly, the child finds out about types of *ciDiyaa* as, at one time, her mother points to a crow, at another, she points out a sparrow but each time uses the deictic speech-act '*dekho ciDiyaa!*'. The child thus gradually figures out that *ciDiyaa* is not a simple category because crows, sparrows, mynahs etc. all fit into the category *ciDiyaa*. Such everyday examples from mother-child interactions show that there is an ideal method that could involve 'immersion' in a way that a child learns language. This is not the only method, though. In the case of a second or third languages, we also rely on the first language for teaching. That would be a second ideal method. The third method, which I think is very important and which is often forgotten by linguists is 'the book'. Learning to read is an

abstract ability. But a book pulls the child in. The story pulls the child in. We hardly ever talk about the book as a mode of learning but it is an important abstract mode of learning. I know that many people in India and elsewhere, including myself, have learnt English, not from spoken inputs but, in the main, from books. I would say, in this context, that we should not forget that India has several literary 'book' traditions. So, there is a hierarchy of methods or a patterns of methods of which the central one may be immersion. In addition, we certainly can and must use literature (stories, poems, etc.) and, importantly, our everyday bilingualism, in imaginative ways for learning.

**RK:** Basically, we will have to pick?

**RBN:** We do pick. We pick and combine. That's human nature - we don't have a choice in this behaviour! For instance, we know Rabindranath Tagore never went to school. He didn't have any formal education. But he had many tutors, he had an enriched environment for learning. So I would say we need this 'enriched environment' for learning, which naturally incorporates more than one 'method'. We should also recognize that such an environment contains elements from the 'sensory motor interface' as well as the 'conceptual intentional interface'. This enriched environment for learning is very important because language is one faculty which does not march alone. It always moves forward hand-in-hand with the senses, with the emotions, and with inputs from the whole wide world. We need to acknowledge this if we want to understand the 'immersion' method in its fullest sense. Enrichment, that is, includes all the other types of 'learning' as well. So I would say: ideally, create an enriched learning environment rather than picking one language learning method over another.

**RK:** Though Chomsky has in general not made any major recommendation for language teaching, do you think his theory has any relevance for it?

**RBN:** Let's take the most basic variety of Chomskyan theory here, which says that, as a species, we have mental representations and cognitive similarities in brain-processing with which we come pre-programmed. Now we are asking: can we use the notion that we share this 'innate language faculty' to educate teachers and students? Obviously we can. Chomsky is saying that we share something and such sharing, to my mind, is the basis of every kind of learning. In fact, this argument can be extended to making language central to all teaching in humanities, social sciences, mathematics, everything.

The faculty of language that Chomsky talks about is important for all forms of learning really, though he may not share this view! For example, it's important for the ideas of manners, politeness and cultural difference that permeate society. Language carries the cognitive load from different kinds of information systems and the brain itself is a complex information system. Chomsky's view is that language as a faculty is unique because it enables us to handle and 'merge' all this information into complicated thought patterns. This property of being able to 'merge thought-information' is, to my mind, the essence of 'recursion'. So, yes, we learn something very important from Chomsky. Whether we can directly apply much that Chomsky says about syntax, I don't know - but I am sure the linguistic 'program' that he is now presenting does need, as he emphasizes, alliances with biologists, psychologists, neurolinguists. It's therefore bound, in the longer term, to have interesting insights for classroom teaching.

**RK:** Are you in favour of allowing only the most accepted and standard form of any language in a language class? What place would you attach to the use of varieties of languages used in everyday life?

**RBN:** Again, a difficult question. Ferguson onwards, so much work has been done on language 'standardization'. But note that the process of having children together inside a classroom *automatically* involves standardization, not to say coercion. In India, according to the Guinness book, we have 1/6th of the world's population; but also, 1/6th of the world's languages - so about 800 languages. Whether you take the Guinness book as the gospel is a different question! Anyway, what does having '800 languages' mean? It means we have a huge language continuum. And whenever we have a continuum and we want to teach one standard language which everybody will share, we will have the problem that we do violence to some these forms of language - especially, the oral forms. So standardization and a certain concomitant 'violence' takes place as part of the education process. It happens across languages. The question in India, particularly in modern times, is: how do we standardize best, given that, unlike China, we have so many scripts as well as languages? And how might we preserve the richness of the spoken word, the regional variety? I believe this is where Indian linguists especially need to do research in bringing the two poles of orality and written discourse together. And of course, as I just mentioned, we have more writing systems in India than the whole world put together! We have twelve to thirteen writing systems at least, often used by millions of people. You intuitively realize this when you as a Hindi speaker listen to a Bengali and can more or less understand may be forty to fifty per cent of the language. But, when you

are a Hindi speaker and you are learning the Bengali script, you will find that it looks similar, but it is hard for you to read at all. The script is not as porous as the spoken word. What this implies for 'standardization' is that when we write things down, we partly remove or erase their similarity to other oral systems. So we say with greater ease when contrasting written systems: this is Bengali, this is Hindi, this is Tamil, etc. - although they come from the same root, that is, the Brahmi script. But what bearing does all this have on the practical use of oral and literacy modalities in the classroom? Here, I go back to the point that we use oral modes for certain components or certain parts of classroom teaching where we have replays of free thinking and debate - and then we deploy the usual written standards as well. The oral and written modes are complementary. Standardization forces people to come together to both speak and write in a 'common language' and this standardization has already happened in our country to a large extent with the formation of geographical 'linguistic states' in the nineteen fifties, from the very inception of independent India.

**RK:** Can you suggest some steps that could be taken to safeguard the local languages from the tyranny of the 'privileged' languages?

**RBN:** I think it is unavoidable that 'universal literacy' is a common goal. However, I think it would be a pity if you made that such a powerful goal that you shut out orality. So, I would actually say that, as our technologies grow, we should use them to make standardization a process which is increasingly sensitive to our local, oral traditions. This is what linguistics teaches us. That it, modern linguistics is a discipline that consciously moved away from the literary text to the everyday spoken word. But even so,

modern linguistics still uses standardized versions of language in most of its grammatical examples. So, what we need to do is to build sensors into this process of the near inevitable use of standardized language - which, to a great extent, we definitely need in teaching. Otherwise, we can't really run any examinations in our vast country! Oral, local and discursive components must, however become a core part of teaching in the classroom and, also, part of research in our universities. And, once again, I would emphasize that India is one of the best places in the world in which to do this because India has such great depth and richness in its oral traditions. I believe it would be absurd to say that there should be no standardization in the context of classroom teaching. On the other hand, it would be absurd to say in a country like India that we can afford to be insensitive to our oral traditions.

**RK:** This brings me to a related question. A few minutes ago, you were saying something like when we say 'bird', there is no entity such as a bird.

**RBN:** Yes. It's a type. It's an abstraction of which we have only 'token' examples, such as sparrows, crows or penguins, in the world out there.

**RK:** We only have types - or 'tokens' - of birds. Similar thing applies to language. So when we say Hindi, or Bangla. These are cover terms and then they are several connectives of these things, which do exist in reality.

**RBN:** Yes, exactly. That's a good parallel.

**Question:** And then there are lot of other variety of these things, there are lots of other languages which are under great threat.

**RBN:** Endangered languages.

**RK:** Not only the officially recorded endangered languages. I am referring to languages in the following way. Sometimes people argue that Indian languages are under threat in the presence of English. Similarly lot of local languages are under threat in presence of dominant languages like Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, and Panjabi. What would you suggest to preserve these local languages and varieties from the tyranny of dominant languages?

**RBN:** We want to believe that we live in a democracy where everyone is equal. But when we look at social structure, it is obvious that everyone is not equal. We have the caste system, we have colour biases and so forth. We have thousands of elements which make our society hierarchical. This is why we should not only narrowly focus on syntax. I think Chomsky himself deeply recognizes this connect between the formal and social aspects of language. He has two hands, so to speak - or two tongues! On the one hand, in some of his work, he talks about syntax and the power of language as a recursive system and, on the other, he talks about society and its ills and how you can change the world. So Chomsky has contributed to thinking about a freer society, one where there is not so much hierarchy. In this way, he does allow that language and society go hand in hand. I often say that, when you look at the language situation in India or anywhere else, because of the relationship of elite languages like English and Hindi with other languages, you are going to witness a very undemocratic set up. So, languages teach you that democracy is an ideology to be communicated. It is not a given. In linguistics, we say that *all* languages are equally capable of handling thought. It is not that there are primitive languages and there are non-primitive languages and there are backward

languages and forward languages. There is no such hierarchy and we believe this. But when we see languages in operation, there is an enormous social lack of democracy. You're asking how we handle this. This is a very difficult question to answer honestly, as opposed to being politically correct. For instance, I have conducted several informal surveys among my own students. I have said to them: I am giving you a choice, which language do you want to learn most of all? Now, they invariably answer: English! Then, I give them a choice of two classical languages—Tamil and, say, French. Which would you choose, I ask? They say: French! Then I give them the choice between an 'endangered' language like Brahui and Tamil. Which one would they choose? They answer in chorus: We would choose Tamil! This little experiment shows how strongly language hierarchies subtly infuse classroom choices. People have to *care* enough about varieties of language. As a species, we are emotionally invested in the idea of language. We do care about it but I don't think so far we have educated our young to be emotionally invested in the local. This is a part of post-colonization. This is part of caste, this is part of the hierarchical organization of society. We have to still to educate ourselves to care about things that do not seem to us to matter, such as the many varieties of language we have - but which in fact contribute enormously to our sense of ourselves as part of a larger human community.

**RK:** The three-language formula was evolved to address the unity and multilingual diversity of India, but it has not been followed in its true spirit. What is your advice to language planners in this context?

**RBN:** Well, I think society is obviously not static. Today, you might be using English more than you use Maithili. So, you are not using this resource, but you do have it. A society or a



country evolves in the same way. We have all these infinite language resources. This three-language formula tried to roughly capture this insight and was good at one time. Now it might need revision given the youth of our population, inter-regional connections, etc. We do have to rethink it. But mother tongues remain critical. The recent large studies we've conducted with mothers at IITD are relevant here as we have consciously made mothers and 'motherese' central to our research. The mother tongue and the mother-child relationship or the quality time that the mother spends with her child is severely undervalued in our society. Caregivers' roles, home roles, are in general severely undervalued. Our linguistic research says loud and clear: if you really value mother tongue education, then please give importance to mothers! And this brings us back to gender and caste discrimination. Many linguists talk about the mother tongue as important. But do they talk about the mother? The mother's role in understanding 'the mother tongue' is actually critical. Of course, in using the term 'mother', I actually mean primary caregivers to the child in his or her primary years. For example, all Indian children now have the very important 'Right to Education' from the age of 6 years to 14 years. Yet we do not sufficiently connect this right to education to the development of the 0-6 age group, saying that this arena belongs to the Ministry of Mother and Child Development. So we educationists are not going to look at this. This, I think, is absolutely myopic. We need to bring these developmental sequences together. At IITD, our studies of the inter-related growth of emotion and language - indeed, studies all over the world - have shown that in language development, the most important landmarks are from 0-5 years. The ages 0-5 are critical for language development as well as overall cognitive development. We cannot afford ever to forget this when developing classroom pedagogies.

**RK:** Recently CBSE has introduced a newer form of evaluation known as CCE. Do you think CCE has really improved the teaching learning situation?

**RBN:** CCE been so far practiced in a haphazard way with schools each interpreting the requirement in its own way. It is actually very difficult to handle continuous evaluation and thus far, anyway, CCE does not feed into the final assessment of the child. It should be there, of course, but we have to have some robust measures for it. In our research at IITD, we have been developing a picture-based Cognitive Capability Scale (CCS) as a possible, partial index for this purpose. Our scale seeks rationalize the mode of continuous assessment that you mention. More generally, as human beings, we are actually designed to continuously evaluate ourselves 'online' from moment to moment via 'feedback loops'!

**Question:** Has the CCE improved teaching?

**RBN:** Well, we have not had this sort of assessment before, so we don't have much 'feedback'. We may infer that, as everybody feels it a good thing, we should have CCE in our schools but we need to think seriously, in a research based way, about how to implement it.

**RK:** Government organizations such as the SCERTs and NCERT are being increasingly asked to include issues such as life skills, road safety, gender, caste, colour, sexual abuse, etc., in the school textbooks from Class 2 or 3 onward and all such burdens squarely fall on language books. What is your response to such proposals?

**RBN:** Prima facie, simplistic value-based teaching does not work. This country has approximately six to ten lakh teachers short in



primary and secondary schools across the country, if not more. There's a shortage of teachers, there's chronic absenteeism. These are basic problems. So, we are going to have all this moral and politically correct instruction - and there are no teachers! We most urgently need to train committed teachers in the disciplines. Ethics is part of this effort and does not consist in the piecemeal addition of 'good topics' to an already overloaded syllabus. Much investment in this process is required at least over the next decade or two. To begin with, as I've already emphasised, we must recognize the signal value of the teaching that happens at home between 0-6 years, to enrich these homes and give support to the mothers and the caregivers at home. Secondly, we could even use college students like students at the IITs to teach as part of their social training and perhaps give them incentives like green ribbon certificates that will also confer on them an advantage in the corporate jobs which they eventually want! Given the present shortage of teachers, we could certainly try and enthuse college students to be 'resource persons' to teach basic mathematics, basic PCM, basic language, and basic technology skills in our schools. Such a measure will also sensitize these elite college students and inculcate in them the understanding that they, too, are a part of society.

**RK:** When should we use them as resources of teaching in schools?

**RBN:** At least until we meet the backlog in our states! We should also make such service something which is prized and not perceived to be a burden on the student. Such novel methods are required in a society like ours where we have plentiful human resources and, simultaneously, a complex network of commitments and prejudices. For instance, a mother may not naturally discriminate between

her male and female children but society forces her to make such 'unfair' choices. If we look at the mother's practice in 'teaching' her children, we can in this sense say that we learn from mothers something important about democracy. A mother is emotionally attached to both her male and female children and inclined to treat them equally but society may not be quite like that. In short, we need lots of democratization in education and while some of this can come from learning from mothers and kinship relations in family settings, other forms of democratic education can come from college students - and senior citizens - voluntarily engaging in educating school children.

**RK:** You have been deeply interested in pragmatics. Does it have any major implications for language teaching?

**RBN:** Pragmatics is usually defined as a 'theory of use'. This involves the 'conceptual intentional' system as it manifests in language. Pragmatics is, further, a theory of use which in its most foundational interpretation is premised on the fact that we are built, our bodies are evolutionarily constructed, in a way that our intentions have to be made evident to others. We don't, that is, have transparent screens on our chests! So, we make our intentions evident through 'speech-acts'. But even language is an inadequate tool, so non-verbal means such as facial expressions and gestures, the 'sensory motor' systems in effect, are also deployed side by side with language to project 'what we mean'. The areas of intentionality and conceptual communication and, increasingly, interfaces with sensory motor abilities including in computer communication, are thus covered by pragmatics.

Intentions are critical in this sort of theory and human beings are seen to be 'intending' and purposeful language users for the most part. This

is where pragmatics interfaces with theories of mind as well, since we do not always do things purposefully. We often do things without knowing why we are doing them or in error. This is also a large area of pragmatics, namely, misunderstandings in language. Two different people from two different cultures using the same language may severely misunderstand each other. Pragmatics is an area of study where you can look at things like politeness and micro-areas of social interaction - in this sense, it is close to sociolinguistics in many ways and to the philosophy and biology of language as well.

**RK:** Professor Rukmini Bhaya Nair, it was pleasure talking to you. Thank you for sharing your insights with the readers of *Language and Language Teaching*.

**RBN:** Thank you Rajesh!

**Rajesh Kumar** teaches in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai.

*thisisraj कुमार@gmail.com*

# Landmarks

## English as a Second Language: Pedagogy, Paradigms, and Politics

*Rakesh M. Bhatt*

### Introduction

Any discussion about the teaching of English in India, or for that matter of any modern Indian language, needs to begin by asking, among other things, three critical questions: (i) What is appropriate pedagogy?; (ii) What are the current paradigms of practice?; (iii) What are the language policies; specifically, the politics of production of 'legitimate' language that dictate answers to (i) and (ii)? The third question, it seems to me, is ultimately the most important question to consider in outlining the methodological framework needed to put together efficient language-delivery systems. In this short essay, I will frame the answers to questions (i) and (ii) from the perspective of question (iii): What is the politics of English language—globally and locally—that shapes English Language Teaching (ELT) in India? My approach should be familiar to all those readers who keep track of the current language politics in the state of Karnataka, dragged out for over two decades and still under litigation as of the writing of this piece. That discussion seems to me to be predicated on the competing ideologies—local and global—about the role of the two languages Kannada and English. Following closely the various court verdicts and subsequent appeals, it becomes clear to me that language choice, even in the stable multilingual context of India, is extremely politicized. In the case of Karnataka, language choice is tied closely to the politics of knowledge production, either what counts, what is valued, or what really

matters. Is knowledge sacred, and hence only deliverable in Kannada that recalls the Brahmanic-Sanskrit heritage traditions, or is knowledge secular, and hence deliverable in English that links the fate of the learner, potentially, to post-modern traditions and global cultural flows. There are, of course, other socio-cultural and political threads associated with the Karnataka language policy, which I will not be considering in this essay. Instead, I will engage with three constructs of English Language Teaching in India—Pedagogy, Paradigms, and Politics—arguing, tacitly, that the vernacular-standard options should both be feasible and indeed desirable in a teaching curriculum that is inclusive, plural, and heteroglossic.

### Appropriate Pedagogy

I will begin by exploring what appropriate pedagogy is. Appropriate to the context of learning? Perhaps. The transformation of English in India—from a colonial idiom to various indigenous forms—was inevitable for it to represent faithfully the ethos of the local cultural context of use, and to enable speakers of English in India to use it as an additional resource for linguistic, sociolinguistic, and literary creativity. So when we talk about 'appropriate pedagogy', we have to start with the assumption that the classroom teaching norm is Indian English. It is the variety of English involved in recording, reflecting, and creating various complexes of socio-cultural nuances indigenous to local, Indian contexts of use. And yet, the picture of English

education is further complicated, as it has created class (as opposed to caste) distinctions in its very distribution; specifically, as Ramanathan (1999) notes,

the Indian middle class, with [...] relatively easy access to English [that now] represents an inner circle of power and privilege that for a variety of reasons remain inaccessible to particular groups of people in India ... [that are pushed] into outer circle (p. 211).

The logic of Ramanathan's argument is rather straightforward: although English is available to everyone, the linguistic class-hierarchy is maintained through the uneven distribution of different types of Englishes. The middle class has access to "standard" varieties that approximate the global norm, whereas the lower classes speak less prestigious varieties. Agnihotri and Khanna (1995) note this empirical generalization as follows:

The most significant consequence of sustaining English in India has been a major social division between the select elite and the "Englishless" masses. Even within the educated English-knowing group there is a split between those for whom English is the medium of instruction in prestigious public (i.e., private) schools and those who largely study English as a subject in ordinary government schools. The route to power, prestige and riches, even today, lies through English. (p.15)

Given the variation in English language learning outcomes, the question about appropriate pedagogy has to be framed as following: what are the ground realities of English language use? This question has to do with the issue of authenticity. Broadly construed, the issue of authenticity has to do with how the grammar of Indian culture constrains the grammar of English language in India. This question goes beyond the often (re-)cited morphological variability, such as the kind one notices in the pluralization

of mass nouns (e.g., furnitures, softwares, underwears, etc.). Let me illustrate my point about authenticity by discussing, in some detail, the use of tag questions in Indian Englishes where clearly English language use seems to be constrained by the grammar of local culture.

In Standard Indian English (SIE), which is the variety of English in India that is closest in its form to Standard British or American English, tag questions are formed by a rule that inserts a pronominal copy of the subject after an appropriate modal auxiliary. A typical example is given in (1).

(1) John said he'll work today, didn't he?

Tags have also been analyzed as expressing certain attitudes of the speaker toward what is being said in the main clause, and in terms of speech acts or performatives. Functionally, tags in English behave like epistemic adverbials, such as "probably", "presumably", and so forth, as shown in (2).

(2a) It's still dark outside, isn't it?

(2b) It's probably dark outside.

Undifferentiated tag questions, such as in (3a) and (3b), serve as one of the paradigm linguistic exponents of the Indianization of English, i.e. the Vernacular Indian English (Bhatt, 2000).

(3a) You are going home soon, isn't it?

(3b) You have taken my book, isn't it?

The undifferentiated tags play an important pragmatic role in the Indian English speech community. In most cases, the meaning of the tag is not the one appended to the meaning of the main proposition; it is usually the tag that

signals important social meaning (Bhatt, 1995). In fact, tags in Vernacular Indian English are a fascinating example of how linguistic form (e.g. of the tag) is constrained by cultural constraints of politeness and are in fact linguistic devices governed by the politeness principle of non-imposition: they serve positive politeness functions (Brown & Levinson, 1987), signalling deference and acquiescence. Notice, for example, the contrast in the tag expressions between Vernacular Indian English in (4) and Standard Indian, British, and American English in (5).

Unassertive and Mitigated (Vernacular Indian English):

(4a) You said you'll do the job, isn't it?

(4b) They said they will be here, isn't it?

Assertive and Intensified (Standard Indian English):

(5a) You said you'll do the job, didn't you?

(5b) They said they will be here, didn't they?

In contrast to the canonical tag expressions in (5a) and (5b), speakers of Indian Englishes find the undifferentiated tag expressions in (4a) and (4b) as nonimpositional and mitigating, as argued by Bhatt (1995). This claim is more clearly established when an adverb of intensification and assertion is used in conjunction with the undifferentiated tag; the result is predictably, unacceptable (shown as starred sentences, counterparts of 4a and 4b, above) to the speakers of Indian Englishes:

(4a') \*Of course you said you'll do the job, isn't it?

(4b') \*Of course they said they'll be here, isn't it?

In a culture where verbal behavior is severely constrained to a large extent by politeness regulations, where nonimposition is the essence of polite behaviour, it is not surprising that Vernacular Indian English has replaced Standard Indian English tags with undifferentiated tags. The explanation of this lies in the notion of "grammar of culture" (Bright, 1968; D'souza, 1988). According to Bright and D'souza, global grammatical norms are modified by local cultural conditions, engendering alternate systems of usage.

Undifferentiated tags are not exclusive instances in the grammar of Indian Englishes where one finds the linguistic form constrained by the grammar of culture: another example could be the modal auxiliary 'may'. 'May' in Vernacular Indian English is used to express obligation politely; see data in (6a) and (6b), which contrasts systematically with Standard British English (7a) and (7b); data taken from Trudgill & Hannah, 1985, p. 109):

(6) Vernacular Indian English:

(a) This furniture may be removed tomorrow.

(b) These mistakes may please be corrected.

(7) Standard Indian (British) English:

(a) This furniture is to be removed tomorrow.

(b) These mistakes should be corrected.

In sum, the linguistic form of localization appears in the choices offered by the grammar of English language variation in India.

The challenge of ELT practitioners is to acknowledge the empirical realities of English language use in India, and introduce those



linguistic realities into the curriculum. A revised curriculum based on authenticity, a socially realistic paradigm of teaching and learning, will of course, require variation to be an integral part of curriculum design and materials development, teacher training, and assessment models.

### ELT Paradigms

A common error in teaching English in India has to do with the outdated models of error analysis. The error in error analysis, as Sridhar (1994) has pointed out, is that the target of English language learning is not Standard British/American English; it is functional competence in English. The ‘error’ is part of the Standard English Ideology, which implies that clarity and logic (and loyalty) depend on the adoption of a monoglot standard variety in institutional and public discourses. This dominant ideology, as I will discuss in the next section, misrepresents a bid for global hegemony as a benign, indeed altruistic, attempt towards linguistic empowerment for local communities (see Honey, 1997; Quirk, 1996 for examples of such discourse). The uncritical acceptance of native speakers of English as models of second language learning and teaching yields a framework of assumptions where difference is computed as deviance, as errors. A quick sampling of textbooks offered in English teaching markets in India points to this fact, as Chelliah (2001) has ably demonstrated. Here is a list of ELT textbooks she surveyed as part of her research (ibid, 162):

Braganza, Michael. (1998) *Common Errors in English*. New Delhi: Goodwill Publishing House.

Hashem, Abul (n.d.) *Common Errors in English*. New Delhi: Ramesh Publishing House.

Phillips, Sam (n.d.) *Common Mistakes in English*. New Delhi: Goodwill Publishing House.

Prasad, Sidhnath and Thakur, K. P. (1991) *Common Errors in English*. Patna: Bharati Bhawan.

Puri G. K. and Puri, Saroj (1998) *Common Errors in English. For All Competitive Exams*. New Delhi:

Indian Institute of Management Studies Publications.

Sharma, R. N. and Kumar, Mahendra (n.d.) *Common Errors in English*. Agra: M.I. Publications.

Smith-Pearse, T. L. H. (1959) *The English Errors of Indian Students*. Chennai: Oxford University Press. (First published as *English Errors in Indian Schools*, 1934.)

Sood, K. S. and Bright, P. S. (n.d.) *Bright's Handbook of Common Errors in English and How to Avoid Them*. New Delhi: Bright Careers Institute.

Sudha Publications (anonymous) (n.d.) *Common Errors in English*. New Delhi: Sudha Publications.

Star Discs (anonymous) (n.d.) *Star Discs: Common Errors in English*. Madurai: Abinaya Publishers.

Vas, Gratian (1994) *The Sterling Book of Common Errors in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

The local ‘experts’, listed above, follow the mainstream ELT experts who assume ‘ambilingualism’ to be the goal of second language acquisition, ‘fossilization’ as the ultimate fate of second language learners, and ‘interlanguage’ as the variety spoken by non-native speakers. These constructs—ambilingualism, interlanguage, and fossilization—provide a habit of thought: soon after being introduced, they are understood as mathematical axioms, above debate. The assumptions shared are not propositions to be defended or attacked and form part of the ‘tacit dimension’ of scholarly understanding. In reality, however, these assumptions consecrate linguistic and cultural privilege (Kachru, 1986; Sridhar, 1994; Pennycook, 1998; Bhatt, 2002). Even where learners meet the criteria of functional bilingualism, trivial dichotomies such as proficiency/competence, standard/non-standard are created by the ELT professionals and then used as alibis for maintaining linguistic ethnocentrism disguised as concerns over intelligibility among English-using populations. The learners are thus confined to life-long

apprenticeship in the second language, without any hope for socio-linguistic emancipation. This is a rather unfortunate development, especially at a time when we find ourselves in the age of another English renaissance reminiscent of a renaissance attitude that we saw among creative writers such as Raja Rao and Anita Desai, and now in the works of new Indian English writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Firdaus Kanga, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, and Rohinton Mistry. Implicitly and explicitly, the non-native users of English are increasingly challenging the authenticating/power-structures located in the UK and the USA; the local ELT paradigms have to respond by incorporating local models of English language use in their practice of ELT in the classrooms.

### **English Language Politics**

In the context of varieties of Indian English, the expert discourse is obligated to maintain the native/non-native distinction: The codification of this distinction in standard textbooks universalizes its legitimacy and contributes to the success of the Standard English Ideology. At the same time, this codification excludes the oppositional discourse, the rival forms of thought (Kachru, 1983; Sridhar, 1994; Cook 1999). The reproduction of Standard English Ideology is then managed by continued production of expert pronouncements which further corroborates and consolidates the native/non-native distinction in the field of second language acquisition research. In this section, briefly, I would like to alert the local ELT experts regarding how the politics of knowledge production works, especially in terms of the teaching of English. I will analyse the 'expert' discourse of one of the leading scholars of ELT that we are all familiar with, Randolph Quirk, to show how the

ideological sleight of hand works (see Bhatt, 2002, for a full critique of his work).

Quirk (1990) uses Coppieters' (1987) study, published in the journal *Language*, to validate fossilization and to give flesh and blood to the native/non-native, standard/non-standard, target/fossilized, etc., distinction. What we find in Quirk's paper is the use of a series of ideological strategies that draw the connection between authority and language use. He begins by using the 'obscuring' strategy, where reality is presented in ways that are convenient for the reproduction of the dominant discourse. He writes thus:

In a range of interesting and sophisticated elicitation tests, the success rate of the non-natives fell not merely *below* but *outside* the range of native success ... (his emphasis) (Coppieters, 1987, p. 6)

The 'interesting' and 'sophisticated' tasks of Coppieters' turn out to be flawed in several respects, as Birdsong's (1992) study, also published in the journal *Language*, has subsequently shown. Birdsong's study replicated Coppieters' study, but his results did not show any significant difference between the performance of native and fluent non-native speakers. Such expert promulgations contribute to 'régimes of truth' and regulatory practices which further obscure the hidden agenda and the systematic distortions necessitated by the dominant 'Standard English' ideology. The valorization of this ideology appears unsuspectingly in different forms of attitudinal internalizations. I will present two sets of attitudes of ELT professionals to illustrate this point. First, Helen Johnson's (1992) paper in the ELT journal entitled, "Defossilizing", which is a critique of communicative approaches in ELT, begins like this (1992, p. 180):

We have all come across them at one time or another. Easily *recognizable* by their inability

to move in any direction except sideways and *by the glazing of their eyes* when you mention the present perfect tense, I am, of course, referring to students *suffering from chronic 'intermediate-itis'*, students whose fluent and extensive output consists almost entirely of communication strategies and very little grammar—the *'fluent-but-fossilized'*. (emphasis added)

She continues further attempting to make a rhetorical case against communicative approaches, but is successful only in demonizing the learner:

Every method has its *Frankenstein's monsters, grotesque parodies* of whatever it is the teaching has emphasized, and these *tediously inaccurate chatterers* are the *unfortunate creations* of the communicative approach. (emphasis added)

The second set of attitudes is manifest in the following form (Medgyes, 1992, p. 340):

I argue, however, that a *non-native cannot aspire* to acquire a native-speaker's language competence. (emphasis added)

The prominence of native speakers in traditional (ELT) methodologies has not only obscured the distinctive nature of successful second language users, but has also defined the latter, as failed native speakers, by focusing on what they are not (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Cook, 1999). The standard language ideology requires such internalizations so that the power-structure of English speech community remains intact.

After establishing the acquisitional deficit among learners, the non-native teacher must also be implicated in the reproduction of the deficit discourse so that the key players in learning and teaching—the tutor and the tutee—share equally the native speaker's burden. The evidence of this implication is found in the rhetorical methods employed by Quirk (1990), as seen in the following quote (ibid:8):

No one should underestimate the *problem* of teaching English in such countries as India and Nigeria, where the English of the teachers themselves inevitably bears the stamp of *locally acquired deviations from the standard language*. (emphasis added) (Quirk, 1990, p.8)

The standard language Quirk has in mind is standard British English. While an interesting rhetorical image, Quirk has provided a false description of the fact (see Ferguson, 1982; Sridhar, 1994). The ideological strategy of the demonization of the 'other' glosses over the explicit empirical sociolinguistic realities of the nonnative contexts of acquisition and use (cf. Sridhar, 1994). While he may be correct that the teachers 'bear' a 'stamp', this is, in fact not really a 'problem' at all. On the contrary, only a minority of the 2 per cent of the entire English speaking population in India has a favourable attitude toward Standard (British) English (cf. Kachru, 1997). Several works on the grammar of Indian English, such as those of Kachru (1983), Sridhar (1994), and Bhatt (1995, 2000) complicate the whole conceptualization of the 'problem'. Clearly, the problem is not really a linguistic one, but rather that of vested interests being poached upon. However, the real problem by the 'experts' is disguised, predictably, by denigrating the 'other'.

## Conclusions

To conclude, I believe the ELT profession in India needs to move towards reconfiguring our disciplinary discourses, and in so doing we have to consider the following:

- 'Standard language' has to be treated as endonormatively evolving from within each community according to its own histories and cultures of usage. Standards cannot be imposed exonormatively from outside one community.

- Appropriated forms of local English are perhaps not transitory and incomplete ‘interlanguages’. If they manifest a stable system over time, with a rule-governed usage in the local community, they have to be treated as legitimate languages. Similarly, fossilization should be reserved for individual manifestations of idiolects of speakers who are new to a language. It should not be used to label sociolects which display collectively accepted norms of usage in a community.
- We have to abandon the use of the label ‘non-native speaker’ for multilingual subjects from postcolonial contexts. In the case of communities which have appropriated English and localized its usage, the members should be treated as ‘native speakers’. We have to explore new terms to classify speakers based purely on relative levels of proficiency, without employing markers of ethnicity, nationality, or race, and overtones of ownership over the language.
- We have to encourage a mutual negotiation of dialectal differences by communities in interpersonal linguistic communication, without judging intelligibility purely according to ‘native’ speaker norms. Both parties in a communicative situation have to adopt strategies of speech accommodation and negotiation to achieve intelligibility.

The beginnings of such a socially-realistic linguistic framework will find a place in a model of ELT that is based on the assumptions of plurality and multiple standards (Smith & Nelson, 1985; Quirk, 1985; Bhatt, 1995; Canagarajah, 1999). The guiding slogan for ELT should be as follows: local standards for local contexts. The norms for learning and teaching in such a plural model must be endonormative so that the learning content is in communicative and sociolinguistic harmony with the new contexts of use. This pedagogical shift carries the empirical advantage of making the ‘available’

Englishes ‘accessible’ to the potential consumers, thus enabling expressions of local identities in the use of these norms. The creative use of language variation representing plural identities must find a space in the local pedagogical practices in the English teaching curriculum generally, and more specifically in the construction of instructional materials.

## References

- Agnihotri, R., & Khanna, A. L. (Eds.). (1995). *English language teaching in India*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Bhatt, R. M. (1995). Prescriptivism, creativity, and world Englishes. *World Englishes*, 14, 247-260.
- Bhatt, R. M. (2000). Optimal expressions in Indian English. *English Language and Linguistics*, 4, 69-95.
- Bhatt, R. M. (2001). World Englishes. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30, 227-250.
- Bhatt, R. M. (2002). Experts, dialects, and discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 74-109.
- Birdsong, D. (1992). Ultimate attainment in second language acquisition. *Language*, 68, 706-755.
- Bright, W. (1968). Toward a cultural grammar. *Indian Linguistics*, 29, 20-29
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chelliah, S. (2001). Constructs of Indian English in language ‘guidebooks’. *World Englishes* 20, 161-177.
- Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 185-209.
- Coppieters, R. (1987). Competence differences between native and near-native speakers. *Language*, 63, 544-573.
- D’souza J. (1988). Interactional strategies in South Asian languages: Their implications for teaching English internationally. *World Englishes*, 7, 159-171.



- Ferguson, C. (1978). Multilingualism as object of linguistic description. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences*, 8, 97-105.
- Honey, J. (1997). *Language is power*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Johnson, H. (1992). Defossilizing. *ELT Journal*, 46, 180-189.
- Kachru, B. (1983). *The Indianization of English: The English language in India*. Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Kachru, B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of non-native Englishes*. London: Pergamon.
- Kachru, B. (1987). The bilingual's creativity: Discoursal and stylistic strategies in contact literature. In L. Smith (Ed.), *Discourse across cultures: Strategies in world Englishes* (pp. 125-140). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kachru, B. (1997). World Englishes and English-using communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 17, 66-87.
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50, 199-212.
- Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: Who's worth more? *ELT Journal*, 46, 340-349.
- Quirk, R. (1985). The English language in a global context. In R. Quirk & H. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 1-6). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, R. (1990). Language varieties and standard language. *English Today*, 21, 3-10.
- Quirk, R. (1996). *Grammatical and lexical variance in English*. London: Longman.
- Ramanathan, V. (1999). "English is here to stay": A critical look at institutional and educational practices in India. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 211-231.
- Smith, L., & Nelson, C. (1985). International intelligibility of English: Directions and resources. *World Englishes*, 4, 333-342.
- Sridhar, S. N. (1994). A reality check for SLA theories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 800-805.
- Trudgill, P. & Hannah, J. (1985). *International English*. London: Arnold.

**Rakesh M. Bhatt** is Professor of Linguistics and SLATE (Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education) as well as the Associate Head of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Illinois. He specializes in sociolinguistics of language contact, in particular, issues of migration, minorities and multilingualism, code-switching, language ideology, and world Englishes. The empirical focus of his work has been on South Asian languages; particularly, Kashmiri, Hindi, and Indian English.

*rbhatt@illinois.edu*



# Book Reviews

## Research on Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Professional Development

ESL and Applied Linguistics Professional Series.

Karen Johnson and Paula Golombek (Eds.) (2011). New York: Routledge. (285 pages).

ISBN: 10-1873630441

ISBN: 13-978-1873630440

Reviewed by: *Pushpinder Syal*



Of the many considerations made for second language teacher development, the one that has finally come to attention is that of critical perspectives on the social practices and situated contexts that teachers inhabit and work in. Whether it is Korea or India, Ecuador or Czech Republic, teacher development programmes do not seem to succeed as much as expected, as the concepts and practices suggested in these programs do not permeate into the frames of teachers' understanding. The studies reported in this book aim to enhance such an understanding by looking at the research undertaken in various countries.

In the 'Introduction', the editors posit that central to this set of perspectives is the Vygotskian framework based on his writings in the seventies, on the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social. Human cognition is mediated by being situated in a cultural environment, as an interactive process in which culture, context,

language and social interaction are the mediating factors. This rings true when we consider that teachers have deeply ingrained notions of language, what it is, how it is learnt and how it should be taught. These are mostly unarticulated, but very often teachers swear by them on the basis of their everyday experience. However, such concepts are limiting, insufficient and even detrimental as they are broadly generalized and understood only superficially. They need to be investigated and systematized by supplementing and connecting them with relevant scientific concepts, which in turn will enable teachers to move beyond their immediate circumstances. This is where Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) programmes have a key role to play.

Although SLTE programmes have been attempted before, but the presentation of the theories and concepts in these programmes have been ill-absorbed by teachers as they seem to be disconnected with goal-oriented pedagogic practices. We also see that knowledge about the subject (for instance, about the theory of second language acquisition) is different from procedural knowledge about how to teach it; teachers may grasp the former and verbalize it, but not practice it. Empty verbalism, such as the kind we often see displayed, is thus mistaken for expertise.

How, then, do teachers develop expertise? Here we may bring in the Vygotskian concept of 'internalization', a dialogic process of the transformation of self and activity, without which the necessary interconnections between theory and practice cannot be made. While the actual forms of such internalization would be expectedly idiosyncratic, the process itself would involve the teachers' learning and teaching histories, institutional contexts and

teachers' engagement in teacher development programs. This would be followed by conceptual development, which is also a true psychological tool for instantiating generally sound pedagogic practices which are at the same time, locally appropriate and goal-fulfilling. 'Mediation' is another central Vygotskian concept. There are many kinds of mediation, or mediating tools—activities and concepts, as well as cultural and social relations.

From the teacher-educator's point of view, Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) would be important to define. Vygotsky defines it as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". Simply put, the ZPD is defined as a space of potentiality—of what one can do on one's own and what one can do with assistance. This concept is intuitively supported by our experience of participating in good teacher development programs; we are encouraged and stimulated by a degree of challenge which the interaction with capable educators and mentors provides. For the educators, it means that the ZPD has to be organized and strategic in the kind and quantity of assistance given. It is a space of mediation in which cognition in individuals emerges in and through social activity. A teacher may be doing problem-solving on his / her own, but the potential for new learning would not be seen until he / she interacts with someone who can accomplish the task more capably—that she may or may not emerge with an enhanced ability is itself a measure of the potential. It will certainly involve some cognitive struggle, a situation that some of the studies in this volume investigate. It becomes evident that this struggle is a site for mediation, and for the development of metacognitive awareness and reflective capacities.

The studies in the book therefore involve teacher-educators working within the ZPD and recognizing the limits of the teachers' ZPD. Chapter 8 (Golombeck) entitled 'Dynamic assessment in using dialogic video protocols', makes explicit their conceptual and experiential understanding as it exists, through stages of verbalization and interaction. This in turn may progress to more dialogue in which the rationale for the expert's responses is made transparent, and lead to intersubjectivity. For instance, in Chapter 4, 'Working towards social inclusion through concept development in second language teacher education', Dunn explores how the concept of social inclusion is mediated by teachers and experts while reading, responding, paraphrasing and collating with their social experience. Many of the studies in the book follow the framework of Activity Theory—an extension of Vygotskian sociocultural theory—which is an analytical framework of a collective human activity system. It involves the community of teachers, mentors and students as the subjects; the objects are the space of activity and the planned outcome; the mediating artefacts are the tests or tasks; the rules or norms and conventions stem from social history. Various contradictions may occur between the elements of the activity system. An instance of this is seen in the two studies on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Korea, by Kim and Ahn, in Chapters 14 and 15 respectively. In this case, one element in the activity system—the rules and conventions—did not include the use of English as a medium of instruction or instructional activities which would allow learners to engage in communicatively-oriented activities. Hence, the government's import of a CLT model did not permeate the instructional practices of Korean teachers. This in turn had an impact on other elements, for instance, teachers and students veered towards attention to grammar and vocabulary rather than communicative proficiency, and even when

teachers tried to redirect the outcome, other factors such as testing methods affected the participants. The community of teachers were unsure of how, when and by whom the communicative activities should be conducted.

This scenario seems somewhat familiar in the Indian context and experience of CLT, though the specificities are different. Another study relevant to the Indian situation of SLTE has been taken up in Chapter 3 by Davi Reis, entitled 'Empowering non-native English speakers to challenge the native speaker myth'. This study traces the attempt of NNESTs (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers) in exploring, through narratives of identity construction, how their identities are connected to their position as teaching professionals and by extension, their instructional practices. This is an issue which involves not only the complex sociology and politics of education in India, but also the kind of psychologies that emerge in the English teachers within a framework of very un-English social expectations, role and class differentiations. Gender also enters into this framework, as the majority of English teachers in India are women, and the profession of an English teacher changes their own perceptions of their identity as well as the social perceptions, with consequences, one might suggest.

This useful and thought-provoking collection of fifteen empirical studies has been organized around five central areas of concern for SLTE programmes. Part I has studies on 'Promoting Cultural Diversity and Legitimizing Teacher Identities'. Part II is 'Concept Development in L2 Teacher Education' and Part III is 'Strategic Mediation in L2 Teacher Education'. Part IV is 'Teacher Learning in Inquiry based Professional Development' and Part V is on 'Navigating Educational Policies and Curricular Mandates'. SLTE also could benefit from empirical work as much as from theory, because SLTE programmes have to ultimately be located

in specific contexts and handled by particular individuals; the outcomes in terms of teacher education would be significant if such studies become a part of the programmes.

**Pushpinder Syal** is Professor of English in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at the Panjab University, Chandigarh. She is interested in Linguistics, and Literature and Language Teaching. [pushpinder.syal@gmail.com](mailto:pushpinder.syal@gmail.com)

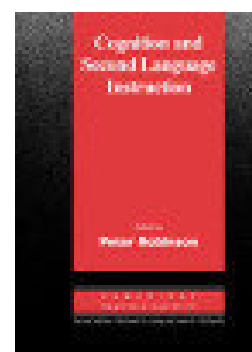
### **Cognition and Second Language Instruction**

Peter Robinson, (Ed.) (2001).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (464 pages).

ISBN: 978-0-521-00386-5

Reviewed by: *Iqbal Judge*



This book presents a detailed analysis of some of the key issues of cognition and learning in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), that reflect current developments and research findings on the role of cognitive variables such as attention, memory, automaticity, connectionism and learnability. Densely packed with theories about SLA, and backed by reviews of empirical researches in the field, it is a valuable compendium for the serious researcher. The collection of twelve articles is divided into two sections: the first section summarizes contemporary theoretical thinking about the above-mentioned cognitive correlates and the second section relates them to SL instruction, specifically task-based learning, vocabulary-building and instructional design.

In the first chapter, Richard Schmidt explores the theme of 'Attention', and asserts that

attention impinges upon virtually every aspect of SLA. His hypothesis being opposite to that of Bruner's 'magical realist' view that unconscious processes are largely at work in SLA, Schmidt focuses on conscious mental processes, presenting a review of the researches conducted on the role of attention in key areas of Second Language Learning (SLL). He also provides empirical evidence to corroborate basic assumptions about attention, such as it being limited, selective and essential for learning, subject to voluntary control, and controlling access to consciousness. Schmidt's thesis is that for learning to occur, attention must be specifically focused on whatever the particular learning goal may be, for example, a native-speaker like pronunciation would require focused attention even to sub-phonemic details of the input, within the existing schemata.

Nick Ellis delves into 'Memory for Language', presenting a Working Memory model in line with constructivist approaches to language acquisition, which view language learning as emerging from inductive reasoning. The concepts of chunking, creativity and aspects of vocabulary acquisition are explored in detail, drawing on researches by scholars from the 1960s to the 1990s. Making a case for connectionism, Ellis underscores the need to analyse the intricate network of associations that language learners activate and build upon in processing input data.

The structuring of linguistic input, the cognitive abilities of the learner, and the classroom context are analysed at length by Brian MacWhinney within the perspective of the 'Competition Model' which claims that language comprehension is based on detection of cues, with the most 'reliable' and 'available' cues being acquired first during language learning. Presenting developmental data from three languages, MacWhinney shows that word order is the predominant cue for children learning

English and case-marking for learners of Hungarian, though he admits to 'a major violation' of the predictions of the Competition Model which would have given precedence to agreement over word order, in the case of Italian. The Neuronal Learner Model stresses upon transfer, parasitism and automaticity in SLL. The conclusions drawn seem to validate the use of audio-video tapes and computerized lessons of a language lab as extra input for children; and listening to TV, radio, movies, rehearsing taped dialogues and practicing new lexical items for adults. This allows them to remain 'in contact with the input in ways that promote the functioning of neuronal loops for rehearsal, memory and learning.'

Michael Harrington trains his microscope over the challenging domain of sentence processing which is only amenable to indirect examination, and on a millisecond timescale. He takes up for consideration three approaches to sentence processing—principle-based, constraint-based and referential models, and studies the manner in which each approach resolves the ambiguities in typical 'garden path' constructions.

Robert M. DeKeyser calls attention to the development of automaticity in SLL and draws 'tentative conclusions' about the kind of classroom activities and curricular sequences that might aid automatization of language skills. Through the maze of studies conducted and theoretical positions formulated, what emerges is that the development of fluency and accuracy occur hand in hand; therefore, communicative drills to practice language structures can be supplemented by role plays, information-gap activities, etc., as the students make progress. Curriculum is represented as a cube, with each side representing requirements on form, meaning and social pressure respectively, and efficient skill development is seen as occurring by moving from one corner across the centre to the diagonally opposite corner of the cube, rather than across its ribs.



The second section of this book connects cognition to instructional design. The prioritization of meaning over message is considered by many linguists to be a natural phenomenon; contemporary communicative language teaching approaches follow the same trend, although increasingly, the need has been felt to teach form and structures, employing varied strategies to design tasks that integrate form with communicative intent. In the chapter, 'Cognition and Tasks', Peter Skehan and Pauline Foster point out that the issue of cognitive difficulty of tasks has often been sidelined, whereas cognitive difficulty actually has important implications for the role of attention in task completion. They suggest that if the cognitive demands of the task are known, the task design could be used to 'manipulate' the learner's attention between form and meaning to enable interlanguage (IL) development. Admitting that assessing a task's difficulty is fraught with problems, the researchers nonetheless suggest three principal areas – language, cognition and performance conditions – to analyse task complexity. The findings from different researchers are also indicated in this section, such as a narrative containing a well-structured and obvious storyline resulted in a more fluent language output than a narrative with a less structured storyline. Additionally, the roles of pre- and post-task activities have been empirically explored. Catherine Doughty's chapter, 'Cognitive Underpinnings of Focus on Form', which is the longest in the book, first examines some definitions of focus on form, identifying cognitive resources and micro- and macro-processes. It moves on to a discussion of two models for memory and speech production in language processing. Three fundamental pedagogical concerns are then addressed at length: 1) Whether learners have the cognitive resources to notice the gap between their IL utterances and target language (TL) utterances; 2) Can

there be a pedagogical intervention that does not interrupt the learner's own language processing, and 3) When should such an intervention occur? Should the teacher recast reformulate learner's errors and to what extent? The findings are backed by reports of experiments conducted by different researchers in immersion settings.

Vocabulary learning is taken up by Jan H. Hulstijn. After reviewing the psychological insights into incidental and intentional vocabulary learning, the roles of elaboration, automatization and rehearsal have been taken up for analysis, and the findings have been presented on a variety of pedagogic exercises that have been subjected to empirical research by scholars in the field. The contentious issue of rote learning is validated by suggesting contextualized, communicative follow-up activities such as role play.

The last three chapters move on to present a holistic, macro view of syllabus design. Editor Peter Robinson focuses on sequencing of tasks in order of complexity, providing both a theoretical rationale and empirical data. He also describes four key areas in which further research is imperative. Mark Sawyer and Leila Ranta study aptitude and individual differences as learner variables to be considered in instructional design, listing the problems and possible solutions in these areas. Finally, Renee Jourdenais examines protocol analysis as a viable method to contribute towards research in SLA.

A plus point of this book is that virtually every article not only provides succinct analyses of already done research, but also presents areas/issues that could be explored further, thus offering a wide range of issues a scholar can choose from. The extensive bibliography is a valuable add-on to set the researcher on the right path. However, it may be a little daunting for the teacher who is merely looking for a simple



guide to SLA and effective classroom instruction.

**Iqbal Judge** is a Professor in the PG Government College for Girls (PG GCG11), Chandigarh. She has over three decades of experience in teaching, with research interests in bilingualism, materials production and classroom dynamics.

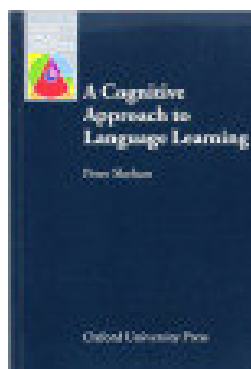
*iqbaljudge\_1@yahoo.co.in*

### **A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning**

Skehan, P. (1998).

Oxford University Press. (324 Pages).

ISBN 0194372170,  
9780194372176



Reviewed by: ***Achla M. Raina***

The book presents an integrated account of issues in second language learning and language pedagogy, bringing into sharp focus the language learner and the learning process. Of the many contributions that the book makes, the single most important is its conceptualization of language learning as a dual mode information processing that involves rules as well as exemplars. It is this theoretical perspective which underlies the forays that the author makes into the issues of cognitive basis of language learning, pedagogical intervention through instruction and assessment, and individual variation in language learning. The book articulates a nuanced approach to language acquisition and learning derived from a view of language as a complex interplay of rules and lists. The approach is, in turn, translated into a set of clearly defined pedagogical practices.

The book consists of twelve chapters and a general introduction. The twelve chapters can be grouped into three broad sections: (i) the theoretical approach presented in chapters 1-4, (ii) approaches to language instruction and assessment discussed in chapters 5-7, and (iii) relevance of individual variation in language pedagogy dealt with in chapters 8-11. Chapter 12 contains the concluding remarks.

Chapter 1 begins with counterpoising the comprehension based approaches to second language instruction and the interaction/production based approaches. The claim that is sought to be built is that meaning-oriented instructional activities that bypass the form of language may induce the language learner to rely on strategies of communication. Chapter 2 questions the assumptions regarding the rule-based systems underlying communication and presents an alternative perspective which argues for a more substantive place for lexis in language than is usually accepted. Chapter 3 examines the processing models in language use and language learning. Three stages of information processing - input, central processing and output - are reviewed. For input, the concept of noticing is assumed to be central. The key factor in central processing is the existence of two representational systems - rule based and exemplar based. These representational systems are implicated in the output and the assumption that is made here is that it is the memory based system which is chosen over the rule based system where communicative pressure is paramount. Chapter 4 schematizes the models of second language learning based on questions that concern the nature of the underlying competence in each model, how the change occurs in the underlying system, how the system is used to enable real time performance, and how performance and developmental change relate to each other. A task-based approach to learning premised on a dual mode system that

combines rule-based and exemplar-based systems is proposed here.

Chapters 5-7 are concerned with a task-based pedagogical intervention in second language learning. The rationale for task-based instruction, as against a presentation-based approach, is built in chapter 5, and the past and ongoing research in this direction is extensively reviewed. Chapter 6 targets implementation of task-based instruction proposals. The chapter discusses two contrasting approaches to using tasks in instruction - structure oriented tasks and communicatively oriented tasks - with a distinct preference for an intermediate approach that can strike a balance between form and meaning. The chapter goes into a detailed discussion of how the known facts about task difficulty and selective effects of tasks, together with the effects of task implementation conditions can be brought to bear upon a productive balance between form and meaning. This balancing is shown to work at the level of individual tasks as well as sequences of tasks. Chapter 7 offers a processing perspective on the assessment of language ability. The chapter proposes strategic competence as a mediator between communicative competence, meaning intentions, context of situation, and knowledge of the world. Formulation of meaning, assessment of resources, planning and execution are characterized as meta-cognitive abilities which underlie the way competence is related to performance. The chapter proposes tasks as elicitation devices, with conditions stated for using tasks as tests. The methods of evaluating task-based performance are also discussed here.

Chapters 8-11 focus on the issue of how individual learners may differ from one another in language learning capacities. Chapter 8 is concerned with the cognitive dimension of individual differences, the language aptitude, integrating it with the information processing

approach to second language acquisition and learning. Aptitude is argued to be componential in nature and its different components are shown to relate to the different stages of the information processing model of language learning. Chapter 9 takes up the issues of modularity and critical period to second language learning, arguing that modularity cannot be conceptualized in isolation from the stages of processing. Thus while peripheral stages of input and output are argued to show the evidence of being different from general cognitive abilities, the central processing stage is claimed to have much in common with general processing abilities. Chapter 10 builds up the claim for a style based perspective on individual variation proposing it to be an area ripe for investigation. Chapter 11 takes up the issue of the role of the learner in language pedagogy, developing the view that the individual learner has been ignored too frequently and for too long, and undesirably so. The concluding chapter 12 revisits the issues of cognitive basis of language learning, the importance of dual coding and the tension between learning and performance.

The theoretical perspective that can be claimed to define the work under review is that the language module is a combination of rules and memory. An insightful parallel is sought to be drawn between first language acquisition and second language learning in terms of the dual coding approach which claims that both first and second language are learnt using a processing model that is rule-based as well as exemplar-based. In what appears to be a very timely departure from the dominant rule-based approaches in language pedagogy, the book argues for a pedagogical intervention that takes into account the exemplar as an important resource in the learning process. The theme of individual variation in learning, often considered undesirable by second language learning researchers for the complexity it can bring into syllabus design and testing, and by the theoretical

linguist for the threat it poses to the universalist accounts of language and learning, is brought emphatically into the discussion. Contesting the claims of invariance in first language acquisition research, the book upholds the view that there is variation in the rate, if not the route, of first language acquisition. Likewise, the undeniable evidence of failure in second language learning is taken to imply that individual variation is of paramount importance to second language learning theory as well as second language pedagogy. Again, language aptitude, usually thought to be relevant only in formal learning contexts in second language acquisition research, is shown to have a bearing on informal learning contexts as well.

The book revisits the contentious issue of language-cognition relationship towards the end and conceptualizes it as a two-phase relationship. The claim is that language and cognition are served by different modules or learning mechanisms during the critical period of acquisition/learning. After the critical period, the peripheral aspects (input processing and output/memory) continue to remain distinct from general cognition, while the central processing and general cognition are integrated into one system. According to this claim, what distinguishes the critical period as a window of opportunity in language acquisition and learning is the modularity of the language learning mechanism. The modularity is eventually lost to a general cognitive mechanism for learning even as the input and output stages remain dedicated to language. This claim has implications for second language learning theory as well as pedagogy, some of which merit further discussion. In particular, how and why does a modular mechanism dedicated to language integrate with a generalized cognitive mechanism in the post-critical period context? Why do the peripheral stages of input processing and output remain untouched by this shift? Again, what bearing does the shift have on the

relative complexity of second language learning in the post-critical period learning contexts? Finally, in what ways can the task-based instruction and assessment approach address this significant shift in the learner abilities?

One of the most promising aspects of the book is that theorizing in linguistics and psychology underlies the discussion at all levels. Further, most issues are dealt with in terms of concrete evidence from first and second language acquisition research. Where the existing evidence is found to be inconclusive, the author takes sufficient care to outline questions for future research. These features of the book make it an important reference material for a language acquisition and learning researcher. The book will also appeal to the language teacher in its exposition of the task-based instruction and assessment in chapters 5-7, as well as the exploration of individual variation in language learning in chapters 8-11. As a whole, the book can be viewed as an important contribution to second language learning theory and language pedagogy.

**Achla M. Raina** is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Kanpur.

*achla@iitk.ac.in*

# Suggested Readings

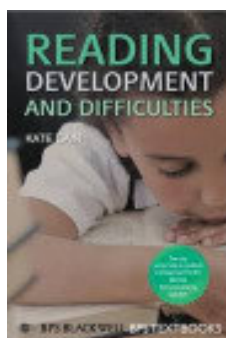
## Reading Development and Difficulties

Cain, K. (2010)

BPS Blackwell.

(272 pages).

ISBN: 978-1-4051-5155-9



*Reading Development and Difficulties* by Kate Cain is a useful book with relevant information about the development of reading. In this book, a considerable attention has been paid to teaching reading as a lot of children face difficulties with reading. It will be useful to researchers in psychology and those who work in more applied settings, such as education, and speech and language therapy. The book is also suitable for readers with limited background knowledge of the psychology of reading and aspiring to understand literacy acquisition.

This book brings together research on word reading and comprehension development, which are often treated separately, and provides a comprehensive and detailed introductory text to reading development and difficulties.

The key features of the book include:

It introduces issues in reading research and the skills involved in reading words and understanding text, from the point of view of both the beginner and the skilled reader. It outlines the similarities and differences between written and spoken language, and the advantages and disadvantages of different methodological approaches in this area. It also explores how failure to develop reading comprehension skills can create difficulties and disorders. Cain's book also provides a description of the implications of the research on the teaching of reading and of reading difficulties.

Cain presents a complex issue with a high degree of clarity, backed up by quality scientific evidence and sharp analysis, thus ensuring that readers get a deep understanding of the issues embedded in reading difficulties. She demonstrates how children learn to decipher single words and then to read whole sentences, and how they eventually co-relate the meanings of several sentences in order to understand reasonably complicated texts. The book reveals that there are two aspects to a child becoming a skilled reader, namely the development of word reading skills and the ability to extract the overall meaning of a text. In the first chapter of the book, the author explores an aspect of reading that is not given enough attention by teachers and educationists working with children who have difficulties in acquiring literacy, namely, 'word reading' and 'word recognition'. Another area that has been explored at length in this book is that of sight and word reading, both of which are often overlooked, particularly by teachers in the field of primary education. The author further examines memory, and provides insightful discussions on local and global coherence, and various models of text representation. Chapter 5 talks about the connection between reading and listening comprehension. Chapter 6 describes characteristics, types, and theories related to dyslexia. Strategies and advice on working with those who experience difficulties have been taken up in Chapter 8. The book concludes the discussion on reading difficulties with suggestions to practitioners of elementary education that once again underline the significance of reading skills and ability.

**Rajesh Kumar**

**Rajesh Kumar** teaches Linguistics in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai.

*thisisrajkumar@gmail.com*



## Games for Language Learning

Wright, A., Betteridge, D., and Buckby, M. (2006).

Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers  
Cambridge University Press. (193 pages).

First Published: 1979.

ISBN-13 978-0-521-15252-5



*Games for Language Learning* is a part of the series “Cambridge Handbook of Language Teachers”. The book comprises a wide range of language games and is mainly for learners from beginner to intermediate levels. However, with some modifications, these games can also be used for learners of higher classes and teachers, and teacher educators in various language trainings.

The book is divided into 8 sections and has more than 200 games including variations. Each section includes games from the following categories: 1) Do: Move, Mime, Draw, Obey 2) Identify: Discriminate, Guess, Speculate 3) Describe 4) Connect: Compare, Match, Group 5) Order 6) Remember, and 7) Create. These categories have been made keeping in mind the fact that each learner has her own way of learning. Some learners may like games which involve working with visual information such as pictures, diagrams, etc., and some may respond better when they get the opportunity to go out and can do things on their own. Similarly, some learners may like to work in pairs and some may like to work in a group or individually. The games included in the book cater to all such concerns of learners and teachers.

Each section begins with a short introduction followed by details of the games such as its name, category, what it aims to do, the

preparation required and finally the procedure. Wherever required, examples and illustrations have been provided for better understanding so that the game can be executed well.

The titles of the sections give an idea about the games included in these sections. For example, Chapter 1 entitled “Icebreakers and Warmers” has games that can be played with a new group; be it a new class or the introductory session of a training. These games create opportunities for the participants to interact with each other and to get to know each other. It also includes games that can be played at the beginning of a lesson. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 in particular deal with four language skills—speaking, listening, writing and reading respectively. The games included in each of these chapters reveal the fact that the four language skills are closely linked with each other, and therefore should not be treated separately when we work in class helping children develop these skills. Similarly, there are games which primarily focus on one of the language skills but also help in developing understanding of the elements of grammar or of a story. For example, in the game “Stories with ten pictures” the learner is expected to compose stories using past tense verb forms (p. 37), while in the game “Question Stories” learner is asked to narrate the story in the past tense and make questions based on it (p. 39).

Chapter 6 is entitled “Vocabulary and Spelling”. This chapter “is to help the learners experience the meaning of the words in context by using them for purposes which matter to them” (p. 94). It includes games such as “Word Web”, “Word Association”, “Naming Games”, “Odd one out”. The reader may have come across some of these games before, but there are many variations under each category that can be tried out in the class. The next section deals with grammar and presents games that expect the learner to exploit and analyse language and its elements. This section has 25 games in all with



variations, and these games cover topics such as tenses, parts of speech, “wh” questions, etc. Chapter 8 suggests games that the learner can play independently to practice, revise and remember what has been learnt earlier. They include making folding vocabulary books, making cards, etc. There are other games to help remember and revise what has been learnt earlier. These include “Making a Mind Map”, “Making a Word Sun”, “Adding words” in the existing lists of words on a topic.

All in all, *Games for Language Learning* is a small handy book of 193 pages. As mentioned earlier, this book can be used both with students and with groups of teachers in various language trainings. The games are meaningful and interesting, and with modification can be used at different levels and for teaching different languages. However, this requires comprehensive understanding of the language on the part of the teacher to enable him /her to use games the way they should be used in class and also go beyond them.

**Rajni Dwivedi**

**Rajni Dwivedi** is interested in language and language teaching. She is currently working with Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, Udaipur.

*rajni@vidyabhawan.org*

## 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. 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. Paper must be saved as word document in MS Office 7. Please send the font if the paper has used any special fonts. Papers may address any aspect of language or language-teaching.***

Last date for the submission of articles:

January Issue: October 30

July Issue: April 30

Articles may be submitted online simultaneously to the following email IDs:

*agniirk@yahoo.com*

*amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com*

*jourllt@gmail.com*

They may also be posted to:

Vidya Bhawan Society

Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004

Rajasthan, India

# Classroom Activities

## Activity 1: Certain or not certain

**Objective:** To develop Deductive Reasoning in children

**Level:** Class V onwards

### Procedure:

- Students read the letter below and answer the questions at its end.
- Now, the students are grouped into groups of 4 or 5 (depending on the class strength) and they discuss their answers.
- At the end, teacher takes up each question and directs the students' attention to the reasoning behind the answers – regardless of whether the answer is right or wrong. In fact, the emphasis is not so much on right or wrong answer – it is on the reasoning behind the answers.

*25<sup>th</sup> December*

*Dear Munki,*

*I hope you reached home safely without getting wet. I was so happy that you could meet several of our relatives and friends. They too had a chance to meet the little one.*

*I have a good news to tell you. I will be coming to the Red Fort with my students on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Let us have breakfast together the next day before I leave. I do not want to leave my mother alone at home. I will bring her with me. I will also get the photographs of the 200 flower show in Lalbagh?*

*Bye for now*

**Questions:** Here are a few statements. Read through them and write whether you are sure that this is possible / true whether you are sure that this is not possible / not true , whether you are not certain about the possibility

Statements	Possible / Not Possible / Not Certain about the Possibility
<i>The writer of the letter is a female</i>	
<i>Munki and the writer of the letter are related</i>	
<i>Munki likes flower shows</i>	
<i>Munki stays in Delhi</i>	
<i>Munki has a Child</i>	
<i>The writer of the letter is a teacher</i>	
<i>The writer of the letter is taking students from Bangalore to Delhi</i>	
<i>About 200 flower shows have been held in Lalbagh</i>	
<i>No one had seen the baby</i>	
<i>The writer of the letter is taking students to see the Republic Day celebrations</i>	
<i>The photographs of the flowers at the flower show are yet to be taken at the time of writing the letter</i>	
<i>It rained when Munki was going home</i>	

**Outcome:**

Students learn to apply deductive reasoning in the process of developing their mathematical and scientific thinking skills (here scientific/mathematical is not limited to science or maths as subjects) to think logically using available facts to arrive at valid conclusions.

**Devaki Lakshminarayan** leads the Azim Premji University Research Centre. Before joining the Foundation, she worked with the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore for over 20 years. She possesses a Doctoral Degree in Psychology from the University of Mysore and Masters in Linguistics from Groningen University, The Netherlands.

*devaki@azimpremjifoundation.org*

**Activity 2: Name Game****Objectives:**

- Thinking about the words around consciously
- Categorizing words
- Developing a schema for the concept “NOUN”

**Level:** Class 2, 3

**Material:** Board, chalk, notebooks and pencils

**Procedure:**

Activity can be done in small groups or with the entire class. Managing small groups will be easier as then children themselves can take care of many things.

1. Ask children to make the following four columns in their note books
2. 1. Name 2. Place 3. Thing 4. Animal. Make it clear that in the name column they are supposed to write name of a person, boy or girl and in the place column name of a city, in the thing column name of anything and in

the animal column name of any animal. There is scope of a lot of variation here.

3. In each column they are supposed to write one name from the above mentioned categories.

The name/s will start from a specific letter which will be decided by one of the child from the group/ class. For example a child can come and ask that they should write words which start with “S”. Now all have to write words in each category which starts with “S” for example;

Name	Place	Animal	Thing
SANJAY	SOLAN	SNAKE	STICK

After a trial, make it time bound. The group that finishes first gets to speak out the answers.

Another child can come and say letter “E”. Now all have to write words in each column which start with letter “E”. The same letter like “S” can also be repeated with new words. The activity will go on like this. Children can write as many words as they want.

**Discussion:**

There is no need to rush this activity and finish it in one period. If children continue enjoying it, it could be carried out for days. Since the challenge is to come up with new names with the same letter, this will push children to look at the books, maps, etc. so that they can enhance the collection of words.

When children have fair understanding of this, teacher can also introduce the concept of noun. This activity may also help in establishing the relationship between letters and sounds.

**Rajni Dwivedi** is interested in language and language teaching. She is currently working with Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, Udaipur.

*rajni@vidyabhawan.org*

# Reports

## A Seminar on 'Different Aspects of Children's Literature'

Vijay Kumar



### Introduction

Stories are powerful because not only do they capture children's attention, but they also improve their reading and writing skills and further their imaginative and cognitive skills. However, they do not just add pedagogical value; they also play a role in sensitizing children to their own as well as other cultures and traditions, and to forgotten folk/oral traditions which are the soul of any culture or community. It is for these reasons that Katha Manch makes consistent efforts to promote the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool.

Katha Manch is a registered trust comprising of school teachers, teacher trainees, field facilitators, university professors, students, etc., associated with the field of education. Members of this group have experienced the power of stories and storytelling during the teaching-learning process. They are therefore interested in stories and activities related to them. In continuation of its concerted efforts in this direction, Katha Manch organized a one-day seminar at DIET, R. K. Puram, New Delhi, to present a holistic view on storytelling, from its folk origin to the art of narration.

### Profile of Participants

The participants of the seminar included school teachers, teacher trainees (B. El. Ed., B. Ed., JBT, etc.), DIET faculty (R. K. Puram), Assistant Professors from Delhi University, field facilitators and people interested in storytelling.

### Sessions

The seminar started with an introductory session. Dr Sanjeev Kumar, the Principal of DIET (R. K. Puram), welcomed the participants and lauded his students for their presence in full strength. He deliberated on the importance of storytelling and children's literature in teaching and set the course of the seminar. This was followed by a session by Suneeta Mishra of Katha Manch who highlighted its objectives and gave a brief account of its activities. She also touched upon the importance of storytelling in pedagogy and various forms of gender stereotypes present in children's literature. She mentioned that stories are not just about literature, but have many different underlying aspects such as history, culture, mathematics, natural sciences, etc. By using the tool of storytelling in the classroom, children get exposure to all these aspects and their worldview broadens. The introductory round was followed by the business session in which there were five resource persons who deliberated on different topics.

Shikha Tripathi (PhD Scholar, University of Delhi), gave a talk on the topic, "Response to Literature". She mentioned that literature is not just a text but it has the power to connect with situations. In fact, literature involves the reader and he/she experiences the imaginary context and gets emotionally attached to it while reading. During the reading process one may find oneself smiling, laughing, becoming sad, etc. Therefore,

one experiences various emotions, and in fact gets connected to the text.

Yashika Chandna (Assistant Professor, University of Delhi, and member, Katha Manch), spoke on the topic “Stereotypes in Children’s Literature”. She focused on how children’s literature imbibes and strengthens existing stereotypes in society. She talked about stereotypes in animal stories, more specifically how animal characters have been presented in *Panchatantra* and *Jataka Tales*. Many instances can be found in the *Panchatantra* stories where animal characters are perceived as male or female irrespective of what their names are and how their gender is reflected in the verb. In a pilot study done in Delhi schools, it was found that even if a cat (*billee* in Hindi) is a male character named Bhola in a story, children perceive it as feminine. This may be due to the fact that most of the words ending in ‘ee’ in Hindi denote the feminine gender. In another story, “The Crocodile and the Monkey”, when the students were asked questions afterwards, their answers revealed that they thought of both the monkey and the crocodile as male in spite of the fact that they actually had female names. Even in the original story the female character had a disruptive nature, was apparently responsible for breaking the bond of friendship and was not even considered as intelligent enough to be part of the male friends circle.

In all likelihood, the mischievous character of the monkey is stereotyped as being masculine, while calm or serene traits are considered to be feminine. Similarly, the clever or cunning fox is always female. Perhaps the patriarchy in Indian society is one of the reasons for such gender stereotyping; males are generally supposed to run around, play, do all sorts of mischief and are head of the family. On the other hand, females get married, do household work, raise a family and are calm as compared to males. Males in general are seen as those who fight

and ultimately win. During the pilot study, children were shown pictorial stories and asked to narrate them. While narrating, they attributed gender to the characters using the stereotypes described earlier. The resource person was of the view that there is a need to weed out stereotyping of characters in children’s literature and textbooks in order to promote gender equality in society. The NCERT books have now started addressing this issue.

There was a tea break after these two deliberations, which was followed by two more talks and one performance.

Suneeta Mishra (Assistant Professor, University of Delhi and Member, Katha Manch), led the discussion on the topic “Stories as a Pedagogical Tool: An Attempt by Teacher Interns” in which she discussed the pedagogical aspects of storytelling. She shared how the genuine concern of most teachers about finishing the syllabus can be taken care of through constant and rigorous engagement with storytelling as a form of pedagogy for a wide array of language skills. She discussed some examples from her own experience of teaching as well as from her supervision of B. El..Ed. interns teaching primary grades. She called upon some DIET students who had taken up story-based pedagogy on her advice to share their experiences. The common points shared by these students were:

1. Children were very interested in story-based pedagogy.
2. Many of the activities and tasks could be linked using the context of a single story.
3. Even those students who did not speak much in the class earlier responded well to stories. The stories proved to be an excellent source of motivation for the children and encouraged them to participate in class.

Through these shared experiences, the students impressed upon the need to include more children’s literature in language-teaching. The



last speaker, Vijay Kumar (Librarian, Directorate of Education Delhi, and Member, Katha Manch), deliberated on the topic “Culture Preservation through Folk Tales”. He discussed various kinds of folk forms—folklore, folksongs and folk artifacts. All these have unique identities. These forms are transferred from one generation to another and nobody can claim authorship of these forms. They have the acceptance of society. When folklore is documented in text form, its originality gets lost. It is most striking and original when performed in local form with traditional aids. With the advent of multimedia, we may be able to document a folk performance in its original form but the spirit of the performance, its cultural component and festivity are lost. He recommended that folklores and folksongs be used in the classroom so that children get exposed to the cultural diversity of India. In fact, both folklores and folksongs can be used for storytelling. There are many local stories sung in the form of folklores and passed from generation to generation. In a way folk forms are a source of cultural preservation.

Ritu Parna Ghosh (freelance storyteller) gave a performance and deliberated on the topic “Story Narration and Integrating Stories in Lesson Planning”. She explained that classics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that are sometimes avoided due to their religious background can be modified and performed in the classroom. She added that performances using masks, costumes, artificial swords, arrows, etc., add to storytelling and make it livelier. Children really enjoy themselves when theatric expressions and different types of voices are mimicked while telling a story. When the performance is done in an interactive mode, many interesting questions are posed and stereotypes broken. For example, while performing the modified *Ramayana*, Ritu Parna Ghosh of Katha posed a hypothetical question—was Ram right in cutting off the nose of Surpanakha (sister of Ravana)? How could the

nose be fixed back again? Should they use cello tape, Fevicol, Quickfix, etc.? She then used a mask of the ten-headed Ravana and Surpanakha, and various weapons such as a bow-arrow, sword, etc. to enact a scene from the *Ramayana*. Everybody in the audience was mesmerized by her performance. Participants of the seminar felt that classic stories can be modified and performed in classroom using various aids. This helps to engage children and make them think, imagine and get connected to the story. An attempt may also be made to break the stereotypes we encounter in our daily life and encourage children to question them.

### Open Discussion

At the end of seminar there was an open session in which participants shared their classroom experiences. There was a consensus that children’s literature and storytelling carry stereotypes which needs to be addressed. Stories can be used not only to learn literature, but also social sciences, mathematics, history, culture, etc. Stories make the classroom more alive and interactive. Classics can be modified and performed in the class. Folklores are a source of cultural preservation and vehicles of its transfer from one generation to another. They can be used in classrooms to make children aware of different cultures and customs. This will help induce tolerance towards plurality among children. Finally, the seminar ended on the note that more such events related to stories should be conducted in future.

**Vijay Kumar** has a Masters in Linguistics from the University of Delhi and an M. Phil in Library and Information Science from Annamalai University. Currently, he is a language and library science researcher and activist.

*vkbooks@gmail.com*

## Writing Workshop Report

### *VBERC Team*

This report is in continuation of the “Report on the Techno-Commercial Writing Workshop for Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Limited Executives” (THDCIL) that was published in LLT 7. The workshop was held from 17 to 26 November 2014 at VBERC, Udaipur. The main objective of the workshop was to help the Executives of THDCIL develop reading and writing skills, particularly in the field of hydroelectric power.

The earlier report contained details of the first component of the workshop—the “contact period” including the structure of the workshop, the process of workshop, and the outcome. The present report is of the second component of the workshop—the “distance mode”, and focuses on the structure and functioning of the distance mode assignments and their monitoring.

The major outcomes of the “contact period” for the participants were as follows: developing an understanding of grammar and its practical implications for writing; identification of problem areas in writing and communication skills; learning to express ideas and thoughts through writing; and learning the importance of cohesion and coherence at the sentence and paragraph level. The “distance mode” aimed to build on these aspects through writing assignments and selected readings. The writing assignments were prepared and readings were chosen by senior faculty consisting of Professors Rama Kant Agnihotri, Nirmala Bellare, Pushpinder Syal, Iqbal Judge and A.L. Khanna. The senior faculty was supported by a junior faculty team from VBERC in particular, Neha Yadav, Arindam and Richa. The assignments were evaluated by the senior and junior faculty collectively. Parul and Preeti from VBERC also helped with the evaluation work.

The participants were given nine writing assignments comprising different tasks. These included reading comprehension; explaining and writing short descriptions; interpreting data; writing a summary, report, proposal or approval writing; text organization with coherence and lexical enrichment. The role of grammatical accuracy in writing cannot be overlooked. So, in addition to the writing tasks, each assignment had a section on grammar. Aspects of grammar included in these assignments were: a) art of persuasion; b) usage of: however, then, and, therefore, it, articles (a, the), connectors (and, but, or) and prepositions; c) identification of prepositional phrases, capital letters, punctuations, similes, metaphors and analogies, auxiliary verbs; and d) sentence construction.

Three writing assignments were assigned in a month which the participants had to complete within a given timeframe. The time allotted for each assignment was one week from the time it was uploaded. The assignments were uploaded on an online group ([thdc@vidyabhawan.org](mailto:thdc@vidyabhawan.org)) of which all participants were members. The participants had to download the assignments, solve them and e-mail the answers to the course co-coordinator. For individual queries, the participants were free to contact Professor Rama Kant Agnihotri or the course co-coordinator or post their queries on the group, which they did on several occasions.

On receiving the answers, the coordinator circulated them among the resource team for evaluation. To maintain consistency in evaluation, a model answer key was prepared for each assignment. The assignments were evaluated independently by a senior and a junior resource person. Every junior resource person was paired with a senior resource person who acted as a

mentor for him / her. Although the marks were awarded by the senior resource person, the comments of the junior resource person were also taken into consideration. Further, working with the senior resource person was a learning experience for the junior resource person. Upon the completion of checking, both senior and junior resource persons returned the assignments to the co-coordinator who, after noting all the marks and comments, e-mailed the assignments along with the model answers to the participants.

All the participants submitted their assignments; the responses received from them were very encouraging. Also, most of the assignments were submitted on time. In case of a delay, the participants informed the concerned authorities in advance and also made use of the ways mentioned earlier to clear their doubts. Currently, the evaluation of assignment 7 is in progress and the remaining assignments will be done in the next few days.

The process of assessment and certification will commence after the completion of evaluation. The assessment will be cumulative. The total marks obtained by each participant will be converted to a grade and a certificate will be issued. Assessment will not merely involve grading and certification, but also individual profiling and an end line examination, both of which will play a role in future planning of the participants' careers. The individual profile for each participant will comprise marks as well as feedback given to him / her in each assignment, thus giving the organization an idea of how the participant has progressed throughout the program. To assess how well each participant has assimilated the goals of the program explained in the first paragraph, THDC has proposed that they take an end line test which has questions of the type described in the assignments. The analyses of the results of this test will be compared to that of the baseline test

taken at the beginning of the program. This will be done to determine whether the participants' writing competencies have changed during the program and to explore avenues for further improvement. This will be helpful in keeping a record of improvement in their writing skills and also set a platform for future planning.

This workshop has been a great learning experience for Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (VBERC). VBERC generally works at the school level, participating in curriculum planning, materials and teacher training. Now we have learnt how to organize a workshop pitched at academically advanced levels in language where the target audience consists of highly qualified engineers and managers.

## Forthcoming Events

### **ICLTE I 2015 - International Conference on Language, Teaching and Education**

Dates: 24-25 October 2015

Organization: Academia Consortium of Science, Technology, Arts, Innovation and Research (ACSTAIR)

Location: Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Last date of abstract submission: 10 October 2015

Enquiries: Secretariat

Conference Information Page Link: <http://www.21caf.org/icllt-2015.html>

### **International Conference on Language Learning and Teaching 2015**

Dates: 13-15 November 2015

Organization: 21st Century Academic Forum / Higher Colleges of Technology

Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Last date of abstract submission: 21 September 2015

Enquiries: Thomas Lechner

Conference Information Page Link: <http://www.21caf.org/icllt-2015.html>

### **5th International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics (ICLLL) 2015**

Dates: 30-31 December 2015

Organization: International Economics Development and Research Center (IEDRC)

Location: Tokyo, Japan

Last date of abstract submission: 10 August 2015

Last date of full paper submission: 25 September 2015

Enquiries: Jack T. Feng (Conference Secretary); E-mail: [iclll@iedrc.org](mailto:iclll@iedrc.org)

Conference Information Page Link: <http://www.iclll.org/>

### **Third International Conference on Languages, Literature and Society (LLS2016)**

Dates: 18-19 January 2016

Organization: Ithaca College, New York, USA , International Center for Research & Development,

Sri Lanka, JK University, India & Unique Conferences Canada

Location: The Bangkok Hotel Lotus Sukhumvit, Bangkok Thailand

Last date of abstract submission: 15 September 2015

Last date of full paper submission: 15 November 2015

Enquiries: [info@theicrd.org](mailto:info@theicrd.org)

### **3rd International Conference on Linguistics, Literature and Arts (ICLLA) 2016**

Dates: 26-27 February 2016

Organization: International Economics Development and Research Center (IEDRC)

Location: Taichung, Taiwan

Last date of abstract submission: 10 September 2015

Last date of full paper submission: 20 October 2015

Conference Information Page Link: <http://www.iclla.org/>

### **ICLLTL 2016: 18th International Conference on Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning, 2016**

Dates: 24-25 March 2016

Organization: World Academy of Science Engineering and Technology (WASET)

Location: Madrid, Spain

Last date of abstract submission: 24 September 2015

Last date of full paper submission: 24 November 2015

Conference Information Page Link: <http://internationalscienceindex.org/event/2016/03/madrid/ICLLTL>

### **AAAL Annual Conference**

Dates: 9-12 April 2016

Organization: American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL)

Location: Hilton Orlando Hotel, Orlando, Florida, USA

Last date of abstract submission: 20 August 2015

Conference Information Page Link: <http://www.aaal.org>

**Special Issue on Disability**  
**(Vol. 5 No. 2 Issue 10 July 2016)**

The 10<sup>th</sup> issue of the refereed journal *Language and Language Teaching* (ISSN:2277-307X) published by Azim Premji University, Bangalore and Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, will be guest edited by Tanmoy Bhattacharya. PDF versions of the past issues are available at the APU website (<http://azimpremjifoundation.org/content/language-and-language-teaching-0>).

The 10<sup>th</sup> issue will be devoted to the theme of disability issues and language teaching; it will be published in July, 2016. The issue will contain invited articles by well-known disability scholars and practitioners in the field. However, a few slots will be available for open submissions. In this connection, the journal invites potential contributors to submit a short note not exceeding 300 words outlining the specific example of the broader theme that their papers would address and the contribution that such a paper would make to the field of education and disability. This note should be received no later than July 31, 2015. The authors of the selected abstracts will then be invited to write an article addressing the theme (see below and the attachment). Usually, main articles for this journal do not exceed 2500 words including references and a 25-word bio-note of the contributor. However, given the specialised nature of this theme, articles exceeding the above limit will be also considered, if justified. In addition, if there is more than sufficient response to this call, we will consider starting a new electronic journal addressing this general issue.

Theme: Discussions with regards to disability and education often veer towards discussion of special education. Not surprisingly, special education itself has its own special vocabulary and perspective, not all of which are sensitive to the human rights issues arising in this context.

The special issue of *Language and Language Teaching* would like to stay away from such terminologies and perspectives. Instead, a critical view of special education as it is practised and as it is perceived are two of the issues that this issue hopes to address. Since special education has given rise to a live debate about teaching students with disability, we expect to include articles that argue from both sides of the divide. Within that broader philosophy however, the collection as a whole will specifically address issues and concerns arising out of language teaching in particular, including language and linguistic concerns that emerge in teaching of other subjects. Since the target of this journal is mainly school teachers, papers which address school teaching curriculum, teaching/ learning material, teacher training, student evaluation, educational policies, and classroom delivery in this context will be most welcome, including examples of classroom activities. However, the issue would also like to compare such studies with teaching/ learning at higher levels as well. The paper should not exceed 2500 words including references and a 25-word bio-note of contributor; it should in addition use the APA style sheet and use non-technical language throughout. A statement declaring that the article is original and has not been either published or being considered for publication elsewhere, must be included along with the submission. An anonymous version of the paper may be submitted in both doc/docx and PDF versions. Please address your contribution to [tanmoy1@gmail.com](mailto:tanmoy1@gmail.com). The last of submission for the full paper is December 31, 2015.



CALL FOR PAPERS

# Philosophy of Education Conference, 2016

Azim Premji University, Bengaluru | 10-12 January, 2016



Azim Premji University invites papers for the 4th Philosophy of Education Conference to be held from 10th to 12th January 2016 at Bengaluru.

#### Themes of the Conference

1. Culture and School Curriculum
2. Philosophy and the Practice of Teaching
3. Educational Policy and Philosophy of Education

The conference encourages authors to explore the given themes from a philosophical perspective. It especially encourages young scholars and doctoral candidates to write papers addressing these themes.

#### Submissions

Complete papers between **4500-5000 words** should be uploaded at the link provided on our website [azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe](http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe) by **October 15, 2015, 11:59 PM, IST**.

#### Review Process

All submissions will be blind reviewed by a panel of reviewers. The decision regarding selection of the paper will be communicated by email to the authors on or before November 15, 2015. The decision of the Conference Committee will be final.

#### Travel and Accommodation

Authors are advised to first explore funding possibilities at their home institutions or other funding organizations and then contact us for travel funding. Azim Premji University may sponsor travel for a limited number of authors based on individual merit and need. Lodging and boarding for the period of the Conference will be provided by Azim Premji University.

For further information, please write to [poe.conference@apu.edu.in](mailto:poe.conference@apu.edu.in) or visit <http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe>

# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 1 Number 1 January 2012 ISSN: 2277-307X

**INSIDE**  
Articles, Interview, Landmarks, Book Reviews,  
Suggested Readings, Classroom Activities,  
Forthcoming Events



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 1 Number 2 July 2012 ISSN: 2277-307X



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 2 Number 1 January 2013 ISSN: 2277-307X



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 1 Number 2 Issue 4 July 2013 ISSN: 2277-307X



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 3 Number 1 Issue 5 January 2014 ISSN: 2277-307X



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 3 Number 2 Issue 6 July 2014 ISSN: 2277-307X



# Language and Language Teaching

Volume 4 Number 1 Issue 7 January 2015 ISSN: 2277-307X





# INSIDE

Articles

Interview

Landmarks

Book Reviews

Suggested Readings

Classroom Activities

Reports

Forthcoming Events



Published & Printed by Riaz A. Tehsin on behalf of Vidya Bhawan Society, published from Vidya Bhawan Society, Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta Marg, Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004; Editor, Rama Kant Agnihotri; printed at Choudhary Offset Pvt. Ltd., 11-12, Gurudas Colony, Udaipur (Raj.) 313001.