# Language and Language Teaching

## Special Issue on Disability and Language

Vidya Bhawan
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# Language and Language Teaching

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# Contents

*The cover consists of original paintings of persons with disabilities. For details about them, turn the page over.*

## *About the Artists of the Cover Paintings*

**Front cover**

The front cover painting is by Anurag Maurya. He is 33 years old and has mild intellectual disability. He loves painting and other creative activities relating to art and craft. Presently he is working in the bakery unit of Muskaan (www.muskaanthengo.org), an NGO empowering intellectually disabled adults with training and employment, working towards creating equal opportunity and dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

**Back cover**

Top two on the right are by Priya Jaiswal, 15, who is hearing impaired and is studying in The Sona Art and Culture School, and Priya Kumari, 18, who is intellectually disabled and is studying in Asha Kiran School, respectively; both of them like to draw traditional paintings and participate regularly in art competitions, including the Annual Art Contest organised by the Very Special Arts India, which endeavours to provide a platform for such talented and young artists by hosting the Contest for special children from schools all over India.

The bottom one is by Akshay Bharadwaj. He is a 17 year old young adolescent with Autism. He loves music, drawing and painting. He has special fascination for drawing Sun and Trees. Presently he is attending a school "Platinum-s" in Rohini. The painting is exhibited in Muskaan.

One on the left is by Vishu, a young man of 19 on the Autism Spectrum. It reflects the artist's love for bright and vivid colours and symmetric shapes. Vishu attends Action for Autism, New Delhi.

LLT gratefully acknowledges the cooperation from the organisations Muskaan and VSAI, and Shubhangi Vaidya, which made it possible for us to include these works of art for the cover.

# Peer to Peer Deaf Literacy: Working with Young Deaf People and Peer Tutors in India

*Julia Gillen, Sibaji Panda, Uta Papen and Ulrike Zeshan*

## Introduction

In this paper, we introduce an innovative action research project entitled "Literacy Development With Deaf Communities Using Sign Language, Peer Tuition, and Learner-Generated Online Content: Sustainable Educational Innovation". We will summarize the project rationale, its goals, and its participatory approach to learning and teaching English literacy to deaf learners in India. The project includes additional activities pursued in Ghana and Uganda.

A review of activities, from initial training to fieldwork and e-learning development, illustrates interesting surprises, challenges and creativity. Although the project is still in its early stages, with teaching having started only in September 2015, some lessons for researchers and educators working with deaf people are already emerging.

## Background

The World Federation of the Deaf estimates that 80 per cent of the world's 72 million deaf sign language users live in developing countries, and that only 3 per cent of them worldwide have access to education through sign language as advocated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), far too many individuals still do not have access to adequate education, and even among children and young people with disabilities, the educational levels of the deaf are particularly dismal (Randhawa, 2006, 67). This project primarily focuses on deaf teenagers and young deaf people in India, which has one of the world's largest deaf communities with an estimated 2-3 million users of Indian Sign Language, ISL (Bhattacharya, Grover & Randhawa, 2014, 3,104).

Across India, the several hundred schools for the deaf are generally staffed by hearing teachers who do not have competence in the students' vernacular language (Indian Sign Language, ISL), and a large majority of deaf children, especially in rural areas, do not have access to these schools. Deaf children who attend mainstream schools often have minimal access to the curriculum in the absence of support. Over the last ten years, the use of ISL in educational settings has been advocated by many scholars (Sethna, Vasishta & Zeshan, 2004; Randhawa, 2006; Sahasrabudhe, 2010). There is evidence of an incipient policy change, for example, the Rehabilitation Council of India states that the option of education through sign language should be available to deaf students (RCI, 2011). However, there are virtually no human or material resources within the current educational system at any level that would allow the implementation of deaf education, as mandated by the UNCRPD. Looking at the empowering approaches to deaf communities advocated by Ladd (2003), and Bauman & Murray (2010), one must conclude that radical educational changes are best driven from within deaf communities. This in turn promotes the project's "deaf-led" approach—deaf learners, community teachers, and local trainers, all

dynamically interacting within a learning and research community. Another important objective of the project was to develop digital and mobile forms of learning and teaching that were cost-effective, adaptable to different contexts, and that could support in-class as well as individual learning.

In the Indian context, with its huge resource gap, the deaf-led approach is further motivated by the educational ground realities. Formally qualified hearing teachers without competence in ISL are unable to communicate with deaf students, and fluent deaf signers do not have formal teaching qualifications. Thus the implementation of peer teaching in the deaf community suggests itself as a potential solution to this problem.

## Project Partners, Aims and Activities

Our main project partner is the National Institute of Speech and Hearing in Kerala (NISH), India. We also undertake pilot work—ascertaining the potential transferability of our approach to other deaf communities—with Lancaster University, Ghana, and with the Uganda National Association of the Deaf.

Our aims are:

- to develop and provide a peer-led English-literacy teaching programme for members of the deaf community in India;

- as part of this, to develop a bilingual e-learning platform with ISL and English content, to be used in conjunction with face-to-face tutor-led literacy teaching and self-study;

- to develop and implement a model of a learner-generated and needs-driven curriculum;

- to draft a model of effective language-teaching interventions to guide policy and further innovation; and

- to adapt the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for the expression of learning outcomes in the context of deaf learners.

The Indian project activities are implemented through five deaf-led organisations (four NGOs and one school). Project staff includes three deaf research assistants based at NISH and five deaf peer tutors. The project began in June 2015, with an intensive two-week training for all staff. Virtual support and regular communication takes place with UK and India-based co-investigators, one of whom is a deaf native ISL user, and the research assistants undertake regular visits to the field sites. Classes take place at the field sites on weekday mornings for two hours, followed by two hours of lab sessions in the afternoons. Between 9 and 15 students attend each, for a total of 58 deaf learners; they are between 18 and 37 years old, with the majority being in their 20s.

The morning sessions are primarily used for classroom work involving the whole class or small groups, and are facilitated by the peer tutor. Afternoon sessions are designed to allow students to work with the online learning platform. Using Moodle as a tool, we have developed a virtual/mobile learning platform called "Sign Language to English by the Deaf" (SLEND). This platform is used for creating learning materials as well as for standardized testing of the participants' progress, and the software automatically collects data logs from participants.

The classes ran for six months (mid-September 2015–mid-March 2016). A pre-test and a learner survey were conducted to establish the students' level of competence with regard to the use of English. Tutors provided weekly observation forms including details of topics covered in the class and related exercises. They uploaded materials to SLEND such as videos of explanations of words in sign language, which

were made available to the other groups as well. Figure 1 shows how the overall usage of SLEND developed over a period of six months.
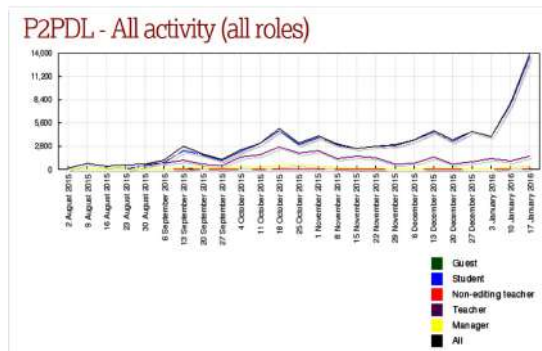


Figure 1. Frequency of SLEND access July 2015 - January 2016.

## Language Teaching and Curriculum Development in the Peer-to-Peer Project

The model of instruction in this project departed from existing traditional language teaching practices in India and elsewhere, and took an ethnographic approach to the development of materials and peer tutoring. This was to ensure responsiveness to learner needs and to allow us to build on the skills available amongst the deaf community with teachers and learners supporting each other.

Our approach drew on concepts of collaborative ethnography and learner-generated curricula. Our guiding principle was to focus learning on 'real language' and 'real literacy' and develop the curriculum together with the learners. The 'real literacies' approach (Rogers et al., 1999), originally developed for adult literacy learners, postulates that learning is most useful if based on authentic texts and practices. Thus the aim was that students learn on the basis of activities, situations and texts which they would come across in real life and which were of immediate relevance to their lives. Our approach was also rooted in the understanding of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1995; Barton & Potts, 2013).

Using simple ethnographic techniques, learners engaged in studying their own use of literacy, and from there, developed lessons and learning activities (Baker & Street, 1996; Ivanic et al., 2009). The second core element of the project was its blended learning approach, which enabled student groups to work and connect together online, either through PCs or smartphones, where available. E-learning through SLEND thus allowed us to build on regular engagement with digital forms of writing for the deaf in English, for example through WhatsApp. (See Sahasrabudhe, 2010 for a similar study with deaf learners in India.)

## Glimpses from the Field

The two-week training at NISH was led by three of the co-authors of this article, and included Indian research staff, as well as one research assistant each from Ghana and Uganda. All trainers and trainees used ISL to communicate with the exception of Papen, so an interpreter was also used.

The main focus of project was on developing the communicative competencies of the students. In the traditional approach to teaching literacy in India, there is an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. At schools for the deaf, students are often asked to copy English from blackboard notes or text books. In the absence of explanations or understanding on the part of the students, they are left functionally illiterate even after years of instruction. By contrast, we introduced the trainees to the idea of a practice-based, learner-generated curriculum, which focussed on real-life literacy, with "embedded" grammar and vocabulary work.

The next step in the training was for the participants to look at English in their local linguistic landscape, and to go out in groups to collect photographs of signs and examples of real-life documents in English, such as a customer feedback form from a shopping mall.

As English is an official language in India, such texts exist in abundance, thereby illustrating the need for English language skills.

Collecting texts and photographing examples of writing is a core element of the learner-led approach to curriculum development, and was much enjoyed by the trainees. We discussed how we could use a photograph of a sign or a document to create a set of lessons to teach relevant words and grammar. We began with discussions of the general meaning of the text in question, and moved on to identifying unknown words and grammatical forms. The next step was to develop and videotape explanations of words in ISL. We then designed exercises and grammar tasks (based on the features used in the text) as well as further writing tasks. The following example of a poster for a green bio toilet (see Figure 2), illustrates some unexpected issues that can arise from this approach to curriculum development.



*Figure 2.* Peer tutor Ankit Vishwakarma with the Green Bio-Toilet poster
(still frame from video)

Ankit tried to explain the content of the poster in sign language, but we discovered that the name Green Bio-Toilet did not mean much to the trainees, for two reasons. The first is that

the association of "green" with sustainability, awareness of the environment and composting is primarily a European idea. Secondly, comprehension of the word "bio" was challenging for the trainees since the peer tutors also had limited general knowledge owing to the constraints on their education. One of them raised associations with farming and another with the body.

The tutors, research assistants and trainers together developed a potential lesson plan with the help of this poster on bio-toilets and other such texts. For example, a close-up image of a part of the text at the bottom of the poster was put on SLEND. This featured the following text (spelling and layout as original):

Dont's

Do not put bottles, tea cups, napkins, papers, gudka covers, etc. into the toilets.

Do not leave toilet without proper flushing.

Help Railways for the successes of this Green Initiative.

Go Green for the Better Future.

It is clear that while the concept of a green bio-toilet might be European, the instructional poster reveals its local situatedness (e.g. gudka [sic] covers). The text led to a discussion on the new vocabulary, including a video of explanations, which were added to the SLEND. Figure 3.1 shows the entry for "flush".



*Figure 3.1.* Screenshot from the glossary of the SLEND

*Figure 3.2.* Screenshot from the glossary of the SLEND

There is a threefold input in this case: the word has a textual explanation in English including its grammatical category, followed by an illustration of the activity of flushing a toilet and a sign language explanation of flushing (see Figure 3.2).

The next step in working with such texts was to design lessons and exercises on related English language structures, in this case on negation and imperatives. The trainees developed and tried out a series of such exercises during the training. The same step-wise approach is now being used with deaf learners at our field sites. Figure 4 shows some further partial screenshots illustrating materials from the SLEND, as developed by the groups of deaf learners and peer tutors.

## Conclusions

Tutors have been working as per the approach they learned at their training, i.e. a focus on real-life uses of literacy, identified and collected together with the learners. The SLEND is populated with examples of documents found
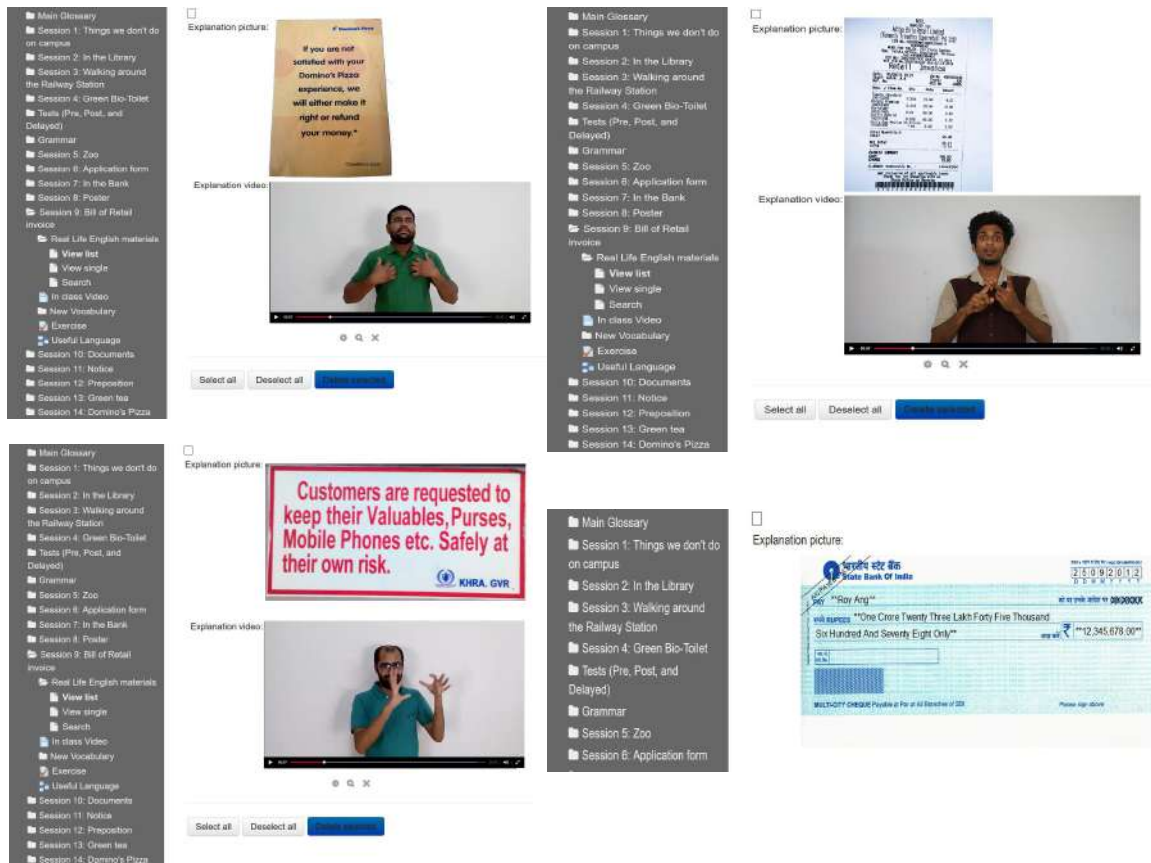


*Figure 4.* Learner-generated materials on the SLEND

by the students (see the list of sessions in Figure 4), words and expressions with their signed explanations, as well as quizzes and grammar exercises. These session topics also illustrate additional world knowledge (e.g. about financial transactions) that is conveyed via the SLEND to the Indian deaf learners, as gaps in world knowledge due to poor school education are one of the obstacles to literacy for them.

Although the outcomes of the project are still not completely clear, we can see some potential in the idea of providing English literacy learning for young deaf adults, who have hitherto been marginalized in their access to education, using everyday texts and experiences. Various challenges emerge from our work so far, and these have been documented in the tutors' weekly reports. They include lack of computers in some venues, unreliable internet connections and demands placed on the tutors who have to find additional resources on the internet (e.g. to teach aspects of grammar) and who need to familiarize themselves with an e-learning technology that is new to them.

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**Julia Gillen** is Director, Lancaster Literacy Research Centre and Senior Lecturer in Digital Literacies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, UK.

*j.gillen@lancaster.ac.uk*


**Uta Papen** is Senior Lecturer in Literacy Studies at Lancaster University. She researches literacy and literacy education from a social and cultural perspective.

*u.papen@lancaster.ac.uk*


**Sibaji Panda** is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies (iSLanDS) at the University of Central Lancashire, UK, and Vice President of the All India Federation of the Deaf.

*spanda@uclan.ac.uk*


**Ulrike Zeshan** is Professor in Sign Language Linguistics and Director of the iSLanDS Institute at the University of Central Lancashire. She is a member of the European Academy of Sciences (Academia Europaea).

*UZeshan@uclan.ac.uk*

# Evaluating the Reading Capability of Visually Impaired Students: The Need to go beyond Mere Administrative Accommodations

*Geetha Durairajan*

## Introduction

Reading is a skill that in most contexts, may be tested by using one or more text types (narrative, descriptive, expository) and one or more question-response types. The test taker is expected to either select an answer from the given options, or supply the answer (Khalifa & Weir, 2009; Alderson, 2000 for a detailed list of question response formats). In a test/ examination context, when texts are read and questions answered correctly, it is inferred that the student has a high reading ability. There are many models of reading abilities, ranging from the well-known Munby's list of subskills (Munby, 1978) which covers the local and the global and including factual, inferential and extrapolative, to the most recent and often used model developed by Urquhart and Weir (1998).

In this matrix of reading, we may talk about two types of reading—careful and expeditious. Each of these are sub-divided into global and local, resulting in a range of reading processes including skimming, scanning, reading carefully and understanding syntactic and lexical cohesion, meaning, etc. Reading texts and questions are chosen to ensure that a range of these reading processes are tested. In testing contexts it is assumed that "all human beings are similarly configured" (Khalifa & Weir, 2009, p. 42), and therefore any test taker who has a low score on a test is judged as possessing low reading ability. This inference regarding the ability of the test taker is made on the basis of the responses and not the actual test itself, for as Messick (1989) pointed out, "tests do not have

reliabilities and validities, only test responses do" (p. 14). However, he also stated that all inferences, in turn, are hypotheses and the validation of an inference is hypothesis testing (p. 13). As such, if it is discovered that there is a flaw in the hypothesis then one needs to critically examine or even question the construct from which it has been derived.

## Reading and the Visually Impaired

Around the turn of the century, reading was defined as "the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 22). Fifteen years later, Weir and his co-authors refer to this seminal work and state: "Urquhart and Weir (1998) suggest that reading is now viewed as the *silent and internal* [italics added] process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print" (Weir, Vidakovic & Galaczi, 2013, p. 104). This implies that reading comprehension is now perceived as a "silent" activity. Currently, all tests of reading comprehension assume that reading is done silently, but this is not the case for all test takers. As a visually impaired (VI hereafter) English Language Teaching doctoral student stated while we were discussing reading tests in a class on language testing, "There is no silent reading for the VI." When asked to explain what he meant, he put it very succinctly: "When I read Braille, I am reading silently. But if I use a scribe, I am listening to texts, not reading them." He

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then went on to state another big difference in the case of VI test takers: "I listen to a question, after the text is read, guess the para where the answer is, but can only ask the scribe to read the whole para again." These statements were an eye-opener for me and made me question the nature of reading comprehension for the VI. To understand this "problem" better, I invited four VI doctoral students in my University for an informal discussion. I realized that unless we get VI students who are aware of the various subskills and processes of reading to articulate their perspective, we will never be able to get insights into their world of reading.

The students talked about the various problems they encountered while taking examinations; and then went on to talk in detail about two sections of the PhD ELE test at EFL University, Hyderabad. In one section, students were given an expository text and were expected to present the information in it in the form of a flow chart, followed by a written summary of that text. In the other section, they were given an academic article that was cognitively demanding and with reduced context (Cummins, 1979), and expected to answer both supply (short answer) and selection (multiple choice) questions based on the text. One of them said: "After the third paragraph, in Section D, I was finished." Another said: "I sent up a prayer: 'Please help me finish this paper without a headache; very difficult texts to remember.'" A third student said: "I was lucky: I got Nirmala as a scribe. She would state, "I think the answer is in para 3. Shall I re-read that para for you?" The first student added, "The summary was okay, but we could not do the flow chart. We just dictated points." I realized that as an evaluator, without the awareness that the test taker was visually impaired, I have probably marked that person down for not producing a flow chart and given partial credit for the list of point. The first student then went on to state: "Those 8 multiple choice questions; finished, I didn't know which

para, I had to ask my scribe to re-read! I was not as lucky as him. I didn't have a Nirmala."

On the basis of these insightful reflections, I formulated the following research questions for my study:

- How does a VI test taker react or respond to test formats in reading comprehension?

- Are there certain formats that are more problematic than others for VI test takers?

## Methodology

To get insightful answers to these questions, I asked a doctoral student to critically examine a variety of response formats and reflect on them. We finally decided to stay with a set of item types/response formats, from Alderson (2000).

## Response Types and Problems

From the wide range of response types presented by Alderson (2000), three selection and three supply item types were chosen for analysis and critical examination. The following responses of the VI doctoral student are given in double quotes for easy identification.

Cloze and gap filling tests were not seen as problematic by the student, particularly "when the blanks are related to semantic or syntactic aspects, for the test taker might find the answer with the help of context". But, as he stated very clearly, "if the test taker needs to go back and forth to find the answer, there is a problem, for we cannot go back and forth in a text and have to rely on memory."

By contrast, multiple-choice questions (MCQs) were perceived as challenging for VI test takers for two different reasons. The first was owing to the nature of the questions, which according to the student, will be of factual and inferential type and this expects re-reading of the text." The other issue was the number of questions and their placement. As MCQs are normally

given after the text, VI learners have to remember all the questions and the text to complete the task. If their memory is not good, they have to go back and forth quite a lot of times which would consume time and labour.

Matching paragraphs with titles, a very common response format in large scale testing was also perceived as problematic. As the VI learner succinctly stated: "for VI learners, item types where paragraphs have to be filled in is extremely difficult because learners have to remember the paragraph before and after the blank, gist of the text, and all the options. This can't be done by memorizing. This can be done only by filling the blank and reading back and forth again and again which would make it very laborious."

Sequencing tasks that involved putting phrases, sentences or paragraphs in order were seen as the most problematic, for they involved a significant load on memory.

Information transfer tasks were also perceived as challenging and difficult for the following reasons.

To create a table we need to have a pictorial form in our mind first. When that is not achieved it is difficult to complete these kind of tasks. In addition, tasks of this nature demand a lot of factual details which are usually gathered through scanning, which we cannot do.

Short answer questions were seen as problematic for two reasons—question placing and response demand. As already stated by my student, "going back and forth" in a text is difficult for a VI test taker: "For visually impaired learners, all short answer questions which come after the text are a problem. They need to be answered after reading the text. We then need to keep the whole text in our heads." Raising a second problem, he added, "Moreover, writing with a scribe who doesn't understand some words means that we visually impaired learners have to simplify that word or find an alternative

word." This was an echo of what my students had said during the informal discussion.

"When we answer papers and start dictating, we soon know that our scribe does not know certain words, for they ask us for the spelling. If we start spelling words, we will waste time. So furthermore, then, we use simpler words".

The free recall test is perceived as one of the fair tests which can be given to the visually impaired learners because both the sighted and VI learners will be reading the text once and writing what all they can recall. This increases the predictive and face validity of the test.

Thus phrases such as "time consuming, laborious, have to go back and forth" stood out in my discussions with the VI test taker. It is probable, that either certain reading processes do not exist, or happen differently for a VI test taker. It was necessary therefore to closely examine the reading comprehension subskills as outlined by Munby (1978) from the following perspective:

- What are the processes of reading that a VI test taker uses with specific sub skills?

- Are any of them problematic for VI test takers?

## Munby's Sub-Skills from a Different Perspective

Munby (1978) listed a wide range of reading sub-skills totalling nearly 18 in number (Urquhart and Weir, 1998, p. 90-91). Those perceived as problematic by VI students are discussed as follows:

"Recognising the script of a language" is the most basic reading comprehension sub-skill. All test takers, it is assumed, will be able to identify the orthography of a language, but this "skill" is completely absent in visually impaired students. When a text is read out to a VI test taker, it is the sounds of the language that are recognized, not the script. If a test taker reads the text using Braille, then it is the shape of the Braille letters

that are recognized and those are universal for all languages, as they include permutations and combinations of 6 dots.

Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items is not problematic except for the ones with visual cues. Teachers who have to use visuals, if aware of this issue, use other aids to compensate and aid VI students, but this is not the case under examination conditions (Deepa, 2014).

Therefore, a test is based on recollection, going backwards and forwards in a text seems to be a very big problem for all VI test takers. Even if they are accessing a text in Braille, they can only access the space covered by their two forefingers at any point in time. If a scribe is to re-read the text, a whole paragraph will have to be re-read. If accessed through screen readers, the VI test taker has to give the voice command to the computer to go back to a particular page or paragraph.

Selective extraction of relevant points is often difficult for VI learners as simple short cuts are unavailable to them. For example: "If the answer to a question is a proper noun, sighted learners would just search for words beginning with capital letters." This option, as we can understand, is not available to a VI test taker.

Basic reference skills are seen as particularly problematic because, "we can ask a scribe to read titles and sub-headings, but that person cannot identify topic sentences for us." As my student succinctly put it, "we VI students cannot skim a text at will. We have to listen to the whole text as it is read by a scribe."

### Interpretation and Findings

The reflective statements of the VI test takers on response types brought into the limelight the problems of not being able to go back and forth at will in a text. It is clear when one looks at the subskills the two basic reading comprehension skills—skimming and scanning—are beyond the ken of a VI test taker. Although the data collected and analysed in this study, was of the

"soft" kind, i.e. butterfly data, (Muhlhausler, 1996), the reflections are genuine. The two skills therefore seem to be absent, both at the global and the local level. This implies that of the four aspects of reading comprehension outlined by Urquhart and Weir (1998), careful and expeditious reading, local and global, expeditious reading cannot be attempted by VI learners.

### Going beyond Accommodations

For a VI test taker, a reading comprehension text is like a listening text. A VI test taker (if Braille enabled) may take notes while a text is being read, but cannot stop and cogitate, or move forward to skim or go back. Like listeners, VI reading comprehension test takers therefore "have to carry forward information in their minds" (Weir et al., 2013, p. 349). The questions therefore ought to be in the same order as the information in the reading passage being read aloud to them.

My doctoral VI student had pointed out that placing the questions at the end of a reading comprehension text caused a heavy load on memory. However, all reading comprehension questions in tests are placed only at the end of the text. In-text questions that are interspersed within the text itself are used only in teaching contexts. At the same time, a preview of questions before hearing a text is "normally deemed necessary in selected response comprehension tasks, such as multiple choice" (Weir et al., 2013, p. 396). If this is accepted practice, then it would be justifiable to present multiple-choice questions in a reading comprehension test prior to the text for a VI test taker.

With longer reading comprehension texts and a larger number of questions it would also be necessary to number the paragraphs and indicate the paragraph number before the question. In a small experimental study, five VI test takers (undergraduate students) were given one text with numbered paragraphs and an answer location indication, and another "normal"

text with no numbering of paragraphs or answer location indication. All five VI test takers preferred the numbered and question location indicated text and questions. One of them said: "It is wonderful to have marked paragraphs". Another said, "I need not to read the whole text again [sic]" A third emphatically stated: "I could go directly to the paragraph and answer the questions" (Ramraj, 2014, p. 266).

## Conclusion

Till now, it has been assumed that any modification of a test paper, for a particular group of test takers would change the construct itself. However, a bold step that is deemed necessary has been taken under the auspices of fairness and justice to present tests in different languages to ELL test takers (Abedi, 2014; Taylor & Khalifa, 2014). This "modified test paper" step, needs to be extended to VI test takers as well. The modifications need to take into account the nature and sequencing of questions/response types and also the special scaffolding that can be provided in terms of answer location indication. If this is not done, then, "construct irrelevant difficulty" (Messick, 1989, p. 35) will be the cause for such test takers getting low scores on reading comprehension tests, leading to invalid inferences being drawn on their abilities.

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**Geetha Durairajan** is Professor in Department of Materials Development, Testing and Evaluation at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Her research interests include pedagogic evaluation and language education in multilingual contexts.

*gdurairajan@gmail.com*

# Learning to Teach Learners with a Visual Impairment

*Shruti Sircar*

When I started teaching at the postgraduate level, I was totally unequipped to deal with visually impaired learners in my class. I had little training in any type of special education, knew little about visually impaired learners, and had never really considered learning anything about them. In those days, our institution, namely, Department of Linguistics & Contemporary English, EFL University, had neither the technology nor a dedicated laboratory for visually impaired learners. At first, it was frustrating and I made many mistakes; over the years it began to feel more natural and easy. In this paper, I will share with the readers a few things that I have learnt about teaching visually impaired learners and how it has helped me grow both personally and professionally.

In the year 2002, I met my first visually impaired learner (whom I shall call M from now on); my first reaction was that of panic. Never having taught a visually impaired person earlier, I had no idea if I could or was ready to deal with this. On that day, I taught the way I had been teaching earlier, in the usual way, pretending throughout that M had the same abilities as the other students in the class. I kept looking at M, trying to gauge whether he could understand the verbal input in the same way as the others. M, I could see, was trying to listen keenly to what I was saying. I often stopped to check for comprehension during class discussions and after I gave my instructions, M was quiet. I could see the confusion on his face, wanting to ask or say something, but choosing not to do so

for reasons known only to him. It was much later that I realized that it is important to ask the student if he/she requires assistance and not to presume that when help is needed it will be readily requested for.

## Learning and Adjustments

My first learning happened when I asked a question and M answered it correctly. After the class, M walked up to me and asked me whether his answer was correct. This made me reflect on what I had said or done in class when M had answered the question: I had smiled and nodded. All teachers as we know employ these non-verbal forms of communication frequently, but a visually impaired learner fails to pick up these cues. A smile, a nod, a wink, or a frown will be missed by a visually impaired learner but a pat on the shoulder or an oral confirmation would indicate to the learner that the teacher is satisfied with his/her answer.

## Graphs, Symbols and Trees

Let me now talk a little about the course that I was teaching that year; the course was called "Second Language Acquisition". Most of the classes that I taught involved quantitative research studies that had numerous graphs and statistical analyses. My first reaction was, "What do I do? How do I convey to the student what the graph looks like?" Perhaps if he/she could understand the general findings, they could ignore the nitty-gritty of the graphs and analyses.

However, graphs and tables lend a clarity and concreteness to an analysis, and therefore a visually impaired learner needs it as much as a sighted learner. I decided to create an imprint version of the graphs. On a piece of cardboard I drew out the graph with a ball point, turned it over, closed my eyes and felt the ridges made by the pen. The graphs were not right: firstly, the ridges were not clear enough for anybody to read them and, secondly they were mirror images of the original graphs. After several attempts, I got the graphs right; now what I needed was the confirmation that it was going to work. I forced my friend to close her eyes, and as I explained the graph, I asked her to feel the graph. It was working, and I was absolutely thrilled!

Years later when I was reading Wendell Rodricks' book *The Green Room* (2012) in which he talks about his *Visionnaire* Collection, where clothes are marked in Braille for size and colour, I found confirmation for what I was doing.

An alternative method of presenting graphs is to stick strings on a cardboard which can be felt by hand. Students with visual impairment are known to use tactile and kinaesthetic inputs. These should not be thought of as "lesser senses" that are used in the absence of vision, but as another system through which learning takes place (Klatzky & Lederman, 1988).

Over the years, I have worked out other ways of communicating what I draw or write on the blackboard. For instance, I verbalize whatever I draw for the benefit of the entire class; for example, for a particular graph, I state "on the x axis we will represent the three groups of English infants: first the 6- to 8-month olds; then the second group 8- to 10-month olds and the third group 10- to 12-month olds ... on the y axis ..." It is not very difficult to get used to verbalizing what one writes on the blackboard and it addresses the problem quite effectively.

However, it should be done as discretely as possible, without drawing attention to the visually impaired learner and his/her difficulty.

The main concern in teaching Linguistics to a visually impaired learner was the non-linear IPA (International Phonetic Association) representations and the (Optimality Theory) OT tableaus. One of the best ways to teach these is to provide tactile imagery (as done earlier for graphs). Also, it helps a great deal, if the teacher and the learner agree beforehand on the terms that can be used to denote different phonetic symbols, for example, referring to [θ] as "theta", /η/ as "n with a hook", and the Arabic glottal /ʔ/ as "question mark without the dot". In the case of a student who was working on "Sonority Principle and Misspellings of SLA Children", I remember using a technique which one might remember from Helen Keller's story, or even the Hindi movie *Black*, which involved tracing the symbols on the arm of the learner.

Another concern in Linguistics was around tree diagrams that linguistics students of syntax have to draw and interpret. The most effective way of verbalizing a tree diagram (with or without the tactile form), is to describe the tree from top to bottom and left to right, using phrases such as S dominates NP and VP, NP dominates D and N, etc. However, most of the visually impaired students I have taught, found it easier to work with brackets rather than trees.

## Materials and Readings

Teachers have to be aware of the range of vision variance that learners may have, and the materials have to be adapted in accordance with these variations. For a learner with low vision who cannot read regular print, materials with large print have to be provided. In most cases, the easiest way would be to make soft copies of all reading material available to them beforehand, so that the font size can be increased. Students with some vision may be

large-print readers or may not be able to read at all without using special computer software or equipment. Many visually impaired learners prefer material in an electronic format and use screen reader software such as JAWS to read it. Other students may want material reformatted into alternative formats. Extra time and pre-planning is needed for this, and the learner must be made aware of these issues beforehand.

My most significant learning regarding visual impaired students came from V, who studied two courses with me during his postgraduate years. V started speaking to me right from the first class; he asked questions and requested repetitions almost every day in class. When I gave out the first text—a photocopy from a library book which had some comments in the margins and sentences which were underlined, V came back the next day requesting a cleaner copy with no underlining, or preferably, a soft copy. This was in the year 2008; by then the university had a sizeable number of visually impaired learners in each course, and a lab for them with JAWS, and a Cell for Disabled students. I learnt that day that texts that are heavily underlined or where the print is faded pose a problem for the scanner that reads the text aloud. Therefore, printed materials should be clear and have an easily readable font.

My experience with Q who uses Braille taught me something very helpful. Braille readers cannot skim read and may take up to three times as long as sighted students, to read a text. Most teachers ask learners to go back to their class notes to answer a question, which requires skimming and scanning. For those using Braille, it is not as fast and automatic as sighted learners, since unlike the eye, the fingers have to be moved linearly and thus it takes a longer time. Even for those with partial or low vision, skimming or scanning within a specified time constraint might be tiring.

Textbooks or academic texts can be skimmed and scanned quickly since they have many markers such as bold, underline, and italics, which draw the reader's attention to important points. Electronic texts however, do not have markers for chapters, headings, etc., and this means that screen readers need to search through the whole document to find relevant areas.

## Testing and Evaluation

Another hurdle I encountered was in the form of internal tests that had to be given to the learners. There are several ways in which tests can be administered to visually impaired learners. However, these methods differ on the basis of the degree of the visual impairment. Let us look at two types of impairments:

i.  P was in the lower spectrum of visual impairment. P had difficulty in reading fine print. She had thick glasses, and hardly looked at the blackboard. P had low vision, and could not read texts unless they were in a large font size. She needed the question paper to be printed in 20-font size. I gave P soft copies of all handouts and class readings, so that she could increase the font size to read them.

ii. For learners with severe vision loss, there can be three possible ways to tackle a test paper: (a) ask an aide/scribe to read out the questions in a corner of the room or in a secluded spot; the questions can be repeated as many times as required on request, (b) give the learner the question paper for a day, and ask him/her to record the answers on a tape, and submit the tape the following day, or (c) schedule the test on a separate day when the teacher reads out the questions and writes out the answers. However in option (c), the teacher needs to read out to the learner the entire question paper followed by the answers for

reviewing, before final submission. When M was given these three choices, he chose (b)[1].

Unlike sighted learners, visually impaired learners require additional time to complete tests and assignments. However, the extra time allotted to them does not call into question the reliability or the validity of the test. In fact, this additional time is required since learners or their aides have to read and re-read the questions and the relevant texts. After writing or typing, it may take longer to proof-read written work and to put a bibliography together. Therefore separate assignment deadlines need to be set for them at the very beginning. Requests for extensions makes the learner put himself/herself at the mercy of the teacher, and may result in low self esteem. Following are efficient time limits: 1. 5 times for low vision learners, 2 times for those using an aide/scribe, and 2. 5 times for those using Braille (Legge et al. 1999).

## Moving about

Personally, I learnt a very important lesson about helping visually impaired learners navigate within the classroom. Q, a visually impaired learner came for the PhD selection interview, and since I was sitting next to the candidate's chair, it was my self-assigned role to help the candidate in and out of the room. As we normally do for children, I held her hand; Q very politely removed my hand and held my upper arm just above the elbow. From then on, I usually offer a visually challenged learner my arm and while I walk slightly ahead, I indicate verbally, any changes in surface, gradient or direction. In addition to this, I leave the door of the room I am teaching in either completely open or closed; it is never partially open.

In case a class is cancelled or the venue is changed, the organizational changes need to be notified to visually impaired learners by phone. They will not be aware of messages left on notice boards or notes on changes in lecture venues pinned to the lecture theatre doors. On one occasion, when my class was cancelled, I left a note on the blackboard for the students. A visually challenged learner who came in a little late, waited for me for almost 45 minutes, and then left.

## Conclusion

I have come to the conclusion that teachers do not need to have special training to teach visually impaired learners or any other differently-abled learners in a regular class. What they need instead is a certain amount of resourcefulness and flexibility in delivering the course content. They need to plan these minor adjustments or modifications within their instructional strategies. These modifications and adjustments will also be beneficial for sighted learners.

It is important to understand that no academic discipline is out of bounds for a visually impaired learner. A curriculum is usually designed keeping in mind the cognitive abilities of learners. The goals and objectives set for students without visual impairments therefore need not be changed for a student solely due to a vision problem. It is the methods that need to be modified, and not necessarily the course objectives.

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## Endnotes

[1] When I was writing this piece, my six-and-a-half-year old daughter asked me what I was writing about. I explained to her about the assessment pattern and the choices I had given to M. She instinctively felt that the first option was better because M would get more time to do it.

**Shruti Sircar** teaches in the Department of Linguistics & Contemporary English, EFL University as an Associate Professor. Her major areas of research include first and second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, and reading development and disorders.

*shrutisircar@efluniversity.ac.in*

# A Note on the Performance Test in a Conversational Japanese Course Taught to Visually Impaired Students

*Nozomi Tokuma*

## Introduction

This is a report of a three-month conversational Japanese language course taught to class XI blind school students as an extra-curricular activity. At the end of the course, the students took a performance test that was in paired interview format. I was the instructor of the course; I did not have any prior knowledge or training in teaching visually impaired (VI) students. While teaching VI students was challenging, I found that being a language teaching expert helped me in teaching them.

Generally speaking, there are two primary methods of testing: paper-and-pencil based language test and a performance test. Paper-and-pencil based language tests are used to assess a learner's knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, etc., or to assess listening and reading comprehension. On the other hand, performance tests are used for assessing a person's speaking and writing ability (McNamara, 2004). It is probably most pertinent to assess the students of a conversational language course using performance tests. However, performance tests are more complex in terms of implementation and assessment, as compared to paper-and-pencil-based language tests. Hence, a language teacher who is well trained in language testing and teaching may be able to contribute immensely towards designing the core curriculum of the course and tests of language proficiency. In this article, I will attempt to explain the course syllabus, teaching methods and evaluation method that I used for teaching Japanese as a foreign language to the aforementioned group of blind students.

## Methods: The School and the Participants in the Japanese Course

The school in question is a government-aided school which is located in Delhi and is affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education. It is a residential school for boys and around 200 students, from preschool to class XII, study here. This was the first time that the school was teaching a Japanese language course. All students of class XI—17 in total—took the course and 12 of them completed it. The executive secretary, the principal, two teachers of the blind school and two Japanese volunteer teachers observed and supported the classes. The Japanese course was conducted from January to April, 2012. The school wanted to hold classes as frequently as possible since the students needed to remember the contents by listening. However, classes were held twice a week in the beginning and later reduced to once a week. Each class was about an hour long, and 16 lessons were covered in total, including the performance test.

## Course Syllabus

Based on the discussions with the executive secretary and the principal of the school, I understood that blind students learn better when they "experience" the lesson and therefore it is

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important to give them examples of appropriate situations when teaching languages. Therefore, I used a situational and topic-based syllabus. We decided to teach them how to communicate in Japanese along with some notes on Japanese culture and manners. Since the focus of this course was on improving conversational skills in Japanese, we did not focus on Japanese script and grammar and announced the same to the students at the orientation. The content of the course is given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Contents of Japanese Course Taught to Blind School Students*

| Lesson 1 | Orientation (basic information about Japan, basic grammar rules, pronunciation and greetings) |
|---|---|
| Lesson 2 | Classroom expressions |
| Lesson 3 | Self-introduction 1 (name and greeting), how to read Romaji, numbers |
| Lesson 4 | Self-introduction 2 (class and languages spoken), my favourite food and drink |
| Lesson 5 | Touching to learn the names of vegetables, offering a drink |
| Lesson 6 | Tasting (sugar, lemon, coffee, chocolate, etc.) and learning taste, my breakfast |
| Lesson 7 | Singing Japanese pop song: 'Ookina furudokei' (Grandfather's clock) sung by Ken Hirai |
| Lesson 8 | Time (learning to tell time in Japanese) |
| Lesson 9 | Schedule of the day 1 (reporting in present tense, learning to identify minutes of the hour, learning to use verbs associated with daily activities) |
| Lesson 10 | Time and schedule of the day (learning to say complete phrases from Lessons 8 and 9; such as "I wake up at 6.30 and I have breakfast at 7.45"). |
| Lesson 11 | Review |
| Lesson 12 | Schedule of the day 1-2 (learning to report the schedule of the week or the previous days) |
| Lesson 13 | Names of the months, my family, watching a DVD of Japanese high school students |
| Lesson 14 | Taking Japanese guests on a tour of the school |
| Lesson 15 | Review with Japanese guests |
| Lesson 16 | Paired interview test |

## Teaching Materials and Method

It was difficult to choose teaching materials for the course because there is no Japanese textbook for VI students. In fact, there aren't many suitable conversational textbooks even for sighted schoolchildren. Hence, I decided to use audio materials as the primary teaching material. I chose *Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Starter A1*[1] —a situational and topic-based syllabus text book. The audio materials are well structured, and include natural conversations that have been enriched with natural ambience sounds. Hence, it is easy for VI students to understand the situation by listening to the audio recordings. The situations include: introducing oneself at an international party, offering tea or coffee to friends and describing the schedule of the week.

Students learned collaboratively in the class. They practiced in pairs or in small groups and helped each other. This ensured that they got more opportunities to speak in a limited time and in a relaxed environment, as compared to speaking in front of all the students in the class. Teaching was also done collaboratively. Since I am not fluent in Hindi, the school teachers translated my instructions in Hindi when needed, and the Japanese volunteer teachers helped to observe and facilitate the pair work of the students.

I provided Braille handouts to fully blind students and handouts with enlarged fonts for those who were partially blind. In addition to this, I gave a recording of the class proceedings in mp3 format to the blind students after every lesson so that they could review them. Braille was written using the English alphabet, as the students already knew how to read English Braille. Contents of the handouts mainly consisted of new vocabulary that the students had learned in class. I prepared the handouts as a document file and the blind school teachers converted it to Braille using a special Braille printer.

The handouts were proofread by blind school teachers before being handed out to the students. At the end of the class, an oral task was given as homework. Since the students stayed in the hostel, they could talk to each other in Japanese even after the classes were over. They reported that they talked to each other about their everyday life, greeted each other and talked about food items or their daily routine with their classmates in Japanese.

## Criteria and Task for the Paired Interview Test

I announced on the first day of the class that there would be an interview test at the end of the course. Two weeks before the end of the course, I explained the criteria and the evaluation method for the paired interview test and this was interpreted in Hindi by a blind school teacher. The criteria for the paired interview test were in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)[2] A1 Conversation and the JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education[3] A1. The purpose of this paired interview test was to let the students know about their progress and to understand how they could do better. It was an absolute evaluation and each criterion was further divided into three categories—fair, good, and excellent. The test criteria and the evaluation categories are explained in Table 2.

Table 2

*Criteria of Evaluation*

|  | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance | Could not answer well. | Answered the basic questions related to food, daily routine, etc. | Understood the situation well and spoke in a natural and relaxed manner. |
| Accuracy | Many mistakes were there in grammar and vocabulary. | Grammar and vocabulary were almost correct. | Grammar and vocabulary were perfect. |
| Pronunciation | Difficulty in understanding. | Able to understand with little difficulty. | Pronunciation was clear to some extent. |
| Conversation Ability | Failed to confirm to important points using phrases such as *Moo ichido ittekudasai* ("Please say it again.") etc. | Able to confirm important points using phrases such as *Moo ichido ittekudasai* ("Please say it again.") etc./repetition was not required. | |

There are several possibilities for paired interview tests. In one, the teacher is the interviewer and the student, the interviewee. In another test, students take the role of an interviewer and interview each other. Since this was the first time the students were taking a performance test, I played the role of an interviewer, as it was easier for the students. Students were given one of three situations. The situations were read in Hindi by a school teacher. After making sure that the students understood the testing procedure, 5 questions were asked from each pair of students. I asked student A the first question and then I asked student B the same question. For the second question, I first asked student B and then student A, to counter-balance. The test lasted about 5 minutes for each pair. Students of similar levels were paired together, even though it has been found that a level difference between the students in a paired test does not have a significant influence on their scores (Brooks, 2009). Considering the case of Japanese students learning English, Nakatsuhara (2006) reported that performance was not too asymmetrical between students even if their level of spoken English was different. However, I paired students of similar levels so that the students felt that the testing was fair. A sample of a paired interview test is given as follows:

Examples

[Situation]

There are some students here from DPS school which is close to your school, who are also studying Japanese. Let's talk to them in Japanese.

Role A: You

Role B: A student from DPS

Questions

1) *konnichiwa, onamae wa?* (Greetings and what is your name?)

2) *nihongo ga dekimasu ka? / nihongo ga sukidesu ka?* (Do you speak Japanese? / Do you like Japanese? )

3) *doko ni sundeimasu ka?* (Where do you stay?)

4) *gakkoo ni shokudoo ga arimasu ka? Shokudoo no gohan wa oishiidesu ka? / nani ga ichiban oishii desu ka?*
   (Does your school have a canteen? Is the food tasty? / What foods do you like the best?)

5) *Hiru gohan wa itsumo nanji kara nanji made desu ka?* (What are your lunch timings?

## Evaluation

The distribution of scores of 12 students who took the paired interview test is given in Table 3. As seen from the table, the students' pronunciation was fairly good considering that they were basic learners. They had also learned communication strategies well, which was evaluated as conversational ability in this test. Out of 12 students, 3 received full marks.

Table 3

*Performance of 12 Students in Various Evaluation Criteria*

| | Fair | Good | Excellent | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performance | 3 | 5 | 4 | 12 |
| Accuracy | 4 | 5 | 3 | 12 |
| Pronunciation | 0 | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Conversational ability | 2 | 10 | | 12 |

The result and teacher's feedback for each student was read to the students in Hindi. Provisions were made for the students to take printed results with them in the summer vacation when they went home.

## 3. Conclusion

This report summarizes the teaching methods used for teaching Japanese conversation to class XI blind school students, and evaluated the students' speaking ability. During the course, students learned Japanese communication in pairs or in groups and were assessed by paired

interview tests. I made sure that learning, teaching and assessment were well correlated in the course. However, we did not do an analysis of the students' answers in the interview tests and this could have given us an insight into the correlation between what the students learnt in class and how they performed.

Vision is the primary and most effective means for acquiring knowledge for sighted students. Visually-impaired students however, need to learn the same content as sighted students, but without any visual cues. Therefore, it is very important that teachers for VI students be skilled enough to select relevant core content from the curriculum and teach it effectively (Aoyagi and Toriyama, 2012). Well-trained language teachers may be helpful in selecting the core content of the target language. As per my experience, teaching a language to blind students by a language teacher who does not have special training is difficult. At the same time, considering the complexities of teaching blind students, it is difficult to be a special needs educator, and teach a language without the knowledge of curriculum design, teaching methodologies, etc.[4] A language teacher or a special educator by herself may not be able to effectively handle a language classroom for the VI students. An effective language classroom for the VI students needs experience and skills of both language teachers and special educators.

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## Endnotes

[1] *Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture* A1 starter is part of a series of Japanese language textbooks for adult learners who are located overseas. It is developed based on the JF Standard for Japanese Language Education. A1 is the first level based on JF Standard and it is for the very basic Japanese learner.

[2] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching (CEFR) is a set of guidelines developed for language teaching, syllabus design and curriculum development. The guidelines can be accessed at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf

[3] The Japan Foundation Standard for Japanese Language education is a set of guidelines proposed in 2010 for teaching, learning and assessment in Japanese language teaching. These guidelines are based on the CEFR. The guidelines can be accessed at https://jfstandard.jp/pdf/jfs2010_all_en.pdf

[4] A report by Topor and Rosenblum (2013), on teaching blind students includes similar experiences of teachers with data collected from 66 teachers. They reported an overlap of strategies used in teaching blind students and teaching sighted students by trained language teachers.

**Nozomi Tokuma** is Japanese language teacher, former Japanese lecturer and teacher trainer of the Japan Foundation in New Delhi. Her research interests include Collaborative learning, Writing Education, Speaking Education, Language Test Construction and Teaching Visually Impaired Students.

*n.tokuma@gmail.com*

# Strategies for Teaching Deaf Students

*Andesha Mangla*

## Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss some key learning points from my experience as a hearing teacher for deaf students in a graduate course. During the three years that I was involved in the programme in different roles, I had the opportunity to learn about deaf students and the Deaf[1] community in India. The knowledge that I gained from my interactions with deaf people from different backgrounds, and from my observations and reflections, has helped increase my understanding of deaf education in India, the Deaf community in general and Indian Sign Language (ISL).

## The Context

To provide higher education opportunities for deaf students in India, the University of Central Lancashire designed a graduate level programme—B.A. in Applied Sign Language Studies (BAASLS), that was implemented at IGNOU, Delhi from 2009-2014. With courses on linguistics of sign languages, applied linguistics, first and second language acquisition, bilingualism, literacy, interpreting, peer mentoring, etc., the aim of the programme was to build deaf sign language teachers, teacher trainers, and graduates with the knowledge and skills to teach deaf children. Since the mediums of instruction were Indian Sign Language (ISL) and written English, the students were required to have basic sign language and English literacy skills. However, recognizing that most deaf students were not equipped with sufficient literacy and numerical skills, there was also a year-long pre-programme called Bachelor's Preparatory Programme for Deaf Students (BPPDS), to impart skills such as English reading and writing, numeracy, computers, etc. The students were also allowed to submit assignments either as ISL videos or English texts. There were students from all over India as well as some international students from Nepal, China, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, etc. The staff comprised both deaf and hearing people, all with the requisite ISL skills.

As a Language Support Officer for the BAASLS programme, my work consisted of teaching remedial English classes, editing written assignments, and generally supporting the students in any difficulty that they had in reading or writing English. For two years, I also taught courses on first language acquisition, metalinguistic pre-requisites for sign language teaching and peer mentoring, in addition to co-supervising dissertations.

During my three years at IGNOU (2011-2014), I was part of an environment in which there were both deaf and hearing people, and where both ISL and spoken English were used. I had the opportunity to interact with deaf students, and deaf and hearing teachers. Since the teachers at the ISL course I had attended prior to joining IGNOU were deaf, I had met deaf persons before, but BAASLS gave me the opportunity to interact with a larger group of deaf people, i.e. a Deaf community.

## Educational Experiences and Literacy Skills of Deaf Students

In my PPTs, I often listed the vocabulary terms that I felt the students might not be familiar with. I explained the meaning of the word and made a sentence to further clarify its meaning. In one such PPT, the sentence had the word "Constitution" referring to the Constitution of India. Students asked me what it meant. I briefly explained that the Constitution was a set of laws, rules, etc., for the government and citizens of India, assuming that the students were aware of the concept but not the English word for it. But the students were still confused, and I had to explain clearly with a lot more detail about the Constitution and its importance and how it came into being.

This incident brought to light how deaf students often study up to classes 10 and 12 without actually gaining class-appropriate knowledge. In my discussions with students, the common refrain was how their school years had been a waste because they had not learnt anything. They further explained that when the teachers spoke, they were expected to be able to understand them with the help of hearing aids, or by speech reading. The teachers, in an attempt to improve communication, used gestures and some signs picked up from the students. However the result was a mix of speech, gestures and signs, neither of which provided a complete and meaningful input to the students. Due to this gap in their school education and the absence of any incidental learning, deaf students cannot be assumed to possess relevant prior knowledge.

Sending emails to the students was a common way of communicating information regarding their courses. However, after the initial few emails, students started asking for clarification regarding the emails. When I asked them if they had read the emails, students replied quite frankly that the emails were very long and so they did not read them.

As a fluent English language user, I did not realize that texts with more than a few sentences might be intimidating to deaf learners. I also realized that deaf students are often hesitant and under-confident when it comes to reading and writing, and tend to shy away from reading material that is longer than a few sentences in length. This is probably because they do not understand it; moreover they have been taught in a manner in which only words are considered important. For example, most deaf students undergo speech therapy, where initially the focus is on individual sounds and words. Therefore, when sending emails or any other written communication to students, we had to make sure that the sentences were short, simple and clear, and the overall text was not too long.

Students often developed basic literacy skills after their one year preparatory programme. However, when they started the graduation programme, their English problems resurfaced. The reason for this could be that the students were required to suddenly move from basic reading and writing in the preparatory programme, to advanced academic texts in the graduation programme. This goes against Krashen's (1982) suggestion of providing comprehensible input. The leap that the students were required to make resulted in confusion, and in several instances, also ended up worsening their English literacy skills.

While giving instructions for assignments, I noticed that students nodded their heads to indicate they had understood, but often, they did not follow the instructions. I initially assumed that maybe my ISL skills were not clear enough. However, my discussions with other experienced teachers revealed that they too faced the same problem. A study by Marschark et al. (2009) shows that deaf students are unaware of their language skills; moreover, their comprehension problems are not just limited to written language but also include sign texts. Therefore, there is a general language comprehension problem. This

helped explain why deaf students felt that they had understood the instructions/academic content but were not able to demonstrate it.

## Teaching Deaf Learners

One day, the term "models of teaching and learning" came up in the class. Students did not know the meaning of the word "model". I tried to explain the meaning, but the students were not able to understand. A deaf senior teacher who was observing my class came up and explained the concept using the example of models of bikes. He asked the students whether they looked at the different models of bikes if they wanted to buy one. He further explained that each model had its unique features and pros and cons, and they looked at what best suited their needs when they bought one. He likened this to models of teaching by saying that there were different models of teaching and learning.

The same teacher later told me that it was necessary to use concrete examples that students could relate to in order to help them understand abstract concepts. He also suggested that I use many more examples to explain a particular concept and that I look up the signs that I did not know before the class. He further recommended that I ask a student who had understood the concept to come up and explain it, since the student would explain it in a language that the other students would understand.

Some students, when asking for meanings of words, often asked for the corresponding Hindi word. One student in particular referred to an English to Gujarati dictionary. When I told them the corresponding Hindi words, the students would sometimes nod their heads, indicating that they were familiar with the words, but at other times, they would shake their head. Despite the fact that their Hindi knowledge was also limited, they still attempted to use it to understand English. They also asked for the English terms for Hindi words, thus trying to expand their English vocabulary using what they already knew.

While this might go against the language teaching principle of avoiding translation, these students were using all available resources to understand new concepts and to get clarity.

## Sign Languages

In a class where we were discussing the concept of first language, most students said that ISL was their first language because it was the only language they knew fluently enough to be able to easily communicate with other people. It was also the language that they identified with. Even though most had learnt it around age 5-6 years or even later, they chose sign language over spoken languages. For most of these deaf students born to hearing parents, the language spoken around them was inaccessible. It was only when they went to deaf schools and met other deaf children that they were exposed to a sign language. However, one student who had undergone speech therapy used Hindi to communicate. She said that she felt that her first language was Hindi. This led to an interesting discussion about whether Hindi could be her first language even though she could not speak it fluently, and why she did not consider ISL as her first language. I also observed that although some students could speak, they mostly chose not to do so because they did not feel the need to speak.

On reflection, I realized that due to their early experiences with speech therapy, or when adults around them insisted that they use hearing aids and avoid using sign language, many deaf people internalized a higher prestige value for spoken languages and associated a feeling of shame with using sign languages. For most students, this was the first time that they were in an environment where their language was accepted, and was being used to teach them

instead of it being ignored or suppressed. Students were taught that sign languages are rule-governed just like spoken languages and the two are linguistically equal. Since their communication experience at BAASLS was so different from their school experiences where they could not understand anything, they understood the value of sign languages. They wondered why they could not have been taught using sign language in school. Here at BAASLS, they felt respected, accepted and valued. For example, one student wrote in the introduction to his dissertation:

> Finally when I joined my BA in Applied Sign Language Studies course where teachers, deaf or hearing would teach us using sign language, I got to know the real experience of studying in an accessible environment. Learning academic courses through sign language made so much more sense … My programme permitted us to submit our assignments either in written English or in Indian Sign Language. For students to have such a choice was absolutely a new experience and I saw how deaf students finally were gaining confidence in themselves as equal human beings, being deaf, and developing pride in their language which was not even considered language by their school teachers and parents. (Nair, 2013, 7)

This quote captures what most students often said to me about their school experiences and about being taught in ISL.

I noticed that there were wide variations in ISL in the students. With students from different parts of India and some other countries as well, one would think that communication between them would be problematic. However, all students were able to communicate with each other as well as with the staff; in fact the variations enriched and enhanced their language rather than impeding it.

In class, students always sat in a semi-circle so that they could all see each other clearly. Sometimes, when the number of students was larger or space was limited, they would sit in two semicircles/ovals, one behind the other. In such situations, if anyone wanted to say something or ask questions, they had to come up to the front of the class. The teacher then waited for the student to return to their seat before responding so that the student did not miss out on what the teacher was signing. In hearing classrooms, students do not need to come to the front, nor does the teacher need to wait, because everyone can hear each other even if their backs are turned. These are among the many small adjustments that deaf people make in their physical environments to be able to communicate better using a visual language that requires a clear line of sight.

## Deafness, Deaf Identity and Deaf Culture

Most of the students in the programme had profound deafness. However, their background and educational experiences were varied. Some students had studied in deaf schools, others in mainstream schools, and some had experience of both types of schools. Some students could hear loud sounds while others could only feel vibrations. Some students were born deaf, some had lost their hearing at an early age, and others much later. Some had deaf family members, others had never met a deaf person till they joined a deaf school.

Despite their varying experiences, the deaf students were connected by a common language and by their identity as deaf persons. Hearing people often feel that deaf people miss out on sounds and music, and that it would be so much better if they could hear and speak. But most deaf students told me that they do not miss sounds because either they had never heard

sounds or they did not have any memories of them. They did not wish that they could hear. They only wished that the hearing society would be more sensitive to their communication needs. They were comfortable with their deafness and perceived themselves as Deaf, not deaf.

During my conversations with deaf students, they would sometimes ask me to repeat what I had signed when they did not understand it. If I didn't understand what they had signed, they would repeat it again and again till I got the message. I noticed that they were very patient and often gave me tips to improve my signing. It was very important for them to be able to communicate clearly so that both sides understood the message, they understood the value of barrier-free communication.

## Conclusion

The BAASLS experience helped me broaden my knowledge, conceptual understanding and re-examine some notions both as a hearing person and as a linguist. For example, in language teaching, we are told that the first language should not be used at all or that it should be limited to specific situations. However, teaching deaf students a written language necessitates the use of a sign language as a medium of communication.

Also, hearing people often talk about the "silent" world of the deaf; and they associate the term "noise" with sound. However, I realized that the chatter taking place around me in ISL could also be termed "noise" even though there was no sound at all. At BAASLS, I started associating the term "noise" with "moving hands". So if we realize that "silent'" does not have to mean "no sound", then we can see that the deaf world is not so silent after all, but is in fact as noisy as the hearing world.

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## Endnotes

[1] As per convention, "Deaf" signifies deaf people who share a language and cultural values which are distinct from the hearing society

**Andesha Mangla** is doing her PhD in linguistics from Delhi University. She has previously taught deaf students in the B.A. in Applied Sign Language Studies programme at IGNOU.

*andesha_m@yahoo.co.in*

# I too Can Get an Award! Mountain Climber's Award: A Case Profile

*Asha Singh*

## Introduction

Individuals have "different learning styles". This is an oft-stated principle with regard to learning and is also underscored as a pedagogic reality. However, are teachers prepared for how this difference is manifested in the classroom, and subsequently how the individual student experience is positioned?

In this article, I will attempt to describe the experiential dimensions of disability through the journey of a young adult who grew up with developmental delays in a form of a letter from the parent of that child. The interactions are set in a social world charged with competition, dominance of instant responses and a high frequency of dismissal of responses that are low on speed and action.

## A Letter from a Concerned Parent

Dear Teacher,

Warm greetings from all those parents whose children are on the fringes of academic competence and are labelled as "children with special needs or with learning difficulties". Schooling is more of a radically life-altering experience for children considered not typical and their families. In the contemporary social fabric, schooling is the only way to avoid social death and economic dependence. Parents whose children do not attend school, or find academic success difficult to achieve have many a trial and distressing moment, this is true of all so-called "non-performing" children.

## Parental Diffidence: Parental Action and Collaboration

Parents often encounter the first signs of developmental delays in their child during infancy, before he/she starts school. However, paediatricians reassure them by saying that every child grows at his/her own pace. Sensitive paediatricians try to sooth parental distress by allowing them to hope for the achievement of typical milestones at varying pace. Of course every discipline has professionals who underplay emotion with a will to "not keep parents in the dark". Hope of dreaming for the future of your child is crashed by proclamations "your child will never reach zones of achievement." Do teacher training schools stress upon the principles of individual variation and a *range* of normal development as principles of curricular pedagogy?

Teacher, I would like to share this journey of neuro-atypicality for two reasons. Firstly, by law, classrooms now have to be inclusive and secondly, schools are places that reward neuro-typicality much like an average paediatrician. As an input for classroom processes, it will be useful for you to know that parents go through stages of shock, rejection, depression and denial, and finally to a state of acceptance when their child is diagnosed with a developmental disorder. This coming to terms with their child's limitations is fuelled by frequent jolts of distressing experiences, often immersing parents in a cycle of "chronic sorrow" (Cameron, Snowden & Orr,

1992). School should strive to build a space where children with special needs find stability and some attention as there is a need to build parental hope and initiative to nurture their child within the collective anonymity that confronts children with disabilities. The presence of "well performing and quick to respond children" pushes quiet and slow to warm-up children off the radar and dampens their spirit due to low performance which inevitably results due to not enough attention being paid to these children.

Teacher you are responsible for 45 wards, each trying to excel in examinations, and have years of experience with varying competency labels such as "children with special needs" or "children with learning difficulties", which are mere euphemisms. Your responses and actions are steered by the parameters that monitor teacher performance, and marks secured by the children become indicators of your competence. Low performers bring down your efficiency. It is natural to be dismissive of a policy of inclusion where varying intelligences are bundled together. Our children, who are also victims of the social cycle, nonetheless derive emotional strength from everyday routines such as going to school. Moreover, they need to sustain links to mainstream academic-social interactions to feel included in the bigger social sphere. As parents, we need to learn to be organized, and provide insights for our child and circumvent the danger of negativity in atypical children. (Barbour, 1996; Gorman, 1999).

## Examining the Errors: Academic Push as Emotional Strength

Amidst correcting piles of notebooks in the staff room before the next class, the note book that has "pestiside" instead of pesticide or "sulfuric" for sulphuric (since only the latter is being recognized as the correct spelling) in a science test is an unnecessary obstacle to speed. Unpredictable styles of comprehension and communication surface with regular frequency. The pressure to catch up with pending work disallows that one moment required to decipher patterns that make certain narratives "illegible". A phrase such as "figh-ween" may actually be a child's attempt to say "fight between". The addition of 3-4 marks may give a boost to the child's drive to perform. Perhaps a close collaboration between the teacher and the parent can save such children from falling off the margins (Barbour,1996; Gorman, 1999; Sabornie, 1994).

## Diverse Learning Behaviours: Innovative Interventions

Alas! Teacher, your time is for the typical collective that is the "class as a group", not for the groping individuals. Hence, it is easy to casually dismiss a *para* that is a summary of a narrative and reads "When I was talking to man called umbrella man and my golden rule and things did not follow as he again did the same thing." This is because ideally it should read. "I had to leave aside my belief in the golden rule of trust as the umbrella man had cheated us." You do not have enough time to see zigzags in sequential patterns and know that the child's thoughts are cluttered as a result of slow sequential processing of thought.

As an involved parent, during a child specific intervention in a private school in New Delhi, 1998-2003, I recognised the mismatch between oral expression and its transfer to written text. The solution that proved to be most useful in this regard was to reduce the syllabus and use focus evaluation by preparing the child with a limited text. This helped us to train the mind for analysis of specific texts rather than cluttering the mind with sequential overload by exposing it to unlimited reading material.

Teacher, the inner world of the child lies in the errors that he/she displays. The joy in an "aha" discovery is overwhelming and connects you to

the perceptual world of children. Children's errors reveal their mental state and unique interpretation of norms. Theorists have called this a deep rupture in communication; however decoding and traversing this difficult terrain is possible through human effort. The trajectory of teaching is like a river; let us not forget that the stream that meanders creates tributaries.

Teacher, we empathize with your being rushed off your feet. Yet, this race with pace pushes children who express differently into corners to continue their struggle for survival. Their deficit becomes their destiny, turning them into "bodies who continue to be stationary or in a state of 'dys-functional' motion in the absence of an external force." It is important to be cautious and avoid the trap that Chandler (1994) recounts, "that school achievement has become equated with self-competency, and the loss of competence has led to feelings of inadequacy, depression, withdrawal and an uncaring attitude" (p. 163). He adds that for others, "poor school performance [leads] to dependency and learned helplessness as a maladaptive style of coping" (p. 163).

## Classroom Identity

The challenges for the struggling child are not just limited to the increasing complexity in textual content or the child's inability to cope with long narratives and rules of syntax. The problems include being part of a classroom collective and its various classroom rhythms such as weekly tests, annual day productions, etc. One way to deal with this is to train the child to write in points and guide him/her to create one phrase for each point.

As a teacher your schedule is too packed to think of trivial things such as the agony and despair the child may experience when his/her friends get 2/2 with a "Good", while she receives a hurriedly scribbled "seen"—like some alms dropped for the urchins who come

running at the traffic light. Intolerance and impatience with deviation epitomizes our societal zest for order, and so we inherently avoid stress to face that one skip in the beat of the rhythms of life. Sometimes there can be elemental beauty in chaos. Disorder is basic to all creation. Have you ever thought that even nature has days without sunshine, when we get rain, which we look forward to? All children, irrespective of the colour of their blazer, can contribute in their own way to the organization of the school. Why do we forget that education is like lighting a lamp, not filling a pail? Some wicks take longer to catch the flame.

## School Calendar and Individual Rhythms

For parents and educators, routines could numb the sounds of the varying cadences of individual voices. The chorus of "Yes ma'am/sir" immediately after "Have you understood?", drowns the lurking queries and silences of children below the so-called expected "margin". The tacit assumption here is that "there will be some who will not know"; the class needs to move on.

Jobs seem to make us flow with the tide of the school calendar, and we allow the cycle of school events to absorb our time, space, and soul. The role and responsibility of being a competent teacher diffuses the larger professional goals and the will to be a compassionate teacher. Please teachers, do not lose or submerge the desire to evolve and derive meaning from your profession. Involve parents as they have instinctual insights that can fuel pedagogical action (Jeynes, 2012).

## The Flame of Hope Burns on

Indeed, the human spirit is soulful, always looking for something. The dormant zeal to give every child his/her due does find sparks in many teaching-learning interactions. A parent of a

child with Down's syndrome once called me to report about the perseverance of a class teacher in bolstering the confidence of her child. She said, "The teacher made my child sing alone in front of the whole class." The social and emotional efforts of the parents and the teacher towards achieving this feat for a neuro-atypical child are comparable to trainers for Olympian sports, and the feat is worthy of a goldmedal. The triumph of the teacher and the mother embodied in the conversation made me remember the story of Helen Keller. However, we often forget that the persistence, patience and faith of Helen Keller's teacher made her (Helen Keller) achieve what she did. I am sure that like us, she must have had moments of despair where she must have wanted to throw up her hands in frustration.

I would like to recommend to you some excellent curricular pieces that comprise the pages of the texts that some of us teach. In particular, I would like to draw your attentionto a lesson in a class VII Hindi textbook *Saras Bharti* entitled "Vardharaj". In the story, a Guru expels a boy named Vardharaj from his tutelage since he fails to display initiative and drive. The teacher believed in *parampara* and *dharma* (which both translate roughly as 'tradition'), and according to him the absence of *ichcha* and *titiksha* ('desire' and 'endurance') would not facilitate or invoke any *diksha* ('bestowing of power of a teacher'), thereby hindering the path of *shiksha* ('learning'). The child's inertia was seen as a betrayal of his parent's resources and expectations, and out of character in the teaching-learning process. The teacher's parting line to the errant pupil is "Go search for your truth", avoiding the use of "the truth"—a sensitive distinction and regard for individual personhood that allows a small door to remain open for the miraculous return of the prodigal pupil. Vardharaj grew up to write a commentary on Sanskrit grammar the entitled *Laghu sidhanta kaumadi*. His inspiration was

triggered by an observation of the groove made on the concrete wall of a well, made by the continuous rubbing of the rope while drawing water.

## Parental Will Amidst Modern Confrontational Approach

Many of us parents seek that external human force to propel the latent spirit in our children that could come from any of you. Quite often, modern professionals stare blankly in our faces to proclaim "the truth", as it becomes their mission not to keep us in the dark of the inabilities that inflict our challenged children. For the parents, their world collapses each time professionals reassert the reality of their child. Brutal truths agitate and imbalance our tryst with struggle, and are a momentary setback to our goals. We feel distraught, but try not to allow despair to overcome us. Our children's sincere searching looks inspire us to not reconcile with the professional's"truth" declarations, and to try and find a way around things. Elevating the competence of our child and providing relevant opportunities becomes our mission. We sustain hope despite statements such as "Nothing can be done", or staff room exchanges such as, "These parents expect too much", or "It is so difficult to deal with unrealistic parents." Thoughts of dumping the schools or abandoning the prospects of education fleet in to blur our dreams, only to be re-focussed by our children's prospective questioning, "Why don't I go to school?" Whatever be the child's inherent potential, the backdrop of an expected social reality for the child in the form of a regular institutional routine soon replaces our diffidence.

Being without a school routine would increasingly deplete the emotional and social strength of our children. We look towards you expectantly for that considered external force that will nurture slow bloomers. We look towards you to tend the limping wicks that require

repeated stoking to catch the flame. Our children are not Newtons, but they could be Einsteins (who had difficulty with spellings, and to whom speech came only after he was three).

Like all parents, we dream for our children! Dear Teacher, be the guiding spirit with a difference, ready to join the quest for assisting children who fumble their way to find their niche. Every child could be a winner, let us sustain hope and effort.

Isolation from the social mainstream would be devastating for a child's sense of self-worth when each neighbourhood child's school bus would blow its horn to beckon another day. The hope of every urban child in the present social context links to an everyday routine of school, to be a part of a greater social group. Our children also enjoy the slides, the playground jokes, the discussions on films, the shared stories and everything else that comprises the culture of childhood, and for which a peer group is central. For any type of action, there has to be an "interested adult" to provide a "special bond" in the schooling process to harness the possible.

## Possibilities

Teacher, you must have heard of individualized teaching strategies for different learning styles, such as using multisensory methods with parent collaboration and special educators; inclusion needs to be propelled with multiple forces, and your help is essential. As described, specific educational interventions to remediate learning disabilities need to be implemented. We need to have a special focus on supportive social-emotional inputs to avoid isolation and neglect (Prakash, 2012).

Simple psychological interventions can have a positive effect on our children; this could be in the form of educational accommodations that facilitate task participation and completion such as a sealed test paper prepared by special educators (Chandler, 1994). Activities that boost

self-confidence, such as serving as a peer mentor or a teacher's special assistant, help to address the child's need for self-worth. Creating "buddy" groups to promote social participation is another way of helping them.

## Listening to the Parent and Above all Creating Parent "Share" Groups

One Last Story: assistance for aspiring and achieving

In a meeting with the Principal, a parent thanked the school for all the flexible and innovative interventions. While expressing the joy of the child and his growing confidence, the parent described how the child was aspiring for the 100% Attendance award in the School award ceremony. The child stated that any other excellence award did not seem feasible. The Principal smiled and appreciated the child's reality check. However, in the next year's awards list, the Principal added a new award—"Mountain Climber's Award", for extraordinary feats of achievement. This further boosted the child's confidence to fly to different peaks.

Sincerely

Concerned parent

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**Asha Singh** is Associate Professor at the Department of Human Development and Childhood Studies at Lady Irwin College and has been involved in developing content for television programmes for children, inclusion and diversity, arts in education, media and children as well as creating child appropriate methods of conducting research with children. In her work, she deals extensively with child development professionals in using theatre as a tool to communicate and comprehend sociality.

*asha.singh903@gmail.com*

# Disability of Language: Disabled People are not Blessed with Divine Organs

*Jagdish Chander*

## Introduction

This short article deals with the familiar issue of terminology in the field of disability, but more specifically, it is about a recent controversy in India with regard to "labelling" a person with disabilities. The issue of terminology may seem superficial at one level, but within a discipline dealing with one of the most well-known but the least talked about human conditions, such labels are deeply-impacting and significant within the larger social context. On a rather practical level too, a multiplicity of terminology only creates more confusion about a field that is in any case not very well understood. Among the various sectors, it is in the field of education that this confusion can have far deeper consequences, for in this field, labelling has a deep, psychological impact on the "labelled" person for the rest of her/his life.

## The Legend

Having acquired independence at the end of the first half of the 20th century, India lately witnessed several socio-political movements relating to the hitherto marginalized sections towards the end of the latter half of the century. These movements include the Dalit, the feminist, the queer, the transgender, and the disability rights movements, etc. Like all such movements in various parts of the world, these movements in India have not only challenged the misconceptions and social construct related to the respective communities (which these movements sought to represent), but, in many cases they have even challenged the traditionally used terminologies related to their respective sections.

While there has been a vibrant disability rights movement in India since the early 1990s, which was preceded by the self-advocacy movement of the blind for their rights during the 1970s and 1980s, there has been an intellectual vacuum regarding the use of language in the field of disability in India. Consequently, we have been borrowing terminologies from the English-speaking western world to describe Persons with Disability (PwD) in English. The translation of these terminologies has often resulted in misperception, or at times completely unacceptable use of terminologies in Hindi and other vernacular languages.

Lack of indigenously developed perspective and language relating to disability in India, has resulted in a lot of confusion in this field. The coinage of the term *divyang* (people with a divine organ), to replace the existing Hindi word for the disabled—*viklang*—by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is a glaring example of the use of not only confused but a completely unacceptable terminology to describe PwDs in India.

The intellectual impoverishment regarding the innovation of indigenous terminology and to some extent the lack of an indigenous perspective to challenge the interpretation of disability has resulted in an excessive dependence on the use of terminologies produced by the West not only in English, but even in Indian languages.

Consequently, a crude translation of these terminologies from English to Indian languages, particularly Hindi, has paved the way for wrong "labelling". For example, the word "disabled" has often been translated as *aksham* ('incapable') by the vernacular press as opposed to the traditional and more acceptable term *viklang*. In the vocabulary relating to disability, the word *viklang* corresponds to the English term "impaired", which is a perfectly acceptable term in a context where there is physical or mental functional limitation. The adjective *viklang* or impaired becomes *viklangta* or impairment when converted to its noun form.

## The Social Location of Disability

The indigenous terms *viklang* or *viklangta* have been acceptable terms in the Indian context so far, perhaps due to lack of any better terminology developed indigenously. Similarly, the terms, "impaired" or "impairment" are also very acceptable terminologies when used in English in the context of one's physical or mental functional limitation. However, the Western disability rights discourse has made a distinction between "impairment" and "disability". For them, the word "impairment" connotes actual physical, intellectual or mental impairment/functional limitation and the word "disability" connotes physical, attitudinal and physical-environmental infrastructural barriers resulting in a disabling environment, thereby, shifting the location of functional limitation of the disabled from the individual to the society. Hence, the term "disabled" is used to denote a person having any kind of impairment. The person therefore is disabled not so much due to her/his impairment per say, but due to a negative social attitude, lack of accessible infrastructure or the absence of the required support system to enable such a person to function independently.

The above-mentioned argument can be substantiated through an illustration of the following two examples in a given context. A wheelchair user would be completely disabled if she/he is asked to climb the fifth floor of a building which does not have a lift. On the contrary, the same person could function quite independently and efficiently in a building which has lifts and/or ramps wherever needed. Likewise, a blind student would be severely constrained if the reading material is available only in print medium and she/he does not have the option of typing her/his exams. Again, she/he could be quite independent and pursue education as effectively as a student who can see, if the books are available in formats such as Braille, audio-recordings or electronic text format, which could be read through a screen reading software and she/he is trained and equipped to type her/his exams. That is to say, a wheelchair user is not disabled if the building is fully accessible, with ramps and lifts wherever needed, and a blind student is not disabled while pursuing education if she/he can read books independently in an accessible format and can type exams independently. This means, being on a wheelchair or being blind happen to be the impairments. However, these impairments are converted into disabilities in the absence of appropriate infrastructure or support systems to meet the needs of such people, depriving them of their independent functionality, and preventing them from participating fully in their desired activities.

So, given the distinction between impairment and disability, it is perfectly alright to use the word "disabled" or "disability" in the western context or even in India when we are using these expressions in English. However, to translate the word, "disabled" literally into Hindi as *aksham* and to replace the existing Hindi word *viklang*, without first preparing the ground for it, would be completely out of context and highly misleading.

In the West, rehabilitation professionals engaged in the field of disability and to some extent the disabled people themselves struggled for appropriate terminologies to replace the earlier terminology "handicapped", which was associated with begging in medieval Europe. Several alternatives such as "physically challenged", "differently abled" and "people with special needs" were considered until the disability rights activists came up with the term "disability" or "disabled". A terminology such as "differently able" sounds politically correct, but it does not communicate the discrimination and the oppression that a disabled person has to deal with, nor does it relocate the disability from the individual to the society, the way the word "disability" does. Hence, the disability rights activists chose the term "disabled" or "disability" to replace the erstwhile derogatory term "handicapped" not only to connote the discrimination and oppression associated with it, but also to relocate disability from the individual to the society. By doing this, they shifted the blame for the discrimination and oppression that a disabled person faces on the society rather than on the person with the disability.

Just like the English-speaking Western world, India too is struggling to evolve an alternative terminology to replace the word "handicapped". The political leaders as well as the Indian media often use English terminologies such as "physically challenged", "differently able", etc. Sometimes, they resort to describing a specific disability such as blindness or deafness by using terminologies such as "visually challenged", "visually impaired" or "deaf-mute". Most of these terminologies however, are not approved by the disability rights activists as well as scholars engaged in research or studying disability from a disability rights perspective.

The greatest blow to this confusing, or in many cases erroneous use of the terminology related to disability is the coinage of the term *divyang* by the current Prime Minister in a speech which he was supposed to read out before an audience at Vigyan Bhawan on the occasion of world Disability Day on 3 December 2015 at the time of launching the Accessible India Campaign. In the absence of Mr. Modi, the speech was read out by the Finance Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley. However, the use of this word went unnoticed by the larger world outside Vigyan Bhawan, as well as the media, which in any case hardly pays attention to the issues concerning a highly marginalized group such as the disabled. However, soon after, Mr. Modi made an appeal to use this term instead of the existing term *viklang* during his last "Man ki Baat" radio broadcast of the year 2015, on 27 December, and this time it caught the attention of the disability rights activists and a small group of scholars working on disability. Mr. Modi again officially used the term *divyang* while flagging off a luxury train in Varanasi in January, 2016. Lately, the official electronic media has also been using this term, and attempts are being made in the government quarters to consider replacing the currently used term *viklang* with the term *divyang* officially.

## Problems with the Term *divyang*

Let me outline three reasons for why I find the term *divyang* unacceptable:

(1) The term has no substance and conveys no information to describe the target group of people. Moreover, it neither conveys the meaning of the word "impairment", as the currently used Hindi term *viklang* does, nor does it convey the meaning of the word "disabled" as the word "disabled" does in the context of disability being perceived as a social construct. Going by traditional religious interpretations, all living beings with or without any kind of disability, are creations of God and they all possess divine organs. So, to say that

people having a disability possess a divine organ would imply that those who do not have a disability have been deprived of a divine organ. It would also imply that disabled people have been bestowed with a divine organ as compared to those without disability, thereby making the disabled people highly "blessed".

(2) As Mr. Modi mentioned in his "Man ki Baat" radio broadcast of 27 December 2015, the idea of describing the disabled as *divyang* is inspired by his belief that if God takes away any part of one's body, He bestows upon that person another part, or He creates an additional sensory body part. The idea that God bestows an additional sense or what is popularly described as the "sixth sense" on a person who has a sensory loss, is an age-old myth based on misconception and ignorance regarding the functionality of a disabled person in India, which has led to a widespread belief about their having a sixth sense. However, what is even more objectionable or unacceptable is that instead of challenging and demolishing such a myth through a scientific explanation, it has been reinforced. It may be true that a disabled person with a sensory loss is more dependent on the remaining senses and tends to use them more as compared to someone without a sensory loss. For example, a blind person could be dependent on his power of touch, hearing or smell, and in many cases, she/he may use them more than a sighted person, but it does not mean that she/he has got an additional sense or what is described as the "sixth sense".

(3) Finally, describing a disabled as a person with a "divine organ" sounds as patronizing as describing Dalits as Harijans or identifying woman as *devi ka roop* ('incarnation of a Goddess'). However well-intended these expressions may have been in a given context, they are no longer accepted by Dalit rights activists and feminists today. Similarly, however well-intended the coinage of the word *divyang*

may be, it sounds as patronizing to the disability rights activists as the word Harijan to the Dalit rights activists, or woman as an incarnation of a goddess to women activists.

## Conclusion

To sum up, we should stick to the currently used terminology in the field of disability in India, i.e. "disabled" or "disability" in English and *viklang* and *viklangta* in Hindi. If this terminology sounds objectionable, then we have to come up with an indigenously developed alternative to them. But the alternative terminology has to be innovated and evolved by the disability rights activists through a bottom-up approach rather than through a top down approach which led to the coinage of an erroneous term such as *divyang* which reinforces the age-old myths regarding disability rather than demolishing them.

**Jagdish Chander** is Associate Professor of Political Science in Hindu College, University of Delhi. He has done a PhD from Syracuse University on the history of the movement of the organized blind in India. His research interests include the history of disability rights movements in India and disability studies.

*jagdish100@gmail.com*

# Teaching Language to Children with Disabilities

*Sudesh Mukhopadhyay*

## Introduction

It is common knowledge that young children acquire language through a process of listening (oral communication) and speaking (spoken communication), and at a later stage, through reading and writing (response mode, usually seen as written communication). While milestones and processes are useful for persons interacting and working with children right from infancy to adult years, it is a challenging concept for those working with children who deviate from the perceptions of language development as per the milestones, and who may not therefore fit within the expected pattern of development.

These deviations are an interesting phenomenon when explored against the backdrop of the diversity that children bring to classrooms not only in India but the world over. Such diversity may be compared with the linguistic diversity that a bilingual or multilingual situation presents. According to Greenfield (2013), "A linguistically diverse student (LDS) is defined as a student who, at the very least, speaks a language other than English. Some LDS also possess literacy skills in their heritage languages."

Language in the context of education becomes an issue if the mother tongue of the child is different from the medium of instruction in the school. External factors such as migration add to the complexity when the child is listening to a language that is different from the one she speaks, one that does not fit the "norm". Language, thus, acquires an important position in all systems of education as it is seen as the most effective and widely used communication mode.

The challenge for teachers is to be sensitive to these diversities, since it is also important to understand the use of language as a mode of functioning and navigating the complexities of today's world. Learning a language as a subject or a discipline is but one aspect of learning; its utility however goes far beyond, as a medium of instruction for imparting knowledge and training in other subjects. Efficiency in the language of the medium of instruction however impacts the performance in all other curricular and co-curricular areas as well.

## Language Learning for Children with Disabilities

Let us look at language learning further to talk about some of the diversities that we face in Indian classrooms. Within a classroom, there may be first generation learners who need to acquire the mainstream language as they are transiting from a dialect or another language spoken at home. We may have children from disadvantaged communities, or different strata of society, or with disabilities, who may be first generation learners, and so on. Learners with disabilities have multiple challenges other than their disability, and these may have an impact on the development of their potential as an individual. Let us try to understand the relationship between the type of disability and

its implications for learning language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

A child with visual impairment may have difficulty in reading and writing when compared to a sighted child. However, the child will be able to read if the role of sight can be substituted with touch, and also write if he/she is taught Braille. Braille is a specially designed system of reading and writing using six raised dots that can be discerned through touch. Special Braille paper is used for the purpose and a stylus is used for writing in place of a pen or a pencil. Thus if the *material* of teaching/learning is altered, the visual disability can be compensated.

However, language teaching and learning is also about acquiring vocabulary, which in turn is associated with concept formation. The process of learning therefore involves the complexity of structure, vocabulary, and a degree of abstractness. This brings up another issue: is the process of concept formation the same for a blind or a low vision individual, as it is for a sighted person? The answer is that it is the same, as it involves experience, association, and internalization. However, students with visual impairment need a mediator to facilitate the process of conceptualization by aiding them in experiencing the process of learning a language, as experiencing through our senses events, states, action, etc. is the first step in the process of conceptualization.

**The Learner and the Learning Process**

The entire process of learning for children in a school, as well as within a community, is centred on two significant aspects—opportunity and experience. As depicted in the following pie chart, sighted children have an edge over visually impaired (VI) children as their acquisition of knowledge is through experience and visual experience accounts for about 80% of our learning (Corpus et al., 2007). The learning experience for VI children can however be

made more comprehensive by providing them with information through other senses such as touch, hearing, and smell. Hence, for developing vocabulary and concepts for such children, teachers need to follow a multi-sensory approach.
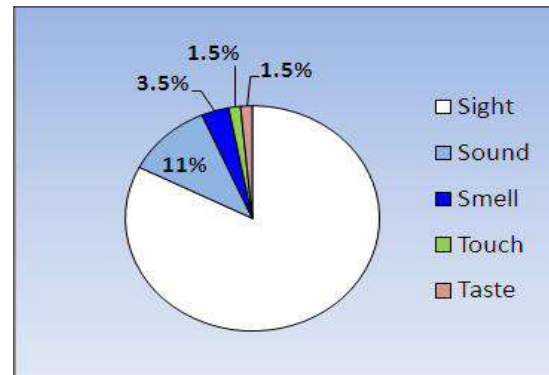


*Figure 1.* Pie chart on senses and perception from Corpus et al. (2007).

The process of learning is further affected by a number of conditions in a learning situation. An analysis of a complex learning activity reveals that it initially follows a simple stimulus - response schema, like the response of visualizing a ball when the stimulus of the word 'ball' is provided. The learner goes through the process of associating the word 'ball' with the object ball. However, this association is later internalized for any round object matching the salient features of a ball.

The conditions in the learning situation also impact the learning process. For example, in order to acquire the skill of problem-solving, the learning situation should provide a stimulus for recall, guidelines for channelizing thoughts, etc. If these are not created in the learning situation, the skills of problem-solving may not develop to the desired level. In the case of a VI child, since he/she would face an absence of stimuli at times, the motivation to learn may be absent. Suitable interventions can be used to stimulate

a VI child and enable him/her to learn nearly to the level of a sighted child. This can however happen only when the equivalent of a spontaneous or incidental learning for a sighted child is provided to the VI child through planned experiences involving senses other than sight.

Consider the example of vocabulary development in sighted children. Informal learning from signboards, posters and other stimuli from the environment reinforces formal learning. For a VI child, this experience can only be provided through a mediated experience. Thus a sighted child attains conceptual clarity by learning the attributes of an object in terms of its existence, having permanence, and differing from other objects. When she/he passes from a concrete to an abstract stage of learning, she/he learns to abstract common elements from several sensory experiences and acquires the skill of generalization. For VI leaners, therefore, there is more reliance on data-driven, rather than conceptual processing (Pring and Painter, 2002; 25).

Sighted children do not have to be taught about every object that exists around them. They learn about them because of their multi-sensory capacities to approach them. VI children on the other hand, move from partially experiencing objects through tactile manipulation, auditory reception, and olfactory sensation to a less partial imagination, as opposed to direct, one-step visual perception. In order to know how a cow differs from a horse, they go through a step-by-step assimilation of attributes. Learning at an abstract level becomes challenging for them.

The following are some of the points that the teacher learner must be aware of when working with VI children:

- Concepts cannot be taught verbally, one must use a method based on an activity.

- In working with VI children, we must describe things in as much detail as possible.

- Complex tactile materials can be confusing for the child and are best avoided.

- It is important to remember to not leave things out from the description.

- Compensatory experience through additional verbal instruction must be provided.

- Compensatory experience in the form of appropriate learning material in tactile form must be provided.

- Compensatory experience in the form of three-dimensional aids must be provided.

In a classroom setting, the teacher should not use one particular approach for providing the learning experience, but may use a combination of the above approaches in an integrated manner, depending on the situation.

**Learners with Other Disabilities**
Children with hearing impairment may have different levels of restrictions. Some may be born with this condition; others may acquire it at some point of time due to an illness, an accident or as a reaction to a medication, etc. A child who is born with hearing impairment will need intervention to develop language skills. Children up to the age of 5 years may be offered a cochlear implant under the ADIP (Assistance to Disabled Persons) scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. However, even after a cochlear implant, the child will initially need to be trained to receive sounds and interpret them for meaningful language. Normally, these children start school only after developing language skills, as in the case of children with normal hearing. In the case of children who have not received an implant and therefore cannot speak because of an absence of auditory input, sign language may be used, as hearing aids do not work for all children. Those children who have become deaf after

developing their language skills will be able to speak, but will not be able to listen. As teachers, we need to be sensitive to all these varying conditions of hearing impairment.

Hence, because of all these variations, language teaching requires a multisensory approach. The basic problem does not lie in written communication, but in listening and speaking. Most school boards do not insist on the three-language formula for these children. Although the NCERT curriculum recognizes a form of sign language, it is not followed in most cases. The Right To Education Act (2009) and its amendment in 2012, as well as the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* framework provide for inclusion of Children with Special Needs, identified on the basis of disabilities as defined by the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (1995) as well as the National Trust Act (1992). Though learning disability as such is not defined by any of these acts, we do find references to children with disabilities. The disabilities that are currently covered in the act are: blindness and low vision, hearing and speech impairment, loco-motor disabilities, cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, mental illness, and multiple disabilities. These may be grouped under the following categories:

### Table 1
*Grouping Disabilities*

| Intellectual | Mental Retardation, Mental Illness |
| --- | --- |
| Sensory | Visual Impairment including Blindness, Low Vision, Partial Vision and Albino, Hearing Impairment, Orthopedically Handicapped |
| Learning | Learning Disability |
| Multiple | Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Multiple Disabilities |

However, these conditions create challenges only when we do not feel confident and competent to identify their unique needs in the learning process. As teachers, we need to acquire competence and experience to be responsive to the learning needs of children with disabilities. We need to also understand how to select learning experiences (see Figure 2):
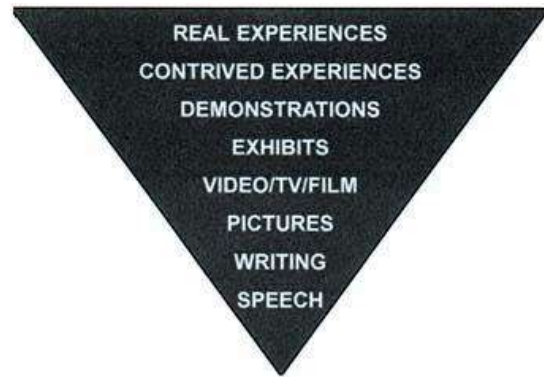


*Figure 2.* 'Cone of experience', adapted from Dale (1954)

The 'Cone of experience' is a pictorial representation that may be used to explain the interrelationships of various types of audio-visual media, in relation to their positions in the learning experience. In this inverted cone, the top level of the cone—real experiences—represents the experience derived from real life, whereas "speech", lying at the bottom level of the cone, deals only with the use of verbal symbols, and are the farthest removed from real life. Retention is highest when learning uses real experience for knowledge construction, rather than just talking about that knowledge.

## Conclusion
Dealing with children with disabilities in a mainstream classroom requires several skills, as outlined earlier, however, the process must start with an understanding of a basic issue—disability is not a problem and difference is the norm. Most educational approaches seem to respond to a disabled student from the perspective that emerges from an assumption of the normative, and they are bound to fail. Unless and until we cross this hurdle, we cannot hope to impart education to a student with disability in a meaningful way.

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**Sudesh Mukhopadhyay** served as Chairperson, Rehabilitation Council of India until recently. She is the former Professor and Head, Department of Inclusive Education in NUEPA. She has also been the Director of SCERT, Delhi. She specializes in education of the persons with disabilities and teacher education.

*drsudesh.mukhopadhyay@gmail.com*

# Interviews

**Andesha Mangla (AM) talks to**
**Professor Madan Vasishta (MV)**

Professor Madan Vasishta is a well-known and highly respected advocate for Indian Sign Language and bilingual deaf education. He completed his MA in Deaf Education and PhD in Special Education Administration from Gallaudet University, the only university for the Deaf in the world, after which he worked as a teacher and administrator at several schools for the deaf in the USA. He retired as superintendent of New Mexico School for the deaf in 2000. Until last year (2015), he was teaching at Gallaudet University. He was the chief advisor at IGNOU for starting Indian Sign Language Regional Training Centre. Currently, he is on a Fulbright fellowship and working on two books on deaf education. He has authored six books, and many articles and book chapters on deafness-related areas.

**AM:** Your book *Deaf in Delhi* describes how you lost your hearing at the age of 11 years and your experiences of growing up as a deaf person. Could you recapitulate some of those experiences here, focusing on your early education and some barriers that you faced?

**MV:** I was in the 6th grade at that time. No one thought about my continuing the class in the village school. I was allowed to appear for final examinations in March, however. For the 7th grade, I had to depend on Shyam, my elder brother, for books. I read each textbook diligently and asked for help with arithmetic when needed. I finished all the books in a couple of months and wondered why we take a whole year for each standard. I did not sit for the 7th grade examination or 8th either. I just kept learning from Shyam's books as he moved to the next grade.

Meanwhile, I was also working all day in the field. In the beginning I just herded cattle, but soon I was cutting grass in the jungle and hauling it to the *kudhi* (where cattle are kept), and milking water buffaloes and cows. By the time I was 16, I graduated to ploughing the fields.

At that time, *Babuji* (my father) suggested that I should appear as a private candidate to get my high school diploma. Students who lived in remote areas, or those who could not attend school were allowed to take the examination along with regular students. I liked the idea and, once again, got Shyam's books and began to study at night.

I took the examinations in March 1957. I was 16 at that time, and a year behind my classmates. High school examinations were not hard and I got the first division despite the little work I did. I wanted to go to a college, but that was out of the question.

Instead of college, Babuji suggested, I appear for Prabhakar examination. I do not know if they still have those examinations. Prabhakar is equivalent to a B.A. in Hindi and Sanskrit. I studied hard and really enjoyed learning Sanskrit and literary criticism in a book by Hazari Prasad Dwivedi.

After Prabhakar, which I passed in 1958, I focused on farming, accepting the fact that I was going to be a farmer all my life. However, the start of a photography school for the deaf in Delhi changed it all.

What helped me was my habit of reading. I read whatever I could find. There was no library and I had to go to Hoshiarpur to buy books from a *raddiwala* at 1 rupee a kilogram. I found a lot of books in English and these helped me not only to improve my English skills, but also broaden my mind.

**AM:** You grew up as a deaf person during the 1950s and 60s with little access to resources. What do you think of the deaf education situation in India today?

**MV:** During the 1950-60s, there were perhaps 40 schools for the deaf in India. However, my parents and I did not know anything about it. When I moved to Delhi to learn photography, I met deaf people for the first time and learned sign language. I also learned that they went to schools that were for deaf people only. None of my deaf friends could write straight sentences in Hindi. Even the brightest ones wrote with a lot of errors. I did not think much of schools for the deaf after talking to my new friends. They did not have mainstream programmes at that time, but some deaf people who could hear a little or were good lip readers, were able to go through schools. No support such as interpreters or note-takers was provided.

My recent visits to various schools for the deaf showed that only oral schools with parental involvement are doing a good job of educating the students. Some private schools that claim to be oral, but use ISL all the time, are also doing a very good job. However, they still claim to be oral. The government schools are a farce; nothing more. Two schools that openly claim to be bilingual—Indore School and Bajaj Institute for Learning in Dehradun—are doing a great job. I can say that deaf education has a long way to go in India. For this we need support from the government and NGOs.

**AM:** You mentioned that some deaf schools which use ISL still claim to be oral. Why do you think this is?

**MV:** It is the prestige of being oral and also to keep parents happy. Parents demand that their child be taught orally. The school administrators either do not know benefits of using signs for teaching deaf children, or do not want to be blamed for not teaching speech.

**AM:** Considering your experience as a teacher and administrator in deaf schools, what do you think are the key issues in special education? And with the shift towards inclusive education, what could be the potential issues there?

**MV:** Special education is disfranchised. A school for the deaf in one state does not know what is happening in other states. Even schools in the same city do not have a formal mechanism to exchange ideas. The National Convention of Educators of Deaf should establish a group for principals of schools for the deaf. These groups could discuss common problems and develop solutions. Learning from each other can be very beneficial and cost-effective.

The sad part is the so-called "inclusion." Inclusion can be great if teachers are trained in various disability areas and all the necessary resources that deaf children need are in place. Placing a deaf child with hearing children where teachers have no background in deafness and have no resources is pure dumping. However, we are not sure which is worse, the government-run special schools that neglect the students or the so-called inclusion.

We need to regulate special schools where teachers are trained. All teachers should be fluent signers, regardless of whether they teach in an oral school or a manual one. There are always some deaf children who need signs and teachers should be trained to work with them.

**AM:** You talked about "what the child needs" and "how the child can learn better". Apart from the issue of the communication medium, could you suggest some guidelines regarding teaching methods that teachers of deaf children need to keep in mind?

**MV:** All children, whether oral or manual, need sign language for social interaction and developing skills in the socio-emotional domain. Children can be taught orally in some classes and using sign language in other classes. The important aspect here is that signs and speech must be kept separate, as a spoken language and ISL are two separate languages. Research in the United States has shown that oral students benefit greatly when the sign component is added. Currently, students with cochlear implants are being taught using signs half the time and orally the other half of the time. These students show greater progress than those taught orally alone.

**AM:** Could you give us some guidelines regarding curriculum, teaching methods and other basic issues that teachers, administrators as well as school boards need to keep in mind?

**MV:** The most important factor is focusing on the child and his/her needs in social, emotional, and cognitive areas. We tend to force our beliefs on children. Instead, we need to learn about each child using the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is used in the United States and other countries. All professionals—teachers, audiologists, speech therapists, counsellors, parents, and administrators—should sit down together and decide the placement and educational plan of a child. This should be reviewed each year. Thus, the child will receive an education specially designed for him/her.

The philosophy should not be oral or manual—it should be "what the child needs" and "how the child can learn better."

**AM:** How do you see the role of parents in the education of deaf children? How do you see the role of parents when disability intersects gender?

**MV:** Parents are the first teachers of a child. They should be involved from the very beginning. Research shows that parental involvement positively correlates with academic achievement. Parents should be a part of the IEP development and a part of the decision for placement.

I am always surprised at the disparity between male and female students in schools for the deaf. Kerala is the only state where a higher percentage of female students attend school, but it is still way lower than the male student population. Parents' fear of sending a deaf female child to a strange place (school) forces them to keep the child at home. Their fear leads to higher illiteracy among deaf females. Deaf population is superimposed on the hearing population. Until recently, education of hearing females was not common and this is reflected in the schools for the deaf also.

**AM:** How do you see the nature and scope of disability and deaf studies in India?

**MV:** This is a new phenomenon in India. We need to have more and more research in various disability areas to enable us to improve the education and rehabilitation of disabled persons. We can learn a lot from Western nations and do not have to reinvent the wheel. However, we also must keep in mind the social, cultural and economic factors when studying various disabilities. Results from research done in various disability studies programmes will help us use new and sound methodologies in teaching.

**Andesha Mangla** is doing her PhD on "The Role of Sign Language in Deaf Education" from the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi. She has previously taught deaf students in the B.A. in Applied Sign Language Studies programme at IGNOU.

*andesha_m@yahoo.co.in*

# Santosh Kumar (SK) talks to Professor Anita Ghai (AG)

Anita Ghai, currently a Professor of Psychology at the Ambedkar University Delhi, was earlier an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi. She is a disability rights activist in the areas of education, health, sexuality and gender. She has been a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum Library, Teen Murti Bhawan and also the President of the Indian Association for Women's Studies.
She is on the editorial board of Disability and Society, and Scandinavian Journal of Disability. Some of her well-known books include (Dis) Embodied Form: Issues of Disabled Women (2003) and The Mentally Handicapped – Prediction of the Work Performance co-authored with Anima Sen.
anita.satyapal@gmail.com

**Santosh Kumar (SK)**: Congratulations for your new position of Professor at Ambedkar University, Delhi (ADU). Prior to this, you were at Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University. This is what we know about you as a teacher. However, we would like to know more about you, especially the early days of your life – your education and the barriers you crossed successfully.

**Anita Ghai (AG):** Thank you. I remember, when I was two years old, polio struck. The first few years were spent hanging between the cure versus care thesis. I go against the cure part as one really doesn't get to the cure in spite of all the time spent for it. I failed in Class II, perhaps because I was in plaster for around 6 to 8 months. Also, I can recall that I had to shift schools three or four times, to find a school nearby. I have perhaps written about that experience in my book *(Dis)Embodied Form: Issues of Disabled Women*.

One of the school-teachers, I recall, was very cruel. I used to have crutches with callipers going to the back (Now, of course, I am on a wheelchair). It would usually be at the very end of my endurance that I used to speak out whenever I had to go to the toilet, and it sometimes happened that I would soil my clothes in the class - or in the corridor - and when I came back to the class, it was like in the poem "Shame shame poppy shame/ All the children

know your name". The teacher used to sometimes humiliate me, even slap me at times and when my father came to know about this, he took me out of that school and said – as did my mother too – that he would shift me to the New Era School, now quite a famous school. The school then began paying attention – for instance, I would be given a chance to recite a poem in the Annual Function, and was made a part of the orchestra too in which I would play the side-drum and thus I got involved in some activity or the other. This school was till Class VIII. My parents had come over to this side after Partition and my mother had not even passed Class X. In Panipat she would do embroidery, etc. and father worked in the private sector. I was the first girl-child and the whole family was very loving and would always try to keep things normal.

In the 9th I went to the Holy Child School, a good school, and I had Science in 9th, 10th and 11th. I wanted to study medical but we did not have as much information about it, and I finally filled up a form for this stream in the I.P.College for Women, Delhi but my name did not figure in the first list. The administrative-incharge there, one Mr. Pahwa, one of my father's companions for the morning walk, urged him to bring me along to the college. The Principal, Sheela Uttam Singh, consoled me when I started crying and said that I had good enough marks for Psychology and would be given admission,

which, indeed, did happen. Later on, the Principal informed us that I had qualified for the medical stream too. By then I had gradually developed some liking for Psychology and stayed back.

As against my experience with teachers in the schools, the experience in the college was different – the teachers were generally fine, they would neither under-estimate nor over-estimate me. They would give me a chance for some activities – for instance, when I started writing poetry, they would encourage me; then I got an award for essay-writing. Whatever I deserved, I got. You may well say that it was an integrated kind of education.

**SK:** Was it inclusive? Mainstream? With an inclusive, accessible environment?

**AG:** Yes, for instance, one of the labs was upstairs but those days I could ascend the stairs, and so I never considered this to be a difficulty. Except for this one lab, everything else was on the ground floor. They noted that I would not go for the sports, and just be sitting around. One of the teachers urged that I be sent for music and thus I started learning instrumental music - the harmonium. In this sense they were rather nice.

**SK:** How do you recall these years of your life, as a student in college?

**AG:** I suppose when I came to I.P. College, those three years were ones of unadulterated enjoyment - *bindaas*, as one might well say. I made friends in the class and in the hostel too. The difficulty I faced there about Indian-style toilets – I finally decided to forget and move on. I had also by then understood what studies were all about – I had developed an interest in Psychology, especially a bit of Adlerian

Psychology that was there in the first year of the course. Adler had worked on compensatory theory and inferiority complex; he himself used to be very ill, suffering as he was from rickets and I was attracted by his life-history. I topped the list in my college. We had to write a dissertation in the third year, which I did on social interaction - not on disability in that sense of the word. My interest then was like, for example, in things like this incident I remember - a teacher asked me to go and bring chalk for the board. Some of my classmates were angered by this, questioning as to why I was being put to this trouble. But the teacher's view was that this would help me gain confidence even though it might take an extra five minutes for the chalk to be brought by me. You can say that she became one of my mentors – she didn't call or treat me as someone helpless – that was not her understanding of disability. It was not the overcoming type of theory on disability, where, one would be called brave for overcoming it.

Those days there were three things to do – study, watch cricket and movies – these three were what being *bindaas* meant to me. My father would say, there should be no red mark, but that apart he would himself take me to the movies twice a week. He would take me to the cinema hall, even if I had to ascend the stairs, for I was quite fond of watching movies – not now, though, it is difficult now. My paternal uncles were very interested in cricket and I too would watch a lot of it. In the hostel there would sometimes be quarrels as I would switch on my radio at 3 or 4 in the morning to listen to the New Zealand vs Australia commentary, for instance, and my hostel-mates would raise objections and I had to lower the volume.

It was fun, and studies. I never missed a class, I would listen to the lecture and it would be lodged in my memory, and so there was no difficulty at all.

**SK:** What were your experiences like at the post-graduation level and thereafter?

**AG :** The hostel was no longer there. My father bought a second-hand car, Fiat, I think, but it would break down often and this led to a problem of transport for me but all of it ultimately got managed somehow or the other. I still remember the day the result was announced. We had gone to see a movie – yes, it was Rishi Kapoor's 'Karz' – by the time we came back, there was quite a crowd outside our home. It seems that there was a call from the university informing that I had topped in my Masters!

Then I went to get a form for the IAS and they said – 'you can't apply', and I asked – 'why not?'

Those with 6/6 corrected glasses and the disabled can't apply, they said. For the first time I got to understand that whether or not I considered myself disabled, they had surely considered me as one.

That was the first time I met Mr. Lal Advani and my relationship and orientation with NGOs began. 1981 was declared the International Year of the Disabled. Sometime around this year, I also had to undergo my first open-heart surgery - just about the time I had joined my M.Phil. I took two papers after I came back from the hospital - then left one, but ultimately earned an 'A' and then I got a job in I.P. College for 9 months. The National Eligibility Test (NET) was not yet in existence back then, on the basis of merit I got the UGC Junior and Senior Fellowships.

About Psychology, I was aware of the problems in the subject. The sense of criticism and how to go about it all came much later – say, when I came to the stage of doing my M.Phil. When again I worked on disability (after my MA project on issues around four disabilities) on the work-adjustment and open employment of the intellectually impaired. I took this work up to my Ph.D., doing the follow-up study in Mumbai in a vocational rehabilitation centre where these people used to work in a sheltered workshop. I followed it up after two years and saw how many people can go into employment.

**SK:** What have been your experiences as a teacher? And what has been the trajectory of your growth thereafter?

**AG :** When I began to teach, I realised that you have to work very hard. But because I was in I.P. College, under Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, Uma Chakravarti being in Miranda, an awareness had begun to be generated. Initially my inclination was not towards the disability movement but towards the women's movement, and I was very active and when funds came from the government, we started running the Women's Studies Centre in the college. I think it was around this time that the idea of womanhood began to hit me. The UPSC incident too involved some sort of a transformation – that's when the disability thing first hit me. And then I can say that this other shift came – in 1994 – of the hysterectomies of the 14 girls, about which I wrote a paper.

**SK:** Are you talking about the Poona incident?

**AG:** Yes… the Poona case…that really hit me and then I felt angry with the women's movement. In those days I happened to meet Javed Abidi who then used to work at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation – he had not yet started the National Centre for Promotion of Employemt for Disabled People. He suggested that we work on something. The Bill was on the anvil those days – and it came in 1995. But two years passed and there was no Commissioner yet and a candle-light vigil was organised and this was for me actually the starting point perhaps.

**SK:** You started touching issues of disability?

**AG:** Yes. That's the time I really started. I started talking with the women's movement and in 2001 I had an invitation from *Hypatia* (a journal of feminist philosophy) for a paper from the Indian perspective[1]. That was my first international publication that became well known, it was the first time I tried to write about women with disabilities - earlier, in 2000 and in 1996, I had gone to the Society for Disability Studies, Washington and then I started getting to meet people. In the 1999 conference Michael Oliver, Colin Barnes, Mark Priestley asked me to write a chapter for their forthcoming book[2], and Miriam Corker, a good friend and wonderful human being who was deaf, said that she could send books to me for being reviewed. And Sally French also promised to send me some books. And so books began coming to me and I started studying a bit.

**SK:** Do please share some of your experiences on issues of education too. Borrowing from your personal experience as a teacher; what, for you, are the key issues in special education? How do you see inclusive education as a way out?

**AG :** I got B.El.Ed. started in Jesus and Mary College. Poonam Batra was also there, she had come from JNU and so B.El.Ed came to us for the first time and I came in contact with Anil Sadgopal ji. He asked me to make a proposal as to what sort of work I would like to do on Education and Children with Disabilities, and I worked on it and I got a deputation for two years. That is how my work with children began.

As to your question about special education, I don't have an easy answer for this. To me this label of 'special' seems insidious, because when one says 'special education' it seems to me that

what will be imparted will not be in its entirety. For instance, many children - like me and many of my friends - never wanted to go to special schools. They wanted to take all the difficulties of "normal schools" and yet stay with normal schools.

**SK:** Could you please dwell a little on inclusive education and gender?

**AG:** Education of children with disabilities should start from the assumption that all children are competent, only the cognitive styles are different. As a psychologist, Vygotsky interested me. He talked about the 'zone of proximal development', saying that children should not be shown what the teacher knows. Rather, let the teacher see how much the child knows and take the child forward from there, thus facilitating the child. And then there were people like Paulo Friere and Karl Rogers who talked about 'freedom to learn'. Through Psychology I came to have a sense of what inclusion could be in genuine education. I worked for ten years in B.El.Ed. and conceptualised the paper on 'Human Relations in Education' - Poonam [Batra] and I devised the curriculum and both of us were psychologists and both had a feminist leaning too and so a framework on identity came up, taking Erikson Marcia's work into account. In a paper of 100 marks, 50 would be allotted for workshops in which issues like fear, co-operation, competition, disability would be brought in and we worked very hard on this for 10 years. And during this period I wrote another paper - on social change, in which I wrote about girls, around gender – how girls are not included in the normal strata and in the disability strata too.

**SK:** Vygotsky's idea of proximate learning obviously gives us the idea that there is a certain

role that teachers and administrators play in the learning of children with disabilities or even children in general. So, how do you perceive the role of teachers and administrators in special education? Could you tell us about the issues of methodology, curriculum framework, and basic issues a teacher has in her mind?

**AG:** We worked on Piaget too, when I was with AADI (Action for Ability Development and Inclusion), Renu (Addlakha) was with me too. We tried that the methodology should incorporate the good things of Psychology and lead to a change in the education-framework. In case one is teaching a blind child, for example, how would one do it? What would be the requirements of these children? I have felt that if teachers are taught that if they are to teach disabled children, they should themselves imagine what it is to be disabled, I mean, your phenomenology and that of the children. First it is this that needs to be understood - the curriculum will come later. What needs to come first is sensitivity. I think the tools need to be changed. Some teachers seem to be teaching disabled children very well and they have many methods of teaching too but because the courses even of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) are designed for the teaching of Special Education, there has been no change and there has also been no connect and I started feeling very dejected – which I still do.

**SK:** And there is the school part, they are not paying heed to guidelines, to the issues highlighted in the NCF 2005. National Curriculum Framework, the later version of it, does include some guidelines to cater to the needs of children with disabilities in inclusive education; however these guidelines are not being implemented by schools. How do you look upon this aspect?

**AG:** Well, they don't even admit the 25% economically weaker sections, that too is negated by giving arguments such as - if children from such sections come......

**SK:** The milieu will be disturbed?

**AG:** The difference will remain. When such arguments are proferred, I come to feel that Special Schools are okay. I remember, a system was introduced in Delhi during the Congress government, if I am not mistaken - in Rajiv Gandhi's time, I think - the Bill too had come up in his time. A resource room was opened in MCD schools with a room for intellectually impaired children. This led to some interaction between children and the teachers. A few days back I had gone to Lady Irwin College for a lecture. They seem to have done some solid work, some things at least – but there too I did not sense that there were any disabled children, they were mostly normal. But they were studying disability. This attempt at congruence has, I think, been made quite beautifully. Schools in Delhi like Vasant Valley and Shri Ram and St. Mary's have done really good work. But all three are very costly. Only disabled kids whose parents are rich can go there. They don't take all children. Prof. Sadgopal has been advocating the cause of the common school, the neighbourhood school – we too supported this but it has not happened, and one is not sure if it will happen - and if it does, when. Moreover, the teachers of special schools are paid less than the other teachers – this too is a problem – teachers who work so hard on special children get paid less. And so, they either try to take tuitions for special education – or, in the given situation try to ultimately shift to mainstream schools.

**SK:** Let's now turn to Disability Studies which is making some waves here and there but it's

not getting the momentum it deserves to have. So what do you think is the scope and nature of this field in India?

**AG:** One can't really say that nothing has been done. I have been going to many schools and find that children are doing well. There are teachers and principals who are genuinely interested in kids like that. But if there is no epistemology of disability, and till such time as knowledge-production related to disability is in the concessional and charitable mode, we will not be able to achieve much. This is what I think. We need both theory and praxis. We have to make people learn and understand what disability is and what is the epistemology, knowledge-production and ontology of disability. But, as I said earlier, it is not that work has not been done.

And let me share something about my Ambedkar University, Delhi assignment. For the first paper in the undergraduate course in Ambedkar University, 53 students came – for the special interest course. I was happy that children are at least coming. But then there was the issue of assessment too, of these students. I started teaching them, little bit about education but also a bit about peer-group and through the movies, Hollywood, Bollywood and also did documentaries with them. And this gave me some more insights. The Elective Course that is now coming up, we have to see what it will be like. For example, there is the aspect of 'Experiencing Disability' that is the first topic for the Elective paper – so that what is the experience of disability, that comes to be read. I have given them quite a few books which include Ved Mehta, Tito Mukhopadhyay's book on Autism, Nancy Meyer, Lennard Davis, Shivani Gupta, Malini Chhib. These books do tell us about the phenomenology, at least. What I am trying to do is joining India with the West here.

I have a vision of Disability Studies, I would at least like and try to bring Elective courses in Disability just like there are in Education, and if approved, they could go to schools too.

**SK:** Before we conclude, what would be your message to disabled students and their parents and teachers?

**AG:** I think for the parents, I have to say, it is a difficult task. However, there is nothing in life that comes without struggle. And if we connect and relate, solidarity too comes. And if we are able to take struggle and solidarity together, we will be able to encourage our students as well – they need to realise that they are not helpless. As a friend says, "Don't fix us, we are not broken." As Psychology says – and I do, too – "to be normal, seems shockingly repellent to me." So it seems to me that to be "normal" is in itself a problem. All that I want to say is, do whatever you feel like – for instance, the slogan "nothing for us without us" and "no pity, no pity", "no charity, no charity". All this can be done. Let us understand that struggle is there for each and every human being. It is universal. And as my father would say – *"gaee na us ke muqaddar ki taareekii, phoonk diyaa jis ne apna ghar raushni ke liye/ Wahi to gul ke tabassum ka raaz samjhega, tamaam umr jo royaa ek aashiqui ke liye."* (One who has set his own house on fire in search of light, will for ever suffer the darkness of his fate/ Only the one who has cried a life time for love, will appreciate the secret of the smile of the flower.)

He used to say the same to me. As a woman I too have endured some sorrow – for instance, marriage is not something very romantic, I have come to understand this at least at this age. My father used to say, you just go on, move on, and just see what comes by. So that's it.

SK: Thank you very much. I wish you all the best for Disability Studies at AUD.

*(Translated from the original in Hindi by Ramnik Mohan. He works as a freelancer in the fields of translation and documentation.)*

## Endnotes

[1] Ghai, Anita. (2002). Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism, *Hypatia, 17.3*, 49-66.

[2] Ghai, Anita. (2001). Marginalisation and Disability: Expereinces from the Third World. In M. Priestley (Ed.) *Disability and the Life Course: Global Perspectives*, pp 26-37, Cambridge: CUP.

**Santosh Kumar** is pursuing his PhD on "Gender and Disability in Talk and Text" from the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi.
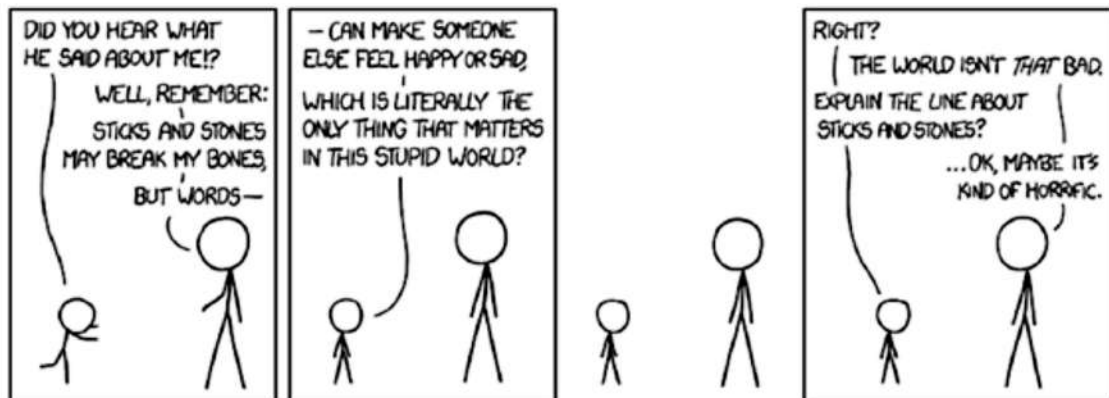
*santoshk.du@gmail.com*

# Landmarks

## But Words can Never Hurt me[1]:
## The Linguistic Construction of Disability in Text and Discourse

### In memory of Barleen Kaur (16.08.84 – 12.11.13)*
*Tanmoy Bhattacharya*



Retrieved from https://www.explainxkcd.com/wiki/index.php/1216:_Sticks_and_Stones

## Introduction

The baffled looks on the faces of teachers encountering the issue of disability in a classroom for the first time is largely due to our unpreparedness to accept that a "mixed" classroom may also include students with disabilities; we seem to be willing to stretch our definition of mixedness only as far as class, caste, ethnicity, race, and gender. What is it about disability that freezes us the moment we encounter it? I think in the heart of our hearts, we all know the answer but are unwilling to accept it even to ourselves. Disability is the only attribute of human condition that can happen to anyone at any time during one's lifetime, unlike race, ethnicity, etc. Is it possibly just a case of not being able to face up to our own possible future selves? There is no safety of a comforting thought such as *Thank God, I am not disabled.*

Thus, rather than doing something *for* a student with disability; it is more for our own selves that we must have more to do with disability than we are willing to. Understanding disability makes sense only from this perspective; it is not to understand the other but the self. The importance of "understanding" the representation of disability is yet another layer on top of understanding the self. The first step in understanding or rather approaching disability involves encountering the various surface forms of disability. These surface forms include the (in)visibility of the corporeal aspect of disability, including cognitive disability, and various representations of that corporeality. Within the corporeal aspect of disability, one of the longest-standing conceptualizations is the social construct of disability that views it as a disembodied environmental concern; specifically, disability is seen as a social

construct. The sociology of disability thus made the body with its impairment, invisible. With this invisibility, the representation of disability becomes challenging.

## The Technology of Representing Disability

A primary procedure of representing disability is through the process of "labelling", at the core of which lies the natural human propensity to name things, groups, people, objects, etc. Naming is essential for language to operate, however, the use of language through naming is a form of social action, as "naming" creates a world around our conversations; this is the performative aspect of language (e.g. the pronouncement "It's a girl", when a female child is born). Labelling has a social and a political aspect. Socially, it results in greater segregation and negativity and therefore surveillance; politically it is bestowed upon those with less power by the ones with more power. In the field of disability, professionals are sanctioned by society to impose labels on persons with disabilities. A disabling label brings a host of other related descriptive terms which are negative. For example, "victims", "sufferers", *bechara* ('helpless'), etc. Often, Persons with Disabilities (PwD) are implied as a homogenous group, e.g. "the blind", "the disabled", etc. In the domain of entitlements, they are always shown to have "needs" (rather than "rights"), e.g. the "need for a ramp".

Sometimes the labels seem positive on the surface, like "brave" and "extraordinary", giving the image that disabled people are superhuman and anything they achieve is praiseworthy. This is known as the "supercrip" phenomenon. Sometimes, the labels are expressed through stereotypes, e.g. one common stereotype is that blind people are talented singers/musicians. The well known American blind activist Kenneth Jernigan realized this very early and remarked drily: "The blind are simple, spiritual, musical; they have a special sixth sense; their other senses are more acute—in short, they are different and apart from the rest of society" (Jernigan, 1983, pp. 58-59). One the one hand, this process spectacularizes the difference from what is considered to be the normative, and on the other, the real motive behind this process seems to be an erasure of the real issues that face the persons labelled thus. This is clear in the case of the so-called positive stereotypes for blind people, as it hides the reality of the constraining social and educational system where very few blind students are either encouraged or allowed to choose science-related disciplines. Similarly *divyang* is an ascription, which although has come about from basic ignorance of disability issues and unfamiliarity with the reality of the life of a PwD in India, is also damaging from the perspective of erasing the struggle and the reality of disability in the country (see Chander, this issue, for a more detailed discussion on this). It has also come about from the same primitive desire to create the impression of doing something new by renaming or relabelling that which had given rise to the expression "differently abled" earlier. I do think that both these ascriptions are of the same nature as they accentuate the social function of segregation and the political functions of erasure of responsibilities of the State. This is however not without precedence in recent memory within the Indian context; the following are some of the examples:

> The "advice" given by the Governor of Uttarakhand, on the need for public awareness to awaken the people "to the love and not sympathy needed by these kids as God always compensates such people with extra abilities,"[2]

> "Children with special needs are unique individuals. Their uniqueness may be noticed in one or more of the following dimensions: vision, hearing, movement, …" (Dash, 2006, p. 3)

## Other Representational Technologies

Moving beyond the issue of labelling which directly connotes negativity and inferiority, there are other linguistic and literary devices that are often employed to connote negativity indirectly. Among the literary devices, rhetoric in general and metaphors in particular stand out.

Among the other representational procedures, one that pervades in representing disability is the use of disability terms metaphorically. Using disability as an analogy is quite common as a literary, journalistic, and performatory device. Examples include the following: lame idea, blind justice, dumb luck, feeling paralysed, argument falling on deaf ears, crippling, crazy, insane, idiotic, retarded, etc.[3] None of these signifying expressions imply positive interpretations. Thus, a lame idea is a bad or an ill-constructed idea[4]. Recently, somebody commented to a post on Facebook by Beth Ferri, ironically, a Professor of Inclusive Education at Syracuse University, by saying "the blind leading the blind". Again on Facebook, a friend recently posted: "Cataract is the third biggest cause of blindness. Religion and politics are the other two"; here, blindness is clearly equated with ignorance.

What lies behind such usages is the troubling concept of the rhetoric of ableism—a biased use of ableist language/concept, that is used deliberately to hurt the sentiments of PwDs. Abelist language can be seen at the same level as sexist or racist or casteist language, with the difference that those areas of bias have been admitted to be socially constructed and activism and awareness have worked to reduce such biases to a large extent, and yet in the case of ableist or disablist language, the practice continues.

Ableism is also at work behind many other cases of language use, where the implicature of the negativity of disability is even more indirect. Some idiomatic expressions, despite their lack of negative disability-oriented connotation as far as their intended meaning is concerned, are none-the-less ableist, since they take it for granted that movement of certain sort is the normative for positivity: "Stand up on your own two feet", to stay "one step ahead", "stand up for oneself", to take "one step at a time", to "hold one's head up high", etc.[5]

Even more indirect use of disability as a metaphor is seen in performances (TV, theatre, film, etc.). Ratan Thiyam's latest production of the Manipuri version of "Macbeth" was the opening play of the 18th *Bharat Rang Mahotsav* at Kamani Auditorium on 1 February 2016. In the scene where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth breakdown after they plot and kill King Duncan, they are taken away metaphorically in a couple of wheelchairs, with many other wheelchairs with dummies in various uncontrollable and deviant postures being wheeled around the stage. Of course, the scene got the loudest applause from the audience.

There are very specific areas of language structure that by default help carry out the ableist agenda of establishing the normative of ableism. Indexicals is an aspect of language structure that is inherently biased against blind people. Indexicals are expressions which are anaphoric (dependent) on the context of use. For example, pronominals such as *she, he, they, you, I, we*; demonstratives such as *this, that, those*; deictic expressions such as *here, there*, etc.; all of these expressions get their value depending on what the reference of that particular expression is in the context of the conversation. The value is often resolved by pointing. Such uses of indexicals can be completely exclusionary and establish an ableist bias.

However, mere policing of language use can never be the solution, the disability community must actively challenge ableist designs and reclaim the disability metaphors for themselves.

## The Role of Language in Definitions

The many-faceted feature of the concepts underlying the issue of disability has led to complications at several levels, not least of which is the use of various terms and definitions. This state of affairs sometimes leads to confusion, especially for practitioners who deal with disability and disabled persons. However, the same state of affairs is also frequently misused to deprive and to discriminate. For example, Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, Specific Learning Disabilities, etc., are not included in the list of disabilities in the current Act (PwD, 1995)[6], leading to much confusion and denial of entitlements that would have been otherwise due in hospitals, courts of law, educational institutions, public transport, etc.

Apart from the reason outlined earlier—the multi-facetedness of the concept underlying disability—there is also the obvious issue of the ever elusive neutrality of language itself. Due to its ever-changing nature and the possibility of personalized and privative semantics that words and phrases may engender, using an accurate expression is often impossible. For example, terms such as idiot, mentally challenged, handicapped, etc., have all been used as technical terms to label certain types of disability at one time or another, but fell into disuse due to the negative connotations that each of these terms acquired over time.

A rights-based movement in both UK and the US gave rise to two dominant usages (in English), namely, Disabled Persons and Persons with Disability (PwD), respectively. PwD is a predominantly American usage (now preferred in most countries and organizations) which highlights the person-hood of a disabled person, whereas "Disabled Persons" is predominantly a British usage that instead highlights the reality of the disability of the person involved in order to bring forth and display the disability of the person as his/her strongest identity; these usages have been appropriately called Person first and Disability first usages, respectively.

It is well-known (Bhattacharya, 2010, p. 18), that within the Indian context, the definition of disability emerged with the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1968, which has been identified as a visionary document in many senses. However, the term "handicap" has fallen into disuse now due to the acquisition of negative connotations, for instance, *having* a handicap has become *being* handicapped. At present, all the following terms are used in India in governmental policies, documents, Acts, signs, by the media, and common usage (their vernacular versions having equally negative connotations): handicapped, physical impairment, physically challenged, persons with disabilities, disabled persons, differently-abled. The last one has gained some currency due to a misconstrued ascription to its relative harmlessness. However, "different" is equally effective in marking out an "other" that all the other terms are accused of doing. Moreover, the perceived harmlessness of the term is misleading and the term is totally a-historic in its context.

On the other hand, the two dominant current usages the world over—PwD and Disabled persons—are historically associated with rights-based movements led by disabled persons in the 1970s or even earlier, which successfully brought about epoch-changing legislations in the field. Due to their historic associations, these two terms can be also used interchangeably.

## Prejudice and Stereotype in Disability Discourse

As a result of the prevailing terminology in disability, the discourse around disability is necessarily coloured by these terms of reference. Over a period, the usage of these terms has left an indelible mark in the form of prejudice, stereotype, and finally, discrimination

of PwDs. Prejudice and stereotype can be seen in action in our society at every level. It is also known that one leads to the other: "When prejudice takes on the form of a specific belief regarding a particular group, it is a stereotype" (Bogdan & Knoll, 1988, p. 67). In this section, I will briefly discuss my experiences at the Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC), University of Delhi, which highlight some of the prominent stereotypes of disability in general, and deafness and Sign Language (SL) in particular.

In my capacity as a member, and later coordinator of the EOC, I was responsible for introducing, designing, and running various short term courses at the EOC, typically lasting a semester. Students were admitted to these courses through an entrance test followed by an interview. One of the standard questions that were asked for the two Sign Language (A- and B-level) and "Disability and Human Rights" courses was: "Why do you want to do the course?" In an analysis of the responses given, the word "help" appeared 48 times, along with the following words which appeared with varied frequencies: "curiosity"; "burden"; "natural drawback"; "deformities"; "illiterate"; "prone to crime"; "dangerous"; "suffering/needy"; "helpless and unsupported"; "inner fear"; "lack of inner strength"; "good human being"; "very innocent"; "not blessed with"; "*aksham log*" (incapable people); "*asaamaanyaa*" (extraordinary/unequal); "deaf and dumb"; "speech organ defect". Some of these terms were self-assigned reasons for taking an interest in disability (e.g., "curiosity"). Others were terms ascribed to PwDs, most of which are copy-book illustrations of stereotypes and/or highlighting an inadequacy. Often, there was an attempt to evade categorization altogether.

The general disability stereotypes were tested by asking five questions, where students were asked to respond by either "Yes" or "No". Table 1 shows the result for a sample size of 152 students:

Table 1

*Stereotypes about Disability*

| Questions | Yes % | No % |
|---|---|---|
| (1) People with disabilities are naturally inferior. | 25 | 75 |
| (2) All deaf people can read lips. | 84.38 | 15.62 |
| (3) Blind people acquire a sixth sense. | 75 | 25 |
| (4) People with disabilities are more comfortable with "their own kind". | 65.63 | 34.37 |
| (5) People with disabilities are innocent. | 68.75 | 31.25 |

Answers to questions (2) and (4) clearly depict negative stereotypes with regards to deafness, and to a perceived herd mentality of disabled persons in general, while answers to questions (3) and (5) show so-called positive stereotyping, i.e. an affirmative answer to these questions may seem to be a positive ascription to people possessing these qualities, but as the Jernigan quote cited earlier shows, these ascriptions stem from the tendency to consider PwDs as somehow "special" or unique.

In order to test stereotypes with regards to SL, five questions were asked and students were asked to mark their response as "Yes" or "No". The following table shows the results in percentages:

Table 2

*Stereotypes About SL*

| Questions | Yes % | No % |
|---|---|---|
| (1) SL is not a complete language. | 63 | 37 |
| (2) SL is only a set of gestures. | 41 | 59 |
| (3) SL has no grammar. | 50 | 50 |
| (4) Deaf people cannot speak as they do not possess the necessary speech organs. | 43 | 57 |
| (5) Deaf students lack the mental capacity to learn at the same speed as other students. | 73 | 27 |

Table 2 clearly shows negative stereotypes about the linguistic status of SL in answers to questions (1) and (2). In addition, as is often the case, disability in one area is associated with

less ability in other areas as well; thus, deafness is associated with a lack in mental capacity (question 5).

It also became clear during the tests that the stereotypes influence how the groups/individuals think about themselves (Medgyesi, 1996, p. 44). Often PwDs identify a non-disabled person as "normal", thus strengthening the stereotype further. This tendency is reflected in comments such as, "we are not special but unique", and most astoundingly, "blindness helps us to increase our sixth sense."

### Teachers' Discourse[7]

The lexical ontology of a certain concept and the discourse of the practitioner surrounding that concept, are a window to the mind and they reveal much more than policies. The state of inclusive education, where out of 20,759 children with special needs in Delhi, 11,463 are out of school[8], the perspective of ontology and teachers' discourse confirms that it is a failure. As part of a symposium on disability, a panel discussion on Inclusive Education was held on 29th September 2012 at the Institute of Development Studies (IDSK), Kolkata. The principal of a famous school who proudly proclaimed that they practised inclusion in their teaching/learning, used many objectionable words in her opening remarks. The following is a list of the lexical items and phrases used by her:

Single words: "help"; "challenge"; "symptoms"; "wheelchair bound"; "suffering";

Phrases/clauses: "They do things like throwing things, etc."; "When they start socializing then they have a problem"; "We help them out"; "Needs help"; "They prefer working alone"; "We select the star child mong them", etc.

A teacher from another school who is involved with inclusive education talked about a child "suffering" from Asperger's, and how "*they don't easily mingle*". She also talked about "praising the star children". Another teacher, who is a theatre person working with "special" children, talked about how the children "suffer" from "acute problems". Furthermore, he was amazed at the "tremendous hearing and smelling ability of blind people". Thus, prejudices and stereotypes are rampant even among the so-called "experts" dealing with "special" children.

So long as *they* have a *problem*, those 11,463 children are destined to remain outside school.

### Intervention at the School Level

The failure to approach disability from an epistemological, or at least a rights-based approach, has led to a formal and informal labelling of children in special schools or with "special needs". This in turn has put undue pressure on the small minority of special educators, as a result of which there has been a higher rate of school dropouts in the case of disabled children. Intervention at the school level as far as the education of students with disability is concerned is an essential step, given the extremely low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of students with disabilities in higher education, even in premiere institutes of the country. One of the major concerns with regard to low enrolment is the lack of efforts made at school level to disseminate information with respect to entitlements and provisions for students with disabilities at college/university level. In addition, early dropouts reduce the number of students with disabilities even further, with the result that very few students end up graduating to higher secondary level.

In 2011, I conducted six workshops with 300 resource teachers or special educators from all the districts and zones of Delhi in order to increase the intake of students at the university

level. The problems and issues that surfaced included travails of disability certification, large numbers of students assigned per teacher, lack of cross-disability training, rigidity of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) syllabus, attitude of authorities, lack of vocational training, etc. Special educators are most often assigned to different schools to look after students with disabilities, and sometimes they are assigned six or more schools per week, where the number of students handled each week can be more than 300 across various disability categories. This easily leads to over-work and less time devoted per child. Moreover, these teachers were not given cross-disability training during their graduation degree/diploma programme of B.Ed. in Special Education, thereby making them unqualified to handle all categories of disabilities together. In addition, they are often asked to substitute for teachers of other subjects, thus cutting into the workload of an already over-worked staff. All this combined with poor salaries, lack of incentives, inadequate travel allowances and no payments for summer vacation, makes the task of a special educator almost impossible. Exploitation of these teachers by the school principals, makes it even less attractive as a career.

One of the main issues that I believe contributes to the failure of school education of children with disabilities to a large extent, is the manner of training imparted to the special educators. For example, all the B.Ed. Special Education programmes are run as per the syllabus prescribed by the RCI, which is in dire need of revision. For example, the RCI syllabus for B.Ed. Special Education (Hearing Impaired) still practices the ancient method of speech training or "Oralism" as far as teaching Deaf students are concerned. The present RCI syllabus assigns exactly 3.25% of the total time of the course to Sign Language, contra Article 24(3)b of the UNCRPD[9] (on facilitating learning of SL and promoting linguistic identity of the Deaf community). Therefore, a revision of the syllabus from this perspective is urgently required before greater harm is caused.

## Conclusion

The task ahead therefore involves the first step of identifying language use in a classroom context and outside that has the power to marginalize disabled students, be they direct terms or indirect metaphoric terms. Based on this, a "linguistic etiquette" can be maintained which can have transformative potentials as far as empowering a marginalized group of students is concerned. However, most significantly, such a step can also bring about alternative text interpretations in class where new knowledge may initiate by centring disability (Bhattacharya, 2014, forthcoming). Finally, training and working conditions of special educators must be revised to enable more inclusive training and better work schedules.

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*\*Barleen Kaur passed away very suddenly at 29. She taught English at Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi and also taught English communication to students with disabilities at the Equal Opportunity Cell. It was from Barleen that I learnt many things about teaching English communication to disabled students, especially about a boy with cerebral palsy, who excelled in her class and was clearly the most organised student in the whole class. Barleen taught us that we do not need special courses or even special ways of teaching English, but rather a new way of looking at what English teaching really means.*

**Endnotes**

[1] The title here refers to the relevant second line of an old English rhyme, the earliest citation of which has been found in an American periodical for mainly black audience, The Christian Recorder, March 1862: 'Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me'. Retrieved from http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/sticks-and-stones-may-break-my-bones.html

[2] The Governor at that time was Margaret Alva, reported in *The Hindu* (Delhi Edition), 4 December 2009, p. 5.

[3] For examples of equivalents in vernacular languages, see Kumar (forthcoming) for an analysis of Hindi proverbs that are ridden with disability-biased expressions.

[4] See Ben-Moshe (2005) for more such interpretations.

[5] See Brignell (2007) for more examples of this sort.

[6] The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995

[7] Part of the data in this section was presented in Bhattacharya (2014).

[8] Figures provided by the Directorate of Education, Delhi in response to an RTI filed by Khagesh Jha; reposted in *Times of India*, 18 October 2013.

[9] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Tanmoy Bhattacharya** teaches Linguistics at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Linguistics, University of Delhi. Within the field of disability, he works on sign language, inclusive education, and disability studies.
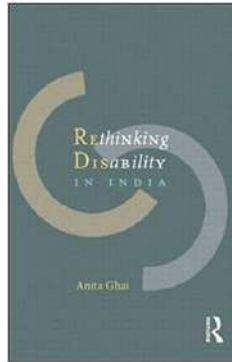
*tanmoy1@gmail.com*

# Book Reviews

**Rethinking Disability in India,** New Delhi: Routledge. (364 Pages). Anita Ghai (2015). ISBN: 978-1-138-02029-0

**Reviewed by: Tanmoy Bhattacharya**

"You can't judge a book by its cover", they say, but in case of the book under review, *Rethinking Disability in India*—henceforth referred to as *Rethinking*, exactly the opposite is true. There are at least two things on the minimalist cover that signify subversion and reframing. The first is the mixed style in the fonts used for the first part of the title of the book, namely, "Rᴇ*thi*ɴ*ki*ɴɢ Dɪsᴀ*bili*ʏ", where small and capital letters have been mixed as well as italicized non-uniformly. Although this is not exactly novel[1], it does communicate the intended symbolization. I have been using a mixed font style for an easy understanding of the idea of "Integrative Difference" (Figure 1), using the autological style of representation, where the word itself, or in this case the fonts used in the word, denote the idea that the word captures:



*Figure 1.* An autological representation of the concept of "difference"

The second point refers to the graphic design of the two horseshoe shapes that are out of sync, that is, they do not meet at either end, symbolizing rethinking, but a rethinking that does not provide the succour of a complete circle. To subvert the notion of a *normate*, a socially determined concept of a normal individual first coined in Garland-Thomson (1997), often what is employed is disabilism—a set of assumptions to promote the practice of unequal treatment on the basis of actual or presumed disabilities (Campbell, 2009, p. 4). However, disabilism re-inscribes disability on the body of the disabled, thereby applying an able-bodied lens or voice towards disability. Instead, disability scholars are now moving towards the new concept of *ableism*—the normality which-is-to-be-assumed (Shakespeare, 1999). Thus the strategy should be to reverse/invert the traditional approach and study instead the production, operation and maintenance of ableism, which has been aptly termed studying the "pathologies of non-disablement" (Hughes, 2007). So the reframing that the out-of-sync horseshoe indicates is that of ontological reframing.

Overboe (1999) and Campbell (2001) also point to the phenomenon of compulsive—the compulsion to pass off as a non-disabled—and they attribute "ableistnormativity" as the concept that works behind this phenomenon. In *Rethinking*, Anita Ghai makes it absolutely clear that disability *is* the badge of honour for her, when she discusses in great detail her narrative of disability right in the first chapter, after the introduction. This strategy was also employed in Ghai's first book in 2003 *(Dis)embodied Forms: Issues of Disabled Women* and is reminiscent of the opening lines of Paul Hunt's celebrated essay of 1966 "A Critical Condition":

> All my adult life has been spent in institutions amongst people, who, like myself, have severe and often progressive disabilities. We

are paralysed and deformed, most of us in wheelchairs, either as the result of accidents or of diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy and polio. So naturally this personal experience forms a background to the views on disability that follow.

(Hunt, 1966, p. 145)

This approach is also the basis of disability-first terminology proffered by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation or UPIAS of the 1970's (UPIAS, 1976, p. 3). Ghai too adopts this approach in the present book when she states—"… I have used the term – disabled individual thus placing the disability as the first categorical representation of that person/woman." (p. 84). Dan Goodley, a well-known disability scholar, expresses a similar thought in his rather precise foreword when he says: "As with earlier writing (Ghai, 2002) she is keen always to foreground her own personal, local and national context …" (page x).

In fact this quote can be interpreted to also highlight that it is not only the presence of the personal identity that Ghai is interested in, but also the local and national, making this positioning quite different from that of the western scholars for whom the personal is supreme. Anita Ghai's activism too therefore takes a wider national and local form, placing it well within the framework of the struggles and movements in other spheres of oppression in India. The structure of the chapters within the book is also reflective of this journey from the personal (Chapter 1) to political (Chapter 7) and paradigm shifts (Chapter 8). This approach to disability is the chosen vantage point in the book as well, for example, when Ghai quotes work in other domains within India and admits that community is a hierarchically higher unit than the individual. However, almost immediately, Ghai point out that "such an understanding of disability needs to be problematized" (p. 25). This, I think, is an

important point that needs to find a greater echo within the community of disability studies scholars in India; especially because it has a history which is specific to disability scholarship in general. Within the social model of disability, where disability is considered as a social construct, emerged as it has from the UPIAS positioning (as stated earlier), there were voices from women with disability about a total lack of the personal in such a social constructionist positioning. Being a feminist as well as a disability scholar/activist, Ghai therefore straddles both domains easily and can envision the shape of disability scholarship to come.

Ghai also expresses concern about the insufficient engagement of the discourse of disability with the diagnostic system, in the sense that the former does not reflect a concern with the latter (p. 78). She feels this very strongly for it is a thread or voice that resonates throughout the text. I think, this can be a very good example of disability writing and/or lives as sites of epistemology, because diagnosis in general has a very wide concern and cuts across at least age and gender, which too have a disability connection, for example, in dementia and fertility, respectively. The gendered nature of disability oppression comes out very clearly in her detailed discussions in Chapters 4 and 5 ("At the Periphery: Marginalized Disabled Lives" and "Mystifying Realities: Right to Life"). In these chapters, she presents a wide range of categories that intersect with disability, such as caste, class, and gender. According to Ghai, the impact of this essential intersective nature of disability can be seen, in education (p. 111), employment (p. 128), sexuality (p. 152), foetus selection (p. 167) and motherhood (p. 191), among others. Chapter 5 is especially very rich in issues that are often shoved under the carpet, as a result of which the emerging field of Bioethics is yet to take into consideration a disability perspective in India.

However, it is chapters 6-8 that define the core issue that the book as a whole reflects. Chapter 6 ("Theorizing Disability") especially is where Ghai slides into her academic persona effortlessly, and since Disability Studies (like Gender Studies) is a field where research and activism must constantly inspire each other, such a traffic between the two is welcome[2]. Theory here is seen as a healer, but the consequences of the metaphysical understanding of disability (p. 221) are wider, as it provides possibilities of emancipation for even those "who are unwittingly trapped in their 'normality'" (p. 222); the author is hoping, through these pages, for an identity construction where both the disabled and those trapped in their normality are involved. Her stance on "passing" (the attempt to "pass off" as non-disabled) is particularly educative in showing that *not* to assimilate with the mainstream is an option, the essence of that sentiment being captured in the opinion that 'masquerades' indicate an existing system of oppression. Though not highlighted enough, such crucial connections define a scholarly engagement, sometimes hidden in the overgrowth.

I will end this review first with a critique and then point out a philosophical issue that I would like to believe should concern us all in the near future. Knowing that Anita wears among her many hats, the hat of a psychologist—a hat that is her primary academic identity—I am a tad disappointed that more individual and group psychological issues in connection with disability have not been discussed with more academic rigour. For example, in discussing terminology, the dehumanizing and almost unethical effects of behaviourism do not find a place in her analysis; naming the enemy, as she knows very well, is equally important. Within the politics of disability concerning social justice that the book engenders, the discussion is mostly framed in the formative model, pointing out the inequity in access to opportunities, but not the distributive injustice, which would require a discussion of a larger socio-economic network of denial of social justice.

With regard to the bigger philosophical issue, I believe that any work on categories will have to deal with the issue of categories in our minds, and not just in our various cultures. Aristotle had said that if the wind picks you up and blows you somewhere you don't want to go, your going there shouldn't be praised or blamed as it was involuntary[3]. But is it really? As I have argued recently, "Extended Denial is also true of the potential perpetrator—every equalist is in denial, inside their minds they are constantly fighting off the shadow and keeping it at bay" (Bhattacharya, 2016). Are we not blameworthy for spontaneous, uncontrolled, unnoticeable ableism? In this connection, let me end with a part of the popular song from 1969 by Peter Sarstedt:

But where do you go to my lovely

When you're alone in your bed

Tell me the thoughts that surround you

I want to look inside your head …

The book is otherwise flawless and should find a place in every library. However, the copy-editing and proofreading of the book leave much to be desired; I have spotted at least 50 glaring mistakes in it. There are typographic and other errors that are simply not expected from a reputed publisher such as Routledge. I hope the publishers will take steps to remove all these errors in any future editions of the book.

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**Endnotes**

[1] This stylistic device was first used in the disability context in India in the presentation "Are We All Alike? Questioning the Pathologies of the *Normate*" made at the "Inequalities in India" conference held at the University of Delhi on 28 November 2014.

[2] Although in a discussion following a book launch event for Anita Ghai's present book on 14 May 2015 at the India International Centre, New Delhi (see a report of the event in the Reports this issue ), I had sounded a critical note about the activist/scholar mix not being ideal. I have grown to appreciate it in disability writing by scholars who are themselves disabled.

[3] From Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1 retrieved web-version from http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.3.iii.html

**Tanmoy Bhattacharya** teaches Linguistics at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Linguistics, University of Delhi. Within the field of disability, he works on sign language, inclusive education, and disability studies.
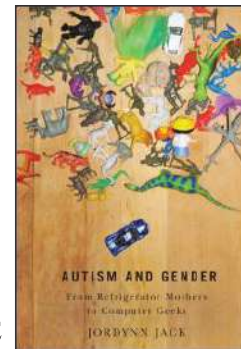
*tanmoy1@gmail.com*

**Autism and Gender: From Refrigerator Mothers to Computer Geek.** Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois, pp 320.

Jordynn Jack (2014).

ISBN: 978-0-252-03837-2 (Hardback)

**Reviewed by: Santosh Kumar**

*Autism and Gender* is the outcome of a workshop on "Science and its Publics" at the Rhetoric Society of American Summer Institute at Pennsylvania State University. The discourse on autism has so far been dominated by a medical perspective. The medical model of disability situates disability in the individual and suggests medical intervention, which leaves not only a gap between the knowledge of autism and the experience of individuals and people around them, "but stories as well: stories about children affected, about parents struggling to come to terms with a diagnosis, about autistic individuals and their lives" (pp. 1-2).

This book offers an engaging account of how gender intersects with other discursively

constituted factors such as parenthood (maternity and paternity), expertise (especially technical, medical, and scientific), occupation, social status (popularity and geekdom), and neurological conditions (p. 13). It also extends the argument of women's rhetoric in which gender has been understood to be enacted through writing. The author further explores feminist science studies which are entrenched within biased scientific knowledge about gender; she believes that gender analysis can strengthen the science (p. 15).

The book is divided into five chapters excluding the Introduction and the Conclusion. In the introduction, "Autism's Gendered Character", the author familiarizes the readers with the different nuances of definitions of autism. The aim is to examine the different models of definitions of autism and to see the ways in which gender has been used as a resource to constitute these definitions (p. 6). The chapter presents a survey of medical, psychiatric, neurodiverse, biomedical, historical and cultural definitions by taking into consideration the perspectives of the different stakeholders in the debate on autism. The author presents a rhetorical history of gender in autism discourse from which the subtitle of the book, *From Refrigerator Mothers to Computer Geeks* emerges.

In the first chapter, "Interpreting Gender: Refrigerator Mothers", the author traces the role of mothers of autistic children. The gendered character of refrigerator mothers provided an interpretive lens through which experts in the field perceived autism as a unique disorder when it was first diagnosed. During the 1950s, mothers of autistic children were often referred to as "refrigerator mothers" as they did not show enough bond or connection with their child. The gender axis became evident when doctors prescribed psychological consultation for such mothers. The author brings

forth the character of refrigerator mothers in contemporary autism research involving parent-child interactions, bonding, stress, and attachment. In the subsection "Interpreting Mothers", the author shows that the historical tendancy to understand autism through the character of the cold and anxious mother stems from the vast range of literature which often decodes the stereotype of the cold mother.

The second chapter "Performing Gender: Mother Warriors" presents the history of mothers who took a stand on autism and its causes in public discourse and challenged the dominant understanding of autism as a genetic neurological condition. This was a kind of collective response by some celebrity mothers of autistic children to the previous interpretation of "refrigerator mother". Accordingly, mothers of autistic children were encouraged to envision themselves as fighters and superheroes. This chapter consists of four sections, the first section deals with total motherhood and its source, dissecting the character of the total autism mother and how it has been constructed and circulated. The second section presents memoirs of mothers of autistic children. The third section deals with the illustration of the image of the mother warrior character spread across blogs, magazines and websites. The final section talks about the importance of responding to mothers' arguments by the scientific community. There is an argument between the rhetorical force of mother warrior characters and paternalistic doctors that relies on emotional appeals. However, in the debate on vaccination, the mothers of autistic children and the doctors are often pitted against each other; they use the emotional and ethical appeal to provoke the readers into action.

The third chapter, "Presenting Gender: Computer Geek" examines how a different character has been presented as an alternative explanation of the causes and nature of autism. This chapter

introduces the stock character of "computer geek" which "emerged from a rhetorical landscape in which commonplaces about masculinity, males, geeks, and technology are already in place" (p. 106), and came to the forefront in an economic context driven by the internet era of the 1990s. From Mark Zuckerberg to Bill Gates, this stock characterization of autism led to claims such as "there would be no Silicon Valley without autistic people" (p. 106). The author engagingly considers the rhetorical context for this stock portrayal in the rest of the chapter. She argues that the prominence of stock characters as male geeks and nerds in television, literature, and film led to making of these characters trope of autistic people mistaking the part for the whole (p. 153). This kind of approach ignores the reality of autism disorder spectrum (ADS).

Chapter 4, "Rehearsing Gender: Autism Dads" brings a fresh perspective on autism research. It shifts the focus on the male presence, especially that of the fathers in autism research which has so far been overlooked in literature. Instead, a skewed overemphasis on the role of the father created a character type—fathers of autistic children were marked as "obsessive, detached, and humorless individuals" and "perfectionistic to the extreme, occupied with detailed minutiae to the exclusion of concern for over-all meanings" (p. 155). This chapter is built on the accounts written by fathers who use autobiographical writing to rehearse new, authoritative characters in their own lives and in public discourse. The author however finds a lacuna in the existing research as there is an absence of narratives from homosexual fathers. It is important to note that autistic people often include alternative gender identification and sexual preferences in their accounts.

The last chapter before the conclusion considers how autistic people understand gender, identity, and sexuality which are contrary to the contemporary theories on gender. Chapter 5, "Inventing Gender: Neurodiverse Character" rightly highlights the diversity of the cognitive abilities of autistic people. The author presents a different set of characters from the accounts written by autistic people who embrace multiple configurations of sex, gender, and sexuality through the lenses of rhetoric and neurodiversity. The chapter ends with advice which often seeks to shore up normative gender roles for autistic individuals, especially in the case of girls. However, this mainstream advice is not authored by autistic individuals, which means that it is a kind of policing of gender through a process of remediation which "limit the potentially transformative insights that might be gleaned from autistic individuals and their experiences" (p. 213). The author argues that the contemporary theories of gender are not sufficient to account for the range of insights autistic people offer. We might draw from autistic people "an understanding of gender as identification, as a neurological condition or capacity, as performance, and as idiosyncratic" (ibid). The subsection "Gender, Character, and Rhetoric" highlights the parts each concept plays in understanding autism. The concluding part of the book categorically highlights the implications of this contribution in the field of autism, gender, rhetorics of health and medicine. The author concludes by saying that the gendered characters examined in this study are in part responsible for making autism a target for remedy.

To summarize, this book thoroughly examines how gendered characters emerge in the discourse on autism in terms of the theories about autism and its causes, and the ways to treat it. It also involves people who speak and write about autism. However, these characters are interpreted, performed, presented, rehearsed and invented through rhetorical actions that approach autism as a problem that has to be

fixed. This book adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on research in the area of feminist science studies, cultural and rhetorical studies of medicine, and disability studies. This approach is also helpful in understanding the role of language which shapes our conceptions of health and wellness. The author acknowledges that the focus on gender has narrowed the scope of other aspects of autism (p. 30). However, for educators, the enriched understanding of the rhetorical theory of autism challenges their pedagogies with regard to autistic students and their abilities. The author seeks to examine the ways in which rhetorics deploy gendered characters in discussions about autism through the history of gender in autism discourse. This book is a vivid journey of autism discourse with authentic accounts to understand autism. In India, autism has not got much prominence especially in mainstream educational discourses. The present contribution therefore enriches our understanding as teachers, and pushes us to consider the various aspects discussed in the book while dealing with autistic children in the classroom in particular and disabled children in general.
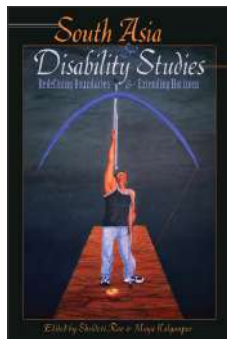
**Santosh Kumar** is pursuing his PhD on "Gender and Disability in Talk and Text" from the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi.

*santoshk.du@gmail.com*

# Suggested Readings

**South Asia Disability Studies: Redefining Boundaries and Extending Horizons.**

Disability Studies in Education, Vol 15. Moosstrasse: Peter lang. (311 pages).

Rao, Shridevi and Kalyanpur, Maya (Eds.). (2015).

ISBN: 978-1-4331-1911-8 (hardback)

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ISSN: 1548-7210

South Asia Disability Studies is the 15th volume of the series "Disability Studies in Education". It is a new and a welcome addition to the growing knowledge base of disability studies in South Asia. The editors of this volume, Shridevi Rao and Maya Kalyanpur, both have PhDs in special education from Syracuse University, which has a well known programme in Disability Studies as well as Inclusive Education, and is known to have produced a fair number of graduates in disability issues from South Asia in general. The book has a South Asian flavour owing to contributions from Fiona Kumari Campbell on Sri Lanka, Chitra Gurung on Nepal, Tehmina Hammad and Nidhi Singal on Pakistan, and M. Miles on all regions of South Asia. The remaining chapters authored by the two editors and Shilpaa Anand focus on India.

On the whole, the book deals with the social, economic, cultural, and historical perspectives of the experience of disability in South Asia. It focuses on the lived experience of people with disabilities and its intersection with caste, class and gender that impact their educational opportunities. In terms of its theoretical stance, the volume is situated at the intersection of disability studies and disability studies in education. Disability studies in education examines how dominant constructions of disability that are entrenched in educational practices, facilitate marginalization of children with disabilities.

The thirteen chapters of the book are distributed under five sections. Section I is entitled "Introduction" and has two chapters which have been penned by the editors jointly (Chapter 1) and Shridevi Rao (Chapter 2). Together, these chapters provide a comprehensive overview of what disability studies can do for disability in south Asia and conversely, how the disability experiences of South Asia can inform and broaden the framework of disability studies in general.

Section II is entitled "South Asia and Disability Policy" and comprises three chapters on how disability in south Asia is framed within the context of policy, development, provisions, and the aid agenda.

Section III is about understanding the historical and cultural contexts of disability in South Asia and the different ways in which they influence disability and its interpretations. The role of local languages in these contexts has been discussed in detail. It comprises three chapters.

Section IV is devoted to the much discussed notion of the identity of PwDs in South Asia, and focuses on women with disabilities and families of children with disabilities; it comprises four chapters.

Section V includes the concluding chapter written by the editors, who argue that the social model of disability may conflict with the contextual realities of South Asia which define

disability constructions differently, especially taking into consideration factors such as colonialism, neoliberalism, development, and internal conflict.

**Tanmoy Bhattacharya** teaches Linguistics at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Linguistics, University of Delhi. Within the field of disability, he works on sign language, inclusive education, and disability studies.

*tanmoy1@gmail.com*

## Communication Options and Students with Deafness.

Delhi: Rehabilitation Council of India. (103 pages).

Rehabilitation Council of India. (2011).

No ISBN number

The field of deaf education is mired in debates and confusion over the best option for communication for deaf students. Schools and teachers often lack clarity on the theoretical foundations of the three main communication options—oralism, total communication, and educational bilingualism—and how to implement them. The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) has therefore developed this manual on communication options, to guide the schools and teachers in choosing the appropriate communication method for their students and implementing it effectively.

Chapters one to five by Asmita Huddar, Prabha Ghate, and R. Rangasayee provide the necessary background for the topic of communication options for students with deafness by describing the key concepts as well as by providing a review of the special education school system for deaf students. A brief introduction to the three communication options

has also been given along with the difference between sign languages and sign systems.

The next three chapters describe each of the three methods in detail. In chapter six, Sister Rita Mary and Saraswathi Narayanaswami focus on oralism, in chapter seven Prabha Ghate and Nisha Grover look at total communication and chapter eight on educational bilingualism has contributions by Surinder Randhawa, Sibaji Panda, and Monica Punjabi Verma.

Each chapter is similarly structured, with the meaning and scope of the method explained first, followed by its strengths and challenges. The prerequisites for the success of the method and how to make schools more conducive to a particular method have also been addressed. If these prerequisites are not met with, the chosen method cannot produce good results. For example, oralism cannot work if appropriate amplification is not provided, and educational bilingualism cannot work if the teachers are not trained in Indian Sign Language. The final part of each chapter gives the training avenues available to the students.

Chapter nine goes on to list some do's and don'ts related to communication options, literacy development, language assessment and subject teaching for schools and teachers. For example, teachers are advised to avoid content reduction while teaching subjects as it may adversely affect educational development. In Chapter ten, there is some more advice to schools on taking decisions and improving their implementation.

This manual is useful for anyone working with deaf children as it provides a balanced view of all three communication methods and how they can be implemented effectively. For each method, the theoretical and practical reasoning has also been explained. The manual emphasizes that no one method is appropriate for all deaf children and each method has its strengths and weaknesses.

**Andesha Mangla** is doing PhD in Linguistics from Delhi University. She has earlier taught in the BA in Applied Sign Language Studies programme for Deaf students at IGNOU. Her research interests include deaf education, language teaching and sign language linguistics.

*andesha_m@yahoo.co.in*

# 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 learning and teaching.

Papers are invited for the forthcoming issues (LLT 11 onwards). The references must be complete in ALL respects, and must follow the APA style sheet. Papers may address any aspect of language or language-teaching. They MUST be written in a style that is easily accessible to school teachers, who are the primary target audience of this periodical. The articles may focus on the learner, teacher, materials, teacher training, learning environment, evaluation, or policy issues. Activities focusing on different languages are also invited. The article must be original and should not have been submitted for publication anywhere else. A statement to this effect must be sent along with the article.

*The upper word limit (including the references and a short bio-note) for different sections of LLT is:*

**Articles: 2200; Interview: 2500; Landmarks: 2700**

**Book Reviews: 1200; Suggested Readings: 500; Classroom Activities: 600; Reports: 700**

*(You are requested to stick to the above word limit.)*

**Papers must be submitted as word document in MS Office 7. Please send the fonts along with the paper if any special fonts are used. For images, please send jpeg files.**

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.co

*They may also be posted to:*

Vidya Bhawan Society, Fatehpura

Udaipur 313004

Rajasthan, India

# Classroom Activities

**Activities Using Chits (Especially for Deaf Children)**

**Objective** – Practice and revise vocabulary

**Level** – Beginners

**Material** – Slips/chits of papers with vocabulary terms written on them

**Activity 1: Family Terms**

**Procedure:**

1. Make 5 sets of chits with family and kinship terms written on them.
2. Distribute one set to each group. Ask them to paste the chits on a plain paper in a hierarchical manner to make a family tree.
3. The activity can be extended by asking the students to write down the names of their family members in the same format.

**Activity 2: Household Items and Furniture**

**Procedure:**

1. Make paper slips (5 sets) with names of household items and some bigger slips to denote headings for the household items with "kitchen", "bathroom", "living room", "bedroom" and "house" written on each.
2. Make 5 groups. Each group is given a set of paper slips of the household items and another set with the names of headings.
3. Ask the students to read the slips and group them under the heading where they belong, i.e. bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room or house.
4. The teacher can write the headings on the board. Ask one student from each group to come up and write the words under one heading, another group under another heading and so on.

**Activity 3: Colour Terms**

**Procedure:**

1. Make two sets of slips—write the names of different colours on one set and on the other set, write the names of things that match the colours.
2. Distribute the chits so that some students have chits with the names of colours, and the others have chits with the names of things on them.
3. Ask the students to move around and find the person who has the chit with the colour matching the object on their slip (e.g. yellow-sun). One colour term may be matched with several items.

**Activity 4: Number Names**

**Procedure:**

1. Make slips with number names from one to thirty, then forty, fifty, and so on till hundred.
2. Divide students into groups with 3-4 students per group. Distribute the slips from one-ten to one group, eleven-twenty to another group, twenty one-thirty to a third group and so on.
3. Ask the students to read the numbers and arrange them in order from the lowest to the highest.
4. Ask students from each group to come up and write the numbers in order on the board.

**Activity 5: Revision of Vocabulary Themes**

**Procedure:**

1. Divide the class into five groups. Give each group a vocabulary topic and a set of chits with vocabulary terms written on them. Ask one student to pick up a chit, read the word (without showing it to the other team members) and sign it. The other students in the group have to write down the word. The

student who signed the word checks that the other students have written the word correctly. Then next student picks up the next chit and signs the word. And so on. The topic can be announced by the teacher. If students are not able to write the correct English term, then hints could be given. For example, the first letter of the word

2. After each group has completed their topic, give them a different topic.

3. This activity will help revise several topics and will involve all students.

## Outcome/Discussion

The chits can be used in a variety of ways and are very useful for deaf children who need exposure to written terms to develop their vocabulary. Doing the activities requires them to read the word on the slip and figure out its meaning and build relations with the other terms, thereby helping to create a semantic network.

## Activity: Story Using the PVR Method

Preview View Review (PVR) is a bilingual strategy that is used to make content in a second language comprehensible to language learners by using their first language to preview and then review the lesson. It also helps to develop literacy skills in the second language.

**Objective:** To develop reading comprehension skills

**Level**: Beginners

**Material:** Story entitled "Aaloo Maaloo Kaaloo"

Retrieved from https://storyweaver.org.in/stories/196-aaloo-maaloo-kaaloo

## Procedure:

### Preview (Discussion in Indian Sign Language)

1. Show the cover page of the book and ask the students to guess who Aaloo, Maaloo, and Kaaloo are.

2. Give the students a brief background of the story: The story is about a boy and his dog and their search for potatoes.

3. Ask some questions to build an interest in the story: Have you seen vegetables being grown? Do you have farms in your villages? Do you know how potatoes are grown?

### View (Reading the English text)

1. Divide the students into groups of maximum 4 students per group.

2. Give each group a printout of the story.

3. Ask the students to read and discuss the story.

4. Ask them to also discuss the meanings of the new words from the story.

### Review (Discussion in Indian Sign Language)

1. Whole class discussion - After all groups have read the story, ask one person from a group to explain the beginning of the story. Then ask another student from another group to explain the next part, and so on.

2. Ask questions to check comprehension of the story: Why did Maaloo yell? Why couldn't he find the potatoes?

3. Ask further questions that require thinking in the real world context: Which other vegetables grow underground? Why do you think Kaaloo found the potatoes and not Maaloo?

**Variations:**

a) Ask the students to write a summary of the story.

b) After the students have understood the story, ask them to enact the story.

**V-shesh** is a social enterprise working with people with disabilities. The deaf teacher (Sakshi Aggarwal) and hearing teachers (Annu Gautam, Kanchan Kashyap and Neha Kulshreshtha) teach English to deaf students in middle and secondary school using Indian Sign Language as the medium of instruction.

*sakshi@v-shesh.com, annu@v-shesh.com, kanchan@v-shesh.com, neha@v-shesh.com*

## Activity: Find the Meaning

**Objective:** To help students develop dictionary-using skills, thereby improving their English reading writing skills.

**Level**: Class 11

**Materials**: Smartphone with a working internet connection/Oxford Pocket Dictionary, Blackboard, Chalk, Notebooks, and pens

## Procedure:

Web search a new word on the smartphone and use the dictionary to understand its meaning to develop reading skills

1. Start with any short story in English related to the lives of the students. For example, a visit to a historical monument.

2. Discuss the story in ISL.

3. Write a new word from the English story that hasn't been discussed before in class on the board. Ask the students the meaning of the word. Allow them to explain the meaning. If it is wrong, ask them to look for the meaning of the word in the dictionary.

4. Some students may find a meaning that does not match the context of the story.

5. Encourage a variety of answers and discuss how they relate to the context.

6. Also ask the students to do an internet search on the smartphone using Google Images. Instruct the students on how to do it.

7. Students can figure out the meaning and concept by referring to the images that come up in the search and by using the dictionary.

**Outcome:** This activity helps children to develop independent learning skills by using a simple smartphone and a dictionary. Students can compete with each other in coming up with a good story and the correct answer. Also, this activity gives the students the freedom to use a phone in class, which is enjoyed by all.

**Sachin Singh**, deaf since birth, is a graduate of the BA in Applied Sign Language Studies programme of the University of Central Lancashire. He is a teacher at Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow. He teaches ISL to staff and English to Deaf students.

*sachinsilentsiren@gmail.com*

## Activity: Sign Language and Written Language

**Objective**: To practice simple present tense

Deaf students are taught the similarities and differences between the structures of the sign language that they use and written language to help them build language awareness and develop writing skills.

**Level:** Class 5 upwards

**Materials:** Board, chalk

**Procedure:**

1.  Ask the students to come up one by one and write a verb on the board. Once there are 15-20 verbs on the board, ask the students the meaning of each verb in ISL.

2.  Write a sentence on the board with the simple present tense of the verbs already discussed (e.g. You play) and ask a student for its ISL translation. Do this for about 10 sentences.

3.  Sign a sentence (e.g. She plays) and ask a student to come up and write the translation in English. Ask the other students whether it is right or wrong. Again, do this for about 10 sentences.

4.  Ask the students to work in pairs. The students have to repeat the activity with one student signing a sentence and the other student translating it into English and vice versa.

**Tushar Viradiya** works as a research assistant for the Peer-to-Peer Deaf Literacy project of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), UK, and the National Institute of Speech and Hearing, Kerala. Deaf since birth, he completed BA in Applied Sign Language Studies and his interests include language teaching and deaf education.

*tushar.viradiya2001@gmail.com*

# Reports

## Know me, Teach me: Annual Training Workshop

By Action For Autism, National Centre for Autism in India

29 September - 1 October 2015, Delhi

*Andesha Mangla* and *Santosh Kumar*

This annual three-day training workshop was conducted by Action For Autism (AFA), for parents of children with autism, professionals working with children with autism, and those who are interested in learning about it. AFA is a non-profit organization comprising people with autism and their parents, that strives to fight for the rights of people with autism. It has a range of interventional and educational programmes for children, training programmes for adults and family support services. The workshop is one of a kind in India, and participants come from all across India.

For this workshop, sessions were conducted by AFA staff including Merry Barua, Indrani Basu, Sudhanshu Grover, Preeti, Divya, and Sharmila P. G. The trainees of various courses run at AFA also actively participated in the workshop.

The workshop started with an introduction to autism by Merry Barua, who is also the founder member of AFA. She started with a personal narrative about her autistic son and how she was motivated by him to work for the cause of autism in India. She used minimal jargon to get across the concept of autism to a diverse audience. She presented a brief history of autism and the incidence and prevalence of autism across globe with special focus on gender, since four times more males than females are diagnosed with Autism. Autism is considered as uneven skill development in terms of language. Barua talked about the characteristics of an autistic child, stressing upon his/her body language, eye contact, facial expression and gestures. This introductory session helped the participants to understand some common misconceptions and stereotypes around autism.

In the next session, there was a discussion on the neurocognitive theories used to explain autism by Ms. Barua. These included theory of mind, executive functioning, sensory processing, and detailed thinking. Ms. Barua pointed out that children with autism do not need to be "fixed"; instead we need to understand and accept their needs so that adaptations can be made accordingly. These points were constantly reiterated throughout the workshop to drive home the message that individuals with autism should be respected.

After this session, participants asked several questions. One of the participants queried how long it takes for parents to be happy about their autistic child; another participant wanted to know how to respond to people's negative comments about their autistic child. Merry Barua took this opportunity to clarify that being happy is an on-going process that applies to all relationships, not just an autistic child, and also that parents first need to accept their child's diagnosis. Parents need to be comfortable with the fact that their child has autism and fight for their rights without an attitude of pity.

In the next presentation, Merry Barua and Indrani Basu demonstrated some behaviours of adults and parents that may have a negative impact on autistic children. For example, scolding the child in an angry tone, talking about the child in front of them, being judgemental and negative and dragging or pulling the child along. This was followed by a talk by Indrani Basu about the sensory difficulties faced by children with autism and the strategies to manage these difficulties. She described the symptoms which could help identify the sensory difficulties of an autistic

child. For instance, a visually hyposensitive child may be expected to stare at people or objects and seek bright lights. For such children, toys such as spinning tops, bubbles, shiny bottles, etc. provide stimulus.

The last session of the day was on behaviour and learning by Sudhanshu Grover. He explained the Antecedent – Behaviour – Consequences (ABC) format to analyse behaviour and discussed motivation as a reason for behaviour. He proposed that by changing the A and C, existing behaviours can be modified or new behaviours can be taught. After these sessions, questions from the participants were taken and a thorough discussion on them concluded the first day of the workshop.

On the second day, Ms. Basu discussed some basic rules for communicating with a person with autism. These included: use of simple words, well-articulated speech with detailed expression of the complete thought, a positive approach, and talking to the child as often as possible.

The next session was on how to use the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) to teach children with Autism. The strategies discussed included Discrete Trial Training (DTT), errorless teaching, prompting, shaping and chaining. Structured teaching and visual strategies were also explained. Finally, videos demonstrating the use of visual schedules and work systems by children with ASD were shown.

The next session "Let's begin teaching" was taken by Preeti, who focused on pairing, communication, imitation, visual discrimination, and other activities that can be done with children with ASD to teach them various skills. The last session of the day was about strategies for teaching cognitive skills such as colour discrimination, pre-math concepts and reading. Students started with sight reading some common nouns. They went on to matching words with their corresponding objects and then with

picture cards and finally matching the word to the picture on a worksheet. Adapted books and structured activities were also discussed.

The third day began with an interesting session on stories that could be used to describe certain social situations and thus give information about how the child may react, thereby helping them to teach appropriate behaviour in a specific situation. This was followed by an important session on dealing with challenging behaviours. Some common misconceptions such as: "people with ASD are loners and deliberately misbehave in social situations", were clarified. The participants were explained about how the concept of privacy needed to be taught in a concrete and cognitive way rather than in a social way since that is how individuals with autism learn. The penultimate session of the workshop dealt with issues of adults with autism. This session was meant to also address issues of puberty in both girls and boys with autism and how to make them understand their sexuality.

The presenters concluded the workshop with a session on alternative therapies that parents may be tempted to try in the quest to cure their child. These therapies are often outside mainstream science and lack scientific evaluation. Parents were cautioned that they need to check whether these therapies work and whether they are supported by scientific studies.

At the end of the workshop, it was very clear that children with autism display different behaviours and therefore require specific coping strategies. The message for parents was to see their children as human beings, to respect them, to accept their differences, to enjoy them and to empower them. Though the workshop exposed the participants to a wholesome teaching pedagogy, the participation fees for parents and professionals seemed to be a bit high for a three-day workshop. The workshop

had a bilingual approach, which was really appreciable but the teaching manual given to all participants was in English, which may prove to be a hindrance to parents who are not proficient in English. However, AFA provides reprints of some teaching manuals in different languages on demand.

**Andesha Mangla** is doing her PhD on "The Role of Sign Language in Deaf Education" from the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi. She has previously taught deaf students in the B.A. in Applied Sign Language Studies programme at IGNOU.

*andesha_m@yahoo.co.in*

**Santosh Kumar** is pursuing his PhD on "Gender and Disability in Talk and Text" from the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi.

*santoshk.du@gmail.com*

## Report on Book Release: *Rethinking Disability in India* by Anita Ghai

*Asha Singh*

*Rethinking Disability in India* authored by Dr. Anita Ghai was released by Smt. Brinda Karat who also chaired a discussion on the book at India International Centre on 14 May 2015. Dr Tanmoy Bhattacharya and Mr Harsh Mander as the panelists presented insightful analyses of the current discourse on the contentious relationship between social indifference towards disability and the absence of knowledge about difference in general.

In her book, the author Dr. Ghai has powerfully written about the struggles of the disabled amidst the "hegemony of the abled". She has also written about how they experience "social apartheid" as defective and disapproved objects under the sharp gaze of the abled. The book has been written in the spirit of opening up avenues for dialogue between various social ability groups, addressing the experiential terrain of the disabled and voicing the collective angst of communities with difference as "hope may be an accomplished liar but hope is all that we have". Both panellists, Dr. Bhattacharya and Mr Mander, compellingly urged for the need for co-existence of different normalities. Tanmoy Bhattacharya took forward Ghai's personal quests and perspective and the demographic absence of the world of ideas related to the social presence of disability. His analysis of the deceptively minimalist cover of the book with the letters of the title words in different fonts and colour was indicative of subversion and perhaps suppression of the marginalized. With regard to the contents of the book, he identified the dynamic link between the availability of audio-visual and print materials, experiential accounts and interactive spaces of difference with a view to prompt review, reflection and reframing of the societal perceptions of the ability-disability continuum. This in turn would lead to an enriched understanding of the extent of what is "normative".

Harsh Mander elaborated upon the unique ways in which Anita Ghai has recounted her experiences as a way to bring academic attention to social, emotional, sexual and intellectual knowledge of difference and its usefulness in knowing and viewing the world. Brinda Karat provided excellent anchoring and comments to bind the discussion and expanded on the diversity of disability issues and challenges. All speakers touched on the role and need for increasing avenues for dialogue on ideas of difference. Books and films contribute significantly to the production of knowledge impacting attitudes, values and behaviour. The present book contributes hugely towards stoking the academic imagination in probing epistemologies of knowing, learning and internalizing as well as exploring existing social realities of living with difference. Ghai's book most importantly provides visibility to persons with disabilities.

**Asha Singh** is Associate Professor at the Department of Human Development and Childhood Studies at Lady Irwin College and has been involved in developing content for television programmes for children's, early childhood education, inclusion and diversity, arts in education, media and children as well as creating child appropriate methods of conducting research with children. In her work, she deals extensively with child development professionals and educators in using theatre as a tool to communicate and comprehend sociality.

*asha.singh903@gmail.com*

# Forthcoming Events

## 1. 32nd Annual CSUN Conference

February 27 to March 4, 2017

Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel

San Diego, CA

Abstract submission date: Science/Research Track: August 9 to September 6, 2016

General Sessions Track: September 8 to October 5, 2016

http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2016/sessions/

## 2. Reading, Literacy & Learning Conference in Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta, Georgia

Abstract and Full Paper between December 15 to January 30, 2017

conference@interdys.org.

http://eida.org/call-for-papers/

## 3. The ICDD 2017: 19th International Conference on Disability and Diversity

May 4 - 5, 2017, Rome, Italy

Abstract: October 7, 2016

Full Paper: April 4, 2017

https://www.waset.org/conference/2017/05/rome/ICDD/home

## 4. Inclusive Education Conference, 2017

February 15-18, 2017, Trinidad and Tobago

Proposal Submission Deadline July 6, 2016

Final Paper Submission Deadline January 3, 2017

Proposals should be submitted to Ms. Nadia Laptiste Francis, Conference Secretary at ieconference@sta.uwi.edu

Link: http://sta.uwi.edu/conferences/17/ie/documents/CallForProposals.pdf

## 5. Learning Disabilities Association 54th Annual International Conference

February 16-19, 2017 Baltimore

Conference Link http://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/

Registration open – Mid-September

## 6. NNDR – 14thResearch Conference
## LIVING WITH DISABILITY

Örebro, Sweden May 3–5, 2017

Link https://liu.se/ihv/nyhetsarkiv-forskning snyheter/1.632367/NNDRConference _2017_Repro_3004_15.pdf

Important dates: Call for abstract: August 2016
Abstract deadline: November 2016

Abstract Confirmation: January 2017

Conference registration deadline: March 2017
NNDR 14th conference: May 3-5, 2017

## 7. International Social Work Congress 2016 (Iswc16) Social Problems and The Future Of Social Work

November 21-23, 2016

Ankara, Turkey

Website: http://www.sh2016.hacettepe.edu.tr/en

Contact person: Engin FIRAT

The Congress is organized with an aim to address the emerging need to explore the response of social work in local, national and international social problems. We hope to achieve this by focusing on the future of social work.

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: August 1, 2016

Compiled by **Deepa Palaniyappan**
deepajnu@gmail.com

# aeced
**association for early childhood education & development**

# 4th National Conference of
# The Association of Early Childhood
# Education and Development

# Azim Premji University



# Re-defining the Early Childhood Development Profession in India:
## Challenges and Potential

# November 7 - 8, 2016

Azim Premji University, Pixel Park B, PES Campus,
Beside NICE Road, Hosur Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Azim Premji University is pleased to announce the 4th National Conference of the Association for Early Childhood Education and Development (AECED) on "Re-defining Early Childhood Development Profession in India: Challenges and Potential". This is to bring to fore the need to re-imagine the early childhood development field, deliberate on alternatives to current issues of the profession - trained professional, debating and endorsing some non-negotiable such as quality teacher education, and identifying strategies to meet the policy requirements for capacity building and so on. This two day conference aims to bring together policy makers, teachers, teacher training institutes, academicians, researchers and representatives from all sectors - private, NGO and government from ECCE domains. The conference will have plenary by invited speakers, paper and poster presentations and workshops for Early Child Development professionals.

**We invite abstracts for paper presentations (oral and poster) on the following themes:**

- **Early Childhood Educator and Caregiver** – Teacher attributes and dispositions, professional qualifications, competencies to work with young children, relationship between teacher, children and curriculum of pre-schoolers, reflective practitioner, career development
- **Early Childhood Teacher Education (Public and Private Sector)** – Contextualizing early childhood teacher education, policies, programs and structures for professional development of teachers/caregivers i.e. pre-service and continuous professional development, content, pedagogy and assessment for teacher education programs, linkages between preschools and primary school teaching, regulations and regulatory mechanisms for teacher education institutions
- **Early Childhood Teacher Educators** – Programs, practices, content, pedagogy, qualifications, and continuous professional development, regulations and regulatory mechanisms

Visit, http://bit.ly/1XW2UED to download Abstract submission form

Last Date for Abstract submission: *30th July, 2016*
Acceptance of Abstract communication: *30th August, 2016*
Submission of Final Paper: *30th September, 2016*

Email abstracts and queries to: aeced-apu2016@apu.edu.in

**To read more on the conference and registration details, visit: http://bit.ly/1WF1azY**

RAJENG/2013/54376

English, Biannual, Udaipur