

# Language and Language Teaching

Special Issue on Literature and Language Teaching

Volume 7 Number 1 Issue 13

January 2018

ISSN: 2277-307X



Vidya Bhawan  
Society



Azim Premji  
University

# Language and Language Teaching

## Editors

Rama Kant Agnihotri, *Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, India (Formerly at the University of Delhi)*

A. L. Khanna, *ELT Consultant, Delhi, India (Formerly at the University of Delhi)*

## Guest Editor

Pushpinder Syal, *Panjab University, Chandigarh, India*

## Editorial Committee

Suranjana Barua, *Indian Institute of Information Technology, Guwahati (IIITG), Assam, India*

Haobam Basantarani, *Language Consultant, Delhi, India*

Rajni Dwivedi, *Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India*

Rajesh Kumar, *Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India*

Devaki Lakshminarayan, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

Praveen Singh, *Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India*

## Assistant Editor

Chetan Anand, *TISS, Mumbai, India*

## Executive Committee

H. K. Dewan, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

S. Giridhar, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

Partha Sarathi Misra, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

Ramgopal Vallath, *Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India*

Prasoon Kumar, *Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, Udaipur, India*

## International Review and Advisory Board

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

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

Tanmoy Bhattacharya, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Jim Cummins, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

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

Kathleen Heugh, University of South Australia, Australia

Ayesha Kidwai, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Robert Phillipson, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

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

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

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

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

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

Sadhna Saxena, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

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

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

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

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

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

© 2018 Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur (Raj.)

The views expressed in the contributions to *LLT* are those of the authors only.

UGC Journal List Details

[https://www.ugc.ac.in/journalist/ugc\\_admin\\_journal\\_report.aspx?eid=NDQzMDk=](https://www.ugc.ac.in/journalist/ugc_admin_journal_report.aspx?eid=NDQzMDk=)

**Language and Language Teaching**  
**Volume 7 Number 1 Issue 13 January 2018**

**Contents**

**Articles**

- Developing Critical Thinking through Practical  
Criticism and Stylistics in the Literature Class  
*Iqbal Judge* 1
- Repetition and Deletion in Literary Texts  
*Anjani Kumar Sinha* 6
- Children's Literature in Hindi  
*Shikha Tripathi* 11
- 9/11 in the Classroom  
*Swatie* 16
- Digital Storytelling: A Classroom Experiment  
*Mojtaba Tajeri and Pushpinder Syal* 20
- From Stylistic Analysis to Interpretation: A  
Pedagogic Illustration from Daruwalla's 'Hawk'  
*Parveen Sharda* 25
- The *Compleat* Lexical Tutor as a Resource for  
Teachers of Poetry  
*Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary* 30
- Should Children Learn to Read and Write in their  
Mother Tongue?  
*Sadhna Saxena* 37
- 'See and Learn': Intertextuality in the Teaching of  
Poetry  
*Saumya Sharma* 42
- The Value of Story-Making Activities in the  
English Classroom  
*Nishevita Jayendran and Anusha Ramanathan* 47
- Interview**  
Interview with Prof. Jasbir Jain  
*Sudha Rai* 52
- Landmarks**  
The Study of Language and Style in Literature:  
An Overview  
*Pushpinder Syal* 58

**Book Reviews**

- Exploring Digital Communication: Language in  
Action  
*Sanaz Marzban and Mojtaba Tajeri* 64
- Elementary English Teaching: A Source Book for  
Teacher Educators  
*Praveen Singh* 66
- Opposition in Discourse: The Construction of  
Oppositional Meaning  
*Saumya Sharma* 68

**Website Review**

- Teaching Poetry: A Review of Some Websites  
*Shreesh Chaudhary* 70

**Classroom Activities**

- Introduction to Prepositions of Space  
Introduction to Verbs  
*Deepa Varghese* 74

**Reports**

- Katha Manch: Ria Gupta* 77

**Forthcoming Events**

79

## ***About the Cover***

### **Front cover**

Source: <http://www.ancientshare.com/roman-theatre-palmyra-dates-back-to-the-second-century/>

### **Back cover**

Images are book covers designed by the Class 8 students of Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi as a part of library activities conducted on the eve of library week celebrations (21-26 August, 2017).

Image 1: Vishal

Image 2: Varsha

Image 3: Naushad

Thanks are due to the Principal, Ms. Sarita Batra and the Librarian, Mr. Vijay Kumar.



## Editorial

In this issue of *Language and Language Teaching*, we will look at how the study of literature is not only an integral part of language teaching but is also a vital component of education. It is not without reason that literature is a critical part of education as it has so much to offer to learners. Despite the misconception that people are reading less and less these days as their reading time is being replaced by gadgets and technology, we find that literature is expanding in different directions in the curriculum. As the focus is shifting from efferent to aesthetic stance, “Literariness” no longer then remains a rare quality found only in a few select or revered literary texts, it is all pervasive in language, whichever language it may be. Hence an understanding of the features of language which create literary styles and bring joy and wonder to the play of language is undoubtedly rewarding.

In her Landmark article, Pushpinder Syal presents us with an overview of the different approaches to the study of ‘style’ in language. According to her, the aesthetic values of language have always been evident in literature. However, there is now a growing awareness of literature as a social discourse, as a complex mediation of personal and social relationships, and of the layers of various ideologies related to it. Perhaps teaching methodologies have lagged behind in the exploration of such aspects, partly because of the authoritative structures that are in place in the field and partly because of the tendency to resist analysis as an activity that is inimical to literary reading. However, we do need to keep in mind that analysis is an intrinsic part of a person's interpretation of her world and therefore cannot be ignored in the interpretation of literature.

A new direction that has emerged in the study of literature is that of linking the reading of literature with the development of critical thinking. According to Iqbal Judge, this development is crucial if we have to move towards activities such as interpretation and evaluation, as literary works are often designed with a view to afford us an opportunity to engage in such cognitive and articulatory exercises. These in turn prepare us for critical discussions on real life issues of social, political and ideological importance, as pointed out in Swatie’s article on the impact of 9/11. They also nudge the teacher towards a more meticulous reading and analysis of the text, as suggested by Praveen Sharda.

Shikha Tripathi writes about children’s literature in Hindi and Sadhna Saxena highlights the importance of reading in the mother tongue. She argues that the multilingualism that already exists in the minds of children is further encouraged by reading literature in different languages. Anjani Kumar Sinha discusses the patterns of repetition and deviation in English poetry.

Saumya Sharma discusses the intertextuality between texts, and of text with art and painting. From graphic novels to digital storytelling, the visual has come to the aid of the verbal. In this issue of LLT, this development has been taken up by Tajheri and Syal through their experiment in digital storytelling. In their article, Nishevita Jayendran and Anusha Ramanathan explore children’s story-telling capacities through their experiment with TELL. Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary illustrates the use of computer corpora in analysing and selecting appropriate texts for teaching. Also included in this issue is an interview with the distinguished scholar and teacher of literature, Professor Jasbir Jain.

## Language and Language Teaching (LLT)

### Objectives

*Published twice a year in January and July, Language and Language Teaching (LLT) reaches out to language teachers, researchers and teacher educators on issues and practices relevant to language teaching. The primary focus of the publication is language pedagogy in elementary schools. LLT proposes to establish a dialogue between theory and practice so that practice contributes to theory as much as theory informs practice. The purpose is to make new ideas and insights from research on language and its pedagogy accessible to practitioners while at the same time inform theorists about the constraints of implementation of new ideas.*

### Guidelines for Submission of Manuscripts

1. MS word version of the manuscripts (British spellings) should be submitted to the Editors of *LLT* via email at the address(es) given below:  
journllt@gmail.com, agniirk@yahoo.com, amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com  
If need be, you may also send them by post to: Vidya Bhawan Society, Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004, Rajasthan, India
2. *Language and Language Teaching (LLT)* welcomes original papers/articles that have not been published elsewhere and have not been submitted elsewhere for publication at the time of being sent to *LLT*. Copies of letters granting permission to reproduce illustrations, tables, or lengthy quoted passages should be included with the manuscript.
3. Word limit including the reference, abstract and a short bio note is as follows:  
Articles: 2500; Interview: 3000; Landmark: 3000; Book Reviews: 1500; Classroom Activities: 750; Reports: 1000.
4. The first page should contain the article title, author(s) and their affiliation(s). It should also contain the abstract and keywords.
5. For correspondence, contributor should provide his/ her name, phone number, complete mailing address and email address.
6. The style for writing numerical expressions should be consistent throughout the manuscript.
7. Notes should appear at the end of the text and before the references. Foot notes are not permitted. Each endnote used in the article should contain more than a mere reference.
8. Single quotes should be used throughout the article. Double quotes should be used only within single quotes.
9. All the references must be cited in text or endnotes, and follow the APA style of referencing in the text.  
For example:  
(Chomsky, 2010: p.27) or (Labov, 2010, p.56) or (Halliday, 2010, pp.56-57)
10. A detailed list of references in alphabetical order must be provided at the end of the article following the endnotes. All details should be provided like: the author's name, name of the book/ name of the journal with issue number, publisher, place of publication, year and page range/ number (in the case of chapter from an edited book, journal, magazine, weekly, periodicals, newspapers).
11. Page numbers for all direct quotations should be provided. Direct quotations of 45 words or more should be indented.
12. Tables and figures should be clear, readable and comprehensible.
13. Book reviews must contain details like name of the author/editor and book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, scanned copy of the cover page, number of pages and price.
14. *LLT* is a refereed journal. All manuscripts are subject to the usual process of anonymous review.

# Developing Critical Thinking through Practical Criticism and Stylistics in the Literature Class

*Iqbal Judge*

## **Introduction**

Teaching English through literature at the undergraduate level in India is assumed to have two major goals: 1) to develop students' proficiency in the language and 2) to help them appreciate the "beauty of literature". In recent time, the goal of developing higher order thinking skills (HOTS) or critical thinking (CT) has also been added. However, these lofty aims remain nebulous concepts, unrealized in practice. The usual "explain and extol" method of line-by-line explanations of the prescribed poems and stories, interspersed with a "discussion" of "examination-type" questions and rhapsodies over the "beauty" of some poetic lines does not adequately address any of the three avowed goals. Targeted and sustained practice in the areas of grammar and vocabulary is still required to develop language proficiency. Exclamations about evocative writing in fact reinforce the notion of subjectivity, rather than a reasoned, objective analysis that would reveal the writer's craft. Further, the questions commonly asked by teachers mainly address the skills of comprehension, recall and understanding of the students. Their higher order thinking skills-application, analysis, evaluation-are hardly touched upon.

In this paper, I will attempt to suggest ways in which the principles of practical criticism and stylistics can be usefully applied in the teaching of literary texts, to achieve a clearer understanding of how writers use language dexterously to achieve certain stylistic effects

or convey an idea. A close reading of the text, and categorization and analysis of the various linguistic features present in it, I believe the students would be able to develop their critical thinking (CT) skills. I have also presented a brief definition of CT, Bloom's Taxonomy of CT skills and the rationale for integrating CT skills in the classroom, followed by key features of practical criticism and stylistic analysis, with illustrations from texts generally prescribed at the undergraduate level.

## **What is Critical Thinking?**

The intellectual roots of Critical Thinking go back to the times of Socrates and Plato, who established the importance of seeking evidence, closely examining reasoning and assumptions, analysing basic concepts and tracing the implications of what is said and done. Thinking was therefore driven by questions. Cornbleth (1990), speaks of CT as "raising and pursuing questions about the ideas one encounters". To quote Michael Scriven and Richard Paul (1987), "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action." This corresponds to Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of educational objectives that presents CT skills in a hierarchical order, distinguishing the higher order thinking skills-evaluation, synthesis, and analysis-from the

lower order thinking skills of application, comprehension and knowledge.

### **Why are CT Skills Important?**

Sumner emphasizes the need for CT in life and education, stating that "it is our only guarantee against delusion, deception, superstition and misapprehension of ourselves and our earthly circumstances" (1906, pp. 632-633). Siegel (1988), avers that the overall aim of education is to prepare students for adulthood, which entails developing in themselves self-sufficiency, self-direction and the ability to think for themselves. He adds that one cannot make sound judgements about important political, social and economic issues without the cognitive skills to analyse such issues critically. Further, subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Literature, History, etc., require students to use critical thinking skills.

El Fatihi (2017), lists philosophical, cognitive and meta-cognitive, pedagogical and socio-economic reasons for integrating CT skills with language/literature teaching. At a philosophical level, referring to Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis pertaining to linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity, and to Vygotsky's idea of "verbal thought", he posits that since language and thinking are interrelated, thinking skills can be developed through language and within language instruction. This cognitive perspective takes into account the transfer of information and knowledge from short-term memory to long-term retention through the CT processes of comprehension and analysis (Pollock, Chandler & Sweller, 2002; Krathwohl, 2002). Studies have shown that CT not only helps to understand how schemata are constructed, it also activates the schemata (Collins et al., 1980) and aids reading comprehension. Pedagogically, CT skills are important because current language teaching methods revolve around keeping the

learner actively engaged in information-processing, problem solving, decision-making and evaluation. Finally, as CT skills enable individuals to make informed, reasoned decisions and solve problems in their social and interpersonal domains, they are important from a socio-economic perspective in helping people to adapt successfully to the contemporary knowledge economy (Halpern, 2003; Ku, 2009).

### **Practical Criticism and Stylistics in the Teaching of Literature**

It is not difficult to perceive the value of CT in the study and the teaching of literature, as analysing, inferring, evaluating, etc., are cognitive activities integral to literary criticism. In Practical Criticism (Richards, 1929; Empson, 1930; Cox & Dyson, 1965), the focus of attention is on specific lexical/grammatical choices made in a particular text and the effect of those choices on the meaning of that text. For instance, a poem may be viewed as a self-contained verbal organization, coloured by feeling, tone and intention, as revealed through its diction and imagery. The rigour that this type of close reading requires, serves as a corrective to impressionistic criticism or the random undisciplined reading of texts. In fact Practical Criticism is often used to test students' responsiveness to texts, as well as their knowledge of verse forms and "technical language" while describing how poems create an impression.

Stylistics also brings in a more detailed, systematic investigation of literary texts, in contrast to the "perceived lack of method, reliance on unchallengeable authority and personal cultism" (Fabb, 2016) of literary theory. As Halliday (1971) stressed, stylistics is an "inquiry" into the nature of language itself, and the function of language in literature. It is an investigation into whether language is fulfilling a specific kind of function, particular in some way, or has been drawn from everyday life but



in a specialized context and discourse of literariness. Though Formalists often looked at literary style as a deviation from the norm, Halliday viewed it as the establishment of a textual norm, the way things are done in the world of the text.

A writer's stylistic choices are perceived as performing three broad communicative functions: communicating meaning beyond those linguistically determined; conveying attitudes, biases and ideological positions; and expressing a range of emotions (Verdonk, 2002, p. 68). Widdowson (1975), has shown how stylistics can be used in ELT, with specific reference to the use of literature to illustrate the nuances of language. In fact, the reflective evaluation of the effects of the stylistic choices helps to improve the students' ability to introspect, which is a goal of CT.

Some of the linguistic features that stylistics investigates are: genre, narrative structure, point of view and focalization, sound patterning, syntactic and lexical parallelism and repetition, metre and rhythm, mimetic and representational effects, meta-representation, irony, metaphor and other ways of indirect meaning, utilization and representation of variation in dialect, accent and historically specific usages, group-specific ways of speaking and examination of inferential processes. However, it is not as though every text has to be scanned for each and every feature listed above. A text is a complex web of stylistic choices, some of which are foregrounded, and it is these areas of markedness and salience that could be primarily investigated, especially when initiating students into the process of such analysis.

### **An Example of Stylistics in the Teaching of Literature**

Frank (1966), presented a reflective report on the use of simple tools of stylistic analysis to raise her students' critical awareness beyond the subjective "I like it", or more "literary" pronouncements of a writer's "smooth flowing

prose", to informed analyses that gave the students deeper insights into the writers' works. Choosing short excerpts from the writings of two authors, she made her students catalogue all the grammatical structures in the passages, and note the sentence patterns, position of sentence elements, modifiers, lexical details such as use of dialect, slang, colloquial or formal vocabulary, etc. Comparisons and contrasts were then drawn on the two passages, yielding much information that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Frank states: "Then the student is on safe grounds in pronouncing value judgements and in speaking of the success or failure of the author in establishing a mood or tone, since he has given the text a close reading." (1966, p. 1052 )

Frank demonstrated how through an analysis of two sentences taken from the beginning of Washington Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and Hemingway's "A Way you'll Never Be", she was able to explain why the prose of Irving seemed more polished and leisurely than Hemingway's. Though both sentences belonged to the same "adverbial prepositional phrase of "place+there+verb+noun subject" type, Irving's sentence construction had prepositional phrases in a nesting relation of modification, followed by relative clauses—a total of eleven modifying constructions before the subject. Hemingway's sentence construction on the other hand began with three co-ordinate phrases, with minimal modification, giving the impression of terseness. The detailed comparative analysis of the lexical, dialogic and syntactic features revealed the "author's artistic purpose and outlook." Thus, the students were drawn into a close examination of the story to prove their initial responses and hypotheses. This exercise grew from a grammatical analysis to an exploration of the writer's creative principles and philosophy, plus a deeper appreciation of literature and the craftsmanship involved in writing.

### **Integrating CT with Stylistics in the Teaching of Literature**

A close look at Bloom's Taxonomy of CT skills and the prototypical question stems that teachers

could use to elicit responses that require the use of higher cognitive abilities, would show us how to integrate the tools of practical criticism and stylistics in the teaching of literary texts. To understand, let us look at "Anthem for Doomed Youth" a poem by Wilfred Owen, often prescribed in undergraduate courses on Literature. Question stems such as: Who? What? When? What happened before.../ after ...? are of the simple "recall" type, which require a basic knowledge of the text. Here, the first step in stylistic analysis could be brought in, which is to list the nouns/verbs/adjectives/ instances of parallelism in the poem. The next step would be to see which words or their synonyms have been repeated? The subsequent step up in cognition would be that of understanding where question stems such as "Summarize/ State the central idea" are used. The list of nouns/ verbs/ adjectives/ instances of parallelism in the poem made on level 1 could now be used to note how the key words point to the theme of the text. For example, the majority of the nouns in Owen's poem maybe categorized into two different lexical fields: 1) a Christian funeral- passing bells, choir, pall, candles, prayers, and 2) a battlefield- rifles, guns, shells. Point out the alliteration and onomatopoeia, and the ironic play on the words, "pall" and "pallor", or the repetition of "choirs" and negatives which are foregrounded elements in the poem. Further, an examination of the grammatical structures reveals the preponderance of noun phrases as compared to verb phrases, with many noun phrases compressing a verbal element in the modifier ("wailing shells", "drawing-down of blinds", "stuttering rifles"), and most constructions being in the passive voice. This would lead to a level of analysis where these foregrounded elements, their semantic incompatibilities and unusual collocations can be studied in detail. Some question stems for this level of Bloom's Taxonomy are: Analyse, Distinguish, Examine, Compare Contrast, Investigate, Categorize, Identify Explain, Take apart, Differentiate, Subdivide, Deduce. Questions such as: "In what way can shires (inanimate) be sad"?; "What could be the reason for choirs to be shrill and

demented"?; "Why are the orisons hasty?"; "What is implied by 'die as cattle'?" etc.; could be posed. These would help the students to delve deeper into their inquiry of the language of the poem and Owen's ideological positioning through an analysis of the referential and inferential meanings of the lexical items. According to Fabb (2016), the key problem in Stylistics is to work out the causal relation between style and effect, where "effect" includes various cognitive effects such as meanings, emotions, beliefs, etc. Students could also investigate the effect of rhetorical questions and passive and negative phrase constructions. Further, examination of the grammatical structures and contrasting adjectives (hasty/ slow, stuttering/ wailing, speed/ patient) could reveal numerous ironic contrasts-quick perfunctory funeral rituals in times of war, cessation of activity and movement after death and the wearied, depressed life of the grieving. The question stems at the top levels of CT-Synthesis and evaluation-require a person to: Judge, Decide, Justify, Debate, Argue, Assess, Critique, Evaluate; and to Compose, Predict, Imagine, Hypothesize, etc. Equipped with the detailed analysis done earlier, the student would now have "evidence" to evaluate the effectiveness of Owen's skills in expressing the theme of the poem, his implied intention and anti-war stance, and "justify" or "comment upon the significance" of the poem's title. The opening phrases and the concluding lines of the poem could be triggers for imagining or hypothesizing about the gruesome deaths of the soldiers and the despairing existence of the grief- stricken living.

## Conclusion

Through this paper, I aimed to explain the importance of CT and stylistic analysis in accounting objectively for the meaning of a text, and its usefulness in the teaching of literature. As Misra points out, "a rigorous and systematic study of the language of a text enables the reader to appreciate its meaning in its totality." (2009, 47). When a literary text is microscopically

analysed in this manner, it not only develops the higher order cognitive abilities of students, but also enhances their appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of the text, illustrating in concrete terms the "beauty of literature" and the basis for the readers' enjoyment of it.

## References

- Bloom, B. S. (1956). Cognitive domain. In *Taxonomy of educational objectives* (Vol. 1, pp.20-24). New York, NY: McKay.
- Cornbleth, Catherine. (1990). Reforming curriculum reform. In L. Weis, Catherine Cornbleth, K.M. Zeichner & M.W. Apple (Eds.), *Curriculum for tomorrow's schools*, (pp. 1-31). Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education Publications. Special Studies in Teaching and Teacher Education. No.3(1-31).
- Collins A., Brown J. S., & Larkin K. M. (1980). Inference in text understanding. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, & W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension* (pp.385-410). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cox, B., & Dyson, A.E. (1965). *The practical criticism of poetry*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Empson, W. (1930). Seven types of ambiguity Chatto and Windus.
- El Fatihi, M. (2017). A rationale for the integration of critical thinking skills in EFL/ESL instruction. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 12(2), 26-31. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/9702>
- Fabb, Nigel. (2016). *The teaching of stylistics*. LLAS Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, University of Southampton. Retrieved from <https://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/2755.html>
- Frank, Yakira H. (1966, November). Stylistics in the classroom. *The English Journal*, 55(8), 1051-1055, 1075. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/812738>
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1971). Linguistic function and literary style: An enquiry into the language of William Golding's 'The Inheritors'. In Seymour Chatman (Ed.), *Literary style: A symposium*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Halpern, D. F. (2003). Thinking critically about creative thinking.
- Krathwohl, D. R. (2002). A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(4), 212-218.
- Ku, K.Y. (2009). Assessing students' critical thinking performance: Urging for measurements using multi-response format. *Thinking skills and creativity*, 4(1), 70-76.
- Misra, Partha Sarathi (2009). *Stylistics*. Kolkata: Orient Blackswan.
- Pollock, E., Chandler, P., & Sweller, J. (2002). Assimilating complex information. *Learning and Instruction*, 12, 61-86.
- Richards, I. A. (1929). *Practical criticism*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Siegel, H. (1988). *Educating reason: Rationality, critical thinking and education*. New York: Routledge.
- Sumner, W.G. (1906). *Folkways*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Verdonk, P. (2002). *Stylistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. London: Longman.

**Iqbal Judge** is Professor and Head, PG Department of English, PG Government College for Girls, Chandigarh. She has been teaching for 35 years and is keenly interested in ELT methodology and materials production, gender studies and the arts. [iqbaljudge\\_1@yahoo.co.in](mailto:iqbaljudge_1@yahoo.co.in)

# Repetition and Deletion in Literary Texts

*Anjani Kumar Sinha*

Every class in a school has a literary text as a part of its curriculum. This text generally contains poems, short stories, one-act plays or other narratives. Each of these pieces has a theme, i.e. the subject matter of the piece of writing, the central idea that pervades it. The guiding principle of a writer is to make every part of the writing move towards that central idea and to conform to it. He/she does this by trying to ensure that his/her work is presented as a cohesive whole and the subplots of the text take their proper place in that united whole.

While moving from one part of the composition to another, the writer may pause to think whether the subplots help him/her to carry out his/her purpose. Purpose here refers to the singleness of objective. The result of such an effort is cohesiveness, not the dull repetition of an idea without variation, nor the unity of isolation. It is the structural union or harmony of the different components of the text and guides the writer in selecting and using appropriate vocabulary. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill (1930: 211-212), "...sentences should follow one another in harmonious sequence, so the paragraphs must fit onto one another like the automatic couplings of railway carriages."

The writer selects a group of words or phrases (such as noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases and adverb phrases) and carefully puts them into clauses. He/she then combines the clauses to form a simple, compound or complex sentence. The writer also decides whether to

use the normal word order or an inversion or other structural manipulations (transformations) to create the desired effect. To this end, an expression may be repeated or deleted to intensify the desired effect and maintain harmony within the text. In all of this, the main purpose is to make sure that the writing is cohesive. Structural connections (such as "and", "but", etc.) may be used to put a group of sentences together, not mechanically, but in a logical manner. Sentence connectors (such as "however", "therefore", "nevertheless", etc.), when used with accuracy and restraint, give a strong sense of cohesion to a paragraph. For instance, let us look at the closing lines in *Of Human Bondage* by W. Somerset Maugham (1961/1915):

1. He smiled and took her hand and pressed it. They got up and walked out of the gallery. They stood for a moment at the balustrade and looked at Trafalgar Square. Cabs and Omnibus hurried to and fro, and crowd passed, hastening in every direction, and the sun was shining. (p. 127)

The relaxed quality of the repeated use of the coordinator "and" in (1) gives the novel a peaceful end.

Let us now look at (2), which is structurally different from (1) but serves the same purpose, i.e. making the conclusion cohesive. This excerpt, taken from *The Razor's Edge*, another novel of W. Somerset Maugham (1944), is a conclusion summarizing the subplots of the novel.



2. For all the persons with whom I have been concerned got what they wanted; Elliott, social eminence; Isabel, an assured position backed by a substantial fortune in an active and cultured community; Grey, a steady and lucrative job with an office to go to from nine to six everyday; Suzanne Rouvier security; Sophia death and Larry happiness. (p. 209)

The deletion of the verb "got" from all the clauses, except the first, brings the novel to a crisp and precise end. What the repetition of "and" achieves in (1), the deletion of "got" accomplishes in (2). Both make the conclusion cohesive, though in different ways; the first ends in a relaxed atmosphere, whereas the second in a precise business like fashion.

Deletion (also called ellipses) and repetition are syntactic devices which act differently, even though in most cases, they serve the same purpose: they bring cohesion to the text by intensifying the intended effect.

Deletion is a syntactic process that involves the elimination of a word or phrase from a sentence, a clause from a compound or a complex sentence or a sentence from a paragraph. One may also delete a noun phrase from a coordinate sentence if it is identical with another expression in the same structure, as in (3b).

- 3a. John came back from office and he had a cup of coffee at home.

- 3b. John came back from office and - had a cup of coffee at home.

Another possibility is to eliminate an identical verb phrase from a coordinate structure, as in (4b).

- 4a. John had a cup of coffee and Bill too had a cup of coffee.

- 4b. John had a cup of coffee and Bill too.

- 4c. John had a cup of coffee and so had Bill.

In (4c), "so" is used in place of "have a cup of coffee". In (5b), the noun phrase as well as the

main verb of the verb phrase have been deleted, leaving only its complement behind.

- 5a. Criticism it is, biography it is not.

- 5b. Criticism it is, not biography.

The deletion of the subject and the main verb can be seen in (6) as well.

6. There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting

So we moved, and they in a formal pattern,

Along the empty alley, into the box circle...

(Eliot, T. S., 1971, p. 118)

The appositive expression "accept and accepting" are the post-deletion forms of "they were accepted as guests and were accepting of our hospitality". In the second line, the verb "moved" has been deleted after the subject noun phrase of the clause "They moved in a formal pattern". The expression "They moved" has been deleted from "they moved along the empty alley" and from "they moved into the box inside". These deletions make the remaining adverbial expressions parallel to one another.

Parallelism is a syntactic device which indicates correspondence between one phrase, line or verse and another. In the last two lines of (6), there is parallelism between the three adverbial phrases.

The parallelism in (7) piles up the adverbial phrases of the type "between X and Y":

7. Between the idea.

And the reality,

Between the motion

And the act

Falls the shadow.

(Eliot, T.S., 1971, p. 58)

The last line 'Falls the shadows' has been omitted from the sentence with the first adverbial phrase "between the idea and the reality". Most parallel constructions are created by deletion of the

recoverable constituents, either syntactically or contextually. However, because of the underlying logic of deletion, the reader can fill in the gap easily. The deletion of the repetitive expressions tightens the text and focuses the attention of the reader on the essential message. Excerpts (2) and (5) demonstrate how deletion creates parallelism and so do (8) and (9) from Francis Bacon (1625):

8. Love is stronger than hate, and peace than war.
9. Reading maketh (i.e. makes) a perfect man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man.

(Bacon in Abrams 1968, p.1217)

In (8), the expression "is stronger" has been deleted from the second clause and in (9) "maketh" from the second and third clauses. In (10), the writer has piled up parallel constructions after deleting "Milton was able to select".

10. Milton was able to select from nature or from story, from ancient fables, or from modern science whatever could or adore his thoughts.

(Johnson, 1771 quoted from Abrams 1968, p. 221)

Some modern writers use deletion very liberally, as shown in the following example (11):

11. They buy the pile up... : piled up in cities, worn away age after age, Pyramids in sand. Builds on bread and onion. Slaves Chinese walls. Sprawling suburbs, jarry buildings.

This extract from *Ulysses* by James Joyce (1914/ 1961, p. 221) contains a telegraphic language with just the bare essentials. However, the missing parts can be reconstructed by the reader without any difficulty. Although the deleted elements are not of much importance to the logical expression of thought, they are

called for by the rules of syntactic construction. Deletion is permitted so long as the meaning remains clear.

Repetition involves the repetition of a word, a phrase a sentence, or sometimes even a stanza in a poem. It is used to reinforce, complement or supplement, or substitute an expression. Like deletion, it creates parallelism, which is used to reinforce a thought or to bring it into focus. For instance, in example (12) taken from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', Coleridge (1970, p. 20) uses repetition to reinforce that there was water everywhere around the mariners.

12. Water, water everywhere  
And all the board did shrink.  
Water, water everywhere  
Not any drop to drink.

This stanza also brings out a contrast; there is water all around but there is an absolute dearth of drinking water. In (13), Coleridge once again uses repetition, but this time it is only for emphasis:

13. The ice was here, the ice was there  
The ice was all around.  
Coleridge (1970, p. 812)

In (14), the entire line has been repeated thrice to emphasize how the world ends.

14. This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but with a whimper.  
(Eliot, T. S., 1971, p. 52)

In (15), repetition has been used to emphasize the permanence of time and place:

15. Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual for one time  
And only for one place

I rejoice that things are as they are...

Consequently I rejoice having to construct something upon which to rejoice.

(Eliot, T. S., 1971, p. 60)

The repetition in (16) emphasizes the significance and uniqueness of the word in the world:

16. If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent

If the unheard, unspoken

Word is unspoken, unheard;

Still is the unspoken word, the word unheard

The word without a word, the word within

The world and for the world;

And the light shown in darkness and

Against the word, the unstilled world still whirled

About the centre of the silent word

O my people, what have I done unto this

(Eliot, T. S., 1971, p. 65)

Such a repetition is meaningful, but not all repetitions are meaningful. Some repetitions are seemingly meaningless; (17) contains an example of one such repetition:

17. The sea was wet as wet could be

The sands were dry as dry

You could not see a cloud because

No cloud was in the sky.

No bird was flying over head

There were no birds to fly.

(Carroll, Lewis, 1872/1998, p. 162)

These lines from "The Walrus and the Carpenter" are meaningless because the similes attached to them do not convey anything beyond the objects they are supposed to compare and clarify. Yet they are meaningful in the sense that they are intended to convey meaninglessness, which they do quite successfully.

Some lexical repetitions are not really repetitions in the sense that they are not the same word; they are homophonous words. For instance, let us look at the meaning of the word "play" in the lines in (18) from Shakespeare's famous play *'The Winter's Tale'*:

18. Go play, boy, play: thy mother plays and I

Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue

Will hiss me to my grace.

Usually, the word "play" refers to participation in a sport for the purpose of enjoyment and recreation. That is the sense in which the word has initially been used here. The third occurrence of the word however refers to sexual intercourse, and the fourth occurrence means "to react"; it also means "to play the role of a character in a theatrical activity".

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, when Othello repeats the clause "it is the cause", he does so for emphasis but when he says, "Put out the light and then put out the light", the first expression means "to extinguish the light" and the second "to make someone unconscious, to kill someone". This type of repetition is not redundant. In short, all repetitions are not redundant.

Although both deletion and repetition are used to create parallelism, there is a subtle difference between the two. In deletion, parallelism is used to highlight the comparison of similar elements; on the other hand, repetition creates balance and deletion highlights the contrast between parallel expressions, as in (19) and (20).

19. Marilyn was destroyed by her own oversensitive perceptions,

Jayne, ... by her lack of them.

(Champlin, Charles, 1967)

20. Neither is mind material, nor is matter mental.

(Spinoza, p. 134)

Example 21 exhibits a beautiful combination of repetition and deletion:

21. My nerves are bad tonight, yes bad.

Stay with me.

Speak to me. Why do you never speak  
Speak.

What are you thinking of? What thinking?  
What?

I never know you are thinking. Think.

(Eliot, T. S., 1971, p. 40)

In these lines, the two devices of repetition and deletion work harmoniously to convey the sense of loneliness and the need to be together, and share their thoughts.

To sum up, although deletion and repetition are two processes which work differently; syntactically both of them add harmony to the text. Deletion creates parallelism, and repetition creates balance. Together, they can be used to reinforce the thought expressed in the text and bring it into focus.

## References

- Abrams, M. H. (ed) (1968). *The Norton anthology of English literature*. Vol 1. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.
- Bacon, Francis. (1625). Of studies, included in Abrams, M.H. (ed.) (1968).
- Carroll, Lewis 1998. (1872). *Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Champlin, Charles. (1967). 'Jane Mansfield: Almost a star', Los Angeles Times, Part IV, p. 11, July 3, 1967.
- Churchill, Winston. (1930). *A roving commission, my early life*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. (1970). *The rime of the ancient mariner*. New York: Doves Publications.
- Johnson, Samuel. (1979). 'Milton', *Lives of the Porto*, included in Abrams, M.H. (1968: 1859-1868).
- Eliot, T. S. (1971). *The complete poems and plays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Maugham, W. Somerset. [1961 (1915)] *Of human bondage*. New York: Poerset Books Inc.

Maugham, W. Somerset. (1944). *The razor's edge*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Maugham, W. (1944). Somerset. *The Razor's Edge*. London: Mandarin, 1990. [First published by Heinemann.]

Maugham, W. S. (1900). *Of human bondage* (Vol. 1). Library of Alexandria.

Shakespeare, William. (1974). *The riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (For quotes from *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*)

Tufte, Virginia. (1971). *Grammar as style*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

**Anjani K. Sinha**, formerly Professor of Linguistics, Delhi University, has specialized in Syntactic Theory and loves to apply it to literature.

*sinhaanjani6@gmail.com*



# Children's Literature in Hindi

*Shikha Tripathi*

The first question that was posited to me as a researcher was, "What is children's literature?" This was followed by "Is it any different from literature for us? What is the purpose of children's literature? Why do we want our kids to read literature, at all? Is it a tool meant to drill rules and structure of grammar (in a context, so to say), or teach moral values? But what about the engagement, the journey that one goes through while reading a text? And more importantly, do we have enough children's literature that truly qualifies as authentic?"

With the help of this article, I will try to answer some of these questions, especially from the perspective of children's literature in Hindi. For the convenience of the reader, I have divided this article into three main sections:

- What is children's literature?
- The need for children's literature
- Selection of children's literature

My intent is not to generalize, but to simply call the attention of fellow researchers, colleagues and students and teachers to this most pertinent cause.

## **What is Children's Literature?**

Children's literature is not inherently different from any other literary work. It is like any other literary work written for aesthetic reasons, except that it is written with the child in the mind. It is of prime importance that one keeps in mind the age, psychological needs, socio-cultural background and interests of the child while writing in this genre. Furthermore, it is even

more important that literature should be an authentic text, written for enjoyment and communication. (Hiebert, 1994) To summarize, children's literature is then literature which is predominantly written keeping in mind the child and his/her needs (Joshi, 2008; Kumar, 1992, 1986).

However, simple as it may seem, this definition requires deliberation. As a part of my M.Phil. research work entitled "A Study of Sixth Grade Children's Response to Literature", I interviewed 7 publishers in the field of children's literature in Delhi to understand this term better. Three of them were government owned apex agencies, which have been vested with the responsibility of publishing quality literature for children. One of the questions for all my interviewees was, "What is your understanding of children's literature?" All the interviewees answered similarly along the lines, "It needs to be appropriate." I was very impressed with their answer, until I asked them to explain what they meant by the word "appropriate". The answers ranged from a simple, "*Bachche ke hissab se naitik mulya ka sabak hona chahiye*" (It should teach moral values as per the child's age); "*Bachchon ko kya pata unke liye kya sahi hai aur kya galat, toh unke achche ke liye hona chahiye.*" (Children don't know what is good and what is bad for them, so it should be for their betterment).

Most of the respondents reaffirmed this thought of treating children's literature as a tool to imbibe the right moral values; they considered the child to be completely clueless about his/her best

interests. On further probing, the interviewees suggested that, "Children's literature should be attractive with colorful illustrations and good paper quality." Interestingly, not a single interviewee spoke about the content of the stories.

Since, my study required me to collect data with regard to the availability of children's literature in Hindi, I made enquiries accordingly from my interviewees. Most of the interviewees were not able to share much information about children's literature in Hindi. They emphasized that the reason behind this situation is that there is a dearth of readers of Hindi literature. Another participant further elaborated this point and said, "...not much is available... there is a major lack of sources and funds and no reach out at all. Hindi stories are mostly didactic and mythological in nature so no interest of our students... also since the presentation is the selling point... these Hindi books don't have interesting presentations and illustrations. Mostly the paper is yellow... Very unattractive... doesn't excite the child at all..."

The question now: is there now a dearth of readers because there is a lack of availability of text or vice-versa? This is a vicious circle where eventually the readers suffer. This calls for serious introspection. Does it suffice to have good paper quality, and vibrant and colourful illustrations? Is it not important that the content of the story be given equal or more credence? Let us look at the second section of my paper to understand why children's literature is important.

### **The Need for Children's Literature**

Literature in all its avatars provides its readers with a plethora of experiences, which define the infinite possibilities of human behaviour. It helps the child in developing a personality, and the ability to think in new ways (Kumar, 1992, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1938). Literary works are in

fact portrayals of the thinking patterns and social norms prevalent in a society. They depict the different facets of a common man's life. The reader not only lives vicariously through the many characters in a story, but also learns to develop new perspectives to explore his/her surroundings. A lot of times, the texts imitates society and the reader can step into different characters, enter into different time zones, and feel what it is to be a part of different social-psychological-economic worlds. For example, a person reading Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* may be transported into the post-independence era; through the story, he/she can understand the plight of the men, women and children caught up in the catastrophe of the partition. Similarly, a person reading Premchand's *Nirmala* can feel the agony of the exploited in rural India.

A story therefore has the potential to influence our understanding of an individual or society through its characters or events. Each one of us has at some point or the other read something that has struck a chord within us, which has sometimes helped us understand ourselves, or someone else better. The text provides the readers with an extension of life itself because it tells stories of human events and the human condition, and not simply facts (Rasinki & Padak, 1990).

Literature challenges the norm and ignites the mind of the reader to critically view various possible perspectives. Rosenblatt, in her seminal study 'Literature as Exploration' (1938, 1976) talks about the responsibility literature has (as against the analytic approach of social sciences) in providing immediacy to an otherwise alien experience. She insists that reading and teaching literature is "not just for them to have, but it's for them to be, something that they're emotionally involved in and for them to be able to think about rationally, to be able to handle their emotions" (Rosenblatt, in an interview, 1999).

One can therefore say that literature contributes immensely to the development of the society

and the individual. Hence, it is of utmost importance to deliberate on this category of children's literature vis-à-vis the literature that is available and that is needed.

### **Selection of Children's Literature**

Having established the importance of children's literature, let us look at the criteria that guides the selection of literature for children.

The objective of reading literature has always been a point of debate amongst the academic fraternity. A certain section of the fraternity believes that the objective of stories is to instil moral values. This has been highlighted in the earlier sections of this article as well. As a result, apart from a few prominent names, most of the Hindi literature for children is either based on ancient texts or is full of moralistic underpinnings. Another thing to note is that the stories that feature regularly in most Hindi textbooks across India are classified as children's literature because the protagonist is a child. This premise in itself is problematic and incomplete. For example, Premchand's *Eidgaah* is a very popular text amongst many publishers and appears in many textbooks. This story is mostly taught in Grades 4-6. This is a story of a young boy Hamid, who buys a pair of tongs (*chimta*) for his grandmother, instead of toys or sweets for himself. Even though the protagonist is a young boy, the language, content and presentation of the story is quite intense and intricate. This story should not be categorized under the umbrella of children's literature. Similarly, another such story where a kid reflects about the profession of his mother who he suspects to be a sex-worker, should not be classified as children's literature just because the story has been narrated from the child's point of view.

The selection of the story should therefore be done keeping in mind the age, emotional, socio-economic needs, and most importantly, the

interests of the child. Instead of adopting an adult's assumptions of what a child might need, one needs to understand the child's need and interests. Let's understand this with the help of an example. A child who is just beginning formal schooling with Grade 1, steps out of his familiar, safe and secure home environment or play school and enters a completely new set-up, with new faces, new subjects and new teachers. To ease the process of familiarization and build the comfort level of the child, one could share stories that the child can relate to, instead of reading stories which either focus on phonics or some such unfamiliar topics. This is not to negate the importance of such stories, but simply to assert the fact that literature is not a tool to teach values or structures of grammar; its role goes above and beyond.

A grade 4-5 child is constantly negotiating between being a child or an adult. He is told, "You are a child, this is not suitable for you; and you have grown up now, this does not suit you". The child is left to wonder where he/she belongs. This results in Erickson's "Identity Vs. Role Confusion" state. In such a case, a story which talks of strong progressive characters, or which focuses on identity and character building will definitely help and interest the child. It is important that children are exposed to and immersed in a variety of genres.

It's also very pertinent to understand that stories do not encourage or build any stereotypes. Children should be encouraged to develop a critical stance and not accept anything blindly. For example, stories which portray women as weak, defenceless and dependent, and their only ambition being to marry prince charming should be taken with a pinch of salt. Or a story where all men are shown as typical chauvinists should also be questioned and not be accepted as it is. Such critical analysis, especially by young impressionable minds, lends itself to strengthening the very edifice of a progressive society.

One also needs to be very careful that the stories selected for children should not only be of different genres, but should also represent all sections of the society. This representation should not be made only at a superficial level, where just the names are different. True and authentic representation of all sections of the society is very crucial to make the students actually engage with literature. Children should mostly be able to identify with, or relate to the story at some point. The language of the story also plays a major role in making the child more comfortable.

### Conclusion

Instead of treating literature as a tool to merely instil values, one needs to critically analyse and understand the true potential of literature. Learning a language and learning through a language are the two most important pillars of any system of education.

### References

- Hickman, J. (1981). A new perspective on response to literature: Research in an elementary school setting. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 15, 343-354.
- Hiebert, E.L. (1994). Becoming literate through authentic tasks: Evidence and adaptation. In R. B. Ruddel, M. R. Ruddel, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed.) (pp. 391-413). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Joshi, K. C. (2008). Kya kya ho bachchon ki ek kitaab main. In L. Pandey (Ed.), *Padne ki dehleez per* (pp. 34-41). New Delhi: NCERT.
- Kumar, K. (1986). *The child's language and the teacher: A handbook*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Kumar, K. (1992). *What is worth teaching?* New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Miall, D.S. (1996). Empowering the reader: Literary response and classroom learning. In R. J. Kreuz, & M. S. MacNealy (Eds.), *Empirical approaches to literature and aesthetics* (Vol. 52, pp. 463-478). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Purves, A. C. & Rippere, Victoria. (1968). *The elements of writing about a literary work: A study of response to literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1991). Literary theory. In J. Flood, J.M. Jensen, D.Lapp, & J.R.Squire (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 57-62). New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1976). *Literature as exploration*. New York, NY: D-Appleton Century Company. (First published 1938.)
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In R. B. Ruddel, M. R. Ruddel, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed.) (pp. 1057-1092). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1980, April). What facts does this poem teach you? *Language Arts*, 57(4) 386-394.
- Rosenblatt, L.M. (1983). The reading transaction: What for? In R. Parker & F.Davis (Eds.), *Developing literacy: Young children's use of language*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Sah, S. (2009). Reading Hindi literature in elementary school context. (M.Phil. dissertation). Central Institute of Education (University of Delhi), Delhi.
- Sinha, S. (2009, Spring). Rosenblatt's theory of reading: Exploring literature. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 6(2), 223-237.
- Sinha, S. (2000, September). Acquiring literacy in schools. *Seminar* 493, 38-42.
- Sinha, S. (2010). Literacy instruction in schools. In A. Nikolopoulou, T. Abraham & F. Mirbagheri (Eds.), *Education for sustainable development: Challenges, strategies and practices in a globalizing world*. Sage Publications India.
- Tripathi, S. (2011). A study of response of Sixth Grade children's literature. Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi.



Yokota, J. (1993, March). *Issues in selecting multicultural children's literature*. *Language Arts*, 70(3), 156-167.

Rasinski, T. V. & Padak, N.D. (1990, October). Multicultural learning through children's literature. *Language Arts*, 67(6), 576-580.

**Shikha Tripathi** is currently pursuing her Doctoral Degree from Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi. She has taught as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary Education, Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi for 4 years.

*shikhi19@gmail.com*

***Language and Language Teaching*** can be downloaded from the following web sites without paying any costs:

<http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/resources-language-language-teaching.aspx>

<http://www.vidyabhawan.org/Publications.aspx>

Subject to its availability, we will be happy to mail you a hard copy as well if you pay us the courier costs. Please email your request to:

*chak.arindam@gmail.com*

# 9/11 in the Classroom

*Swatie*

Supreme Court has ruled that privacy is a fundamental right, but it is obvious that the limits on the rights of the citizen and whether or not they are being curtailed are up for question. The collection of biometric data was one among several concerns that the right to privacy raised. This judicial process resonated with a similar concern that was taken up in the aftermath of 9/11 in the United States. As the Patriot Act came into effect, concerns about the evasion of individual civil liberties were brought to the fore. Finger printing and other biopolitical practices at airports became the norm after 9/11.

Clearly, a critical study of 9/11 and its after effects- one that critiques aspects of dictatorial non-constitutional policies of government is useful for non-US contexts as well. What is at stake here are not just our physical freedoms but also freedom to think and explore the world in new ways. Thus, the need to inculcate critical thinking keeps on increasing in this fractured world but unfortunately the space for humanities keeps on shrinking not only in higher education, but also in secondary and senior secondary level. In such a situation, what role can pedagogy of language play in nurturing critical thought?

It is here that one can see that language pedagogy is a natural ally to nurture critical thinking. This relationship between language teaching and critical thought isn't an external one, but the very nature of language teaching involves nurturing the voice of the students; this includes nurturing new ways of seeing, questioning and responding to the world.

Developing upon this premise one can say that bringing important social political events into language classrooms is not only a good practice but I will argue that it is also increasingly becoming a necessary one. Development of the voice of the students and comprehension are some of the examples where this becomes evident.

In this spirit, using the context of my research on the American culture in the aftermath of 9/11, I will examine the value of a non-traditional teaching practice of using a short film on 9/11 in the secondary and senior secondary education sector. At the heart of my argument is the conviction that critical thought- the ability to think and question core concepts- is at the foundation for practice of not only good citizenship but also language teaching. I would like to assert that good citizens can be nurtured through good humanities and language/ literary education.

## **Language Teaching and Literacy in School**

It is common knowledge that language teaching in schools is combined with the aim of literary education. When students learn a poem, not only are they learning new words, and inculcating diction, they are also learning literary techniques such as alliteration and rhyme schemes. The literary and the linguistic are inherently inseparable within the realm of the narrative. When Bhattacharya (2012) describes how oral and visual traditions in India can be incorporated

in the Indian classroom, her assumption is that narrative and language are intrinsically linked. Similarly, when students encounter a poem or a short story in a textbook, they are not simply encountering language, but also venturing into newer worlds in and through language. Bhattacharya (2012) notes the need for students to meet within language both the familiar as well as the unfamiliar. This terrain of the unfamiliar then becomes a way for the students to have newer contexts and worlds opened up to them.

Literacy is "the ability to read independently a text of one's choice, and understand it" (Amritavalli, 2012, p.1). It involves the use of critical tools to read a text and achieve a certain level of comprehension. The aim of literacy is not to have students simply memorize the answers, but to enable them to think independently. Thus, to be able to think critically is very much a part of the way we conceptualise literacy itself. This can be facilitated through certain teaching methodologies and extra classroom aids. Sinha and Malshe (2017), discuss the use of the visual texts (such as graphic novels) to supplement the teaching of the linguistic (and the literary). Other skills such as having students translate a poem in a multilingual classroom so that each language speaker can learn from another language speaker has also already been noted. Yet, the core point remains, as Agnihotri (1995) states, that there is a need to develop critical thought so that social change follows from such awareness and inquiry. He notes how classroom teaching has become increasingly monolingual even though multilingualism has cognitively been linked to excellence in the classroom. Moreover, our attitudes to languages are also linked to our cultural attitudes such that the multilingual classrooms are also a path to a multicultural society. Students interact and learn about other cultures through their textbooks and classroom teaching. Amritavalli (2012), asserts how

"[p]edagogy is not a matter of covering the syllabus or of imparting skills or knowledge, but of affecting individual minds." (p.3). Affecting individual minds has a direct relationship with sensitising them and making them more prone to questioning their surroundings, so that they in turn can become responsible citizens. I will turn to my research on American cultural politics after 9/11 to explore ways through which this can be done.

### **Teaching 9/11**

The question then presented to me is how best to inculcate the notion of independent examination that studies of 9/11 can foster in the classroom? For this, I would like to refer to a film titled *11'9"01: September 11* (2002). The film comprises of 11 independent films by directors and filmmakers from around the globe. Released shortly after the 9/11 tragedy, the film follows the impact of the tragedy in the United States as well as across some other countries. In doing so, it makes a statement about the world as a globalized village. For the purpose of my article, I will concern myself with the first segment of the film, directed by Samira Makhmalbaf. This segment is not only about the tragedy itself, but it is also about how to make a group of young children understand what tragedy is.

Set in Afghanistan, the film shows a remote village of Iranian refugees, preparing to build a bomb shelter. Some residents are busy making bricks from mud while the children discuss a local resident's death in the village. A young unnamed burqa clad teacher passing by comments that atomic bombs (presumably to be dropped by the United States) will not be stopped by a mud shelter. She motivates the children to come to class with the promise of free books. Once all the children have gathered in the mud cave that is the classroom, the teacher talks about "an important news". Upon

being asked what important incident occurred in the world recently, the children can only respond with local news. "Someone dug a well and two people fell in and died", says young Esmat, who was one of the children who was helping to make the brick shelter. As the children discuss the possibility of what this "big event" could be, the teacher calls them to silence and supplies the answer about the "very important global incident". After explaining how two airplanes hit the World Trade Center towers, the teacher promptly asks the children, "Do you know what a tower is?" She explains that a tower is somewhat like the chimney of the brick kiln. She then asks the children to hold a minute of silence for the victims of the tragedy. The film ends with the children gathered near the chimney of the brick kiln, and the teacher encouraging them to imagine the height of the WTC towers as compared to that of the chimney.

This short film, through its 11 minutes, 9 seconds and 1 frame makes several important points about the nature of the tragedy as well as its pedagogy to young unassuming children. First, it notes the impact of the global on the local such that *glocal* events are registered. While the persons dying in the well seems to be a more pressing concern for the inhabitants, the fact that they died while creating a bomb shelter is important. The residents of the village understand the looming threat of war on their land in retaliation to the very global event of the World Trade Tower tragedy. Second, what is also highlighted here through the children is the innocence of the people faced with war; the director is thereby criticising the belligerent US policy. Third, the film highlights the importance of learning. The teacher meets illiterate parents and children who do not have any idea of modern concepts such as clocks or towers or atom bombs. She ventures to teach them nonetheless about the tragedy. She does so in highly creative ways, equating the World Trade

Center tower with that of the brick kiln's chimney—the highest structure the students have encountered—in order to create sympathy towards the suffering of the people who died in the tragedy. Fourth, the film makes the viewers think about their world and their place in it. If 9/11 was a glocal event, then it must also be thought through in both global and local ways. The film makes a statement about the necessity of doing all of these four points together.

For the classroom, the film becomes not just a piece of art that is available for viewership and teaching (if adequate technology is available), but rather it becomes a *metaphor* for the teaching of 9/11 in general. The teacher in an Indian classroom too is usually devoid of any tools (except a textbook and a prescribed syllabus) to aid in the process of teaching glocal events such as 9/11. All that is available to the teacher are her or his own words and imagination. The teacher, the film seems to argue, must teach *creatively*. She or he must venture to take the help of concepts already available to the students to facilitate the comprehension of the concept under discussion. To give an oft-cited example from Saussurean (and Derridean) linguistics, teaching a concept would be similar to opening a dictionary for a particular word. This word can only be known if other words explaining the first words are available and understood by the student. Otherwise, the learning of a concept becomes an endless opening of different entries in the dictionary. It becomes the task of the teacher to ensure that a new concept is available in a manner that uses previously learnt concepts, similar to how the refugee students learn about the WTC towers through the chimney of the brick kiln. Agnihotri (1995) states how discourses readily available to students interacting with non-readily available discourses need to be at the core of revolutionary pedagogy. Events such as 9/11 have much to contribute to such a pedagogy. Further, it is this sort of revolutionary pedagogy that the film

*11'9"01: September 11* tries to argue in favour of, in order to develop the skills for critical thinking in students such that they can examine independently the global events that affect their own surroundings the most.

## References

- Agnihotri, R.K. (1995). Multilingualism as a classroom resource. In P. Pluddemann (Ed.), *Multilingual education for South Africa* (pp. 3-7). Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- Amritavalli, R.(2012). Helping children become readers. *Language and Language Teaching* 1(1), 1-4.
- Bhattacharya, R. (2012). Making a 'play-text': Innovative uses of traditional arts. *Language and Language Teaching* 1(1), 40-45.
- Brigand, A., Dussart, C., Innaritu, A. G., Kajikawa, N., Khoury, G., ...Zazulinsky, T. (Producers) & Chahine, Y., Gitai, A., Innaritu, A. G., Imamura, S., Lelouch, C., Makhmalbaf, S., ...Tanovic, D. (Directors). (2002). *11'9"01: September 11*. [Motion picture]. Egypt, France, Iran, Japan, Mexico, United Kingdom, United States: Studio Canal.
- Kaplan, A. (2004). Violent belongings and the question of Empire today: Presidential address to the American Studies Association, Hartford, Connecticut, October 17, 2003. *American Quarterly* 56(1), 1-18. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sinha, M. S. & Malshe, M. (2017). Graphic Novels as Pedagogical Tools in the Indian Classroom: Teachers' Opinions. *Language and Language Teaching* 6(11), 1-6.

**Swatie** is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English, University of Delhi. She is currently working on a dissertation titled '*The New Normal*': *Trauma, biopolitics and visibility after 9/11*.

*purplerain734@gmail.com*



# Digital Storytelling: A Classroom Experiment

*Mojtaba Tajeri and Pushpinder Syal*

## **Introduction**

Storytelling is a powerful way to express ideas and communicate experiences. It takes place both through the spoken form and in writing. Storytelling has been part of teaching since the definition of subjects, as far back as Aristotle (Alexander, 2011). According to Sharda (2007a), storytelling, in general is a powerful pedagogical paradigm that can be used to enhance learning outcomes for general, scientific and technical education. With the rapid development of information technology, "students live in a world that has been transformed by technology, and they are often referred to as 'digital natives' because their exposure to digital resources begins at birth" (Morgan, 2014, p.20). Thus, there is always an inertia in education for these two strands—that of storytelling and technology to converge, one such attempt is being made in this paper.

## **Concepts**

The American Digital Storytelling Association defines digital storytelling as "the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling (in which) stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative, and voice together, giving deep dimension and vivid colour to the characters, situations, experience and insights". Digital stories combine a spoken "text" with still images, and sometimes with music or sound as well, to create what is in effect a "mini-movie" (5 minutes). Digital storytelling, therefore is the process of creating a short purposeful movie

with various multimedia components in order to create an engaging presentation.

The use of digital storytelling in education allows students to express their thoughts and ideas in a different, and hopefully creative manner. It is also used to make students reflect on their learning; it can be equally used as a method of assessment. However, the emphasis of digital storytelling has to be on the story itself, rather than the technology. "Story without digital works, but digital without story doesn't." (Ohler, 2008, p.xviii).

## **Integrating Digital Story Telling (DST) in English Literature Class**

In a program held in the University of Houston's College of Education, the students' digital stories "demonstrated creativity, thoughtful writing, organizational skill and powerful incidences of self-expression, even by students who were often reluctant to speak out in class." (Rudnicki, Anne et al., 2006, p.2) Digital stories are also known to facilitate learning in students who are new to academic writing and who have problems in engaging intellectually with conventions of academic writing (Clarke & Adam, 2010).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009), in their study on struggling writers, found that creating digital stories helps students gain more awareness of purpose, structure and form of the story. Moreover, the use of photographs and videos helps students express themselves more easily and competently.

### Digital Storytelling Workshop

Students at different levels have different digital skills and knowledge. In this regard, the first step of integrating DST in a class is to conduct a workshop for the students. The main aims of the workshop would be to:

- a. Introduce digital storytelling to the students, brainstorm a story idea, teach them how to draw a storyboard and how to find the required materials.
- b. Introduce an application for producing DST, such as Adobe Premiere Pro software, Movie Maker, Microsoft PowerPoint, etc. Also teach the students how to create, edit and present their digital story.

### Students Performance and Activity

Ohler (2008), believes that digital storytelling helps students develop the creativity required to solve problems in innovative ways. Researchers found that it gives them an opportunity to express their ideas, interests and dislikes. Also, it forces students to use a more complex set of structures and a presumably advanced range of vocabulary, and develop their critical thinking abilities. They have to think critically about the story and express it using their own words and visual representations. They also have to use other critical thinking skills such as deduction and interpretation. Furthermore, digital storytelling helps to develop the students' ability to express an opinion, argue their case, initiate and sum-up ideas and illustrate their opinions using examples.

Digital storytelling can be easily adapted for the English literature class by asking the students to present their tasks, ideas and their understanding of the text in a digital form. The DSTs can be presented individually, or through collaborative groups comprising 2-4 students by first reading the text in the class, and then creating a digital representation of it. Throughout

the activity, group members are encouraged to exchange ideas to establish the purpose of the story. Members of the group are assigned specific responsibilities. For instance, if a group is producing a video, members are assigned the roles of director, writer, producer and editor. They coordinate the activity according to their roles and the text they are reading. Each group is given a storyboard to complete (Figure 1).



	Transition	Transition
		
	fade out	fade out
Time (sec)	25 sec.	30 sec.
Effects	slow-motion	slow-motion & colourful picture
Music/ audio	Disperatamente Giulia Italian	
Script	Victims of violence grow up to perpetrate it. Patriarchy suppresses the voice of women.	When the chain of control is reversed the perpetrator becomes the oppressed and the oppressed the perpetrator.

Figure 1. Student-created storyboard based on Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*.

With their storyboard in mind, the groups engage in discussions based on the text and use their knowledge of the text to plan their digital stories, often making links between the text and their personal experiences, outside media (such as relevant songs) and images. The storyboard serves as a guiding framework to keep the groups on track, and helps them to set

manageable goals for the scope of their project. It is also important that group members have access to the necessary technological tools such as a computer and an internet connection. Should they choose to take pictures or a video, the group would need appropriate cameras. Groups with limited access to technology may choose to create a slideshow of still images taken from the Internet for pictures, graphics, and sound files.

This collaboration allows for thoughtful and insightful discussions of the primary text within the context of an assigned role. Students gradually assume responsibility for comprehension, interpretation, and understanding of the text through the process of selecting words and producing multimodal representations as a group, guided by the roles assigned to them. Thus, a DST provides a social context in which students utilize multimodal tools to construct personal interpretations of the text and externalize their interpretations through collaborative activity.

The structure of a digital storytelling activity is such that the students' attention is directed towards metacognitive process such as planning, monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on the accomplishment of multimodal tasks (Ohler, 2008). DST also provides social support that helps students acquire additional reading knowledge and skills; but most of all, it is a fun activity and today's students relate to such activities very well.

Teachers don't often associate inquiry with the language arts, but rather with the sciences (Mills & Jennings, 2011). Yet at its core, DST is an inquiry-based activity, and the first step in the inquiry process is to ask questions, either about the narrative or about the subject matter of the central text. Personal knowledge, knowledge systems (history, science, politics, etc.), and sign/symbol systems (art, music, etc.) are typically the sources for student inquiry (Short, Harste,

& Burke, 1995). However, in this activity, the principle source of inquiry is the text that the students are reading. The beauty of a digital story is that the nature of the activity fosters a culture of inquiry within the classroom, which is found to have practical implications for engaging the students in talk and significantly improving the quality of classroom conversation (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

### **Student and Group Roles**

The purpose of an activity drives the nature of the activity within a group; and the social interactions that take place during a DST are critical to its success. Deep comprehension of a subject relies on the students' ability to verbalize known content, listen to differing view points, and synthesize new information (Burns, 1998). Just like literature circles, DSTs allow for student choice, self-management, and variety grouping, which promotes a more cooperative and responsible classroom climate (Burns, 1998).

Allowing students to make decisions and choices based on their roles provides "a sense of empowerment, and empowerment leads to engagement" (Seely-Flint, 1999, p. 17). Research has also shown that students feel an increased sense of ownership with regard to their learning, coupled with a responsibility to their groups, when a specific role is assigned to them (Wilfong, 2009).

### **Role of the Teacher**

Monitoring the classroom discourse is the most important role of the teacher in DSTs. At the outset, just as in a traditional literature circle model, teachers facilitating DST should first work collaboratively with the students and then reduce the level of scaffolding as the students demonstrate independent learning and assume responsibility for their own learning within the roles assigned to them (Brown, 2002). With

technology as the added component in story telling, teachers are also responsible for monitoring and scaffolding the students' technological proficiency (Mills, 2010).

Novice digital storytellers can often get lost in the Internet "thicket". A recommendation to the teacher is that, during the students' first attempt at this activity, the class be permitted access to only a limited repository of teacher-selected images (e.g. a shared drive folder or CD containing subject-specific pictures). This will limit the Internet wandering and focus the students' attention on the craft of digital story telling. Once the students have mastered the making of a digital story, they can move on to more advanced techniques, such as recording their own videos, voice-overs, or even original music.

It should be noted that some current classroom teachers may themselves not be comfortable with technology, despite the fact that today's K-12 students are "digital natives" (Prensky, 2005). It is also not uncommon for students to be more tech-savvy than their facilitators. This should not be a cause for concern. The role of the teacher is more to provide access to technology and then to monitor the appropriateness of the result antimages, sound files, dialogues and story and subject matter.

### Assessment

"Present the Production" is the conclusion of the activity in which students present their production of digital storytelling to their classmates and parents. This is the culmination of the social exchange of the activity, as the language learned during the students' movie-making experience can be shared with outsiders. As Vygotsky's (1978) work in sociocultural theory asserts, learning is best experienced when shared with others; the end result here should also lead to this. Thus, assessment can be done in terms of reflection

and feedback with blogs, discussion boards and student response systems. This kind of feedback would allow students to share their learning with wider groups than just teachers and also give teachers much better platform for assessing their students.

### References

- Alexander, Bryan. (2011). *The new digital storytelling: Creating narratives with new media*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Brown, B. A. (2002). *Literature circles in action in the middle school classroom*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ERIC (ED 478 458)
- Burns, B. (1998). Changing the classroom climate with literature circles. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 42, 124-129.
- Hung, Chun-Ming, Hwang, Gwo-Jen, & Huang, Iwen. (2012). A project-based digital story telling approach for improving students' learning motivation, problem-solving competence and learning achievement. *Educational Technology & Society*, 15 (4), 368-379.
- Mills, K. A. (2010). Shrek meets Vygotsky: Rethinking adolescents' multimodal literacy practices in schools. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54, 35-45.
- Mills, H., & Jennings, L. (2011). Talking about talk: Reclaiming the value and power of literature circles. *The Reading Teacher*, 64, 590-598.
- Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. J. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. *Teachers College Record*, 108, 1017-1054.
- Morgan, Hani. (2014). Using digital story project to help students improve in reading and writing. *Reading Improvement*, 5 (1), 20-26.
- Ohler, J.(2008). *Digital storytelling in the classroom: New media pathways to literacy, learning and creativity*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin press.
- Prensky, M. (2005). Listen to the natives. *Educational Leadership*, 63(4),8-13.

- Rudnicki, A., Cozart, A., Ganesh, A., Markello, C., Marsh, S., McNeil, S., ... & Robin, B. (2006, March). The buzz continues... The diffusion of digital storytelling across disciplines and colleges at the University of Houston. In *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 717-723). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).
- Seely-Flint, A. (1999). *Literature circles*. Westminister, CA: Teacher Created Materials.
- Sharda, N. (2007a). Applying movement oriented design to create educational stories. *International Journal of Learning*, 13(12), 177-184.
- Short, K., Harste, J., & Burke, C. (1995). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sylvester, R., & Greenidge, Wendy-Lou. (2009). Digital storytelling: Extending the potential for struggling writers. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(4), 284-295.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wilfong, L. G. (2009). Textmasters: Bringing literature circles to textbook reading across the curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53, 164-171.

**Mojtaba Tajeri** is a Ph.D. scholar in the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University Chandigarh.

*mojtatabatajери@gmail.com*

**Pushpinder Syal** has been Professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University Chandigarh for over 30 years. She has been guiding research and publishing in the area of Stylistics, Linguistics and Language Teaching.

*pushpinder.syal@gmail.com*



# From Stylistic Analysis to Interpretation: A Pedagogical Illustration From K.K. Daruwalla's 'Hawk'

*Praveen Sharda*

According to Widdowson (1992), "Poems are uses of language and they can only be understood as uses of language" (p. 10). The language of poetry usually takes as its subject matter, what is conventionally considered to be common place, ordinary or even insignificant. What is then significant about poetry is simply the way language is used to reformulate in unfamiliar terms the simple propositions capturing the underlying mystery of the commonplace. It is imaginative, insightful and subtle thought which renders into poetic language simple truisms such as "nature is beautiful" or "love is a wonderful feeling". The language of poetry thus brings into existence new or elusive images of reality. This puts poetry on a pedestal as it becomes an especially prestigious discourse, different from the world of ordinary affairs. The message contained in a poetic text is the poet's perception, but it is meant for others and thus of general significance. To understand the message, readers must not only relate the language of poetry to ordinary day to day activities but also discover the deviations to understand the meaning, the message or the objective of the poet. To understand the language of poetic communication or discourse, the reader needs to interpret its language to understand how it has been laden with certain values, which make for a coherent world in the context of that poem.

Before taking up a poetic text in the class, a teacher must do a stylistic analysis of the text. The teacher must then act as a facilitator by providing the students with linguistic props or language clues which would help them arrive at

the evidenced interpretation. The teacher's role in the class should in fact be to encourage the students to come up with more than one interpretation, or ask the students for their individual interpretations based on the linguistic indicators/signs in the poem. The teacher can begin by telling the students that every piece of literature whether poetry or fiction, is a negation of the norms of a social system. It is only when the accepted ideas, conventions or values of a society are represented in a new light or in an unfamiliar manner, that the search for the unformulated meaning begins and this, in the vocabulary of the reader response theorists such as Wolfgang Iser, is due to the negation of the standard manner of representation in the code. A student who is on a guided tour of a poetic text begins his search by looking for elements represented in a "defamiliar" manner, or focuses on those utterances which are odd or deviant from the standard language. The teacher can also guide the student to look for "extra regularities, not irregularities, into the language" (Leech, 1969), such as repetition of similar structures on the levels of sound or meaning and the use of parallel structures or utterances which appear to be too simple and linear. The student must therefore analyse the poet's choice of words or lexical items, sounds, sentence-structures, the use of deictics, or any other overarching structures. Further, the teacher must instruct the student on how to relate the linguistic or formal properties of the language of the poem to the normal paradigms of language to establish their literary significance. The student must look for those attributes which

have been acquired by lexical items in the context of the poetic text, and these attributes, in the words of Widdowson (1975), are those where an additional value has been added to their significance in the already existing code. Thus the meaning of a word in the poem becomes equal to its value and significance. It is the poet who adds value to the already existing significance of a lexical item or word in a poetic context; and it is the sum of the superimposed values which helps the student in arriving at a coherent interpretation of the poem.

The teacher must also explain that it is the poet's distinct usage at the levels of sound, lexis, syntax and semantics that constitutes his distinct style in a chosen text and this could be similar or different in other texts. The student thus comprehends the meaning of style as a choice, and the stylistician's or the analyst's task as that of relating specific choices to the poet's intended meaning. The teacher analyst also draws the student's attention to any structure formed by these meanings explored at different levels, because it is the coherence of meaning studied at various levels that is of prime importance. Let us now look at Daruwalla's poem 'Hawk' and attempt to understand its pedagogic significance.

The teacher first draws the students' attention to the title of the poem and the expectations it arouses in the readers. A hawk is a bird of prey which feeds on smaller animals, and is usually found in habitats such as deserts and fields. It is known for being an aggressive predator which kills with its claws, and its preferred time for hunting is when daylight reduces. A hawk's diet includes snakes, lizards, mice, rabbits, squirrels or any other type of small animal. The teacher directs the student to read the poem at least twice and identify utterances or parts of the text which are different from the commonplace representation of a hawk. The student reader is asked to look at and reflect about sentences such as:

A frustrated parricide on the kill.  
The fuse of his hate was burning still.  
A rapist in the harem of the sky  
The ones he would scoop up next,  
Those black dregs in the cup of his hate!  
Hawking is turned to a ritual, the  
predator's  
Passion honed to an art;  
But I am learning how to spot the ones  
Crying for the right to dream, the right  
to flesh,  
The right to sleep with their own wives-  
I have placed them.

(Daruwalla, K.K. 1992, pp. 80-82)

These portions of the text persuade the reader to think that the human feelings of hate, forced sexual assault, passion and the intelligence to target "them", i.e., those who wish to lead normal lives have been added to the normal traits of a hawk. The hawk is thus behaving more like a human being than a bird of prey. The anthropomorphic qualities of the hawk are the elements of value added to the existing qualities of the hawk. The baser instincts of hatred and frustration consume him so much that even after parricide he wants to target other birds for his vicarious pleasures. The sky has been compared to a big harem where he can assault anyone. Here the teacher can explain the metaphorical use of the word "harem" by elaborating how the sky has become a substitute for a "harem", as the hawk is free to choose and assault any creature of the sky. His passion to kill is transformed into an art and he now acquires the skill to target those "human beings" that he desires to target. It is indeed strange that the hawk targets humans and the reader is persuaded to look for the cause. The teacher then introduces the students to the lexical item "anthropomorphic" and explains that

Daruwalla's poetic creation possesses these qualities. The teacher can further motivate the student to think about the poet's objective in creating an anthropomorphic hawk. The idea of a hawk being vested with human-like qualities is not very different from the childhood experience of playing with toy animals with human faces, arms or legs, or of reading stories about such creatures. The teacher can also draw the student's attention towards animation films which feature speaking and thinking animals. Thus, it can help the students to understand the idea of a hawk vested with human emotions or attributes.

The teacher then directs the students' attention to the structural contrasts or thematic contrasts

in the poem. They observe that the structure of the poem contrasts between sections one and three (describing the wild hawk), and sections two and four (describing the tamed hawk). Also, there is a prominent repetition in section two

The tamed one is worse, for he is touched  
by man.

The reader is coaxed into thinking of the contrast between wild and tamed hawks. The teacher can ask the students to focus on this contrast and use a table to list the differences between the two. This would help them understand the poet's objective in representing the tamed hawk as worse than the wild one- something which is contrary to the reader's expectations.

Table 1

*Differences between Wild and Tamed Hawks*

<b>Wild Hawk- Free</b>	<b>Tamed Hawk- Kidnapped by man</b>
King of Sky	Blinded, starved, tortured (scar is swelled up)
Hunts-crow, mynah, pigeon, parakeets, hare	Hunts-"them" or those wishing to lead normal lives, i.e. human beings
Speck of barbed (controlled) passion	Trained for havoc-ferocious; eye targets his torturers
Human traits-full of hatred, attacks fearlessly all birds without distinction, Rapist	Human traits-Vengeance for torturers-eye focused on them
Wild nature provides for hawk	Nature cannot satisfy hawk, unnatural torture breeds unnatural desires
Normal Predator	Maniac

It is evident from the table that contrary to domesticated animals, the tamed hawk, in order to satisfy man's lust for hunting, acquires uncontrollable traits of violence. The lexical item "tamed" therefore carries the positive value of becoming less dangerous, but also simultaneously the negative value of being subdued and subjugated to the will of the master. The hawk too is enslaved to the violent instincts of man.

Hawking or hunting smaller animals, which is the natural trait of hawks in their usual habitat is turned into a ritual or a compulsory practice which they do when they accompany a hunting expedition. Hunting thus becomes a forced trait. The violence unleashed on a hawk in captivity makes it more aggressive, and ferocious as a predator. The students thus understand that in the context of the poem, a tamed hawk is more

violent and this is a negation of the normal expectations of a domesticated bird or animal. Moreover, a tamed hawk's violent nature is in proportion to the violence it is subjected to in his captivity. Hence the message or the discourse which emerges from the analysis of the table is that violence begets or breeds more violence. The tamed hawk is thus:

...a black prophecy  
Weaving its moth-soft cocoon of death  
Over each and everything that it looms  
over.

The student is persuaded to think about the intention of the poet who uses the tamed hawk as a persona. In section four, the poet wears the mask of the kidnapped hawk; in fact sections two and four have been written from the hawk's perspective. Poets generally absent themselves from a scene when they apprehend that the blame for an action will fall on them. Wearing the mask of the enslaved hawk gives the poet the advantage of being acquitted of the blame for the excessively violent acts on the part of the tamed hawk. The enslaved hawk becomes responsible for all his acts. The poet uses the third person for the wild hawk and a description of all its actions, right from the actions. Also, not much space is given to the wild hawk as the poet has appropriated his habitat and all his actions. It is the tamed hawk who reveals his perspective by making use of the first pronoun in the last stanza, thereby acting as the poet's spokesperson or his persona. The greater space accorded to the tamed hawk and its actions in the poem's architecture are indicative of man's power over the tamed hawk, its torture, its exploitation in hunting pursuits and its subjugation for his selfish motives. The hawk in this poetic context has imbibed the baser instincts of taking revenge, of being violent in unexpected proportions and casting a shadow of death over whatever comes in its way.

Towards the end of the class, the teacher questions the students on the value added to the significance surrounding the hawk. Using the table to make note of the expected traits and the use of pronouns, the teacher guides the student to arrive at or at least approximate the communicative message of the poem that the violence unleashed on the kidnapped hawk makes him much more violent and like "a black prophecy"-spelling death all around. The human traits of hatred and revenge acquired by the hawk are also the result of this unnatural torture and habitat. Unnatural habitats create unnatural desires and hence a state of continuous frustration and dissatisfaction. The tamed hawk is trained in spreading havoc and in a period of drought,

...it will rain hawks

This means that the tamed hawks will outlive everything as man has contributed to the large-scale destruction of nature and hence its wild and natural habitat. The wild hawk was somewhat satisfied and happy in his wild surroundings which provided for him, but for the tamed hawk, nature in its wildness is certainly not enough and hence man too becomes a victim of the tamed hawk. Thus the proverbial message is that what man did to the hawk now comes back to him as man becomes a prey to the unnatural violence of the hawk. Arriving at this point of understanding, the students will hopefully appreciate the power of the poem.

## References

- Daruwalla, K.K. (1992). Hawk. In Mehrotra & Arvind Krishna, (Eds.), *The Oxford Indian anthology of twelve modern Indian poets* (pp. 80-82). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London: Longman.
- Widdowson, H.G. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. London: Longman.

Widdowson, H.G. (1992). *Practical stylistics: An approach to poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Praveen Sharda** is Professor, Department of English, University School of Open Learning, Panjab University, Chandigarh. She has worked on the stylistic analysis of fiction and poetry and guided research in literature and language teaching.

*praveensharda@hotmail.com*

## *Language and Language Teaching 10*

(July 2016) was a Special Issue on  
Disability and Language

### **Articles**

- Peer to Peer Deaf Literacy: Working with Young Deaf People and Peer Tutors in India  
*Julia Gillen, Sibaji Panda, Uta Papen and Ulrike Zeshan* 1
- Evaluating the Reading Capability of Visually Impaired Students: The Need to Go beyond Mere Administrative Accommodations  
*Geetha Durairajan* 8
- Learning to Teach Learners with a Visual Impairment  
*Shruti Sircar* 13
- A Note on the Performance Test in a Conversational Japanese Course Taught to Visually Impaired Students  
*Nozomi Tokuma* 18
- Strategies for Teaching Deaf Students  
*Andesha Mangla* 23
- I too Can Get an Award! Mountain Climber's Award: A Case Profile  
*Asha Singh* 28
- Disability of Language: Disabled People are not Blessed with Divine Organs  
*Jagdish Chander* 34
- Teaching Language to Children with Disabilities  
*Sudesh Mukhopadhyay* 38
- ### **Interviews**
- Interview with Prof. Madan Vasishtha  
*Andesha Mangla* 43
- Interview with Prof. Anita Ghai  
*Santosh Kumar (Translated by Ramnik Mohan)* 46
- ### **Landmarks**
- But Words can Never Hurt me: The Linguistic Construction of Disability in Text and Discourse  
*Tanmoy Bhattacharya* 53



# The *Compleat* Lexical Tutor as a Resource for Teachers of Poetry

*Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary*

## **Introduction**

In the age of computers, technology is an ideal choice for teachers working with young people for two reasons. First, learners have easy access to gadgets and spend long hours with them. This interaction can be employed to advantage in the language classroom. Second, technology helps promote independent and personalized learning because learners get to work on activities that suit their proficiency level, and at their own pace.

Widdowson (2004) remarks that "the most striking development in linguistic description over the past twenty years has been the use of the computer to collect and analyse vast corpora of actually occurring language data" (p. 357). This "technology" has found its way into classrooms, with interesting applications and inspiring outcomes. In my paper, I will take up an illustration of one such technology. The *Compleat Lexical Tutor* (see <http://www.lextutor.ca>) is a free website which offers a variety of corpus-based tools that emphasize the role of vocabulary in language learning (English, French and Spanish) and promote inductive learning. The website was created by Tom Cobb of the University of Quebec at Montreal, Canada, and is dedicated to "data driven learning on the web" (Cobb, 1997).

Data driven learning (DDL) refers to the use of linguistic corpora in language learning (Hadley, 2002). It encourages learners to explore and analyse (authentic) language data in order to discover patterns of use for themselves

(Johns, 1990). Cobb contends that vocabularies are retained longer and used more appropriately when encountered in a variety of contexts and when learners are actively involved in the learning process. For Cobb, the rationale for this attention to vocabulary is that if learners know the 200 most frequently used words in a language, in addition to the 570 high-frequency academic words on the Academic Word List (AWL), they already know about 90 per cent of the words they will encounter in academic contexts (Cobb, 2004). The website, therefore, offers a wide range of tools to facilitate the self-learning of vocabulary in a context.

There are four main advantages of this approach, as compared to more traditional approaches to language teaching. These are: it teaches vocabulary and grammar inductively because learners discover regularities and patterns for themselves; it makes use of authentic material because the corpora are drawn from instances of actual spoken and written language; it promotes learner autonomy because the activities are learner-centred and can be used independently of teachers; and it appeals to young learners' interest in technology because learners use their laptops or smartphones to process the data and learn through discovered patterns.

## **The *Compleat* Lexical Tutor**

The website offers a wide range of tools to facilitate data driven learning, most of which are interactive. Learners, for example, can

assess their vocabulary size, test their knowledge of vocabulary, read and listen to vocabulary in context, determine their passive

vocabularies and make them active, and test their grammar using concordance lines. A sample of the website interface is given in figure 1.



Figure 1. The Compleat Lexical Tutor interface.

The tools may be picked in accordance with the local pedagogical objectives. The system developers, however, suggest the following formulae for "learning" vocabulary:

1. Use the *vocabulary tests* to determine your vocabulary size and next zone of vocabulary growth. You may want to start with the Classic (GSL+UWL) or BNC (1-14k) word recognition tests (GSL=General Service List; UWL=University Word List; BNC = British National Corpus). The test names are also hyperlinks and will take you to the tests if you click on them. A sample of the tests page is given in figure 2.



Figure 2. Frequency based vocabulary tests.

- Go to List\_Learn and identify the level you need to improve on, figure 3.

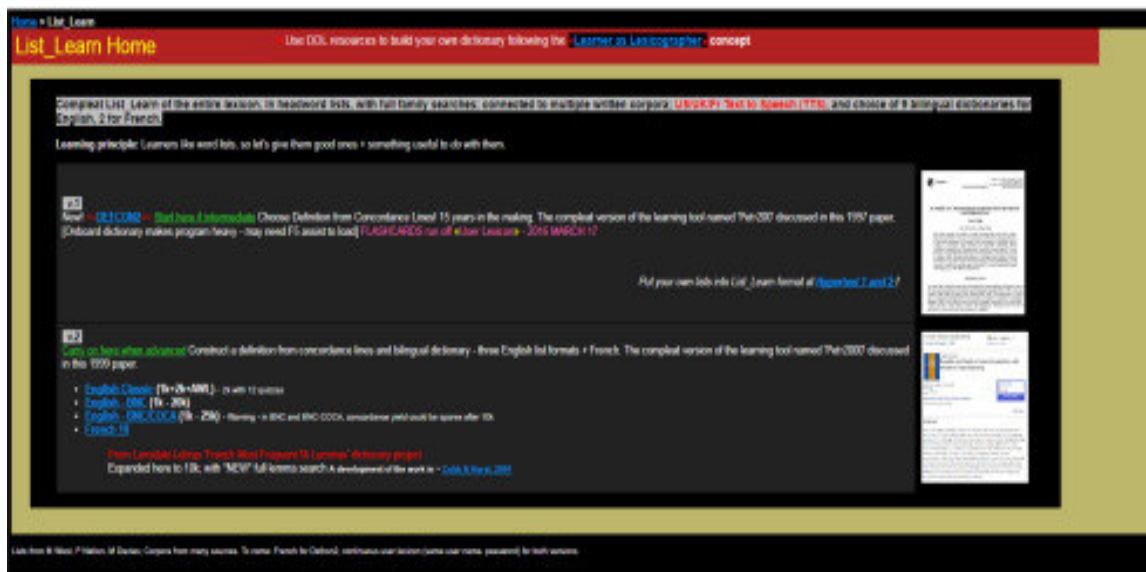


Figure 3. List\_Learn.

- Work your way through the list with the aid of a dictionary and concordance. Develop an approach that suits you: make notes, cut and paste examples and definitions to the Group Lex Database provided, or a spreadsheet on your computer, figure 4.

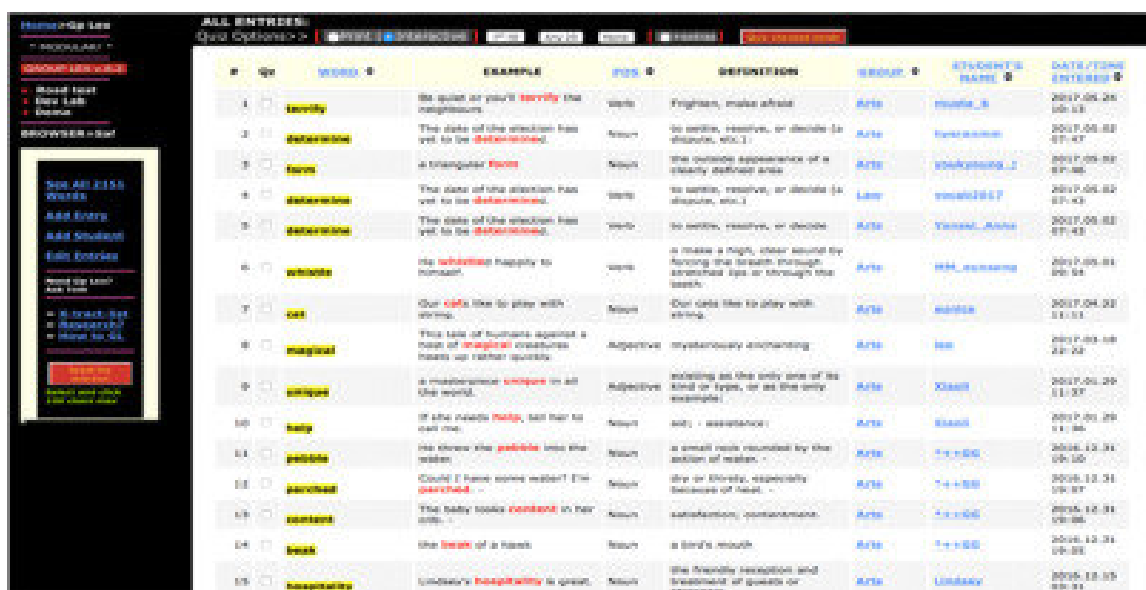


Figure 4. Group\_Lex.

- If you do not like learning from lists, or want to learn more about new words by meeting them in other contexts, then you can paste complete authentic texts into VP Cloze, which will give you exercises for words from the frequency band you are working on, figure 5.

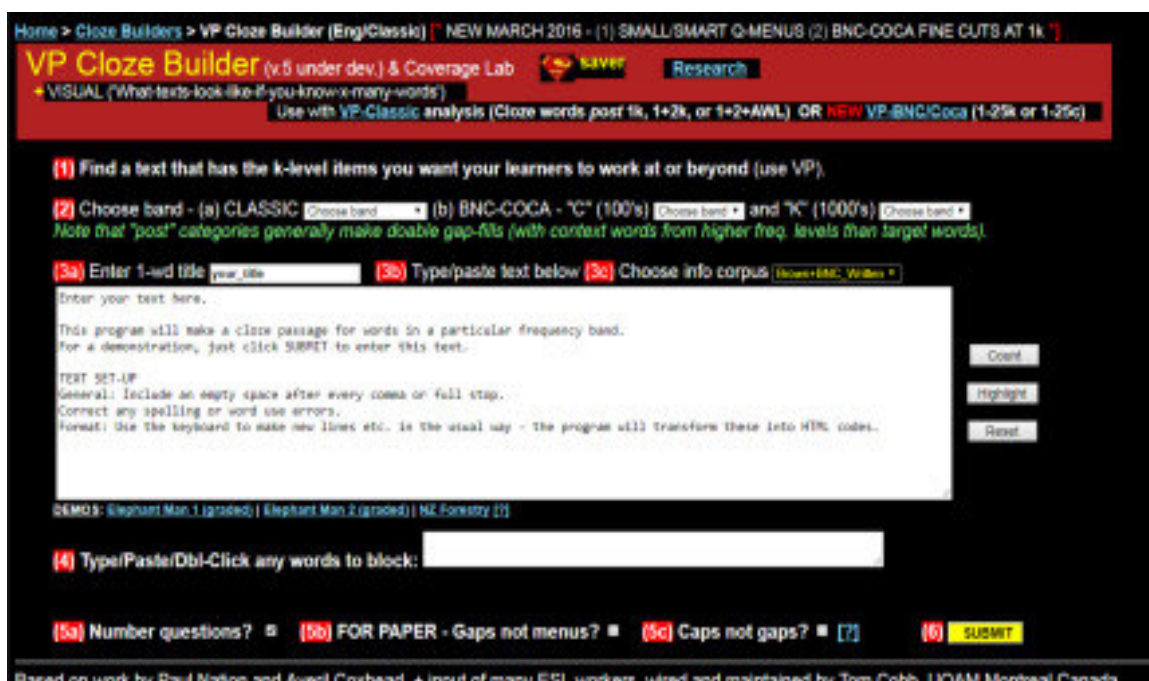


Figure 5. VP cloze builder.

5. If you want to work outside the frequency framework altogether, but not entirely independently, then you can read a novel with full click-on lexical support. You could also make your own resource-supported texts at Hypertext Builder, figures 6, 7.

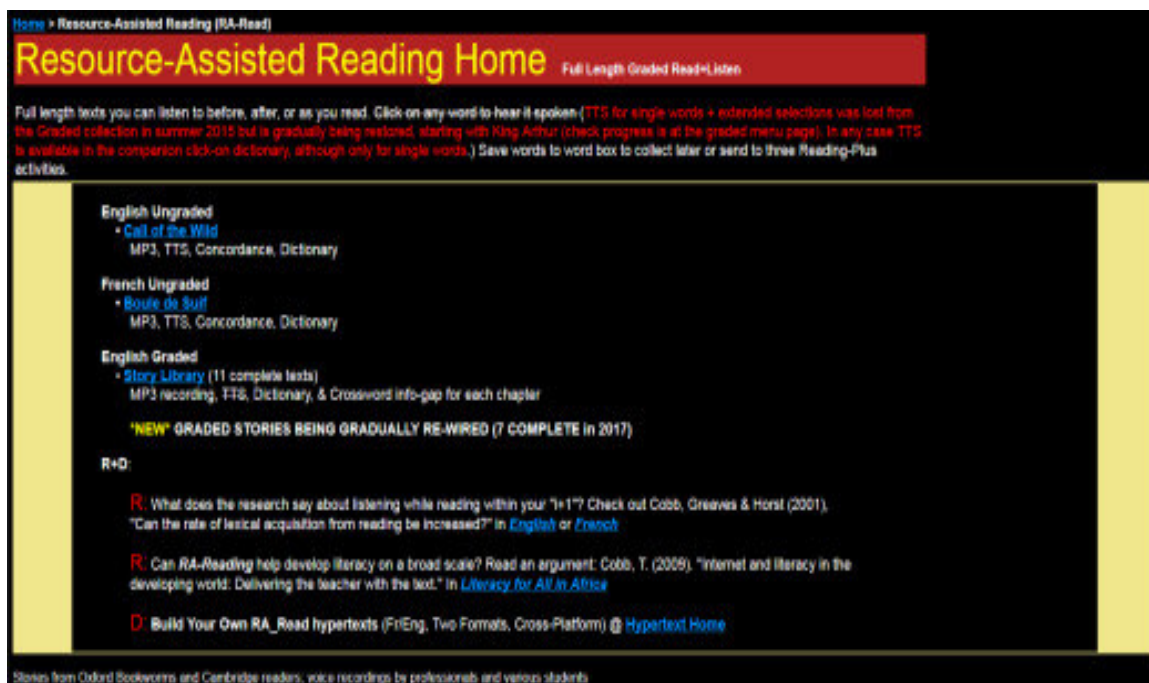


Figure 6. Resource-assisted reading home.



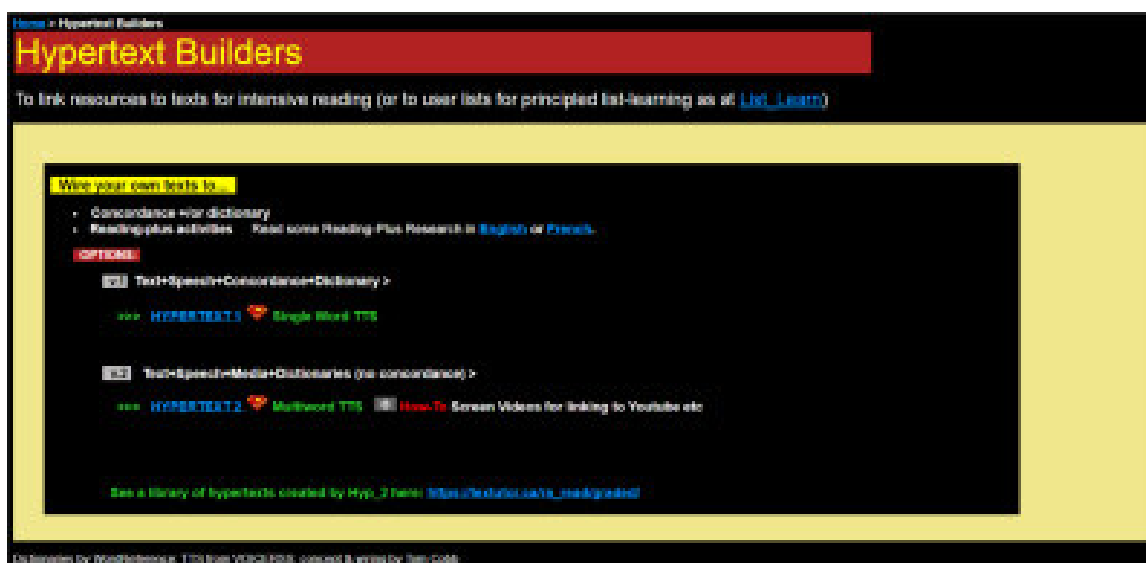


Figure 7. Hypertext builder.

For tutorials on using the *Compleat Lexical Tutor*, watch the youtube channel *Using Lexical Tutor Web Site* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43CrLOtule4>.

### The *Compleat Lexical Tutor* and Teachers of Poetry

In this section, I will highlight two tools that are most directly relevant to the poetry classroom. The first tool is Vocabprofile. Teachers can input poems into the WebVP Classic, as seen in figure 8.



Figure 8. Web VP classic.

When you hit submit, you get the analysis of the text at the lexical level, as shown in figure 9.





Figure 9. Lexical analysis of 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'

The output shows that the percentage of the K1-K2 words (most frequently used 2000 words) in the text is about 85 per cent, the percentage from the AWL is under 1 per cent, while off-list words (which may be proper nouns, archaic words, abbreviations, etc.) constitute a little over 14 per cent. This lexical frequency breakdown is crucial to the teacher of poetry, especially at the stage of text selection. It provides an answer to the decades-old debate about which poems to select for the language classroom. If the learners have taken vocabulary tests and determined their vocabulary size, teachers can select the right text for their class with the help of Vocabprofile. It may be noted here that learners can also benefit from this tool by inputting their essays and monitoring the percentage of AWL words in their writing.

The second tool is Concordance. This tool allows teachers to demonstrate to learners how the words they encounter in poetry, both classic and modern, are actually used today. It also allows a demonstration of how words collocate, and whether the collocates the learners find in poetry are also found in common use. To do this, click Concordance, Corpus: English and the screen in figure 10 pops up.



Figure 10. Corpus concordance English.



Figure 11. Output of collocation analysis of Wander and Lonely in Brown Corpus.

## Conclusion

In my present paper, I have explored the relevance of corpus tools in the poetry classroom. I have provided evidence that corpus-driven tools can provide valuable insights with regard to the selection of poems for the language class. Moreover, vocabulary from the poems selected need to be examined against the corpora of language use in order to decide their frequency and relevance to the learners' needs. The language in the poem examined 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' is quite simple in terms of vocabulary, but it contains words and collocations that are not frequently seen outside the poem. Tools such as the *Compleat Lexical Tutor* provide a better understanding of the different and unusual nature of language in poetry. They may serve to maximize the benefits from the introduction of poetry, classic or modern, into the language classroom.

## References

- Cobb, T. (1997). *The Compleat Lexical Tutor*. Retrieved from <lexutor.ca>.
- Hadley, G. (2002). Sensing the winds of change: An introduction to data-driven learning. *RELC Journal*, 33(2), 99-124.
- Johns, T. (1990). From printout to handout: Grammar and vocabulary teaching in the context of data-driven learning. *CALL Austria*, 10, 14-34.

Widdowson, H. (2004). A perspective on recent trends. In A. P. R. Howatt & H. Widdowson (Eds.), *A history of English language teaching* (2nd ed.) (pp. 353-372). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary** has a Ph.D. in Stylistics and has served as Fulbright post-doctoral fellow and adjunct faculty at San Diego State University, USA. His research focuses on the investigation of ideology in political discourse.

*gibreelsadeq@yahoo.com*

# Should Children Learn to Read and Write in their Mother Tongue?

*Sadhna Saxena*

## **Introduction**

The People's Linguistic Survey of India recorded 780 living languages in India. These living languages are mostly mother tongues of the majority of the people, the languages in which they communicate. In common parlance most of these languages are disparagingly called dialects, or distorted version of the standard languages. Out of these, 22 languages which have written and printed literature, are constitutionally recognized and listed in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. Interestingly, English is not listed in the Eighth Schedule but is recognized as an official language. This makes the Indian education scenario very complex, given its multilingual reality and the dominance of English and, to some extent, the dominance of the regional languages.

The politics of marginalization of people's languages is at the heart of the hierarchy between dialect and language, the consequences of which people encounter on a daily basis (Saxena, 1993). Those dialects, which do not have a script and thus no written literature, are generally considered inferior, notwithstanding their rich repository of knowledge, unique world view, collective memory and oral literature. Also, there is a serious lack of understanding with regard to the social, historical and political processes of the emergence of dominant or regional languages and the so-called standard languages, and their relationship with dialects. A common misconception about these dialects or *bolis* as they are called in India is that they

are distorted versions of dominant languages. Further, they are believed to be devoid of structure or grammar. For example, most of the English and Hindi medium B.Ed. students that I have taught at the university level believed that dialects have no grammar or structure. These are people who are graduates and postgraduates in different disciplines and many of whom speak a dialect at home. Such attitudes are rooted in deeply entrenched social and class biases and arrogance.

## **Multilingual Classrooms and Language of Teaching**

It is not the linguistic limitations of dialects, but the political and economic processes that result in the marginalization of communities, their languages, cultures and worldviews, and lead to the emergence of dominant or standard languages. These mainstream standard languages are then considered languages of power. English is neither a regional nor a constitutional language, yet it is a language of power in India. Interestingly though, by and large, rural as well as urban Indian classrooms are multilingual, as there are children from different communities speaking different languages who come here. These children also then learn languages present in the classrooms, and become multilingual. Despite evidence from research which shows that multilingual children develop better thinking ability, there is no policy to tap this rich classroom resource. Instead the emphasis is either on the imposition of a dominant

language or English. The teachers, caught in the dialect-standard language discourse and seeking simple solutions, also insist on teaching in a standard language, even at the cost of silencing the majority of children. This seemingly simple solution has had serious consequences on the reading, comprehension and writing competencies in all languages.

### **What do we Understand of the Reading Process?**

Devy (2017) says that though English is a powerful language in India, "Yet, it is an established scientific principle that early education in the mother tongue helps in proper development of cognitive and the ability for abstraction". Das (2017), points out the advantages of familiarity of language in developing literacy. She writes, "The second generation Santals believed that in the early schooling, it is easier to develop reading and writing skills in mother tongue...since they continuously hear and speak the same language at home unlike the languages used in schools" (p. 78-79). Thus, in addition to the debate around the medium of instruction in the early stages of schooling, there is yet another issue that needs to be discussed. It is not just the bias and ignorance of the policy makers with regard to the advantages of teaching in the mother tongue and making use of the linguistic diversity in the class; but also their narrow understanding of the reading and writing processes that has also contributed to the failure in literacy acquisition at national level. Therefore, even if the language of teaching becomes the mother tongue, the ignorance of the reading and writing processes could still wipe out its advantages.

"Traditionally", says Sinha (2010), "reading was viewed narrowly as a decoding process, that is, of finding oral equivalent of written language"

(p. 123). However, there is ample research that has established that reading is not a mechanical decoding process, but an engaging and sense-making activity, where children become literate by actively generating a hypothesis about the print around them. However, our primers have continued to focus on decoding. On the basis of her study of 10 Hindi primers, Sinha wrote, "... the analysis revealed total absorption with graphophonics. Lessons were constructed around particular sounds, not themes.... Due to their obsession with sounds to the exclusion of everything else, the texts are unfocused and at times blatantly absurd.... These texts actually teach 'not' to seek meaning"(p. 122). Literacy however is not confined to phonics, but includes the whole act of reading, including comprehension, guessing and meaning-making. So, if the reading material or the primers in mother tongue are developed around sounds and not themes, these may not contribute positively to the literacy process. Thus, along with the question of languages of literacy, a holistic understanding of the reading process also gains urgency.

### **Parents' Demand for Teaching in the "Language of Power"**

In the context of the issues raised here, there is yet another complication that needs to be discussed. On the one hand, educationists advocate that the medium of instruction in the classroom should be the mother tongue, at least up to the elementary level; there is also evidence to substantiate its cognitive and epistemic value as well as the learning problems caused by instructions in an alien language. On the other hand, parents demand that their wards be taught the language of power, the language of the market. Proliferation of private schools and parent's struggle to send their children to the



so-called English medium schools is an evidence of the language hierarchy and divide that has only deepened in last 70 years. The languages of the Eighth Schedule are also powerful at the regional levels but, as is well known, they are not the languages of the vast majority of the marginalized groups, especially the Adivasis. Ganesh Devy (2010) reminds us that languages emerge out of human activities and labour. It is an organic process and takes a long time to develop. How can people's rich languages be replaced with any alien language, such as English, overnight? Yet, to gain political mileage, many state governments take advantage of people's insecurities and introduce English teaching from primary levels, with serious consequences (Modi, 2017).

While parental anxieties and concerns are fully justified in the context of the power that English and to some extent, Hindi and some other Eighth Schedule languages hold, yet, the role of the spoken language in achieving reading and comprehension skills cannot be undermined. A recent UNESCO study underlines the significance of the mother tongue in the early stages of schooling, even in bilingual and multilingual classrooms. Its research findings confirm that children learn best in their mother tongue, "as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education" (Ball, 2011, p. 6). To endorse this hypothesis, in the following section, I will share an experience of a programme which combined the use of the mother tongue as well as an understanding of early literacy to teach reading comprehension.

### **Experience from the Field**

Here, I would like to share the experience of an innovative literacy programme called "Children's Activity Programme" (CAP), that was especially designed to support literacy activity in schools and run non-formal centres for out of school children. The programme was

conducted in about 20 villages of Hoshangabad district in Madhya Pradesh in the early 1980s by a voluntary organisation called Kishore Bharati. The CAP group had earlier observed the Hindi language learning classes in the primary schools of that area where, pedagogically, repetition of alphabets and sound-based words was the norm. The parents complained that their children had not learnt reading and writing even after five years of schooling.

For CAP, nearly fifty Hindi and English children's story books were translated in the local language of the children which was primarily Bundeli, interspersed with Gondi words. The translated content was typed in Devanagari script and pasted on the books. These Bundeli books were given to children in the non-formal education centres. Parallel to this, classes in reading were also organized, which were interestingly attended by both, school dropouts and school going children. The group also ran mobile, cycle-borne libraries in these villages and several other villages. Reading aloud from these books was a regular activity in the classes as well as the non-formal centres. Children actively participated in the read aloud activity by flipping through the pages of the book, and running their fingers on the printed text to identify the titles, sentences and words. After some time, the children would pretend to read the books on their own, which is a well-recognized activity in early literacy.

In order to create a print-rich environment and opportunities for children's informal interaction with print, the mobile libraries also had about 100 Hindi story books. These books generated a lot of interest amongst the children who either read independently or did "pretend reading". They even insisted that the library procure new books after they had "read" all 100 books. While "reading", the children would take cues from the illustrations or guess words from the stories



and unconsciously replace many Hindi words with Bundeli words. Consequently, the Hindi to Bundeli translation of the stories happened spontaneously. This was indicative of the children's engagement with the text and their effort in seeking meaning.

Constant demand for new books, even by those children who were not able to read in the traditional sense, was the most memorable and fascinating experience. These children, of course, had become early literacy experts as they could identify the books by their titles and cover illustrations. Many of them could also narrate the whole story, flipping the pages as though they were "reading". This first-hand experience of early literacy was truly fascinating and gave us confidence in this whole language learning methodology. Children from formal schools were attracted to the informal settings of the reading classes-under a tree, or on a dilapidated village *chabuttra* (platform), or a veranda of a house, with all kinds of reading activities-and they started coming in hordes. The choice of the book for reading was always preceded by an animated discussion on the book. Since the teacher did not interrupt or "correct" anything, be it pronunciation, spellings, or even switching from Hindi to Bundeli or to a mixture of both languages, it facilitated a free flow of information and ideas. The children truly enjoyed the fun of uninterrupted reading.

To generate interest in writing, another very creative exercise was undertaken. Children who could write were encouraged to give their written pieces for a cyclostyled children's magazine, *Balchirrayya*. However, the ones who had not learnt how to write were equally keen to see their stories published. This led to another very unusual initiative-another cyclostyled magazine called *Gulgula*. The person in charge of the informal centre would sit with the children and ask them to narrate their stories, which he would transcribe for them. He would then read aloud the written version

and ask for suggestions/ changes/ corrections from the narrator. Seeing their oral stories transformed into written form gave the children a sense of achievement and motivated them to build the association between the written and the oral forms of language. These cyclostyled magazines became the new additions in the mobile library repository.

In this context, a recent write-up by Alaknanda (2017) came as a breath of fresh air. Shetalks of the ease with which the children in Madhya Pradesh learnt how to read and write when the Hindi books were translated into their own languages. The experience and the academic evidence of the benefits of reading as a meaning-seeking exercise confirms that initial literacy learning should be in the language children are conversant in. The imposition of standard or dominant languages in formal schools leads to cultural and linguistic alienation that pushes children into a culture of silence. This has a detrimental impact on their self-image and confidence. It can be even worse if the teacher is also completely illiterate/ignorant about the treasures of linguistic plurality, and engages in symbolic violence by facilitating the imposition of a standard language.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Marginalization of people's languages, cultural and material resources through unjust political processes is one reality. The other reality is their demand or at least the hope, that their children have access to the language of power. Given the research evidence regarding the use of mother tongue and the understanding of the reading process, it is important that languages that are alien to the children should not be introduced in the early stages of schooling. The real challenge however is to resolve this paradox by making literacy a meaningful process and at the same time make the language/ languages of power accessible to the large majority of children.

## References

- Alaknanda, Sanap. (2017, July 28). How books in tribal languages are opening up new worlds for Adivasi children, *Village Square*. Retrieved from [www.villageSquare.in](http://www.villageSquare.in)
- Ball, Jessica. (2011). Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years. Paris: UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002122/212270e.pdf>
- Das, Ruchira. (2017). Mother tongue in indigenous script as medium of instruction: Discourses among migrant Santals of Kolkata. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 14(1) 71-89.
- Devy, Ganesh. (2017, June 8). India might become an educationally failed nation. *Financial Express*. <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/india-might-become-an-educationally-failed-nation-ganesh-devy/707203/>
- Modi, Anjali. (2017). Lost for words: Why Tamil Nadu's shift to English medium instruction is not helping children. Retrieved from [www.scroll.in](http://www.scroll.in)
- Saxena, Sadhna. (1993). Politics of language. EPW, 2445-2448, Vol. 28, Issue No. 45.
- Sinha, Shobha (2010). Literacy instruction in Indian schools. In Anastasia Nikolopoulou, Taisha Abraham & Farid Mirbagheri (Eds.), *Education for sustainable development* (pp. 117-128). Sage Publications India.

**Sadhna Saxena** has been teaching in the Department of Education, University of Delhi, India for the past one and a half decades. Her areas of interest include science education, gender and science, policy analysis, issues of equality and justice, literacy and sociology of education.

*sadhna1954@gmail.com*

# 'See and Learn': Intertextuality in the Teaching of Poetry

*Saumya Sharma*

## **Introduction**

Although much research has been done on how to teach poetry, yet tutors at the school and/or college level broadly resort to the following methods: focussing on the meaning of the text, its inherent theme and symbolism; providing a general paraphrase for the verses; elaborating on the figures of speech employed by the poet and the imagery they evoke; the stanza form and rhyme scheme; and detailing the background of the poet and his times. Instructors are fearful about teaching poetry, which is often considered an ineffectual exercise (Linaberger, 2004). This is because interest in the reading and writing of poetry is synonymous with literary high culture (Benton, 1984), which demands a niche audience to appreciate and interpret it. Moreover, although the words "creative art", "imagination" and "vividness" are associated with poetry, there seems to be a discrepancy in the actual practice of its teaching, as the emphasis is mainly on conveying the meaning of the poem rather than teaching its appreciation to the learners. Likewise, owing to its special syntax and their explanations, the teaching of poetry can more often than not become a mere mechanical, meaning-decoding exercise. In my paper, I will attempt to revive imaginative interest in poetry teaching by arguing in favour of the use of visual art in teaching poems, as a supplementary pedagogical practice to the already established ones. I will support this claim through the analysis of Tennyson's poem "The Lotus Eaters" and the study of a painting depicting the poem.

## **Intertextuality**

The term intertextuality has gone through multiple revisions in the hands of different theorists. It was initially used by Julia Kristeva (1986) based on Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986/1994) and Valentin N. Volosinov's (1994) views on language, particularly dialogicality. Bakhtin explored the interrelatedness between different texts. According to him, each text echoes its predecessors and contemporaries, making speech two-sided or dialogic. He added that words are reciprocal, relying on the speaker and hearer to make meaning. "Each and every word expresses the 'one' in relation to the 'other' (1994, p. 58), more so the printed word that reflects, responds, affirms and negates the other." This, according to Bakhtin, gave rise to the phenomenon of verbal communication that is fundamentally dialogic and intertextual, as each text contains traces of other texts in a broad and specific sense. Roland Barthes (1981), extended the meaning of intertextuality further by drawing a distinction between text and work. He asserted that work is the finished product held in the hand, while text is the force of writing—a "fabric of the words which make up the work" (1981, p. 32) that contains voices and utterances of other texts. Thus text is essentially dependent on language and can be likened to a vast repository of meanings that is decoded by the reader. The meanings are not stable, but are deferred in the Derridean sense (1970/1989), so that more words are required to explain the meaning. Hence, the process of reading and

drawing meanings from the text is given importance as the reader meaningfully interprets the text. Intertextuality, therefore, is no longer just interrelatedness of texts but included its active comprehension by the reader.

This concept was further modified by the taxonomy given by Gerard Genette (1997), who discusses five types of intertextuality, one of which is relevant for our understanding, namely, hypertextuality. Hypertextuality essentially means texts that refer to other/earlier texts that can be treated as a source text. For example, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* thematically and structurally draws from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* so much so that the former will not make sense without the latter. Similarly, the source text for James Joyce's *Ulysses* is Homer's epic *Odyssey*. A moot point here is that intertextuality refers not just to previous or successive versions of a written text, but also to its adaptation in other media such as comics, films, songs, television programmes, video games and cartoons, where each version is a text and an intertext of the other, and the reader is also the viewer and the consumer.

A modern day example of understanding the process of intertextual reading is the written tales of Sherlock Holmes and its television and film adaptations. To understand the character of Holmes and the thematic setting, one needs to investigate not just the printed word but also Holmes' portrayal by British actors Jeremy Brett (closer to the original text) and Benedict Cumberbatch, who portrays a modern avatar of Holmes. The drastic difference in Holmes' depiction by the two actors might provide clues not just for a better reading of the stories (their plot, structure and themes) but also about the changing tastes of the audience, renewed interest in Holmes as a figure of popular culture and the state of postmodern, contemporary societies. Intertextual readings about texts, thus informs each text, enhancing the interpretative

process of the readers/viewers and their knowledge of different media.

### **Intertextuality and Art**

Literature and art are both creative processes and visual depictions of literature are not uncommon, as can be seen in the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti or William Waterhouse. These paintings usually depict a crucial scene from the literary text that the painter thinks is significant from the point of view of the plot or the characters. An image, like words, arrests time in a frame but it is more impactful and has greater chances of rousing the learner's interest in the topic. Images (monochromic/coloured) drawn in school textbooks, generally have an explanatory or denotative function with reference to the given printed matter. However, intertextuality in teaching is not a simple or direct relationship between images and information, as given in textbooks. It is an intersection of varied strands (philosophical, historical, artistic, literary, cultural, etc.) interpreting the texts, their production, social background and reception. In fact, visual intertexts of literature can magnify or ignore certain aspects of the text by provoking a dialogue on "why", "how", "when" and "what", thereby acting as a rich interpretative process and a useful pedagogical exercise. Research indicates that intertextuality is not a common process, yet the use of visual arts can increase the "linguistic and cultural proficiency" of students. This was demonstrated by Ortuño (1994, p. 500), who used Spanish paintings from sixteenth century onwards to teach language. A similar approach was employed by Knapp (2012) to teach German and to enhance the students' knowledge of literary movements of Romanticism, Expressionism, etc., thereby developing their literary competence. Jester (2003) also employed visual arts as a medium for analysing literary works, especially poetry. She taught

English vocabulary and writing skills to her students through paintings, drawings and the creation of storyboards.

Unlike studies that focus on language and literature, Jones (2007) examined the interrelation between art and literary genres especially realism, to understand the similarities, influences and motivations behind the two creations. In the same vein, I would like to propose the use of paintings based on literary works to teach those works. I believe that both the literary text and the painting are intertexts, and their combined analysis would help the learner to better comprehend the printed text. However, an intertextual reading is not a simple and comparative analysis of the texts, since a story and its painting are different in size and structure. For instance, a poem is longer in length whereas the painting shows a particular scene/s from it; it does not cover the entire text. Therefore, while comparing the two, the focus should be on the following:

1. The words from the text that highlight the painting, i.e. the lexical pictures created by the author through figures of speech and/or literal descriptions that talk about the style, context, setting, characters and themes of the work;
2. The use of colour in both creations;
3. The philosophical and sociocultural backgrounds of the two works, by engaging in a discussion about their conceptual interconnectedness and reception;
4. The ways in which the newer text transforms or conforms to the older text and the reasons for such changes;
5. The various interpretations that can be derived from both the texts by the readers/viewers, to critically and productively appreciate them.

Due to space constraints, it is not possible to engage in a detailed discussion of each of these points, however, I will attempt to provide an

intertextual reading of Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'The Lotus Eaters' (henceforth, TLE) and its painting by Robert S. Duncanson (1861), largely focusing on the parallels between the two.



Robert Duncanson: The Land of the Lotus Eaters, 1861.

### **An Intertextual Analysis**

Tennyson is known for his word paintings—the use of words that conjure pictures. Word paintings, according to Benjamin are produced by "the imagination" and by "certain tricks of light and colour which produce the desired effect on the eye of the beholder (1931, p. 355). Stylistically, these word paintings consist of metaphors and similes, and noun phrases that contain colour and sensory adjectives and adverbs. Some examples from TLE (1969/1987, p. 469) that are instances of figurative language include:

1. "wavering lights, showery drops" (noun phrases with adjectives)
2. "dark faces, rosy flame" (noun phrases with colour adjectives)

Although the painting by Duncanson shares some commonalities with the poem, it is different in some ways. While highlighting these, I will provide pointers for further discussion on the topic. Tennyson's poem begins with a description of the Lotus Eaters landing on the shores of the island, fatigued from travelling (indicated by the use of the word "courage" by the protagonist Ulysses).



Their time of arrival (afternoon) in a land "in which it seemed always afternoon" (1987, p. 468) conjures the image of dull sunlight; and the description of the waters as "the slender stream along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem" (1987, p. 469) connotes the wayward movement of a narrow water body. Duncanson's painting portrays this scene in the following manner: the use of a diffuse yellow colour denotes a land where it is always afternoon; the movement of a few swimmers reaching ashore where their companions are standing and the stream falling down like a short waterfall to form a river body. Thematically, reaching the island is the most significant scene in the poem for it provides the scaffolding for the activities of the Lotus Eaters; probably that is why it is the scene chosen by the painter. Furthermore, it is said that Duncanson's work was much appreciated by Tennyson, therefore, exploring the sociocultural contexts for the poem and the painting can also be part of the classroom discussion.

Tennyson employs bright colours to create his "effect": "the red West" where the sun sets, the "yellow down" of the hills, the "yellow sand" on which the mariners sat and the "rosy flame" of the sun accentuated against the "dark faces" of the mariners. The basic manifestations of nature are also vibrantly colourful: "amber light" of the sun, "creamy spray" of the rippling waters, the "purple hill" and the "emerald-colour'd water" (1987, pp. 469-476). Apart from this, the woods, hills, ivy creepers, poppy and amaranth flowers, all are endowed with natural colours so that the reader can automatically "see" them and the landscape such as "gleaming river seaward flow", "three mountain tops" (1987, p. 469), "here are cool mosses deep/And thro' the moss the ivies creep" (1987, p. 470). The painting, unlike the poem, employs excessive use of amber yellow and creamy white to highlight the general atmosphere of the place, the sameness of time and the foamy waterfall. In fact the diffuse glow of the sun (the yellowness) is dominant in the

upper half of the canvas, making natural light one of the main motifs in the painting and the poem. From a pedagogical point of view, the depiction of the above-mentioned phrases on the canvas can be used to explain their meanings since children learn better when they "see" what is "written". Thus, instead of explaining the imagery of a poem, a common technique in a poetry class, the poem can be explained visually.

However, the painting does not use any other bright colours as the rest of the landscape is bordering on dark brown and green, which is a discrepancy in the visual intertext. A probable reason for this could be that the painter painted in accordance with the traditional colour scheme of dark shades and the tenets of line and perspective as prescribed by the authorities at the Salon in Paris and London at the time (Read, 1985). The African-American painter, although a contemporary of Tennyson, was probably a follower of the traditional aesthetic scheme because the use of dark colours depicts a general mood of melancholy and lethargy, ascribed to the Lotus Eaters. Such deviations between the texts can be viewed as the key to discussions on art in the Victorian age and the artistic background of both the poet and the artist. For instance, what techniques did the two artists use?; did they conform to the tradition of those times or were they iconoclastic?

Unlike the traditional topics of art of that period that mostly reproduced indoor-studio paintings (Read, 1985), Duncanson's painting depicts an outdoor landscape based on TLE, a poem describing nature and outdoor activities. Moreover, in both compositions, more lines and canvas space has been given to the rendition of the topography rather than to the mariners. However, a point of deviance is that the poem describes various aspects of the natural scenery of the island including the "woven copse" (1987, p. 469) of trees, whereas a major portion of the visual canvas has brown, rocky mountains on it

with just a few trees on either side. Lastly, the general mood of the poem (and even the canvas) is one of repose and quietude. This is brought forth in the comparison between the languidness of the air and the breathing of "one that hath a weary dream". The fall of water is like "downward smoke" (1987, pp. 468-469) and the act of resting of the mariners on amaranth beds can be compared to the resting of nature in the poem depicted through the wilted, downward bending of the tree leaves and the amber light. Such similarities, deviations and comparisons can be helpful in discussing how the newer text transforms or re-produces the original, and to what effect.

### Conclusion

Though the painting does not denote all the portions of the poem, such as the angst of the Lotus Eaters and their activities, yet it is a mesmerising visual representation of thematically relevant aspects of the poem. This representation provides a base for textual, artistic and cultural discussion, thus empowering learners to rely not just on imagination but also on visuals to enliven the printed matter, thereby enabling them to enjoy poetry and comprehend its wider social and artistic contexts.

### References

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1994). Language as dialogic interaction. In P. Morris (Ed.), *The Bakhtin reader* (pp. 48-61). London: Arnold. (First published 1986.)
- Barthes, R. (1981). Theory of the text. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A poststructuralist reader* (pp. 31-47). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Benjamin, C.H. (1931). Word painting. *The Scientific Monthly*, 32(4), 355-361.
- Benton, P. (1984). Teaching poetry: The rhetoric and the reality. *Oxford Review of Education*, 10(3), 319-327.
- Derrida, J. (1993). Structure, sign, and play in the discourse of the human sciences. *A Postmodern Reader*, 223-242.

- Duncanson, R. S. (1861). *The land of the lotus eaters*. Sweden: Collection of His Royal Majesty, The King of Sweden. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_S.\\_Duncanson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_S._Duncanson)
- Genette, G. (1997). *Palimpsests: Literature in the second degree* (C. Newman & C. Doubinsky, Trans.). Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jester, J. (2003). Of paint and poetry: Strengthening literacy through art. *The Quarterly*, 25(4). Retrieved from <https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/958>
- Jones, V. P. (2007). Teaching elements of literature through art: Romanticism, realism and culture. *Pedagogy*, 7(2), 264-270.
- Knapp, T. E. (2012). Picturing German: Teaching language and literature through visual art. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 45(1), 20-27.
- Kristeva, J. (1986). Word, dialogue and novel. In T. Moi (Ed.), *The Kristeva reader* (pp. 34-61). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Linaberger, M. (2004). Poetry top 10: A foolproof formula for teaching poetry. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(4), 366-372.
- Ortuno, M. M. (1994). Teaching language skills and cultural awareness with Spanish paintings. *Hispania*, 77(3), 500-511.
- Read, H. (Ed.). (1985). (Ed.) *The Thames and Hudson dictionary of art and artists*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Tennyson, A. L. (1987). The Lotus Eaters. In C. Ricks (Ed.), *The poems of Tennyson: In three volumes* (2nd ed.). (Vol. 1, pp. 468-477). London: Longman. (First published 1969.)
- Vološinov, V. N. (1994). Language as dialogic interaction. In P. Morris (Ed.), *The Bakhtin reader* (pp. 48-60). London: Arnold. (First published 1973.)

**Saumya Sharma** is Assistant Professor, EFL University Lucknow Campus, Lucknow. She has a Ph.D. in the discourse analysis of drama.

*saumyasharma2@gmail.com*

# The Value of Story-Making Activities in the English Classroom

*Nishevita Jayendran and Anusha Ramanathan*

## **Introduction**

In this paper, we will discuss the findings collected from an open-ended story-making activity conducted with a group of Class eight students from a semi-urban government school in Aizawl, Mizoram. The activity was part of the Connected Learning Initiative (CLIX)-English, a project undertaken at the Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research (CEI&AR), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. A group of students from the school were invited to work in pairs and write stories based on picture cues provided on a Technology Enabled Language Learning (hereafter, TELL) platform. Drawing from this field experience, we would like to suggest that imaginative, open-ended activities that involve students in crafting stories based on pictures and with a specified word limit per sentence, can hasten language learning. In our paper, we will discuss two such stories created by the students to illustrate our point.

## **Why Stories?**

The use of stories in the English classroom is not new. In fact most school curricula use this pedagogy of teaching, especially when languages are taught through texts that are (sometimes stylized) stories. However, due to factors such as pressure to complete the syllabus, large student numbers, etc., most of the classroom activities primarily involve simply reading the stories and literary texts. There are limited opportunities for children to write stories.

We believe that a shift in approach towards making students creators of imaginative content can energize the language classroom.

Studies conducted on stories and myths reinforce their function as meaning-making devices. Karen Armstrong (2005) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1979), for instance, stress upon the relationship between language, stories and cognition, where interpretations of the world are authenticated through human language and (literary) representations.

Armstrong remarks on the way myths and stories about natural phenomena have shaped, and continue to shape, man's understanding of the world around him. "Human beings", she states, "have always been . . . meaning-seeking creatures" (Armstrong, 2005). Myths, Armstrong argues, provide structures of meaning that help man negotiate his relationship with the world around him. This act entails authenticating an individual's experience through words, thereby forging a relationship between cognition and language through stories.

Claude Lévi-Strauss argues likewise that myths, and the stories that comprise these myths, are contained within and communicated through language in written and oral traditions alike (Lévi-Strauss, 1979). These positions spotlight the centrality of language in stories as providing structures of meaning, whereby stories become, equally, vehicles of communication and comprehension.

Stories support self-actualization and communication of one's deepest desires. Mere

expressions of the self, however, do not comprise story creation; narrative is at the core of stories and narrative relies on thoughtful structuring of content. For H. Porter Abbott, the link between events that establish causation in a plot defines the nature of the story as a coherent meaning-making space (Abbott, 2002). A story's conflation of cognition and communication through verbal crafting therefore makes it a tool that is amenable to language learning, thereby transforming students from passive receivers to active producers of meaning.

### **The Story-Making Activity: An Outline of the Social and Pedagogical Context**

In February 2016, the students of eighth grade of the Government High School, Chaltlang, a semi-urban school in Aizawl were invited to participate in an activity that involved making stories on a TELL platform. They were given a picture gallery on a tool developed by CLIX, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, called the Open Story. There were approximately 50 pictures in this gallery, sourced from an online open platform called 'Story Weaver from Pratham Books'. The students were asked to work in pairs, choose pictures from the gallery and craft a story. They could record their lines on the tool, save their story on an offline platform and replay it as a slideshow movie. The Open Story tool allowed a maximum of 20 pictures per slideshow. It also restricted the text (caption) to 140 characters per picture, which included the use of punctuations and spaces. Though the students were not specified a time limit, we observed that they completed the activity within an hour. The activity was received with enthusiasm; the students stated that "they had never written stories before". By turning them into creators rather than mere receivers of stories, the activity had triggered their imagination. One student

remarked, for instance, that she enjoyed the activity since she could "write about [her] dreams". Further, the paired nature of the activity gave them the necessary confidence to collaborate at the ideation and content creation stages.

In the following section, we will analyse two stories written by these students.

### **Open Stories: Two Tales from Aizawl**

The first story describes a young girl who eats a great deal of food and grows fat, and her subsequent reconciliation with the idea of beauty. This story was created by two girls and comprised seven picture slides to which the girls added narrative texts. Slide 1 depicts a girl eating food with a spoon. In the second slide, three young children are laughing, playing and dancing in circles. The third slide shows the picture of a girl standing before a mirror, gazing at herself. Her stance indicates that she is speculating. In slide 4, there is a bear with a happy expression. The fifth slide depicts a young child with her parent (mother). The parent appears to be scolding the child, who is crying. In slide 6, the earlier image of a young girl gazing speculatively in the mirror is reused. The final slide, slide 7, reuses the image of the three children playing and dancing in circles, and laughing. The accompanying narrative for the story (Transcript of video recording taken in Mizoram; trials conducted by Jennifer Thomas, Karuna D'Souza and Manoj Bhandare, February 2016) was:

“once there was a girl who loved to eat a lot of food/ everyday she eat more and more/ she was bigger than all her friends/ one day she look herself in a mirror/ she found that she was as fat as a bear/ she ran to her mom and told her about how she feel/ mom told her that, 'you may be happy on how you look../ she look



herself in the mirror again/ and notice that she was the most beautiful girl in the world/ then, she continued to live her life happily ... The end ..”

The story woven around these seven slides is an interesting study in language and self-expression through stories.

Let us first consider the contents of the story. The structure of the tale woven by the girls is cyclic, as is seen from the two slides that repeat within the narrative structure. The second slide, with the laughing and playing children finds an echo in the final slide of the story. The narrative movement is accompanied by the child's dawning self-knowledge after her mother advises her that she should take pride in herself, and that appearances do not matter. Slide 3, with the girl looking in the mirror, is complemented by slide 5 that depicts the girl gazing in the mirror once again, but with the newly gained knowledge that a) in the eyes of her mother she will always be beautiful and b) beauty and self-respect lie in her hands, thereby conferring agency on her. At the level of the plot, the story created by these girls is insightful, revealing their close engagement, as authors, with the theme. It is evident that individuality and subjective opinions shape the plot and narrative resolution. The intimacy of the contents with regard to the authors is a further indication of the intricate connection between stories, language and self-expression.

The second story, written by two boys, similarly, displays the students' deep engagement with their environment. Comprising six slides, this story begins with the image of an old man with a long white beard, red cloak and peaked hat (resembling a wizard), walking through a wooded area. The second slide shows the picture of a man wearing a hat and carrying a bag on his back. He is sitting on a mound of earth, watching a kingfisher perched on a

branch. Slide 3 depicts the lifecycle of a plant progressing from a seed planted under the ground to a sapling, shrub and finally, a big tree. In slide 4, the man is holding a flower in his hand and watching a bee (or butterfly) buzz around it. Slide 5 depicts the man standing with a camera, focusing and taking a photograph, all the while watched over by the kingfisher from the earlier slide. Slide 6 depicts an idyllic lake, with blue waters and green foliage surrounding it. The accompanying narrative for this story reads:

“One day a man was walking on a jungle/ he was so tired he sit down to rest he looked around/ and then he saw the beauty of the jungle/ and then he fell in love with the jungle/ then he took pictures of the jungle/ he spent his life saving the jungle from deforestation.”

(Transcript of video recording taken in Mizoram; trials conducted by Jennifer Thomas, Karuna D'Souza and Manoj Bhandare, February, 2016)

Like the earlier story, this one is also marked by a coherence in narrative. With nature as its predominant theme, each image and its connection to subsequent pictures displays an interplay of man and nature, and man's place in the world. While the first and last slides are extrapolated from other narratives, the four slides comprising the core narrative—the man pondering, his observation of plants, his admiration of the flower and his subsequent attempt to capture them through his lenses—comprise a coherent visual and a textual whole. Identifying and slotting these four images therefore become, in the first instance, an act of comprehension and interpretation by the students. The addition of two new slides, the one before and the one after the core slides indicates creativity, as the students contextualize the musings of the man surrounded by nature. The questions evoked by this story have a



philosophical potential, as they depict man's relationship with nature, his place in the world and his responsibilities towards his environment.

From the perspective of content, the story of the man and nature is well-crafted. The choice of certain words is, however, interesting. The use of the word "jungle", suggesting wilderness and danger, instead of the more colloquial "forest", may indicate a mismatch of word and intent. Equally abrupt is the use of "deforestation", a ponderous word in a narrative that is marked by simplicity. There are also grammatical errors and mistakes in punctuation and capitalization. These instances can be used as pedagogical footholds for language sensitization, by indicating to the students possible synonyms that are more appropriate to the context of the story, thereby resulting in crisper sentences.

### **Reflections on Story-Making: Pedagogical Implications**

Several points come to light through this exercise on story-making in a language classroom.

First, despite their limited control over English, which is for these students, a second language, they were able to create stories of a sophisticated nature. One reason for the students' successful engagement with the activity was that with its non-academic, recreational implication, the story diffused the pressure-inducing learning environment and infused the learning spaces with imaginative appeal.

Second, the story-making activity shifted the locus of attention to the student as a creator of (authentic) content. While the classroom uses curated stories to teach language skills, a story-making activity requires students to turn into storytellers themselves, and learn the language as they make their own tales. As active

stakeholders in the activity, students can therefore take charge of their learning.

An analysis of the stories made by these children reveals that, despite limited command over the language, they were capable of interpretative thinking and were able to articulate their opinions.

A few pedagogical observations on the activity would not be amiss at this stage.

The pictures offered a stable scaffold for this activity<sup>1</sup>. Porter Abbott (2002) observes that narratives are present in every creative act, be it a poem, drama, fiction or painting. Selecting pictures that depict an action can be one way of enabling discussions among students as they create plots for their stories. It would also contribute to the Krashenian comprehensible input that supports second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Also evident during the activity was an enactment of the  $i + 1$  input that Krashen states is essential to motivate learners to reach beyond their learning levels and advance in language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Further, each picture in this activity offered a range of possibilities for interpretation. Paired work and discussions contributed not just by way of incidental language learning through discussion, but also by the sharing of ideas, which enabled the mobilization of language into articulate thought.

Open-ended story-making activities worked well with these students by triggering language output. We noticed that since the pictures led the story-making activity by providing visual cues to guide the students' imagination, further instructions were not needed to help them with their stories. In fact, specificity of instructions would probably have hindered their creativity.

The word and character limit set as a precondition in this activity was successful in helping students focus on the target language.

While regular classroom activities impose word limits on the length of paragraphs, it was seen that by imposing a similar limit on the length of a sentence, students were able to produce sharper sentences, and in one instance, even a lyrical sentence. It also made them pay closer attention to their thoughts, and the means to translate them effectively into words. Consequently, learning became focused and aimed at communication rather than the mere mastery of grammatical rules. For the teacher as well, scaffolding shorter sentences and offering feedback on them was easier, thereby leading to a more meaningful engagement with the language.

We would like to conclude with a final observation that while our activity was TELL based and multimedia intensive, it is possible to adapt it in a regular classroom as well. Picture cards and image series can be used for pen and paper activities, and student can work in pairs to interpret the pictures to create new tales.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Jennifer Thomas, Sujata Bhonsale, Surbhi Nagpal, Manoj Bhandare and Karunad' Souza from CLIX. Their field presence was instrumental in collecting the stories created by the children. We would also like to thank Prasanna Sangma, Ruatfela Hlondo and Dr. Lalbiakdiki Hnamte for their support and hospitality during the CLIX team's visit to Mizoram.

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that the same pictures (Pictures 3 and 5, and 2 and 7, in this story) generated different interpretations based on the context of the narrative. It was observed that other children in the school used the same picture in their stories for different

purposes. The picture with the mother and the child, for instance, was interpreted variously as a parent consoling a hurt child and a parent scolding a child, depending on the students' narrative. These instances highlight the way a visual trigger in an open-ended story-making activity triggers the imagination and motivates language production that is marked by plural interpretations.

### References

- Abbott, H. Porter. (2002). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, Karen. (2005). *A short history of myth*. New York: Canongate Books.
- Krashen, Stephen. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd. pp 1-32.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. (1979). *Myth and meaning*. New York: Schocken Books.

**Nishevita Jayendran** is an English Curriculum Consultant at the Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research (CEI & AR), TISS Mumbai. Her research and teaching interests lie in comparative literature, representation and culture studies and critical theory.  
[nishevita.jayendran@tiss.edu](mailto:nishevita.jayendran@tiss.edu)

**Anusha Ramanathan** is a Curriculum Consultant for English at CEI & AR, TISS, Mumbai. She also does research in ELT (Assessment, Materials Development and Pedagogy), Indian literature and general semantics.  
[anusha.ramanathan@tiss.edu](mailto:anusha.ramanathan@tiss.edu)

# Interview

## Sudha Rai (SR) talks to Jasbir Jain (JJ)

Jasbir Jain, formerly Professor of English at the University of Rajasthan, where she was also Director, Academic Staff College (1992-1997), UGC Emeritus Fellow (2001-2003) and Sahitya Akademi's Writer in-Residence(2009) is currently the Founder Director of IRIS, Jaipur (Institute for Research in Interdisciplinary Studies). Professor Jain is an elected life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, U.K. She is the recipient of several awards including the K. K. Birla Foundation Fellowship for Comparative Literature (1997-1999); Lifetime Achievement Award IACS (2004); and the SALA award for distinguished scholarship (2008).

Professor Jain has published extensively in a wide range of areas, especially Indian literature. This includes language literatures, an area where she has published three volumes on the history of the Indian novel from 1860-2002. These are: *Feminizing Political Discourse* (1996), *Contextualising Modernism* (2001) and *Beyond Post Colonialism* (2006). Other thrust areas in which she has made her mark are feminism, drama, culture, theory and narratology. Some of her well-known publications include *Deconstructing Character: Transformations in American Drama* (1997); *Theorising Resistance* (2012); *You Ask, I Tell*—a translation of Hansa Wadkar's autobiography that she co-edited with Shobha Shinde (2013); *The Diaspora Writes Home* (2015); *Forgiveness: Between Memory and History* (2016) and *Bridge Across the Rivers* (2017), co-edited with Tripti Jain. Her latest publication, *Subcontinental Histories: Literary Reflections on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* is expected to be out by the end of 2017. Her work is widely cited and is evidence of her unrelenting pursuit of intellectual inquiry and exploration of ideas.

**SR:** Growing up, which languages did you speak in your family? In what way have you enriched your classroom and research through your multilingual inheritance?

**JJ:** We were an average family knowing or speaking three languages—Punjabi, Hindustani and a little later English, as each one of us grew up. My father knew Urdu well and my brother learnt Persian and did his graduation with Persian as a subject. I learnt Urdu for a couple of months in a municipal school in Mhow in the very first class and studied Latin for one year in a missionary school. Real exposure came to us through my father's frequent transfers to different parts of India and the necessity of picking up a speaking [sic] knowledge of Marathi or Telugu as the case may be and through a very early introduction to books. We were a reading family—all of us. Multilingualism

entered our lives with our marriages into Marwari, Tamil and Malayalam-speaking families. Travel, exposure and reading—all taught us to understand and respect difference. All this has influenced my life and my work.

**SR:** What are your impressions of your first year as a teacher?

**JJ:** It was a boys college most of whom came from rural areas. I had to learn to maintain discipline and yet win their confidence, to play along with them in their attempts to get the better of me and yet not yield my ground. I enjoyed it and soon they became my ardent fans and friends. It was enjoyable and fun.

**SR:** How has your teaching evolved over the years? Can you dwell on some important milestones?

**JJ:** I think one learns on the way. Pedagogy is situation-bound and depends a great deal on the institution, the classes one is teaching, the feeding schools and also on one's working environment. There are elitist and non-elitist institutions hence there is need to adopt different methods. Finally, pedagogy depends on one's own sense of commitment, imagination and intuition. If you ask me to define pedagogy-it is not limited to a method or a structure-it is commitment plus intuition. It comes from beyond the classroom-the openness of thought processes, a sense of equality, a wee bit of psychological understanding, in fact all that one has learnt and absorbed-and it travels outside the classroom to the cafeteria, library and perhaps playgrounds where a rapport is built. With power-point presentations, clarity is definitely achieved, but an excess leads to repetition, encourages lazy preparation and results in the loss of human touch. Let us not forget that the self-image of the weak students also needs to be boosted, and the differences in their backgrounds of schooling and learning overcome; they are not all on the same level. Their school backgrounds and family upbringing are different in each case. How are you going to make them feel equal?

**SR:** What were the specific linguistic hurdles and challenges you faced in motivating university students: (a) At the start of your teaching career? (b) In the later years?

**JJ:** I think I have addressed some of your queries already, but let me add that the medium of schooling is one challenge, gender used to be one too, but with more co-educational schools coming up, it is no longer so. But family backgrounds in terms of class, economic standards, rural or urban backgrounds also do count. The reason why a student has joined a particular course also counts, for it tells us how

serious is the desire to learn. All these differences present a challenge for the teacher and give enough reasons to inspire her to innovate interesting ways of communication. Bilingualism as a teaching strategy is a shortcut except for making an occasional humorous comment. They need to listen to the language as it is spoken, its sounds, rhetoric and rhythm. Lucidity, use of simple words, maximum use of the black or white board, introduction of a couple of synonyms help to encourage the young entrant from a different language medium background into the use of a second language.

**SR:** What attracted you to teaching as a career/profession? What do you now sum up in terms of its rewards?

**JJ:** Teaching was my first preference, I liked sharing and discussing; and I think it is important to live with a sense of job satisfaction. I have enjoyed it all. The pinpricks have come from other directions. The rewards have been many. When former students of the early years of my teaching still contact me and my relationships with my former scholars remain on friendly terms, it is abundant reward.

**SR:** Would you agree that students in Indian classrooms are lacking in rigorous training in their discipline? Why?

**JJ:** One cannot generalize, there are other factors to be considered: malnutrition, problems at home, low self-image, lack of interest on the part of the teacher, low expectations of the teacher and her failure to motivate interest, casual teaching and inability to relate the material to the outside world. I have noticed a little bit of push encourages them to explore beyond the course; and their participation through presentations, discussions and

occasional participation in the teaching are strong motivating methods. Responsive and critical remarks on their assignments also help to raise levels of motivation. When challenged, they do perform, provided we can keep an excess use of the internet out and instead involve our own selves. In fact, we have a tendency to spread our courses too thin in pursuit of numbers and easy accessibility. There is also a degree of laziness in not assigning self-readings and then assessing the resultant assignments or seminars. Students need to be made self-dependent at the senior level. After all, this very material does well abroad. Good teaching involves spending time on all these extra activities. The national policies, it seems, have long since abandoned the idea of quality despite the whole propaganda around excellence. There is a great deal of talent in our country; we don't allow it enough space to grow by imposing meaningless curbs and our obsession with uniformity of syllabi. True, our problems are many: low education budgets, commercialization, competition, unemployment and now, more than ever before the reluctant teacher and the reluctant student. The worth of the teaching profession has yet to be socially recognized.

**SR:** You are known for implementing an interdisciplinary approach in your classroom? How does it work?

**JJ:** I firmly believe that literature is the mother of all disciplines-philosophy, psychology, social sciences and at times art, physics and music. Open a short narrative, take a fairy tale, read a poem-tell me what doesn't come in? What is claustrophobia if not the study of psychology and space? Take the example of Jane Eyre's Red Room or Conrad's sea novels. It is present there; one only has to delve a little deeper. You'll agree with me (I hope), Professor Rai, that one should travel outside the syllabus and the

discipline to make learning both interesting and worthwhile. Despite the limitations of our system where, more often than not, the teacher-student ratio is very uneven a good teacher can strive to create a challenge and sometimes manage to ignite a spark somewhere.

**SR:** How have you deployed linguistics in your teaching methodology?

**JJ:** I have not been trained in linguistics but have read widely in the area, especially George Steiner and Ronald Barthes; a wee bit of Chomsky, worked on semiotics (with special reference to drama) and social linguistics while discussing dialogues. Never began with theory but with the text, gradually it seeps in, becomes a game and the interweaving of language, meaning and social background is revealed. Cultural differences, class backgrounds stand revealed. Analyse a dialogue from *Look Back in Anger* or *Omkara*- the inter connections would emerge. Of course, while teaching grammar, structure was definitely a plank. Teaching composition to undergrads and grading the assignments of senior scholars brought this in. When we ask a student to work on narrative patterns, strategies, approaches or dramaturgy for that matter structures surface once again. Interweaving depends on the way one handles teaching. Translation, again is a good medium of opening up structural and syntactical differences. Shakespeare's plays are not only rich in poetry but also rich in rhetoric. Any act of interpretation-whether of fiction or of non-fiction-requires a decoding of meaning, and thus is a linguistic act. Literature is surrounded by theories but is remarkably free from formulas, one has a wide choice.

**SR:** What would you regard as the high points of your teaching career and the low points and why?



**JJ:** Low points first: When a good scholar becomes complacent in his or her academic career, it hurts me, I feel frustrated, it's like a plant I have nurtured which has begun to droop, or has surrendered to other pressures.

And the high point. When my own department, the Department of English, University of Rajasthan, invited me to deliver a Memorial Lecture in memory of my own teacher and guide, Professor R. K. Kaul. It was a rare honour and no other memorial lecture I have delivered has meant so much to me. As he was an eighteenth century scholar, I felt a fitting tribute would be to speak on that period.

**SR:** In what way did you redesign your role as a teacher after you retired formally from the university?

**JJ:** Thank you for asking this; I founded a Trust on Interdisciplinary Studies-Institute for Research in Interdisciplinary Studies. I established it while still in service in order to create a forum for young scholars, so that they gain confidence, become more articulate, learn to ask and respond to questions, conceptualize and organize their material, research independently. We began with monthly meetings, discussing various critical essays, short stories, philosophy-Kant, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze. We circulated xeroxed material and the discussion was opened by one of the members, to be expanded upon by others. At times, we organized a series of four or five lectures during the summer. We also invited a number of scholars and writers with the support of various organizations and high commissions. It's been a great learning experience and it became a centre for long term friendships. I personally gained a great deal from these discussions. We also included several members in our publication work and thus have trained

them in editing. But the scholars have grown wings and are flying in their own skies. The UGC's new formula for measuring Academic Performance Indicator (API), is a deterrent to good scholarship. Journals are springing up at the rate of a dozen a day and getting recognition from the UGC, and reviews (mostly) are pretending to be research papers; the death knell of any learned pursuit!

**SR:** In what way did your research feed into your teaching and your teaching into your research?

**JJ:** My research problems often arose out of my teaching and I also guided research on several periods/authors which were interconnected. The understanding that research brought me enabled me to unravel the texts better, gave me a deep sense of satisfaction and also made the class interaction more interesting. It is not enough to dwell on a fragment of a writer's world, one must extend it beyond that. Not enough to discuss the prelude but also send the student to the library in search of Wordsworth's shorter poems; equally essential for the readers to enter the psychology of the individual fallen angels, as to understand predestination or Christian theology.

**SR:** Any paper or book that you would like to cite as an outstanding contribution to pedagogy and why?

**JJ:** That's a difficult question to address. There are several papers on creativity, on pedagogical approaches or aesthetics of education. I have helped design unusual syllabi with a focus on learning skills both for university students and for skill enhancing centres. Once I designed an undergraduate module course-a three tier one of Certificate, Diploma and Degree-in order to

reduce the number of dropouts who were compelled to leave their studies for some reason or the other, but I am afraid no Vice-Chancellor had the time to look at it. We are shy of innovative steps. But I can't really single out anything.

As Director of the Academic Staff College, we streamlined and improved the quality of the orientation and refresher courses, introduced a sense of continuity in the course design, backed it up by [sic] good critical material, encouraged participants' panels and various other methods. My pedagogical experiments have all gone into my teaching and research.

**SR:** What is the latest research you are involved in?

**JJ:** There are always times when we debate which road to take. At the moment, a work *Subcontinental Histories: Literary Reflections on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* is under publication, and my mind is engaged in debating the relative possibilities of two subjects which pose intellectual problems. Too early to talk about the likely winner, but perhaps *Multiple Modernisms* will win. I want to do some work on European thinkers too.

**SR:** You have received many distinguished awards as a teacher and researcher. What fuels your commitment?

**JJ:** Most of them have come as surprises, even the *Writer-in-Residence*. The unexpected gives a lot of pleasure, and other fellowships that I worked for, naturally are a matter of satisfaction. They provided me with opportunities to work in good libraries, to interact with scholars of repute, to attend the lectures by philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and renowned poets like Joseph Brodsky; to meet with playwrights, attend theatre rehearsals and

view a number of performances at Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off Off Broadway. As for your second question, a fire within me and the pleasure of communicating.

**SR:** Do you think it is important to bring one's personal concerns and ideology into the classroom? Can that shape one's pedagogy too?

**JJ:** One can compare with real life problems, historical realities, economic facts but the classroom is no place for left-wing or right-wing political ideologies. A liberal secular perspective is the only course in a pluralistic society or for that matter anywhere in the world, else we lead them into bigotry. Jiddu Krishnamurthy is the philosopher of use here with his reliance on an open mind or Levinas's ethics.

The whole purpose of education is to teach them to think, to question and to discern. We are not here as brainwashing agents. As ideology surrounds us on all sides, any discussion that takes place must present all its sides. Personal beliefs in a moral and an ethical code definitely enter relationships and for that matter pedagogy.

**SR:** What are your own pedagogical strategies to encourage students to rediscover knowledge?

**JJ:** They are bound to differ indifferent circumstances and at different stages. Motivating a scholar involves a psychological approach. There can be no single way of doing it. Reflection, sharing, introducing something new and challenging, discussion, asking them to write a diary, to return to an earlier interest—all of these can work in some measure. At times, all that is needed is to listen to them. One could also take up a collective project. But finally, there is no substitute for self-motivation; external pressures can sometimes turn out to be negative.

**SR:** Why do you think the emphasis on humanities education has declined and in what way have you personally addressed this issue? Your final evaluative comments on the role the classroom can take on in engineering social change.

**JJ:** This is a huge question with multiplied imensions; and is a world-wide phenomenon. More social and economic value is attached to science and technology, national educational budgets are uneven but have you noticed a shift? Younger people are now more attracted to social sciences, especially economics, legal studies and psychology. With several disciplines merging together or overlapping in their areas, human sciences are reflecting a slight resurgence. Employment venues have yet to come up to support this trend; but now it is thinkers, the better students who are being attracted towards human sciences. Part of the solution is to make their base wider by including texts which require intense analytical study.

**SR:** Professor Jasbir Jain, thank you so much for this interview, the time you invested and the ideas you shared.

**JJ:** It's been a pleasure. You have taken me back to the beginnings of a journey I had thought was over, but no, it is not. Thanks.

**Sudha Rai** formerly Professor and Head, Department of English, University of Rajasthan (Jaipur), is a recipient of the Senior Fellowship awarded by the Australia-India Council (2008-2009). She is currently Head, Department of Languages, Manipal University (Jaipur).

*sudharai52@gmail.com*

## 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 13 onwards). The paper must be accompanied by an abstract and a set of key words. 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: 2500; Interview: 3000; Landmark: 3000  
Book Reviews: 1500; Classroom Activities: 750;  
Reports: 1000**

*(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. **Please refer to submission guidelines for more details.**

Last date for the submission of articles:

January Issue: July 31; July Issue: January 31

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

agnirk@yahoo.com; amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com;  
journlt@gmail.co

*They may also be posted to:*

Vidya Bhawan Society, Fatehpura

Udaipur 313004

Rajasthan, India

# Landmark

## The Study of Language and Style in Literature: An Overview

*Pushpinder Syal*

One of the most interesting things about language is that we often learn more of it when it doesn't follow the rules of prescribed and fixed grammar, but manifests itself in a large number of extraordinary variations which seem to violate those very rules. In fact, language variation is an everyday occurrence around us. The variations include social variations, styles of speaking and writing, and registers from different areas. Metaphors and idioms also find their way into most conversations. Strangely however, children seem to learn, or deduce the underlying grammar of language from this rather varied and idiosyncratic grammar used by their parents and other people around them. Rhymes and verses of the silliest kind, dialectal nuances, "non-standard" pronunciation, incomplete sentences—none of them perfect examples of textbook language—are all grist to the mill, serving a number of purposes at the same time. These purposes include construction of "competence", fulfilment of social and pragmatic "obligations", and development of thought processes and a finely-tuned sense of relationship with the world. It is this basic reality that informs the choice of literature in the language learning curriculum, rather than a general obsession with putting some high-sounding texts into a syllabus; in fact, an intuitive recognition of this reality is probably the reason why literature has been such an integral part of the education process from the earliest times.

Variation is more noticeable when we see it in a particular context such as literature, and the reason for that it is foregrounded. The concept of foregrounding became seminal because of the works of the Russian formalists, and later structuralists (Jakobson, R., 1960; Leech G. N., 1969; Durant & Fabb, 1990). According to them, against a fixed grammar and fixed conventions of speech, the placement of extra patterns of repetition and parallelism of sounds and syntax, or deviation in grammar was foregrounded, i.e. this kind of language was seen as significant. "Significance" is an integrated complex of psychological and aesthetic affect, along with a received set of associations drawn from the storehouse of memory of a particular speech community. Such a signification becomes cumulative and multi-layered in a literary text and creates a "cohesion of foregrounding" (Leech, 1985).

A learner may not always be aware of all the depths of meaning in a literary text. A child, for instance, may not be too concerned at a conscious level with the meaning of a poem, but be charmed only by the incantatory magic of its sound patterns. Conversely, someone who has been instructed to derive meaning from some lines of poetry may be totally oblivious to the intricate sound patterns in those lines. This turns into a tussle when the one becomes a compulsion to the exclusion of the other, or an authority in some form (sometimes in the

apparently benign form of the teacher-educator), and imposes a dominant meaning on the multi-faceted fluid movement of language in a literary work.

How can learners and teachers use the understanding of variation in language, or style in literature to develop their language skills? These two purposes are not at odds, though in later developments that seems to be the case. In the earlier approaches, the study of language of a literary text was an integral part of reading in an instructional framework, whether it was called "rhetoric" or "poetics" or something else. Consider Marjorie Boulton's classic work *The Anatomy of Poetry* (1953), in which the insightful discussions on poetic techniques such as metre, poetic diction, etc., were exemplified and expanded in ways that made the assimilation of the "technical" aspects of poetry quite pain-free. Wayne Booth's equally classic *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), presented the basics of a systematic study of fictional elements such as narrative points of view, much before the sophisticated narratology studies of the later years. However, it is I.A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1930), which remains a pedagogic landmark in the area of language study. It provides a reference point, not only because of Richards' focus on the text and the uncovering of literary devices within it which enable the student to make an informed critique, but also because of the relation between such features and their psychological impact on the learner.

With the growth of linguistics as a discipline, the study of literature, was brought within the scope of linguistic analysis. Certain splits emerged within the field with this development. The notion that a hard-core discipline such as "stylistics" had to be supported as a legitimate field of study brought about a rupture from the traditionally integrated approach. To a large extent, this was indicative of the progress in the field. The analysis of metre in poetry, for instance, evolved into more complex phonological explanations,

first in the works of formalists such as Jakobson, then in the generative phonology of Chomsky and Halle. Leech's seminal *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969) was a kind of gateway to a closer linguistic examination of language in poetry, as was Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction* (1981), which looked upon the study of fiction as a literary discourse.

Over the years, many more theories emerged, that strengthened the linguistic methodologies of stylistics. However, the most important theories from the perspective of teaching and learning were those that had a functional approach to the study of language and literature. For instance, in Jakobson's delineation of the six different functions of language, poetic function is one in which language functions to draw attention to itself. It is a special function of language, and operates by displacement of the normal rules at the level of sound, syntax and meaning (1960). Another understanding of the functional aspect of language was given by Firth (1957) and later British linguists such as Fowler (1986), who hypothesized that language functions in situational and social contexts, is purpose-oriented and draws from the discourse of people in the real world. Literary or poetic language is therefore not a matter of verbal artistry or merely decorative in nature, it occurs within specific communicative and social contexts, and is placed within a particular socio-cultural, historical and political setting. All kinds of language acts are therefore performed in the context of a discourse and become meaningful only in such a context. In the context of literature, there are implied meanings. These meanings are derived by readers because they understand that if language has been used differently or some conventions have been violated, it must be because there is an underlying meaning or relevance. This thinking was drawn from the field of pragmatics which grew through the work of Austin (1960) and Grice (1975), and later taken up by M.L. Pratt



(1976) and others. In stylistics, this hypothesis was reflected in Widdowson's (1975) *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* and Short (1989).

Another theory- that of Halliday's functionalism- also proved especially useful. Halliday posited that literary style was a matter of realization of linguistic functions such as ideationality (world-creation), interpersonality (participant relations and orientations) and textuality (cohesion within a text). This explanation made it possible to see how each literary work makes a world of language within itself, not a deviation from the norm but a unique norm in itself, with a structure of relations within it, and a textuality that comes from the working of the cohesive features that bind it together. In his important and widely anthologized essay on Golding's *The Inheritors*, Halliday (1971) studied an example of how language functions in a given context through the presentation of a particular world view expressed in specific transitivity relations at the clause structure level. Carrying these ideas further, Widdowson (1975), Fowler (1986) and Carter (1982) analysed individual texts and argued the case for the consideration of interpersonal roles and relations stated or implied in the text (for example, the personae were seen as different from the author, and there could be different kinds of readers implied in the text), through which the text realized the interpersonal function. Halliday and Hasan (1978) stated that it is the cohesive structure of a text that helps it realize its textual function as an organized discourse. Thus, for instance, not only do cohesive features such as pronouns function grammatically to create a text by linking sentences, but they also bring about continuity of the discourse through the creation of subjects and participants within it. These subjects and participants, by virtue of being embedded in the very structure of the text, express certain social roles which are significant in a particular culture. For instance, the pronouns referring to certain

people, speakers, etc., may affirm some roles and exclude other persons, or oppose other points of view. Brown & Gilman's (1960), "*The pronouns of power and solidarity*" explicates this theory very clearly. According to them, these features function to develop a "voice" or "voices" in a literary work- a fact extremely relevant when looking at hidden meanings such a particular gender slant- and support the idea that a text is ideologically constituted to transmit nuances of specific social, cultural and political practices. With this awareness, the reading of literature in the classroom acquires a greater dynamism and relevance as the exploration of language in aliterary discourse leads the students and the teachers to questions themselves, their society and their culture. The conscious attention given to feminist or anti-feminist voices in the emergence of "feminist stylistics" (Mills, 1992) is a development that should be taken into account in this regard. It is hence evident that the study of literature can become an enabling tool for enhancing sensitivity towards human and social issues.

However, we must remember that the emphasis on functional and discourse approaches does not mean that the aesthetic dimension of literature should be overlooked. The point is that a literary text fulfils many functions simultaneously. As Leech shows in his analysis of Samuel Johnson's celebrated "Letter to Lord Chesterfield" (1983/2014), a piece of prose comprising a letter written by Johnson is used by him (Johnson) to achieve three goals: civility (maintaining politeness according to the norms of civilized society), practicality (castigating Chesterfield for his miserliness and getting a stipend from him) and aesthetics (producing a "cleverly parallelistic and climactic use of language"). Thus literary and non-literary objectives work together as in the case of Johnson's letter, which fulfilled a purpose in his real life and was at the same time, a work of art.

This certainly makes a case for the inclusion of multiple readings and perspectives in the literature class. In fact, the proliferation of reader-response theories and hermeneutics in the later part of the twentieth century has resulted in greater empowerment of the readers in the entire process of reception and production of literature. Although earlier structuralist theories asserted that foregrounded features are obvious in a literary text, later theories acknowledged that some readers may find certain features foregrounded which other readers may not. This would obviously lead to differences in their interpretations. Not only this, later research also shows that reading involves many more processes than the simple recognition of prominent structural features in a text. It involves mental schemas, presuppositions, knowledge of cultural conventions and several other factors. This may prove to be a problem for strictly analytical approaches adopted by earlier stylisticians. However, there is no reason why analysis cannot be undertaken to support and elaborate various points of view. In fact, readers may enter into the text from any starting point and may gather evidence to support a point of view; conversely, aspects within the text (as for instance the occurrence of certain pronouns, as mentioned earlier) may indicate outer frames of reference that the readers may find relevant.

Another area of change has been the choice of texts as subjects for stylistic analysis. With the recognition that features classified as "literary" may also occur in our daily discourse—in advertisements, in journalistic writing, political oratory and many other contexts—the object of study has expanded. Earlier, there was an Anglo-centric slant to studies on literature, with only works from canonical texts considered as being worthy of detailed study (and by this activity further validating those canonical texts). There was and to a great extent still is, a great wall of resistance in the Western academic world towards the inclusion of the works of writers

from the non-Western world for analysis. Oddly, linguists have been more conservative in this regard. In fact many of them were ready to categorize the speeches and writings from non-Western cultures into an "anthropological" slot, thereby shelving the works into a convenient space of "other" ethnicities and ethnographies. However, the emergence of strong postcolonial voices in criticism and creativity ensured that literature from all across the world was taken into consideration. This was an important development in the field of stylistics because it offered much more variety in terms of materials such as poetic, dramatic, epic and narrative styles, rather than just the Euro- or Anglocentric texts. Creole literature, and African and Indian writing in English, to mention a few, are important examples of literature where questions of language and cultural sensibility, and the manner of relating the two has been studied. Some work in this area takes up the theoretical and analytical frameworks of Western stylistics to study the writings of African and Indian writers in English (Anozie, 1981; Syal, 1994). The blending of conventions and innovations drawn from oral literatures, performance art, regional and local mythologies and contemporary music and storytelling styles characterize current interest and renew the field in various directions. We may also consider that most cultures, along with their literatures, also have critical traditions of their own. India for instance has ancient poetics, with its advanced theories of *rasa*, *alankara* and various sophisticated stylistic conventions, as well as more recent critical schools in Indian *bhasha* literatures.

One of the consequences of all these developments in the field of literature studies is that the "canon" has been shaken and destabilized, and this is reflected in the curricula right from primary schools to postgraduate literature courses. We are now familiar with the inclusion of short stories by Indian writers such as R.K. Narayan, M.R. Anand and Anita Desai,

and poems such as Ezekiel's 'Night of the Scorpion' and Wole Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation' in many school English textbooks across India. These are placed side by side with writers from England and America. At one level, this becomes instrumental in the learning of English language by providing interesting and varied reading experiences. At another level, it increases awareness of the fact that English is not just one language, and that it is used by people all over the world in ways that change its syntax, its vocabulary and its overall meaning potential. With this awareness of change and difference, the teachers can engage the children in a more active discussion on the points of contact between writers from different cultures and the various styles of writing that they choose.

An extremely important aspect of the application of stylistic approaches is that they can be used for all languages. If Jacobson and other analysts took up literature in European languages for close textual study and verbal analysis, the same is possible for all other languages as well. In the multilingual environment of India, for instance, the inclusion of writings in an Indian language along with writings in English can be very educative. In fact, it can be the beginning of a useful comparative study of languages, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. In a paper presented at a literature teaching conference, Agnihotri (1992) illustrated the unique qualities of sound and the use of metaphors in English, Hindi and Urdu poetry by placing extracts of verses from these languages side by side and analysing them. In her Ph.D. dissertation on bilingual methodology, Iqbal Judge (2005), used verses on nature by the Punjabi poet Bhai Vir Singh as an introduction to a poem by Wordsworth; she drew comparisons between the similes used by the two poets.

Translation is another crucial interface through which literature is sought to be made accessible to people who do not know the language of the

original work. Translators have always had to deal with stylistic issues in translation, and they do so by paying close attention to textual features and the presence or omission of elements (as for instance, certain pronouns, or deictic references, which might be missed) to achieve more sensitivity in translation.

Perhaps the entire evolution of the discipline of stylistics and the ongoing developments within it (cognitive stylistics, theories of effect, etc.) that we see taking place may appear to be somewhat daunting for teachers and practitioners. But this overview is in the sense of a background, and an assimilation of different ideas is often possible through practice. Over time, many practitioners in the field of ESL and EFL have made use of literature to improve reading skills and literacy (Brumfit, 1985). The teaching of literature and language as communicative goals are not so far apart that they cannot be mutually enhancing, even though the activities related to their learning maybe different.

Finally, help is at hand in the form of technology. There are now online courses to help us familiarize ourselves with some basic concepts and tools. Some of these (listed at the end of the references) aid a learner, teacher or student, in observing and thinking about texts and comprise important hands-on training which can be developed in an open-ended way and shared with other participants on these courses. This will undoubtedly result in a satisfying collaborative experience of teaching and learning literature for both teachers and students.

## References

- Agnihotri, R.K. (1992). *A fine excess: Reflections on the language of poetry*. Paper presented at British Council Seminar on Literature Teaching, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
- Anozie, S. (1981). *Structural models and African poetics: Towards a pragmatic theory of literature*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Brown, R. & Gilman, A. (1960). The pronouns of power and solidarity. In Sebeok(Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 253-276). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Booth, W. (1961). *The rhetoric of fiction*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Boulton, M. (1953). *The anatomy of poetry*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brumfit, C. (1985). *Language and literature teaching: From practice to principle*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Carter, R. (Ed.) (1982). *Language and literature: An introductory reader in stylistics*. London: George Allan and Unwin.
- Durant, A. & Fabb, N. (1990). *Literary studies in action*. London: Routledge.
- Firth, J. R. (1957). Applications of general linguistics. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 56(1), 1-14.
- Fowler, R. (1986). *Linguistic criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1971). Linguistic function and literary style: An inquiry into William Golding's *The Inheritors*'. In S. Chatman (Ed.), *Literary style: A symposium* (pp. 330-365). London: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. (1978). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Jacobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and poetics. In Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 350-377). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Judge, I. (2005). *The role of bilingual methods and materials in the teaching of English at the undergraduate level in Punjab*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Panjab University, Chandigarh.
- Leech, G.N. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G.N. & Short, M. H. (1981). *Style in fiction*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G.N. (1985). Stylistics. In van Dijk(Ed.), *Discourse and literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Leech, G.N. (2014). Pragmatics, discourse analysis and stylistics and "The Celebrated Letter". In *Language in literature: Style and foregrounding*. London: Routledge. (Original work published 1983)
- Mills, S. (1992). *Feminist criticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pratt, M.L. (1977). *Towards aspeech act theory of literary discourse*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Richards. I.A. (1930). *Practical criticism*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Short, M. (Ed.). (1989). *Reading, analysing and teaching literature*. London: Longman.
- Syal, P. (June 1991). The discourse of literature teaching: A questionable matter? *Journal of English and Foreign Languages*.
- Syal, P. (1994). *Structure and style in Commonwealth literature*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Widdowson, H.G. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. London: Longman.

#### Online Resources for Courses on Stylistics

Ling 131: *Language & style*. Retrieved from [www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/stylistics](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/stylistics)

Free course: [www.pragmaticstylistics.org/2008-2007/free\\_web\\_base\\_stylistics\\_cour.html](http://www.pragmaticstylistics.org/2008-2007/free_web_base_stylistics_cour.html)

*Teach English: Intermediate Grammar (4 course specialisation)*. Retrieved from [courser.org](http://courser.org)

*Creative Writing (5 course specialization)*. Retrieved from [courser.org](http://courser.org)

*The Modern and the Post Modern*. Retrieved from [courser.org](http://courser.org)

*Art and Ideas: Teaching With Themes*. Retrieved from [courser.org](http://courser.org)

**Pushpinder Syal** teaches at Panjab University, Chandigarh. She has published and guided research in Stylistics, language teaching and literature.

[pushpinder.syal@gmail.com](mailto:pushpinder.syal@gmail.com)



# Book Reviews

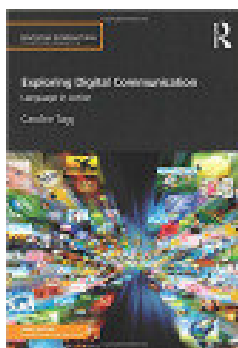
## **Exploring Digital Communication: Language in Action.** **Abingdon & New York; Routledge.**

Caroline Tagg. (2015).

ISBN: 978-0-415-52491-9 (hbk)

978-0-415-52493-3 (pbk)

978-1-315-72716-5 (ebk)



Reviewed by: **Sanaz Marzban and Mojtaba Tajeri**

Exploring Digital Communication is one out of the series of 10 introductory level textbooks by Routledge, that cover the core topics in Applied Linguistics.

The book is divided into four parts- an introduction and three other sections. The sections consist of: A. Problems and Practices, B. Interventions and C. Theory. Each of these sections is further divided into two subsections which reflect linguistic issues relating to digital communication-digital language and literacy, and social issues and media. The book begins with an introduction in which the author examines the importance of digital communication across contemporary societies, and the concerns that people have about it. The author then goes on to emphasize on the collaborations that modern digital technology facilitates with other forms of communication. The argument that the author wants to put forward here is that insights from digital communication are not just important to study communication on digital platforms but have a much wider bearing onto our understanding of language and linguistics itself.

The author elaborates upon the practical issues related to digital communication, and proceeds to understand how developments in modern linguistics challenged some of the assumptions regarding the binaries that emerged with the advent of this new technology. For example, the author questions the separation of online communication from offline communication. The book tries to answer two important questions. Firstly, why should online (computer-mediated/internet-mediated) communication be looked at differently from offline communication? Secondly, why should one focus on language related problems associated with the internet, such as privacy, harassment and social isolation. Addressing these questions is central to understanding what this book attempts to do. The book begins with the "Problems and Practices" commonly linked with digital media. This section, as the name suggests, elaborates on some of the challenges that digital platform poses to us, such as, digital literacy, its effects on how we picture ourselves, the fears that people have about it, its exotic nature, questions it raises about our privacy and its ability to connect us with others. It is argued that our understanding of these problems and practices and our ability to respond to them will necessarily include our understanding how language is being used across digital spaces, such as the internet. The first subsection has four chapters: "Is digital communication ruining language?"; "Has the web changed how we read?"; "Is the web devaluing what it means to be an author?"; "Does the internet further the global dominance of English?". The second subsection also comprises of four chapters: "From anonymity to self-promotion: Are we ever ourselves on social media?"; "What are the implications of social media for privacy?"; "Is social media



making us less social offline?"; "What can be done about trolls and online bullying?"

Through these questions in section A, the author tries to explain terms such as web, digital, media, privacy, and communication. She then goes on to look at interventions from within applied linguistics; that is, ways in which applied linguists have sought to look beyond popular descriptions of challenges that digital communication is posing to us to understand through practical investigation what people are actually doing when they communicate digitally. The first subsection has the following chapters: "Why digital communication may be good for literacy"; "Exploring digital literacies"; "Using the web as a space for writing"; "Using more than one language online". The second subsection is divided into four chapters: "Performing identity online"; "Audience design on social media"; "Constructing virtual communities and the linguistics of online aggression".

The chief concerns of the book in section B include digital literacy, practical investigation of language use on an online platform, online identity, social media and virtual communities. In section C, the author steps back to deliberate on the theoretical insights from linguistics, primarily sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, and argues in favor of "practices approach to language", which expands the purview of language to the point that anything that aids communication can be understood through the lens of language. This allows the author to include a variety of digital practices, such as the green light that signifies 'availability' on Skype and other platforms, within the domain of language. To develop upon these linkages between theoretical insights from linguistics and the actual challenges of the digital space concepts such as Multiliteracies, Translanguaging via a superdiverse Internet and Heteroglossia are explored in the first subsection, and in the second subsection: Identities in interaction and Sociolinguistic communities.

This book is a useful resource for students starting their studies in applied linguistics as well as general readers interested in the subject. It is part of a series of books which take a "practice to theory" approach, with a "back-to-front" structure. This takes the reader from the reality of problems and issues, through a discussion of possible interventions, before finally relating these practical issues to theoretical foundations.

The author attempts to clarify any perceived divide between online and offline communication and argues that issues raised in relation to digital communication throw light on language use and practices in general, and thus linguistic interventions in this area have an impact not only on users of digital communication but also on linguists' general understanding of language and society. The research discussed in the book is situated in the well-established discipline of applied linguistics; a field of language-related study that is transforming how we conceptualize language and thus how different languages, speakers, and practices are evaluated. The book goes on to show that although language-focused research cannot resolve social problems single-handedly, it can play an important role in understanding and addressing them, and thus language-related research has much to contribute to contemporary discussions about the internet.

The book is generally well written in an informal and accessible expression. However, at times it relies on a certain familiarity with linguistic terminology which should not be problematic for readers of discourse and society, but may be a barrier for novices in this field. Although the format seems innovative and exciting, at times the text may seem a little disorganized with a lot of both back and forward referencing. This does become clearer once the whole book has been read. However, there is the distinct absence of a conclusion to bring together the mentioned issues and to pull together the

practical examples with the theories that have been discussed in the chapters.

With a vast bibliography of more than 600 references, this book provides many opportunities to the readers to extend their knowledge by studying the texts referenced and to look more deeply at the relevant research examples given by the author. The author has also included tasks with commentaries, a glossary of key terms and a further reading section, making this textbook a useful resource for both students and professionals returning to academic study.

**Sanaz Marzban** is a research scholar at Panjab University, Chandigarh, working in the area of online communication in language teaching.

*sanazmrzbn@gmail.com*

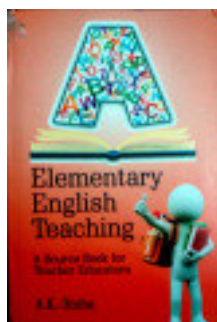
**Mojtaba Tajeri** is a research scholar at Panjab University, Chandigarh and has submitted his PhD thesis on digital storytelling.

*mojtabatajери@gmail.com*

**Elementary English Teaching: A Source Book for Teacher Educators.** Delhi: Shipra Publications. A. K. Sinha. (2016).

ISBN- 978-81-7541-848-6

Reviewed by: **Praveen Singh**



The book *Elementary English Teaching* by Anjani Kumar Sinha is a welcome addition to the stock of aids for teachers and teacher-educators. Even though the sub-title clearly states that the book is meant for teacher-educators, I think that teachers teaching the English language can also benefit a great deal

from this book. It is a relatively thin book of approximately 210 pages, but it has a lot of valuable insights for both parties. The book is divided into six units which comprise of a total of sixteen chapters. The six units and the chapters comprising those units are:

- I) English language in primary school curriculum: Chapters 1-6
- II) Language skills: Chapter 7
- III) Language skills: Reading and writing: Chapters 8-10
- IV) Lesson planning and material development: Chapters 11-14
- V) Assessment and evaluation: Chapter 15
- VI) Practicum: Chapter 16

Unit I, true to its title introduces the problem of language acquisition and how in many ways learning and teaching of language is different from other subjects. According to the author English language plays an important role considering the extremely diverse nature of India and the importance of teaching English at the primary school level in India is emphasized and argued for. The author then introduces the reader to the significant ideas in the field of language and language teaching such as innateness hypothesis, second language, critical period hypothesis, characteristics of a language, etc. All these concepts are discussed and explained very lucidly and anyone seeking an elementary understanding of these notions is bound to like the book for its wide coverage. Experiments conducted on higher primates such as Chimpanzees are then used to detail out the complexity and uniqueness of human language. Unit I also includes a discussion on issues such as bilingualism, steps of language learning and different modes of reading, among others.

In Unit II, the author discusses the issues related to speaking and listening, and the factors affecting them in general to begin with, for example, the time lag between listening and

speaking is used to emphasize upon the importance of listening in language acquisition, this eventually then leads to describing the issues involved in speaking and listening in English. The text also offers drills to help the teacher-educators demonstrate how a sound contrast can be elicited by getting the participants (i.e. teachers) to speak some of the phrases/sentences. For instance, the participants can be made to say things like "he hid his head", "these shoes fit my feet" (p. 51). Finally, the author includes a discussion on the concept of "stress", "intonation", (voice) "modulation", etc., in English. In Unit III, the author explores the skills of reading and writing. The unit also includes a chapter (Chapter 10) on "Teaching Grammar". The authors talk about the different approaches to reading, how to improve reading speed and reading strategies, and much more. Then she goes on to explain the steps involved in writing such as punctuation, spelling, etc. The chapter has much to offer on matters of paragraph writing and creative writing, and should be of tremendous help to teachers and teacher-educators.

Chapter 10, which is on teaching grammar, is the longest of all 16 chapters. About forty pages are dedicated to the teaching of English grammar. It is written by an experienced person who knows the field and therefore knows what will interest the audience/reader. This comprehensive chapter covers all the major topics in English grammar such as different types of sentences, clauses, agreement rules, tenses, different parts of speech, etc.

In Chapters 11 to 14, which make up Unit IV of the book, the author discusses lesson planning and material development. Chapter 11 specifically deals with lesson planning, starting from the micro level and leading up to the presentation of a planned lesson in front of the class. It enumerates and highlights the important components of a good plan and makes for a

good introduction on how a teacher should plan and present a lesson in order to achieve the set objectives. Chapters 12 and 13 offer a whole canvas of "Approaches to the Teaching of English" and "Methods of Teaching English and Developing Skills", in very few pages. This shows that the author has been meticulous in his attempts to present various approaches and methods that have been proposed in the last century. Chapter 14 is highly insightful and enriching for those who are interested in "Developing Materials Aids for Language Teaching". The author explores how songs and choral readings can be used as material in classrooms. She also looks at how teachers can use cartoons, puppets, flash cards, pictures, etc., to engage with learners in the classroom and make English language learning fun. Hence through these chapters, the author explores how ICT, CALL and MALL, multimedia, etc., can be put to great use in classrooms as aids for teaching.

Unit V has just one chapter on "Assessment and Evaluation". However, this chapter is very comprehensive, and discusses everything, right from assessment tests to diagnostic tests. Not only does it discuss the difference between errors and other phenomena that might be called phases in interlanguage, but it also talks about comprehensive and continuous education (CCE), and even suggests "remedial measures".

The last chapter and unit is titled "Practicum". It has about four lesson plans that serve as models on which teachers can build their own lesson plans. These lesson plans are largely for primary school students. The author has also shown how word games can be part of classroom learning.

Having talked about some of the contents of the book, I would like to add that the book is rich in content and scope. It serves as a good introductory text for those who would like to specialize in the field of language teaching as it

serves as a plank to take up other more specialized texts in the field. I would highly recommend this book for teachers and teacher educators.

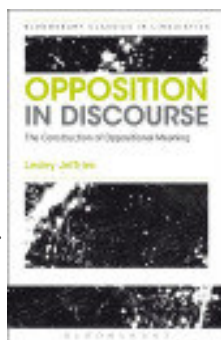
**Praveen Singh** is doing his Ph.D. at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai.

*singhp0187@gmail.com*

**Opposition in  
Discourse: The  
Construction of  
Oppositional Meaning.**

London: Bloomsbury (147).  
Lesley Jeffries. (2014).

ISBN: 978-1-8470-65124  
(hardback)



Reviewed by: **Saumya Sharma**

Lesley Jeffries looks at a hitherto under-researched but over-used phenomenon, namely, the creation of opposites in language. Unlike works that begin with a theoretical exposition, Jeffries begins with a few examples from different genres, setting the tone and thematic concern of the book. The first example, taken from the British political elections, draws on the opposition between being British and being Black. Jeffries states that opposites are manufactured in a discourse with an ideological agenda while the subsequent example from poetry emphasizes that opposites are often used by poets as a structural device.

The first chapter provides a historical overview of opposition from the time of Aristotle, and its relevance in mathematics and child language acquisition. The author emphasizes on how opposition is fundamental to thought, to the extent that people think and talk of the world around them in terms of opposites—a weak version of the Whorf-Sapir Hypothesis. The chapter also includes a detailed discussion on the types of

opposites (binaries, complementaries, gradable antonyms, etc.). The author explains that complementaries (such as husband-wife) are mutually exclusive terms that divide and explain the concrete world and are used in news reporting; reverses are words that are the opposite of each other (tie-untie); gradable antonyms are a group of words on a scale such as 'boiling hot' to 'freezing' and are quite commonly employed in texts. The basic point is that a pair of opposites mostly share the same attributes, with a difference in just one trait or characteristic. Thus there is a thin line dividing them, for instance, genius and madness or button and unbutton. However, the creation of some common opposites does not affect other terms in the spectrum, for example, male-female are treated as a complete case of antonymy, even though they co-exist with the term hermaphrodite, that has its own sociopolitical history. The description and discussion of the types of opposites is a valuable contribution, however their relevance to language teaching does not form a part of the book, a point that will be dealt with later.

Before proceeding to the analysis of opposition in different texts, Jeffries elaborates on the lexical and syntactic triggers in language. A considerable portion of the work is dedicated to the use of negation or negative markers such as "not", which highlight complementary antonyms in a text. These triggers can also be linked to schema theory and how children acquire and use opposites such as "good" and "bad" to understand their environment. The use of comparatives (less than, more than) and coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or) indicate opposites just as juxtaposition of dissimilar words. For instance, "human" and "aloof" (2014, p. 37) are used to contrast politicians who mingle with the public versus those who maintain their distance. The lexical triggers include explicit mention of verbs of change such as "transform", "change" and "alter", or the differentiation of



specific words in a text to emphasize a point. Such contrasts can also happen through conventional opposites. The difference between "helplessness" and "rage" or "packaging" and "content" are examples of such a phenomena (2014, pp. 51-52). Jeffries also relates her study of opposition to the current debate in cognitive linguistics, particularly the influential metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Wierzbicka's (1992) semantic primitives good/bad (1992). She proposes that opposition is fundamental to human thought and it exists as an image schema, pre-conceptually structuring the way humans think and feel about people, objects and events in their surroundings.

The latter part of the book is about analyses of literary and non-literary texts, their aim, according to Jeffries, being the investigation of opposites across text types to find similarities and dissimilarities. The literary data consists of a comparative evaluation of the writings of two women poets Mebdh McGuckian and Carol Ann Duffy, and one poem by Philip Larkin. Jeffries finds that opposition helps to create local textual meanings in the poetry of women writers, but in Larkin's work it is a stable, repetitive device that develops the narration. The book also includes observations on a qualitative analysis of the opening lines of hundred stories from adult and children's fiction across genres. These observations provide interesting insights into the working of opposition. A significant insight that emerges is that opposition might not be used in the opening sentence but in the first page to highlight aspects of characters, their activities, the plot structure and to challenge accepted ideologies about the human world. However, firstly, there is no systematic basis for the selection and quantification of the opening sentences in fiction. Secondly, the literary sample could have been enlarged to study the effect of opposition in poetry.

In the non-literary genres, Jeffries analyses data from a larger database culled from newspaper reports about the British elections, news articles on the 9/11 terror attacks, data on how the female body is described in magazines and British news reports on the controversy surrounding the Danish cartoons of the Prophet. She finds that in the British political elections, complementaries are used to put forward the various ideologies, policies and schemes of the competing political leaders to the point that they can be successful in structuring the worldview of newspaper readers. In comparison, in the articles on terrorism, opposition in the form of oxymorons serves to highlight the historical context and the feelings of the writers and the public through co-occurring images. The analysis of gender highlights the inscription of the female body with multiple ideological terms (natural/unnatural, healthy/unhealthy, good/bad) to promote certain social beliefs about natural birth in pregnancy, and breast implants as natural, yet abnormal. News reports about the cartoon controversy portray the varied meanings of free speech in relation to censorship, religious views, fundamental rights, etc. Both literary and non-literary texts are of interpretative value, and such analyses confirm the ubiquity of opposition in the media and human thought, and its exploitation by different social groups to perpetuate certain ideologies.

The book is written in an easy, accessible style with simple explanations of the technical jargon used. The bibliography is informative and though it is touted as a work in stylistics, there are many useful references to semantics also. It is a valuable contribution to the ever-burgeoning field of stylistics, yet there are some weaknesses. There are references to psychology such as the schema theory and how children acquire opposites, yet the book does not include how opposition is processed and understood by the readers of literature and news reports. Jeffries repeatedly states that opposition creates local



textual meanings, enabling the readers to understand the text and the world, yet the analysis is purely textual, with few speculations about the psychology of the interpreters. The reader's reception of the texts that have been analysed would have supported Jeffries claims, demonstrating their psychology and discourse processing. Another issue is that even though the different types of opposition have been very well described and explained, there is no mention of how they can be employed in language teaching. However, I believe that the study of opposites has direct relevance for language teachers and educators. If opposites can be taught contextually through authentic texts such as newspapers, magazines and political speeches by focusing on their type, use and function rather than through wordlists, then the simple topic of opposition can enrich the way in which learners think and respond to texts and the world around them. The work thus, has a wide appeal and can be of interest to college level students and teachers at the school or university levels in the fields of linguistics, language education and literature.

**Saumya Sharma** is Assistant Professor, EFL University Lucknow Campus, Lucknow. She has a Ph.D. in the discourse analysis of drama.

*saumyasharma2@gmail.com*

## Website Review

### Teaching Poetry: A Review of Some Websites

*Shreesh Chaudhary*

Poetry is perhaps the oldest and most popular genre of literature globally. Yet poetry remains under-utilized in language classrooms and also a source of lot of anxiety. In India, poetry is taught mostly as a part of literature component in the syllabus. However, can it also be used in the "language" classrooms? Can it be used for teaching language? How can it be best taught for its own sake? Is it possible to teach how to write poetry? Is it possible to create among students a liking for (English) poetry? These are some of the questions that fuel our anxieties in using poetry to teach language. At the center of this anxiety is the asymmetry that use of language purely for informational purposes has over using language for aesthetic reasons in classrooms. There is a change coming; research shows that our knowledge of language, among other things, includes our ability to decode sentences, but 'motivation' plays a central role in language acquisition. With this awareness there has arisen a not too-well articulated but an ever-growing need in language classrooms in India for new material that is both authentic and interesting. Poems as songs have always answered this need. Today they are available easily and aplenty at the Internet.

When we google the words "Teaching poetry" the site of the Poetry Society of the United Kingdom comes up right on top. This site gives the "Top Tips for Teaching Poetry"<sup>1</sup>. Closely following it at number two is the site of the American Academy of Poets, which offers "Tips for Teaching Poetry"<sup>2</sup>. The first page of the result of the search "Teaching poetry" also gives links to other popular sites. These are:

- 10 Ways to Use Poetry in Your Classroom
- How to Teach Poetry - Video & Lesson Transcript
- 25 Great Ideas for Teaching Poetry
- Best 25+ Teaching poetry ideas...
- The Teaching of Poetry | Education.com
- Five Poetry Teaching Tips for New Teachers
- Innovative Approaches to Teaching Poetry: Pre-Reading Strategies

To see how poetry is taught to English-speaking students, I looked at the top two sites- the Poetry Society of the United Kingdom and the American Academy of Poets. The British site reports the methods and materials that "Trailblazer" teachers used to popularize poetry among students. The "2017 Teacher Trailblazer" Joanne Bowles advocates:

- Don't keep poetry in the classroom
- Create poetry bookmarks for distribution
- Tell students what poetry actually is
- Share your tastes with students

Kate Brackley, another Trailblazer of 2017, advises poetry teachers to:

- Write with the students
- Use poetry to get to know your students
- Use poetry in every scheme of work

Donna Kedward, a Trailblazer from 2015 and 2016 suggests we should:

- Read poetry for pleasure
- Create displays
- Use visual stimuli
- Create a certain atmosphere

Ben Bransfield, yet another Trailblazer, advocates:

- Written feedback
- Next draft
- Poems that "your team" has discovered
- Successful poetry writing lessons again

The Academy of American Poets offers a summary of best practices in this field. In America, April is celebrated as the National Poetry Month. Then there are events such as "Poetry Festival" and "Poetry out Loud" of Teachers & Writers Collaborative and similar efforts by the National Council of Teachers of English, etc. The American Poets website has a write-up under "Tips for Teaching Poetry", that has been developed after taking into account inputs from these events and organizations. The write-up is divided into four sections called "Preparation", "Reading", "Writing" and "Other Activities". The site on the whole advises to make poetry a part of everyday life of students, this can be done through various means such as, decorating the class with poetry and poets, holding poetry contests, handing out poetry in cafeteria and organizing field trips to places that have connections to poem read and discussed in the class. Slowly classes can develop their own anthologies which can not only include poems by published poets but also by students themselves that have been read, enjoyed and discussed amongst students. Some other recommendations include memorizing, reciting and publishing students' works. Further, the academy advises excursions and visits to sites of poetic interest and writing poems about them, organizing poetry writing festivals, poetry competitions, rewards for recitation and composition, etc. Decorating the classroom and other available walls and spaces with poems and pictures of poets can also be done to promote poetry.

Unlike the British site, the American sites mention schools where teachers and librarians have worked to together to popularize poetry. At Rye Country Day School in New York, students read out a favorite poem and explained its significance in the school assembly every morning. Miss Hall's School in Pittheld, Massachusettes, encourages teachers to begin meetings with poems, either their own or those

composed by students or anyone else, and then to mail them to friends and family. The school also sponsored contests where the focus was on poetry and presentation skills. Poetry clubs at the United Nations International School of New York meet weekly to discuss a chosen poem. After examining the Brueghel painting "Peasant Wedding" and reading William Carlos Williams' poem on it, the students also wrote a poem about the painting. In all, the site hosts 20 schools that work towards making poetry popular.

Many of these things may not be easy to implement in an English class in India. In fact, few schools in India can publish anthologies of poems written by the students. However, there are some schools such as Rishi Valley School in Chittoor, which conduct poetry workshops for students. Some of these workshops have been led by the noted Indian-English poet Gieve Patel. Some years ago, the school brought out an anthology of poems written at these workshops. Sadly, though, such efforts in India seem to be limited to elite schools. Having said this, students' poems do get published in school and college journals. It is also possible to organize poetry festivals, set up poetry clubs, have teachers illustrate poems with additional audio or visual material in the classroom before presenting a poem, etc. India has a long tradition of writing, teaching and using poetry. One of the spaces where poetry intersects with popular culture is in film music, where many poets like Gulzar, Sahir Ludhianvi, Javed Akhtar, Majrooh Sultanpuri and even Harivansh Rai Bacchan found space. Games like "Antaaksharii" are old and popular and represent just this mixing of poetry with everyday lives of the people in India. *Antaaksharii* is played between friends and family, the contestants are required to recite a new poem or song beginning with the last letter or sound of the song or poem presented by the rival. Poetry still excites, amuses and involves,

the long tradition is not dead, events like *Mushairas* and *Kavi Sammelans* are still active in many parts of the country. All we need is the will to use these resources.

I would like to close this review with two relevant personal experiences.

Most recently, I tried to teach English at a Hindi medium government primary school in my village in Bihar. The class comprised of forty children, all between eight to ten years of age; they were early learners in English. I wanted them to learn a poem by heart, only for its sounds and spelling, not for its meaning. I chose the following poem:

Piggy on the railway  
Picking up stones  
Down came the engine  
And broke piggy's bones  
Ah! Said the Piggy  
That's not fair  
Oh! Said the engine driver  
I don't care

I wrote the poem on the blackboard in the class and recited it word by word. I got the children to repeat after me, all the while drawing the children's attention to how the letters had been formed. I am not sure whether the children learnt to write the poem within the one-hour session spread over two days, but they certainly memorized the poem by heart. To my amusement, I found a group of children reciting it outside a temple in the village. Perhaps they thought that like the other songs they knew in Hindi and Maithili, the local languages, this was also a prayer!

Some years ago, in a course in English at the Advanced Level (EAL) at IIT Madras, I included some sonnets from *A Suitable Boy*. This was a class of senior under-graduate students who were good in English and needed a course at their level. I wanted the class to see

the prosodic, grammatical and semantic features of a sonnet. I began by creating gaps in a randomly selected sonnet, given in the Annexe. The class was asked to fill in the blanks with suitable words. Each of these blanks could have been filled in with a unique word as the combination of grammatical, prosodic and semantic constraints did not allow any other word. The class took its time, but enjoyed the exercise. Many students also read the entire book and the course got a high rating. Many colleagues, I am sure, have similar success stories to tell. It is time our websites also reflect this change.

### Annexure

Fill in the blanks in the following sonnet from Vikram Seth's 'The Golden Gate'. The blanks must be filled in such that the chosen word meets the demands of grammar, meaning and metre accurately. Check your answers with those given at the reverse of this page.

John's looks 1. \_\_\_\_\_ good. His dress is formal.

His voice is low. His mind is 2. \_\_\_\_\_.

His appetite for work's abnormal.

A plastic name tag 3. \_\_\_\_\_ around

His collar like a votive necklace.

Though 4. \_\_\_\_\_, he is far from reckless,

Pays his rent promptly, jogs, 5. \_\_\_\_\_ not

Smoke cigarettes, and rarely 6. \_\_\_\_\_,

Eschews both church and 7. \_\_\_\_\_ drinking,

Enjoys his garden, likes to 8. \_\_\_\_\_

Eclectically from Mann to Bede.

(A surrogate, some say, 9. \_\_\_\_\_ thinking.)

Friends claim 10. \_\_\_\_\_ grown aloof and prim.

(His boss, 11. \_\_\_\_\_, is well-pleased with him.)

Expected answers follow the poem are given below:

1. are
2. sound
3. hangs
4. well-paid
5. does
6. pot
7. heavy
8. read
9. for
10. he's
11. though

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Tips for Teaching Poetry | Academy of American Poets

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.poets.org/national-poetry-month/tips-teaching-poetry>

**Shreesh Chaudhary** retired as Professor of Linguistics from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai. He is currently working as a Distinguish Professor at the Institute of Applied Science & Humanities, GLA University, Mathura.

*shreeshchaudhary@gmail.com*

# Classroom Activities

## Activity 1

### Introduction to Verbs

**Level:** Grade 2

**Class Strength:** Up to 30 students

### Objectives

a) To learn verbs or action words.

### Prior Knowledge

Children should be able to read and write simple sentences with understanding, and already have an understanding of simple verbs like run, jump, skip, sit, stand etc.

### Materials

(1) Slips of paper-each slip needs to have a sentence containing a verb that children will be able to act out. For example:

Mohan likes to jump.

Sita is running.

I am laughing.

(2) Board

(3) Chalk

### Time Required

Approximately 25 minutes

### Procedure

**Step 1:** Tell children that they will be playing a game which involves some acting or miming (gesture or movement without language). Each student will be given a situation to act out and they need to act it out in front of the whole class. The rest of the class needs to guess or describe what the student is doing.

**Step 2:** Hand out slips of paper to each student. Make sure that you tell them not to show them to their friends. Give each student 1-2 minutes to decide in his/her mind how he/she will act out the word written on the slip.

**Step 3:** Call each student one by one to the front of the class and ask them to act out their understanding of the word written on the slip of paper given to them. If the student is unable to read the slip, the teacher must read it for him or her. If the student needs more help, the teacher can translate the sentence into the student's mother tongue. This is very exciting and a lot of fun for the students because they get to see their friends doing something funny. As one student is acting out, the rest of the class guesses or describes loudly what the particular student is acting out. Once the class has guessed the word correctly, draw their attention to the verb that was acted out.

For example, "What was Bhanu doing?"

Say for instance the class replies, "She was skipping."

Once this is done, write down the verb on the board.

By the end of the game, you will have a list of verbs on the board.

**Step 4:** After this you can have a discussion with the students. Some guiding questions can be:

What are the words that have been written down on the board? Read them aloud...

What kind of words are they?

What do they tell us?

Can you think of more words like these?

If children come up with more verbs, add them to the list.



At the end of the discussion, children should have a general understanding that in all sentences the words that tell us about any kind of action are called verbs. They should be able to give examples of common verbs.

## Activity 2

### Introduction to Prepositions of Space

**Level: 2**

**Class Strength:** Up to 30 students

#### Objectives

- a) To acquaint learners with prepositions
- b) To help learners name and identify common prepositions

#### Prior Knowledge

- Children should be able to (1) read and write simple sentences with understanding, (2) understand and follow instructions.
- They should also have basic understanding of words like in, on, under, etc.

#### Materials

- 6 Sets of 3 Step instructions or clues for a treasure hunt. (details given below)
- 6 rewards (treasure): There should be something that can be shared with a group of 5 students like sweets or a chocolate or balloons.
- List of clues to be displayed either on a poster or through a projector.

#### Time Required

Approximately 25 minutes

#### Preparation

The first part of this activity is a treasure hunt which needs preparation beforehand. The teacher should divide the class into six groups

with about 5 children in each group. This division should be done earlier so that each group has children of varying abilities.

The teacher also needs to prepare 6 sets of 3 steps of instructions or clues for each group to help them find their treasure. Each clue should be a sentence with a preposition in it. For example, one set of clues could be as follows:

- Your first clue is under the table.
- Your next clue is behind the book shelf.
- Your treasure is in the locker.

This planning needs to be done very carefully to space out the clues to avoid chaos in the class. The clues should also be easy for children to follow, and challenging enough to keep them engaged. Each set of clues can be written on a different coloured paper to avoid the groups mixing up their clues. The teacher must then stick or hide the clues in appropriate places.

As a follow up of the treasure hunt, the teacher also needs to prepare a written list of all the clues which she can display for the whole class in the form of a poster or through a projector.

#### Procedure

**Step 1:** Tell children that they will be playing a game called 'Treasure Hunt'. Tell them that they will be working in groups and also mention that co-operating and helping each other in groups is needed in this hunt. Explain that each group will be given a set of clues and they must use their clues to find their treasure. Further, once each group has found their treasure, they must reassemble in the class.

**Step 2:** Divide the class into mixed ability groups using any desired method. The teacher could display the groups on the board or call them out or stick posters with the group members around the class and ask children to assemble around them. Give each group the first set of clues. But to be fair, ask them all to open or read the first clue at the same time. After

this the children will take about 5-10 minutes to find their treasure.

\*Note: In order to manage the class better, the teacher could send 2-3 groups at a time and have the other groups wait for their turn.

**Step 3:** Once all the groups have come back to the class, give children some time to enjoy their treasure, whatever it may be, until the excitement dies down.

**Step 4:** Have a discussion with some of the following guiding questions:

What were some of the clues you got?

What helped you find your treasure?

Which part of this clue do you think helped you know exactly where the treasure was?

**Step 5:** Display the list of clues to the class and go through each clue one by one. After each clue, draw the attention of the group to the preposition and tell the members that these words help us to know the position of things around us. Also, make sure that children understand the prepositions. For example, when discussing the preposition 'under', you may illustrate further by showing them different examples. As you go along, make a list of prepositions that students can use later.

**Step 6:** Once you have gone through all the clues, explain to the children that these words that help us know the position of something are called prepositions. Ask the children to give examples of how these prepositions could be used correctly to describe the position of things around them.

### **Extension**

Display the poster of the room/park. Ask children to write 5-6 sentences or a paragraph using the prepositions they have learnt. They may use the list you had made before. This will help you assess students' understanding of prepositions. Alternatively, it is also a good idea to allow peer correction at this stage. Children can exchange notebooks with their classmates and correct each other's work.

**Deepa Varghese** is an elementary school teacher with a passion for curriculum, pedagogy and teacher training. She has an M.A. in Clinical Psychology and also in Elementary Education.

*varghese.deepa@gmail.com*

# Reports

## **Katha Manch: Session of Stories at the Vidya Bhawan Summer Camp**

Human beings are meaning making animals, thus we are embedded in layers and layers of narratives to make sense of who we are. In that sense stories are what make us human. Stories bind all of us together as a family, as a society, as humans. Every society known to us has story-telling as one of its mediums for entertainment and education. Through stories from around the world, one can understand and empathize with people one has never known or met. The attractive world of stories motivates the Katha Manch-which is a registered trust dedicated to stories- to read, listen and create them, so that later they can be narrated to children. Storytelling is necessary for the transmission of experience, it not only allows us to experience new things but also allows us a window into knowing things that we couldn't have known otherwise. It is this potentiality of a story that makes it so powerful and such a treasure which always needs to be passed on to the next generation.

Stories are important in the lives of children as they provide them with a platform to explore their fears, take risks, feel like a hero or a villain. They also have the potential to expose children to new things or concepts. Further, they teach children about various cultures.

Realizing the importance of stories, Katha Manch, a group of educators, uses them as their main pedagogic tool. Katha Manch comprises school teachers, B.El.Ed. interns, university professors, students, government teachers, etc. The group shares the belief that stories are not only a tool to build empathetic, creative and tolerant beings, but they can also be used as the main resource in enhancing various literary skills

such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. With this in mind, Katha Manch conducted a five-day workshop for around 200 students from 57 government schools from different parts of Rajasthan, and from Vidya Bhawan Senior Secondary School in Udaipur. The objectives of the workshop were:

- To understand the context of the students
- To introduce the world of stories to the children and capture their interest
- To demonstrate various modes of storytelling
- To respect, recognize and use multi-lingual environment
- To involve the students in discussions, activities and enactment

### **Participants of the Workshop**

The workshop was conducted by four members of the Katha Manch (KM) team. The students who attended this workshop belonged to remote areas of the districts of Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Ajmer. Although they were of various ages, they largely belonged to the senior classes. The duration of the workshop was 2 hours per day for 5 days.

### **Flow of the Workshop**

There were around 160 to 180 students who attended the workshop. All the students were divided into four groups. Each member of the KM team randomly chose a group of students and started their work. The students needed specific and direct guidance as their knowledge of Hindi and English was minimal.

On the first day, the KM team simply observed the children while other teachers were working with them. After a thorough discussion with the team of teachers, the original plans for the

workshop were reframed and the expectations were set differently.

The first interaction of the team with the children aimed at getting to know them and make them do team-building activities. This included encouraging them to sing songs in their languages, introducing themselves by adding an adjective before their names, telling the story behind their names if there was one, and other activities.

After the interaction on the first day, the KM team decided to hold sessions in accordance with the children's needs. The team's primary task was set, since most of the students were first generation learners it was important to bring forth their experiences and make that the center of everything. This could be best achieved through discussions or activities around stories, which would help them open up and share their experiences. Keeping all this in mind, the team decided to introduce a variety of stories to capture their interest, give them some confidence and add to their learning. All four groups of students had one team member of KM working with them for all five days.

Each group focused on a different aspect of story-telling and presented their work, this showed that they were very much active participants of the process. The first group focused on different modes of story-telling like drawing. The second group worked on various elements or aspects in a story. The third group were interested in reading and also pre-and post-reading activities. The last group enjoyed stories in a lyrical form. Different types of stories were narrated, enacted, performed and read in all the groups. For instance, "Wedding Clothes" published by CBT was read, enacted and even extended by the students. The major focus was on vocabulary building, expanding the scope of the imagination of the children's ideas, making meaning from the actions and words in the story and relating to the context of the story with one's own experiences.

In one activity, only half of the story was told to the children and they were asked to complete the story. They suggested various endings for the story. To start with, the children were hesitant, and did not respond to the questions. This was probably because making a connection with an unknown person needs time. As the workshop progressed, all four members of the KM team saw a change in the students. They began to take a keen interest in the activities and even expressed joy at being in the class with others. It was amazing that students who were conditioned to run out of the class as soon as they heard the school bell ring, now did not leave even after the bell had rung as they were so involved in the activities.

The main challenge for the team was getting the children to speak up and to share their point of view. Possibly the children had previously experienced intolerant behavior from their teachers, or they did not have the confidence to express themselves in their native language in class. They may have felt that their language might not be accepted, or they may have been judged if they spoke. The KM team recognized this fear of not speaking up and allowed them to share their experiences without judging them. They were allowed to use the languages they know freely to share their views and hold discussions during the sessions. This helped in building a connection with the other students.

This experience of the KM team with the senior secondary students left them with good memories and a lot of learning. The instinct for learning and understanding was clearly evident in all the students, which shows that this neglect of sharing of experience that is at the heart of storytelling is a very vital part of children becoming reluctant learners. Given the right environment children love to express themselves, which makes them learn, reflect and grow as was seen in this workshop.

The workshop which began as a struggle for the students turned out to be quite a success in

the end. The KM team wondered that if only five days of sessions around stories could work such wonders, then what would be the impact on learning if such sessions were permanently included in the curriculum? Simple strategies such as peer learning, listening to the speaker, responding in bilingual or even mixed language, accepting each other's perspective, reinforcing previously learned knowledge, working as a team, etc., need to be included in the curriculum of children. The moment they gain authority over their learning, the real magic of learning begins. This was experienced in all the groups when children were encouraged to present their work and KM team members took a backseat and watched them perform. They did not merely take charge of the position they had got, they even justified it by helping and supporting each other. This report will be incomplete without saying that no child in this world is born a blank-slate- *tabula rasa*- on which society can write and train as they please, humans capacity for creativity and learning is internally linked to his innate complex structures. This makes every child has his/her own story. This is one of the first resources that empowers a teacher, allows the teachers to give recognition to the experiences of the students and lead them to the path of growth and empathy. There is a need to recognize, accept and respect stories in order for children to have rich childhood that nurtures their experiences and let them grow to be empathetic human beings.

**Ria Gupta** works with Katha Manch. She has done her B.El. Ed. and M.Ed. from Delhi University. She is a professional storyteller.

*ria.ria14@gmail.com*

## Forthcoming Events

### June

#### **16th International Asia TEFL Conference**

Date: 27-29 June 2018

Location: University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

Call Deadline: 31st January 2018 (Abstract)

Conference information page link: <http://www.asiatefl.org/main/main.php?main=2>

#### **The European Conference of Language Learning 2018**

Dates: 29 June - 01 July 2018

Location: Brighton, UK

Organization: IAFOR

Deadline for abstract submission:

Early Bird Registration: February 15, 2018

Final Abstract submission: April 16, 2018

Conference information page link: <https://ecll.iafor.org>

### July

#### **2nd International Conference on Linguistics and Literature (ICLL 2018)**

Dates: 20-22 July 2018

Location: Rome, Italy

Organization: ICLL

Deadline for abstract submission: 5 March 2018

Conference information page link: <http://www.icll.org>

### August

#### **Language, Individual & Society 2018, 12th International Conference**

Dates: 26-30 August 2018

Location: Elenite, Bulgaria

Organization: International Scientific Events

Deadline for abstract submission: 31 January 2018

Conference information page link: <https://www.sciencebg.net/en/conferences/language-individual-and-society/>



### **September**

#### **International Conference on Globalization, Literature and Culture Conference**

Dates: 7-8 September 2018

Location: Pune, India

Organization: Higher Education and Research Society, Navi Mumbai

Deadline for abstract submission: 7 September 2018

Conference information page link: <http://herso.org/call-for-papers/>

### **October**

#### **19th International Conference on Teaching, Education & Learning (ICTEL)**

Dates: 24-25 October 2018

Location: Colombo, Srilanka

Organization: ADTEL (Association for Development of Teaching Education and Learning)

Deadline for abstract submission: 15 February 2018

Conference information page link: <https://www.adtelweb.org/2018---19th-international-conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-october-24-25-colombo-about-60>

### **November**

#### **5th ICRTTEL 2018 - International Conference on Research in Teaching, Education & Learning**

Dates: 14-15 November 2018

Location: Singapore

Organization: Eurasia Research

Deadline for abstract submission: 15 July 2018

Conference information page link: <http://eurasiaresearch.org/conference/singapore-icrttel-14-15-nov-2018>

#### **44th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition (JALT 2018)**

Dates: 23-26 November 2018

Location: Shizuoka City, Japan

Organization: JALT

Deadline for abstract submission: 12 February 2018

Conference information page link: <https://jalt.org/conference/jalt2018>

## ***Shiksha Sambal Project***

Started in 2008, *Shiksha Sambal Project* is a unique attempt at addressing the issue of providing quality education to underprivileged rural children at the senior school level. It involves hopefully a constructive and lasting partnership between a corporate agency, a non-government trust, civil society and the government. Started by Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL), the project really picked up momentum when it joined hands with Vidya Bhawan Society (VBS), Udaipur along with the Rajasthan Education Department in 2016. In most comparable cases of such partnerships, the focus has invariably been on deliverables; in this case, the focus is on sustained appreciation of each partner's work, levels of conceptual understanding of children, training of FIs and continuous on-site and on-line support. Though HZL insists on improvement in the board results, it does not in any way minimize conceptual clarity among teachers, FIs and children.

Located in 57 **Government Secondary and Senior Secondary** schools in 5 districts (Udaipur, Rajsamand, Chittorgarh, Bhilwara and Ajmer) of Rajasthan, *Shiksha Sambal* engages with about 6000 children, 150 teachers, 80 Field Instructors (FIs), 50 HZL employee-volunteers and resource persons from VBS in strengthening the quality of education. This may indeed prove to be a model for multiplying similar programmes on a large scale, given that there is not much hope from the government. The focus of the project is conceptual clarity in Science, Mathematics and English and improvement in board results. The effort is to ensure that underprivileged children do not lag behind in society because of lack of infrastructure and academic support. *Shiksha Sambal* believes that like all other children, these children have an innate potential for understanding and creating knowledge.

### **Academic and Infrastructure Support**

The Education Resource Centre of VBS undertakes the responsibility of providing on-site and online support to teachers and FIs in addition to regularly conducting orientation and subject-specific workshops. The VBS teams visit the schools and interact with children, teachers and FIs trying to resolve their problems; they also observe classroom processes, collect feedback on the use of worksheets prepared by them for children and document their visits. HZL has tried to improve the infrastructure in significant ways. Schools have libraries and book banks now and all children are provided with materials that may be necessary for their academic growth; all schools also have access to teacher geometry boxes, basic science kits and microscopes.

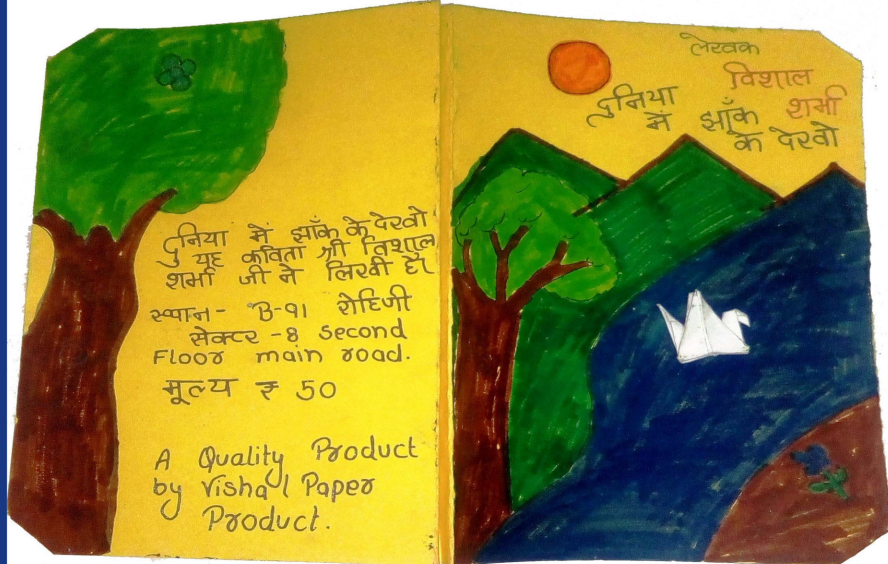
Intensive summer camps are a special feature of the *Shiksha Sambal* project. In these camps, children come from all the project schools. The Udaipur camps lasting over a month have a demanding time-table; mornings starting at 5.30 am are devoted to physical exercise and Yoga; the academic work is undertaken during 8.30 am to 1.30 pm. Followed by a rest period of two hours post-lunch, the evenings are devoted to reading, storytelling, sports and cultural activities. Conceptual clarity and creative articulation are at the heart of these camps.

(Excerpts from an article published in *Deccan Herald*, July 4, 2017)



# INSIDE

- Articles
- Interview
- Landmark
- Book Reviews
- Classroom Activities
- Reports
- Forthcoming Events



'There are many aspects of human emotions and knowledge which cannot find expression in words and must therefore get spaces in 'lines and colours, sounds and movements'.

Tagore



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

