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Editorial

Language and Language Teaching (LLT), as the name suggests, brings researchers working on language and people interested in the field of teaching language together. As the Feedback Report in this issue shows, teachers have consistently found materials published in this journal useful; at the same time researchers have tried their best to make their theoretical understanding of the intricacies of language accessible to teachers in the context of language teaching. This issue of *LLT* includes ten papers. The papers present an eclectic mix and teachers, teacher trainers as well as policy makers and those generally interested in language issues would all find something of interest to them. A general thread that binds the contributions to this issue together is the emphasis on the reader/ learner experience. It has been a conscious effort in this volume to include voices and perspectives that help the *learning* experience and to take into account the multilingual nature of classrooms.

This issue also includes its regular features such as an interview with an eminent scholar in the field of the study of language and education. This time we have interviewed Professor K. P. Mohanan with whom Praveen Singh talks at length about issues that are strikingly relevant to teachers and researchers in the field of education. Mohanan candidly explains his concerns and understanding of wide range of issues such as teaching methods, role of the study of language in teaching, classroom practices, the teacher-training practices and, English in India and Education to name a few. The other regular feature of this journal has been a Landmark piece of fundamental importance to teachers and teacher educators. In this issue, we invited Dr. Rimli Bhattacharya to write the landmark paper. In her paper, Bhattacharya emphasizes on learning through exploration. Writers of textbooks would find this piece relevant and helpful. Drawing on insights from *Sandesh* - a monthly magazine founded by Upendrakisor Raychaudhuri - she questions the validity of disciplinary boundaries and vouches for a style of text that is *both* scientific and imaginative, factual and fictive at the same time. Literature and science, she contends, need not be two ends of a spectrum but can come together in a holistic and engaging way in a text which can thus do justice to the child's inquisitive mind. Bhattacharya ends her piece with a few suggestions that can be incorporated in pedagogy and provide for language to be more than just an instrumentalist concern in education.

Amongst other pieces that concern the status of languages and their use in education, V.T. Bapui's paper deals with the Hmar language which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family and is a part of the Lushai-Kuki-Chin group. It traces the history and development of the language while stressing on its teaching in Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam while also focusing on and recognizing the associated problems in its teaching. T. Shrimathy Venkatalakshmi and Chandreyee Sarkar Mitra talk about the role of feedback, assessment, and evaluation process in the process of learning. They show how information to students on their performance is the key factor that enhances their performance. They suggest constructive, prompt, and qualitative feedback to students could be one of the turning points in education. T. C. Ghai analyses an approach for translating (Punjabi) poetry. In line with contemporary readings in Translation Studies, Ghai - through his analysis of his own translations of Puran Singh Kanwar, Avatar Singh Sandhu (popularly known as Pash) and Lal Singh Dil - draws attention to the fact that the relation between a poem and its translation remains fluid. A translated text can therefore be literal, in spirit, an adaptation, a trans-creation or free and even become independent of the original - something that language teachers would do well to take cognizance of. Pavithra Velpuri explores her understanding of relationship between language, mind and society

with respect to pedagogical implications of linguistics. She tries to understand how children acquire tacit knowledge and proposes that such an understanding would be an asset that every teacher should leverage in classroom. She explores why the grammar class of a first language could not be made interesting and how grammar could be taught inductively. Also, teaching learners rules is less exciting than making them come up with rules based on what they know. In appropriating reader-response theories for the Indian classroom, Shefali Srivastava's paper makes a case for aesthetic stance in education as equally important as an 'efferent' stance. She claims that the goal of education is not to produce literate mechanized human resource but to develop thinking and feeling individuals with sound perceptions, analytical minds and human hearts.

A democratic and free response-based classroom would go a long way in equipping learners to develop into free-thinking individuals. A.L. Khanna's article explores various issues essential for the effective teaching of English at the primary level: these include diverse social backgrounds of different learners of English; teachers' beliefs, practices, competence and availability; their competence in English and their use of multilingualism as a pedagogical tool; effective textbooks and teaching materials and, finally, appropriate evaluation and assessment techniques. Uma Sudhir expresses concern over the use of language in textbooks prepared by state governments in a short paper. Such use of language might make textbooks incomprehensible. In turn, the intended audience will not learn either words, or concepts. It is, therefore, recommended that the language used in textbooks must be the language that average citizen can follow. Sanchita Verma's paper draws on Conversation Analysis techniques to analyze silence as an important discourse marker in the multilingual Indian classroom. She notes that silence can be an effective marker in highlighting the successful use of multiple languages in the classroom environment and the academic performance of a child is best protected when she is encouraged to learn a new language with and in relation to her own language and when nothing is thrust on her. Jobin Kanjirakkat talks about the requirement of research into neurophysiology of language for uncovering mechanisms that underlie processes of encoding and decoding. In his paper he gives an account of social-psychological description of the nature of this relationship and offers a criticism of an influential contemporary approach such as mentalism. Analyzing examples from two well-known texts, he talks about communication and proposes that focus on narratives with respect to language helps us understand the ways in which we learn language. Jennifer Thomas underlines the requirement of the use of innovations in technology in teaching and learning.

The issue also includes reviews of three books that focus on language and education. There are also three activities that are designed for improving vocabulary which teachers would find very useful.

Teaching of Hmar Language with Special Reference to Assam

Vanlal Tluonga Bapui

Introduction

The Hmar language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages and is a part of the Lushai-Kuki-Chin group. It is a verb final language. It was first reduced to the written word in the Linguistic Survey of India done by G.A. Grierson way back at the beginning of the last century. The language may be said to be in a developing stage; it requires standardization in several areas.

The Hmar people were first recognized as a tribal community in the North-Eastern States of India. In 1956, the Government of India also granted recognition to the tribe by including it in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification), 1956 vide Ministry of Home Affairs Order No. S.R.O. 2477 dated 29 October 1956. Prior to this, they were known as Kuki or old Kuki, which is not actually a name of any tribe but a term that was coined by others to refer to them. In all likelihood, the people who assigned this name could not differentiate between the different tribes or their languages, and therefore gave them this name. In fact, anyone who enlisted in the armed forces, police force or petty government jobs was also known by that name. However, with the publication of the list, the different tribes came to be known by their specific tribe names.

Development of Hmar as a Language

The Hmar group of tribes speak several languages and dialects among themselves. For the convenience of having a common language, the language of the *Khawsak* (Easterner) group was accepted by the tribes. Although the other languages and dialects are still widely spoken, only Khawsak is used for literary and teaching purposes.

For a long time, from the 1920s until independence, the Hmar language was written and taught by the tribal communities largely for religious purposes and for literacy in their own language. Hymn books were among the earliest that could be mentioned as a book. The New Testament of the Bible in Hmar was published in 1947 and the entire Bible in 1972. In fact, with the exception of a dictionary by Dr. Thanglung, a medical practitioner, there were very few books on non-religious topics. A few weekly, fortnightly, monthly and annual news magazines were published but were often discontinued due to various constraints.

However, since the fifties and the sixties, a substantial number of books have been published and the language has developed into a modern Indian language.

Teaching of Hmar Language in Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya

Way back in 1928-1929, Dr. Thanglung wrote a language primer known as the *Bu Hmasa* (First Primer) for Hmar language. That primer is still in use in primary schools in Manipur. The book was intended to help the Hmar people to become literate in their own language and it did serve the purpose for which it was intended. Many Hmars became literate in their own language because of this primer. Today, apart from the primer, there are a number of school textbooks of Hmar that are used in the secondary schools in Manipur for teaching Hmar. In fact, some vernacular schools in Cachar, Assam have also adopted these textbooks called "Readers" in upper primary schooling.

In 1956, Hmar language was formally recognized by the Government of Manipur. In 1968, the Government of Manipur granted permission to teach the language at the primary level. In 1985, Hmar language was elevated to the status of a modern Indian language (MIL), and was included in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination as a half-paper; it carried fifty marks. As the upper primary schooling was consolidated and textbooks for secondary schooling were finalized, Hmar language gained the status of a full paper in the HSLC Examinations in the year 1997. From the year 2000, Hmar was included at the higher secondary level and Manipur Central University granted permission for study of the language at the degree level. Examinations in Hmar MIL were permitted from the year 2003. Currently the university

is taking measures and preparing textbooks to introduce a course on the study of the Hmar language as an Elective and as a Major subject in degree courses.

The Governments of Mizoram and Meghalaya are also trying to introduce the teaching of Hmar language at the primary level. However, till date not much has been achieved in this regard. In both States the Hmar tribe is recognized as a Scheduled Tribe (Hills).

Teaching of Hmar Language in Assam

The Hmar people living in Assam unofficially adopted the textbooks written in Manipur, and some schools in the Cachar District even started teaching the language. Two vernacular Middle Schools (Upper Primary Stage) were established at Hmarkhawlien and Diphucherra in Cachar, where students were taught in Hmar upto the Upper Primary level.

The Government of Assam recognized the Hmar language as a medium of instruction vide their order conveyed in Memo No. EMI. 82/67/199 dated Shillong, 25 March 1969. However, the language was introduced as the medium of instruction in the primary classes in the autonomous district of north Cachar Hills only from the academic session of 1984-1985. One vernacular Middle School (Upper Primary) was established in Saron. However, the Government did not recognize the school as the establishment of vernacular schools had been discontinued by the authorities. The school was recognized as a Middle English School where Hmar is taught as a language paper only.

As the teaching of the Hmar language advanced, the question of textbooks arose. The textbooks developed and approved by the Government of Manipur could not be accepted by the Government of Assam, and for a good reason as well. Textbooks of Manipur had lessons pertaining to the local history, geography, and biographies of local heroes and leaders. Therefore, new textbooks from the Pre-Primary to the Secondary stages had to be developed for the schools of Assam. The Hmar people themselves in Assam developed school textbooks that incorporated their local history, biography, etc., and even printed and circulated most of these books on their own.

In the meantime, there was a change in the National Policy on Education (1986) which made it mandatory to develop textbooks as per the norms prepared by the NCERT. Following this, the SCERT developed primers and textbooks in Assamese, the major language of the state. Now, all other languages of the State had to adapt the pattern of the newly developed textbooks. That again posed another major problem; while the State language is an Indo-Aryan language, the Hmar language is a Tibeto-Burman. Moreover, the alphabets of Assamese are similar to that of the official language Hindi, with all the *sandhis*, combined consonants, etc. The Hmar language on the other hand has only 25 alphabets (both vowels and consonants) and all Hmar sounds are represented by a combination of these consonants in a manner that is different from that of Assamese. Adapting from one to the other therefore became a major problem. It would have been much easier if the writing of the

textbooks was permitted in a manner that could simplify the learning process. However, the State Government could not be blamed because they had to abide by the national directives. Finally, the State Government decided to develop new textbooks up to the Lower Primary level in Hmar language as per the standards prescribed by the NCERT. The writing of language textbooks for the Upper Primary level is currently being developed. As a result of various constraints, the Hmar people of Assam have decided to have only one language paper at the Upper Primary level.

The Government of Assam has also supplied all textbooks upto the Upper Primary level free of cost to all students. Textbooks developed under the guidance of the SCERT are printed as free textbooks by the Government of Assam and distributed to the learners through Block Development Offices.

Though the Hmar language is yet to be introduced as a medium of instruction at the Upper Primary level, the Board of Secondary Education Assam has recognized and introduced it as a language paper in the High School Leaving Certificate Examinations from the year 2007, vide No. SEBA/AB/HMAR/2007/01 dated 23 August 2007. The Assam Higher Secondary Education Council has allowed the introduction of the Hmar language as a MIL paper in classes XI and XII from the year 2008, vide AHSEC/ACA/CURR. SYLL/01/96/94 dated 3 January 2008. Consequent to this, Assam University, Silchar has recognized the language as a MIL paper for the first Degree (TDC) from the year 2010, vide No.

AUD-56/2009-10/2004 dated 23 July 2010. For all these classes, new textbooks have to be written according to the norms laid down by the respective authorities of education.

Problems Relating to the Teaching of Hmar Language

As mentioned earlier, preparation of textbooks is one of the major problems. Another major problem is that of supporting the teachers. So far, only the teachers of the Lower Primary levels are appointed and supported by the State Government. All other teachers of the language, from the Upper Primary level to the Degree level are appointed and supported by the community through sheer determination. Had this not been the case, the teaching of the language would not have progressed so far. However, this has now become a burden for the community. A proposal around the creation of posts of teachers at different levels of education has been submitted to the government, but so far not a single post has been sanctioned. The schools eagerly await the day when these posts will be created and sanctioned but nobody knows when that will happen. In the meantime, the teaching of the language is somehow going on. The teachers are working with negligible remunerations and making supreme sacrifices of their time and talents for the cause of the language.

Despite everything however, we cannot blame the authorities for not sanctioning the posts of the teachers. The Hmars are a small minority of scheduled tribes. There are many larger scheduled tribes and

communities in the State who are facing the same problems. At the same time, this cannot go on indefinitely, and something needs to be done about it. The teaching of the Hmar language will not be able to continue unless teachers are appointed by the Government to teach the language at every stage. As of now, in the State of Assam alone, the language can be taught in about 90 primary schools, 39 high schools and 15 higher secondary schools and colleges, which include Government and non-Government schools and colleges.

Vanlal Tluonga Bapui is an independent researcher. He has made significant contributions to social work, mass education programs and in preparation of textbooks for Schools and College levels. He can speak several tribal languages with native like command.

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Significance of Feedback in the Teaching/Learning Process

T. Shrimathy Venkatalakshmi and Chandreyee Sarkar Mitra

Introduction

This article focuses on the significance of feedback as a tool to enhance improvement in the performance of the students. The evaluation of a student at school starts the moment a performance in any form (both oral and written) is made. This evaluation comes through small classroom unit tests, quarterlies and half yearly- (different forms of formative assessments) or final examinations – (summative assessments). Let us look at some of the issues as to why all students fail to excel in their performances and how feedback from teachers can help them to move towards a more desirable performance.

Understanding the Learning Process – A Real Challenge

The age old difficult concept of the proper understanding of the learning process continues to remain a mystery to teachers and educators. There often lies two problems with teaching, one is that we plan, observe and control the teaching but cannot do the same with learning. This is partly because learning is not in our hands, it is not even perceptive. We as teachers do not know when it is happening. It applies specially to any language teaching because here skills are being developed. However,

although we cannot see learning as it happens, we can see the result of learning. We cannot see the process but we can see the product. If someone tries to do something today and fails, and often after six attempts, the learner succeeds, it is safe enough to say that the learner has learnt to do it. What the learner was unable to do yesterday, is able to do now. The issue is not how much has been learnt, but what should matter most is that things are being learnt. In India, we refuse to accept that a learner actually learns making a slow progress.

A regular classroom is mostly occupied with a group of learners, and one teacher teaching a group, and a particular lesson. All learners do not learn at the same time, they don't learn a thing at the same pace. Some learners learn faster, some learners learn slower. It is uneven. Teaching is uniform but learning is not uniform.

Reflecting on Assessments

It can therefore be justified that we have to wait for the product to evaluate the performance. Here, by product we refer to assessments.

According to Sally Brown (2005):

“Assessment is probably the most important thing we can do to help our students learn. We may not like it, but

students can and do ignore our teaching; however, if they want to get a qualification, they have to participate in the assessment processes we design and implement.”

Therefore, it is important to see what the assessment process will do to help rather than impede learning. The two types of assessments in academics are the *formative* and the *summative* types.

A *Summative Assessment* plays a critical role in the data or information gathering process. It is the instrument that provides us with the information of the final progress of the learner at the end of a semester or an academic year. Summative assessments are the high-stakes tests that decide whether the learner can be considered adequate to move to the next level of learning. Yes, the after effects are problematic because after the completion of the assessment and evaluation process, some students are rewarded with an 'A' or 'B' grade whereas others are reminded over and over again that they are 'D' or 'E' grade students. Categorizing individuals is to persuade some that they are good and desirable from the view point of the system and others that they are bad, and therefore unwanted.

Summative assessment is the final decoration and there is not much option to improve on. However it has been observed that teachers spend more time on designing summative tests. Students can learn without grades but cannot learn without formative assessment and the feedback that comes from it. A formative assessment hence, maybe considered as checkpoints along the way.

Formative Assessments

It is a well-accepted fact that in the field of teaching and learning, feedback is integral to the learning process and is one of the main benefits that students get from assessments – more so formative assessments. Formative assessments help to identify the gaps in learning. Formative feedback can move on to address and help reduce these gaps in learners even if it is not possible to close them completely.

Unfortunately, research carried out by Paul Black and Dylan William (1998) shows that high-quality formative assessment is relatively rare in classrooms, and that most teachers do not know well how to engage in such assessment. Their study further revealed that most classroom testing encourages rote and superficial learning. Teachers, it turns out, generally replicate standardized tests without checking their suitability in their own assessment practices and therefore lack sufficient information about their students. The response of teachers on students' work is what we commonly term as 'feedback', 'correction' and at times 'grading'.

Defining Feedback and its Necessity in the Teaching and Learning Process

Feedback can be defined as the information to students on their performance and is the key factor that enhances their performance. Ferris (1999) said, “there is mounting research evidence” that students benefit from well done grammar correction. Literature on feedback was full of confident assertions and assumptions that grammar correction was the most common

norm. Hattie and Timperley (2007) note that most improvement in student learning takes place when students get “information feedback about a task and how to do it more effectively” and is clearly related to the learning goals. Its role in the learning process is to inform the student of where and how their learning and performance can be improved. As Sue Swaffield (2008) suggests, the idea of future performance being affected by information about earlier performance is central to learning. Planned learning is a prerequisite for any teaching model. Feedback should therefore be seen as a professional activity and should be done unfailingly by teachers for the purpose of determining the alignment of learning results with their teaching methods. Teachers know as part of their profession that they not only need to teach students but also test them on what has been taught and provide feedback on their performance.

The Feedback Scenario in India

Feedback methods certainly need to be improved upon in India. Feedback is most of the time ineffective because it only highlights the errors but fails to provide explanations following it. Mostly, teachers sought to give evaluative (judgmental) feedback without a descriptive (explanatory) feedback on most formative assessments or written assignments of students. It may be considered alright when teachers sought the 'flick and tick' method in the primary and secondary classes where the teacher can correct a wrong spelling or a single grammatical error in a sentence. But as

students move to higher classes their volume of writing too increases. Most of the assessments evaluate the writing skill of students. McNamara (2000) recalls “an image of an examination room, a test paper with questions, desperate scribbling against the clock”. He has also shown how testing has come a long way from just waiting to penalize the learner for what he is not able to do. It chooses to encourage for what he/she has been able to do.

Unfortunately, in India it still continues to be a pitiful state wherein learners are severely punished for minor errors or failing to turn up in class without the homework. Newspapers in recent past have been thronging with information on how young learners in primary and secondary classes have been physically abused by teachers for not submitting a desirable performance in a task. In some cases, the punishment has been so severe that it led to loss of sight or hearing in case of some students. It is true that most of these reports of physical abuse is largely from schools located in rural areas.

With all this data at hand it therefore becomes important to consider how to engage students with formative assessments and feedback and the need to reflect how feedback can be enhanced to move students to a higher level of learning.

Seventy-five percentage of all language assessments and examinations in India test writing, it is important to provide feedback on writing. Feedback on writing is therefore crucial in relation to the teaching and learning of writing. Feedback in second

language writing focuses on almost all aspects of language elements and skills related to writing such as grammar, vocabulary, content, coherence and cohesion of ideas. Writing is an important skill and is a means of developing ideas particularly for engineering graduates because tertiary education in India is in English and therefore students whatever be their educational background are expected to submit assignments and write assessments in English. The quantity of feedback on students' writing can be placed on a continuum ranging from language errors to more serious aspects of writing such as relevance of points discussed and coherence. It is not just grammar errors that teachers need to check but also look at the content of writing. Although grammatical errors can be a stumbling block to understanding students' writing, but very often language teachers are content only correcting the grammar and offering feedback on the same without looking at the other aspects of writing which can enable them to write texts rather than a bunch of grammatically correct sentences.

This method of correction maybe considered negative because a student is obviously put off when he/she finds his/her paper bleeding. Feedback in which a student does not only receive 'flicks and ticks' for grammatical errors may be more constructive. 'Written feedback', has in the past especially at the school level in India been mostly of the 'flick and tick' type- flicking through the students' books to check that they have done the work, with occasional ticks as acknowledgment and to provide evidence to the management, peer teachers, parents and the students that

the teacher has 'marked' the books. Both 'flick and tick' and 'cover everything in red' marking were often accompanied by a numerical mark or grade and a comment at the end of the work (Swaffield, 2008). It is a very common practice that can be found in the assignments and assessment sheets of students in India.

Conclusion

The sole search then depends on what can be done to make feedback effective. It is practically not possible to craft lengthy comments on each students' performance owing to large class sizes. Any attempt to make it effective then would primarily depend on the results of a diagnostic test that would help to understand the gaps and address them accordingly.

The remark provided by the teacher to a student can have a long impact on the latter's psyche. Nothing could be more damaging and life threatening in the life of a student as negative or solely judgmental feedback. In the twenty first century, as teachers it is therefore important to understand that each student in a class is different from the other in many ways and needs different kind of feedback. It is therefore highly important for the teacher to realize how the role of feedback can ensure humanistic and ethical teaching. The teacher with a more humane approach giving feedback to students on their performances in both classroom assignments and assessments can help create an encouraging atmosphere in the classroom. This initiative by teachers will also ensure that the students learn from the feedback given to them in both formative activities and assessments.

The teacher needs to adhere to prompt feedback on a particular task. However, the quantity of feedback certainly lies at the discretion of the teacher. Feedback guru, Susan Brookhart (2008) is of opinion that there is no single 'right' way of providing feedback. It is necessary for teachers to develop a 'tool kit'. Good quality feedback is always more encouraging. As teachers we should focus to provide feedback on the performance and not the person.

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Translating Punjabi Poetry: An Approach

T. C. Ghai

I believe that through translations, Indian English is evolving into a confluent site for many disparate voices from scores of Indian languages, dialects and oral traditions. These enrich it, enlarge its perspective and give it a real flavour of India's rainforest diversity and make its readership hear voices that not only surprise and delight but also shock and disturb and bring within its earshot what is unheard or ignored, or dismissed as too commonplace or dangerous. However, all of this is insufficiently reflected in the domain of Indian-English Poetry.

It is within this framework that I will talk about three Punjabi poets in this paper, whose poems I have translated. These poets, like many other regional language poets, make us hear voices that question, reject, overturn and subvert many traditional and mainstream notions of State, nationalism, religion, art, culture and society.

The first Punjabi poet I translated was Puran Singh Kanwar (1942-1996), who was my colleague at a Delhi University College, and a poet of unusual talent. His first and only collection of poems *Raatan Di Rut* (1984), was characterized by poetry around a "unique paradigm" in Punjabi. I translated his poems because I thought his poetry, however unknown, deserved to be preserved and broadcast. It was published in English as *A Season of Nights* (Kanwar, 2006), along with the Punjabi text. This

poem illustrates why I considered it worthy of translation:

Lines on my Palm

Bhrigu is dumbstruck –
thrusting my eyes
into his

I laugh through them.

He starts!

The mad man might
suddenly charge
and strangle him
in broad daylight...

He's the master of his art
and has peered
at the innumerable lines
on my palm...

One of them
spells suicide
and hundreds
speak murder.

When I was born,
people tell,
my mother
had laughed and laughed:
that laughter
was her death-knell.

In my childhood
 during his sleep
 I had slit open with a knife
 my father's jugular vein.
 He has been asleep since then...
 I have let him sleep.

At our mansion
 nuptials are performed
 everyday.
 The family barber dresses me
 in the bridegroom robes of the royal family.
 The palki-bearers
 seat me in the palki
 and move in a trance
 as if snake-sniffed.

Every night I sleep
 with the living corpse
 of a new queen.
 At dawn
 the priest
 calls...
 O prince
 wake up
 you have to be ready again
 for the nuptials...

Kanwar's poetry explores the human subconscious with a ruthless honesty and frankness that implicates the reader and unsettles him. In each of his 34 poems, he explores a non-ordinary state of mind far removed from what we call the normal, which leaves the reader breathless with fear, admiration and amazement.

The next two poets I translated were Avatar Singh Sandhu (1950-1988), popularly known as Pash, and Lal Singh Dil (1943-2007). Both of them were revolutionary poets—products of the Naxalite movement in Punjab in the early seventies of the last century.

Pash was perhaps the most dramatic literary figure to emerge out of the Naxalite movement. The movement failed, but it produced a number of poets who substantially altered the world view of Punjabi poetry. Pash revolutionized the subject matter, the language, the idiom, the imagery and the tone of Punjabi poetry. Lal Singh Dil, along with another Dalit-Naxalite poet Sant Ram Udasi (1939-1986), brought to the centre of Punjabi poetry the issues of untouchability and caste discrimination and laid the foundations of Dalit literature in Punjabi.

Pash was an extremely popular poet. Hundreds of people, most of them students and young men, came to listen to his recitations in kavi sammelans. The central theme of his poetry was the overthrow of what the Naxalites called and still call the semi-feudal and neo-colonial state with its comprador bourgeoisie dispensation, and its replacement with an egalitarian communist dispensation. So Pash took on the Indian State, with its mainstream view of nationalism centred around its pride in the constitution, the parliamentary system, the elections, the national flag, free speech. No surprise then that he faced imprisonment a number of times (on a false charge of murder once), and was subjected to police atrocities. His life became further complicated because he was an open and strident critic of the

Khalistan movement, at its peak in the 1980s, for which he paid with his life when he was shot dead by Khalistani militants in 1988. Although his poetry shows a progressive change from a fire and brimstone revolutionary to a meditative one, and his disillusionment with the Naxalite movement itself, he remained a revolutionary till the end of his life. He can be seen in the tradition of certain rebels in Punjab of which the clear examples, apart from the Sikh Gurus, are figures such as Banda Singh Bahadur and Bhagat Singh.

I began translating Pash in 2007. I first read Hindi and English translations of his poetry and then read his original work. Pash's language posed many problems. Friends and relatives helped where dictionaries failed. I also read his contemporaries, particularly the leading revolutionary poets, Lal Singh Dil and Sant Ram Udasi. I read most of the available literary criticism on Pash and Naxalite poetry in Punjabi, Hindi and English. I also read Pash's diaries and letters, and about the Naxalite movement in general and particularly in Punjab, about the Sikh history and traditions, the Ghadar Movement and Bhagat Singh to have a better understanding of the poet. My own training in English literature, my knowledge of European and Latin American literature and a modest understanding of Marxism were useful in this regard.

The next stage, after I had obtained a reasonable understanding of the poet, was to translate his poetry into English, a language that is culturally so alien to Punjabi and especially to the kind of language Pash used. Pash's language is

almost totally colloquial and he does not hesitate to use slang. In fact, he seems to consciously, almost willfully, reject the embellishments of Punjabi poetic diction as is clear from an excerpt from his poem "I Refuse" (Ghai, T.C. 2010: p. 131).

Don't hope that I, a son of these fields,
shall talk of your chewed and spat-out
tastes

My approach was to translate line by line, as far as possible, keeping in mind the difference in the syntactical structures of the two languages. To achieve a semblance of an acceptable translation, I had to stretch my resources of both the languages as well as desperately forage through dictionaries. Although Pash is often complex and meditative, since he is a revolutionary poet and speaks without any inhibitions, his language is very close to prose, and the rhythm in his poetry is spontaneous. It is the rhythm of the spoken word uttered by a revolutionary in many rhetorical shades. I have included here, some excerpts from his poems as translated by Ghai (2010)

You go riding in a steel car

I have a steel gun

I have eaten steel

You only talk of steel

("Steel", 2010, p. 46)

People turning Time's wheel

don't die of a fever

("Turing Time's Wheel", 2010)

Go and read the Frontier or the Tribune

Talk of Calcutta or Dacca

("Time's Not a Dog", 2010, p. 60)

Listen, you who write letters to your ladyloves

("An Open Letter", 2010, p. 68)

You have always known the door

through which you could burst in

And now we shall show you the door

through which we shall dispatch you

("Resolution", 2010, p. 70)

We shall fight, comrade, for the unhappy times

("We Shall Fight, Comrade", 2010, p. 95)

It is the tone and natural rhythm that are more important in Pash, rather than any artificially imposed rhythm and metre. I thought it prudent to use English that was neither literary nor too colloquial. The first would have made Pash look wooden and the latter made him talk too much like an Englishman. So I tried to use the shortest and the simplest (and as neutral as possible) words or phrases or collocations, and avoided heavy literary or ponderous expressions or those with rich connotations. My translations, therefore, are more prosaic than poetic. It was relatively easy to capture the tone of his poetry and often his rhythm. However, the cultural nuances and connotations, the flavor and sounds of colloquial Punjabi, its slang and many other things have been lost in the translation.

My attempt has been to convey the heat and intensity of liquid steel that is the hallmark of this revolutionary poet, his rebellious spirit and fearlessness with which he questions everything, his explosive love of life, his impossible dreams. One big, and possibly

crucial deficiency in my translations is that I did all my work outside Punjab. I did not even visit Pash's village or Punjab, or talk to people who had known him personally. How far this has affected my translations for better or for worse, I cannot say.

In order to provide background information on the Naxalite ideology, the Naxalite movement in Punjab, relevant literary background, biographical information and my own assessment of his poetry I also wrote an introduction and appended at the end, a glossary of terms, names of places, persons, customs, social practices and events relating to the Punjabi life, history and culture that Pash refers to in his poetry. This was to facilitate a better understanding of Pash's poetry by readers outside Punjab. I had done something similar while translating Puran Singh Kanwar when I had written an introduction to his poetry, placing him within the framework of the European Surrealist Movement, since that seemed the best way to approach his poetry (which defies all commonsense and rationalist interpretations). However, I did not append any glossary because his poetry, essentially an exploration of the human subconscious, uses images and symbols that are archetypal. The images and symbols recurring in his poetry are those of birth and death, father and mother, the earth, the sky and the sun, light and darkness, pure and impure, repressed violence, delusions of grandeur and depths of self-denigration.

Coming to Lal Singh Dil, I became familiar with his poetry while translating Pash and was intrigued by the sad fact that a poet should be forced to sell tea and wash tea cups for a living. Translating Dil presented very

different challenges. The socio-economic environment in which Dil grew up was very different. Pash was the son of a middle class land-owning Jat farmer. Dil, on the other hand, belonged to the Ramdasia Chamar community, and his father owned no land, and throughout his life worked mostly as a wage labourer on others' land. His was a family without any financial and intellectual resources. Dil's boyhood and youth were blighted by caste humiliations at school and college and in society.

Dil joined the Naxalite movement to overcome economic and social exclusion. Like Pash, he suffered imprisonment and police atrocities, although for him physical torture was matched by psychological persecution that constantly reminded him of his caste. After release from jail in 1972, Dil, with no support from any quarter, fled to Uttar Pradesh to escape police persecution and seek respite from caste humiliations; and once there, he converted to Islam. He spent nearly ten years doing odd jobs no better than those of a daily wage. Dil returned from UP in 1983 and lived to plough his tragic and lonely furrow till his death in 2007.

To translate Dil, one needed a different mindset. My understanding of the Naxalite movement in Punjab had to be supplemented with an understanding of the issue of caste discrimination in all its ramifications and complexity. The world of Dil's poetry was the world of a totally marginalized humanity, ignored and forgotten and outside history:

Once again the grain winnowers walk off
an alien land

A long train of people is on the move

carrying loads of insults
casting long shadows
children riding the donkeys
fathers holding their dogs
mothers carrying cauldrons
on their backs
with their babies asleep inside
A long train of people is on the move
carrying on their shoulders the poles for
their huts

Who are these hunger-driven Aryans!
Whose land in Bharat
are they now planning to grab!
("The Colour of the Evening", my
translation)

I'm the spirit of a father
trampled upon in the fields.
The heart of a mother
robed in tatters.
("Love's Self-Murder", my translation)

I followed a similar approach for Dil as I had done for Pash, selecting about 100 poems. I read all of Dil's works including his autobiography, most of the commentaries and critical appraisals available on him, and talked to some people who were his friends or close to him. Watching a documentary film by Ajay Bhardwaj on the marginalized traditions of Punjabi life featuring Dil himself also gave me an insight into Dil's character and poetry. Dil's language however posed some problems. Punjabi dictionaries have not always been

helpful because many turns of phrase in Dil's colloquial language seldom find a place there. Talking to people who knew Dil helped.

Regarding the translations, my attempt has been, as in Pash, to remain faithful to Dil's content, images, tone and rhythm. I have provided footnotes where necessary. I have also added a detailed introduction delineating his life, character and poetry.

Finally, I am quite conscious that my translation of each poet is just one of so many possible translations. The new discipline of Translation Studies recognizes the impossibility of the perfect transposition of a poem from one language to another, not only because of the linguistic, socio-cultural and temporal distances between the source and target languages, but also because of the personality of the translator, his intention, his capabilities, and his own self that always intrudes into a translation surreptitiously. Translation Studies has mapped and documented various forms a translation can assume and it is evident that the relation between the poem and its translation remains fluid: a fact which language teachers would do well to draw the attention of learners to when engaging with a translated text. Depending upon the intention and purpose of the translator, a translation can assume many forms. It can be literal, or in spirit, or an adaptation, or a trans-creation, or free, and even become independent of the original. The translator can become a creator in his own right, or become invisible. My translations, as shown above, are closer to the literal and I have tried to make the translator in me invisible, as far as possible and let the poets speak for

themselves, albeit in Indian English! It is for those engaged with teaching and learning of translated texts to decide if the poet's voice in translation sounds like the one in the original language.

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An Exploration on Teaching 'Subject-Verb Agreement with Respect to Gender' Inductively in Telugu

Pavithra Velpuri

Introduction

Learning about language, mind and society awakened in me an interest in knowing more about the pedagogical implications of linguistics. The Chomskyan idea that humans have a hypothetical language acquisition device drew my attention and I wanted to understand more about how children acquire tacit knowledge. Such an understanding would be an asset that every teacher should leverage.

In a language classroom, children find "Grammar" classes uninteresting and dry as compared to a story or a poem. I wanted to understand why the grammar class of a first language could not be made interesting and so I wanted to explore how grammar could be taught inductively. Also, teaching learners what they already know in the form of rules is less exciting than making them come up with rules based on what they know.

In this article, I will attempt to shed some light on studies conducted in the field of first/second language acquisition and inductive/deductive approach to teaching grammar. I have also explored the possibility of teaching grammar inductively in the child's first language (Telugu) through a small task. In the end, some implications of such tasks in a language classroom have been suggested.

Through this article, I have explored the syntactic structure of subject-verb agreement in Telugu. In Telugu, the subject-verb agreement pattern for all singular inanimate, non-human animate and human feminine subjects remains the same. On the other hand, for all singular human masculine subjects, the verb gets conjugated. For instance, let us consider the verb of the word "doing" (*cheyadam*). In the former case of subjects, the verb would be *chesth-undi* and in the latter, it would become *chesth-aadu*. In the case of the task discussed earlier, only the gender of the subject has been changed in the sentences given to the child while plurality has been kept unchanged.

Inductive and Deductive Approaches to Teaching Grammar

Teaching grammar inductively refers to the practice of giving enough exposure of an aspect of a language to children to enable them to generalize or discover the rules of that aspect on their own. On the contrary, a deductive approach to grammar deals with presenting to the students, a set of rules and giving them exercises to familiarize themselves with those rules (Wagner, ms. p. 5). Inductive approach brings out the tacit knowledge a native speaker has acquired and makes him/her acknowledge

the rule they already know, thereby making the learner an active constructor of knowledge. A deductive approach would be helpful for those learners who need a pattern or a structure to help them learn a language (Wagner, ms. p. 5).

In the case of a deductive approach to grammar, the children may learn the grammar of the language (competence) without actually learning the language itself (performance aspects of speaking or writing). For instance, they may know that one needs to add the morpheme 's' to a verb in simple present form if the subject is a third person singular "Kamal runs fast". However, when they speak, they may end up saying "Kamal run fast". In other words, there could be a mismatch between competence and performance in a child's language. Inductive approach consumes time as different learners may take different times to discover and generalize patterns. To follow this approach in large classrooms is therefore a challenging task.

Both these approaches have shades of difference when teaching the first language or a second/foreign language. That brings us to the question of the need for teaching first language grammar to native speakers of that language. This seems to have been answered by Chomsky (1972), "a person who knows a language has mastered a system of rules that assigns sound and meaning in a definite way for an infinite class of sentences....Of course, the person who knows the language has no consciousness of having mastered these rules or of putting them to use" (p.91).

Formal grammar instruction in a student's first language is an effort to bring to his/her

consciousness, the rules which have been mastered (Zhou, 2008, p.4). Let us look at the differences in first and second language contexts. Krashen (1982) points out the distinction between the terms acquisition and learning. He states that the term acquisition should be used when a language is naturally acquired (as in the case of mother tongue). The term learning, on the other hand, is relevant to learning a second/foreign language (Wagner, 2017 p.4). It may be tempting to conclude that an inductive approach would sail smoother in a first language acquisition context and a deductive approach in second/foreign language classrooms, given the nature of the approaches. However, there are studies that indicate that inductive approaches have been more effective than deductive approaches even in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Rokni, 2009). Also, some studies prove that integrating both the approaches would yield better results rather than choosing one over the other (Xin, 2012). Nevertheless, the decision on which approach suits a classroom is best taken by a teacher who knows of both the approaches as well as the learning styles of her/his students.

Task Conducted

The task that I conducted was partly based on Zhou's recommendation of how to teach grammar inductively (Zhou, 2008, p.6). It comprised of making children listen to thirteen erroneous sentences and asking them to correct the sentences if they felt anything in the sentence did not seem right to them. The sentences had inappropriate subject-verb agreement with respect to the

gender of the subject. The subjects included masculine and feminine proper and common nouns and non-human animate and inanimate things. All the subjects were in singular form. The objective of the task was to see if the children could:

- a) correct the sentences
- b) provide a proper reasoning for the correction
- c) assess the rules of subject-verb agreement for different kinds of singular subjects
- d) accommodate minor deviations from the intermediate rule they derived (at the end of the 5th sentence) and assess the modified rule in the last sentence
- e) acknowledge the fact that the subject-verb agreement pattern for all singular inanimate, non-human animate and human feminine subjects is the same and only for masculine subjects does the verb agreement pattern change.

Background of the Respondents

Since there was no opportunity to teach the children in a formal setup and record the findings, I conducted and recorded one-on-one sessions with eight children, and documented the gist of their responses. Given that the interaction was brief, I did not make them frame the rules. Instead, I helped them in figuring out the rule by asking leading questions. Also, I asked them to assess whether the rules were correct or incorrect. Of the eight children, six were from Telugu-speaking homes and belonged to Grade 5. Six of them were studying in a school that followed the

CBSE syllabus. According to the school's policy, their second language of instruction was Telugu. The remaining two children were also from a Telugu speaking family that resides in the UK. In their case, although Telugu was spoken at home, they were more comfortable conversing in English. One of them belonged to Grade 4 and the other to Grade 3.

Reflections on the Responses

In the sessions, there were a couple of questions that the respondents found ambiguous. Four out of eight students gave an incorrect response to the first sentence—“*Shankar intiki vellindi*” (Shankar (singular, male) *ghar gayi* (verb conjugation used for female) *hai*). The expected response was that they would correct it to “*Shankar intiki velladu*”, thereby displaying their knowledge of the rationale that Shankar being a boy called for such a correction. Other confusions (4 or 5 out of 8 responses) around the rationale were in sentences where the subjects were tree, dog and monkey. The children who had difficulty in articulating the rationale were able to make the verb agree with the subject. However they had a problem in determining the gender of these subjects. Telugu, as a language assigns a neutral gender to all non-living things and non-human living things. This was something that the children did not seem to be comfortable with. Some of them said that a tree was a living thing which was neither a boy nor a girl, and hence it required “*di*” at the end. Other children said that it had a “*di*” because they spoke it that way; they could not explain it any further. A couple of

interesting, rather funny responses on the rationale for correcting the sentence "Dog is barking" are given as follows. The fifth child's response in particular gives an insight into how stereotypes are formed in children.

After reading five sentences, six of the participants belonging to the same school were asked to observe the pattern or commonality in the sentences. Most of them correctly pointed out that feminine subjects had masculine verb conjugations and vice versa. This showed that they were aware of the rule that human masculine and feminine subjects have different subject-verb agreement patterns. The second half of the sentences had a mix of subjects. At the end of the thirteenth sentence, I summarized the subject-verb agreement rules and asked them if they agreed with me. Seven out of eight children were able to modify the subject-verb agreement pattern for non-human living and non-living things with the rule they had come up with at the end of the 5th sentence. It was interesting to

observe that one of the NRI children could not identify the errors in five out of thirteen sentences. This could be attributed to the fact that given a choice, she chose to speak in English and avoided speaking in Telugu. This indicates that English was her first language or language of comfort over Telugu.

On the whole, seven out of eight respondents were able to correctly assess the rules. When I summarized the rules, all seven children were able to correctly state the conjugated verb for each kind of subject. However, given that the test was based on just thirteen sentences, its reliability needs to be ascertained by conducting it on children belonging to different age groups and backgrounds.

Suggestions for Teachers

Similar tasks may be conducted in a classroom using an inductive approach to make the children aware of various aspects of grammar in a language. In bigger classrooms however, it will be a challenge to engage every student. In such cases,

Child 5: Kukka moruguthondi is correct.

Interviewer: Why so?

Child 5: Because, it is a girl. Girl dogs bark more.

Interviewer: Is that so?

Child 5: (Nods in agreement)

Interviewer: So, boy dogs don't bark is it?

Child 5: No

Conversation 1

Child 4: Kukka moruguthondi.

Interviewer: Why so?

Child 4: Because, it is a dog, it should be followed by moruguthundi. If it was a boy barking, it would have been moruguthunnadu.

Conversation 2

dividing them into groups and assigning group tasks would prove effective. This approach, as shown earlier, is not only beneficial for first language classrooms, but also for foreign language classrooms. If Telugu language teachers were to follow the inductive approach in their classrooms, it may be possible for a natural order to emerge in which children learn the rules instinctively (Wagner, p.5). For instance, learners may learn the subject-verb agreement rules in order of plurality, gender, tense, etc. An area (say gender) in a target language, say Hindi, could be complex for Telugu speakers to understand but not for Urdu speakers, owing to the similarity in the language family Hindi and Urdu belong to. The assignment of masculine/feminine gender for non-human things in Hindi is a feature that does not exist in Telugu. So, this could be difficult for Telugu speakers to master. But, for a Hindi speaker learning Telugu would not be as difficult. The reason being that in Telugu, all non-human things are assigned a neuter gender, removing the confusion of it being feminine or masculine. Based on the rules and features of the learners' native language and the foreign language being acquired, there would be differences in the ease with which a language is learnt. This in turn would change the natural order of aspects acquired by each group of learners (based on their native language). This natural order can be utilized in structuring classes where Telugu is taught as a foreign language. For children to be able to learn foreign grammar effectively and quickly, they must know native grammar (Wagner, p.9).

Conclusion

Designing small exercises to let children discover patterns in a language will eventually teach them to frame rules on their own and would lead to interesting ways of teaching grammar. In multilingual classrooms, if the teacher plays the role of a researcher and a linguist, the natural orders of learning different aspects of languages can be recorded. Insights from such observations would provide valuable inputs to curriculum makers (NCF, 2005 p.27). Tasks facilitating the discovery of patterns in language would help children learn about the language and also learn the language simultaneously.

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Facts versus Feelings: Teaching of Literature in Indian Classrooms

Shefali Srivastava

Introduction

According to Purves (1972), literature “comprises a body of texts which a reader, or a group of readers, finds necessary to read aesthetically”. He defines it as a category where “both scripted and improvised theatre, film, television, drama and happenings” are subsumed.

Before the advent of literacy, story telling was the medium of entertainment and education. Through stories, people used to learn about far away lands, values of life, and in the process, develop an awareness and understanding about people and life in general. With the advent of literacy, literature has been envisaged differently at different points of time. The Greeks in classical times believed it to be an agency for teaching moral values to the public. Plato, in his seminal work *The Republic*, considered poetry to be useless if it did not serve a purpose. Neo-classicals such as Pope and Johnson believed that literature played a crucial role in forming public tastes. Victorian prudery tried to use literature for teaching morals or defining the code of conduct for men and women in society, although there were exceptions such as Emily Bronte. Walter Pater broke away from this mindset to celebrate the aesthetic aspect of literature in the nineteenth century.

This preoccupation of scholars with literature across centuries underscores its centrality in our lives. With the advent of various kinds of media, literature has become very easily accessible. Also, with the passage of time, different genres and forms of writing have emerged. The twentieth century itself has been witness to the rise of various kinds of literature and we know that it is definitely not the end of the journey.

Early Theories of Literary Criticism

New Criticism – the theory that governed the teaching and learning of literature – believed in the supremacy of the text. According to New Critics, the meaning of the text resided within the text; the reader therefore occupied a subordinate role. Laying emphasis on objectivity, the New Critics called for an impersonal and “intrinsic” analysis of the text, leaving out factors such as the author's biographical details, the socio-historical milieu of the times and of course the reader, who was in the periphery or maybe even further. Literary work was believed to be a standalone piece of art that carried meaning within itself. Within this paradigm, the analysis of the text demanded categorization of its genre, analysis of the structure of the literary work, verse forms, patterns of imagery, metaphors, and so on. Russian Formalists were more concerned with the

application of linguistics to the study of literature. They held the view that literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language and valued literary form over content.

Reader-Response Theories

In light of the new developments in the field of philosophy and psychology, New Criticism was finally succeeded by reader-response criticism. The pioneer of reader-response theories was Rosenblatt (1938) who first turned the spotlight on the reader. She emphasized the active role played by the reader in the act of reading, where meaning was “constructed” during a “transaction” between the reader and the text, thereby highlighting that both the text and the reader brought something to the text which gives rise to meaning. Further, she acknowledged and celebrated the presence of the feelings experienced by the reader while reading a literary piece, which was previously derided for being more of a “fallacy” that clouded the readers' judgement. Later, Fish (1970) also wrote that the objectivity of text was an illusion. Celebrating “affective fallacy”, he argued in favour of creating a space for the readers' personal and subjective responses. According to Fish, meaning was constructed during the readers' engagement with the text through and during the act of reading. He negated the existence of a “true” or “final” meaning, making room for multiple responses by various readers at different points of time, with each response being equally valid. Iser (1992), looked at the process of reading through the lens of phenomenology, whereby he described a literary work as having two poles—an artistic pole and an

aesthetic pole. The artistic referred to the text created by the author and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader.

While welcoming the role of feelings while reading a literary piece, Rosenblatt (1938) also acknowledged the role played by the reader's age, experience, disposition, social and economic background, gender and political and personal histories in interpreting a text. According to him, readers did not exist in a vacuum and hence neither did their perceptions and interpretations of life or a text. In propounding the concept of “stance”, Rosenblatt (1980) argued that there are two kinds of stances that a reader is likely to take while reading a text, depending on the purpose of reading—efferent and aesthetic. An efferent stance was usually taken where the purpose of reading was to take away information from a text. In contrast to the efferent stance was the aesthetic stance, where the attention was focussed more on the lived experience of the reader while reading the text, the quality of experience, the feelings evoked, and the thoughts and images populating the mind scape of the reader rather than the factual details extracted from the text. But Rosenblatt maintained that no reading of a literary piece is completely efferent or completely aesthetic; both stances exist along a continuum.

In the context of the Indian classrooms which this paper deals with, a problem arose when teachers selected and directly or indirectly promoted an efferent stance through their questions, activities or their own response to a learner's interpretation of the text. We shall now

examine implications of efferent and aesthetic readings in the context of the Indian classroom.

Situation in Indian Classrooms

The teaching of literature in Indian classrooms is usually a teacher-dominated phenomenon, where the teacher is perceived as the reservoir and hence the transmitter of knowledge (Sah, 2009). When teaching literature in class, teachers either read the text aloud themselves or ask a student to do so; they keep supplying the meanings of difficult words and make it a point to correct faulty pronunciation (Sinha, 2009). It is also common for teachers to stop after every sentence and explain it to the students without ever asking what they make of it. Then follows a series of questions and answers based on factual details from the text. For instance, if the teacher is doing Cinderella's story with the young learners, the questions may read as follows:

- Who was Cinderella?
- How many sisters did she have?
- What household chores did Cinderella have to do?
- Who helped Cinderella go to the ball?
- How did this person help Cinderella go to the ball?
- What did Cinderella leave at the ball?
- By what time was she supposed to come back from the ball?
- How did the prince find Cinderella?
- Did the prince and Cinderella live happily ever after?
- How were Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters punished for their ill-deeds?
- What is the moral of the story?

These questions suggest that the teacher does not recognize that while reading Cinderella's story, something must have gone on inside the minds of young learners and they may have "felt" something. All the questions listed are designed to gauge the learners' comprehension of the factual elements of the story. Sadly, this is how reading comprehension questions are usually framed at end of the chapter in many textbooks, and these are followed as the Bible for teaching. The responses to a subjective question designed to make learners think critically or from their heart may be as varied as there are learners in the class. In such a situation, handling a wide variety of responses becomes very difficult for the teacher who usually aims to arriving at one common understanding of the text. As a consequence, learners never get a voice in the classroom and they learn to align their responses with that of the teacher.

However, if we were to reconstruct this class according to the principles of reader-response theories, the class would look very different. To begin with, there would definitely be more learner talk than teacher talk. The noise level in the class may be a little high as a consequence of group work. The learners would probably be engaged in a discussion about the text with their peers or involved in some other activity. The questions asked in such a class may be as follows:

- How did you feel when you read the story?
- Which part of the story did you like the most?

- Create an alternative ending to the story.
- Which character in the story did you like the most and why?
- Compare and contrast Cinderella with another character from a different story.
- Write a letter to any character in the story.
- Draw your favourite scene from the story.
- If you were to meet Cinderella in person, what questions would you like to ask her?
- Placing Cinderella in today's context, rewrite her story.
- Write a letter to your friend telling him/her about Cinderella's story or anybody else who leads a similar life.
- If you were to become a Fairy Godmother/Godfather for a day, whose life would you like to change and how?
- Narrate the part you liked the most in the story to your partner.

All these questions are aimed at eliciting responses from learners that will help the teacher to understand their interpretation and experience of the text, and their likes and dislikes in terms of the characterization and portions of the text. In such a classroom, comprehension questions would be designed to make connections between the reader and the text and also establish inter textual connections. Inferential or extrapolatory questions would be asked instead of just factual questions. Learners

would be encouraged to make predictions, draw conclusions and infer the meanings of difficult words from the context. Most importantly, they would feel free to think and explore. However, unfortunately, despite knowing about the constructivist approach and its merits, we are still very behaviouristic in our practices. This not only inhibits learner response but also makes the class very insipid and boring for the learner, who might even develop a lifelong aversion to literature.

Further, teachers have a tendency to moralize texts. Therefore, after reading a story, they often ask a question about the moral of the story with complete disregard for the joy of reading that the learners might have felt (Kumar, 2004; Sah, 2009).

The Way Ahead

There are a lot of implications which can be drawn from this discussion around the teaching of literature in Indian classrooms. Since the change in pedagogy can primarily come from teachers, there is an urgent need to orient teachers at pre-service and in-service levels towards reader-response theories. Any desirable change in the system needs to come from the grass roots level. It is only when the teachers are aware of a particular approach will they be able to follow it.

A response-based classroom has the potential to develop life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and empathy among its learners. Freedom of expression, a non-threatening atmosphere, acceptance from teachers and peers and stimulating classroom environment are

some of the factors that are conducive to the development of these life skills. When learners are encouraged to express themselves freely and the classroom is a democratic space, free from value judgements of authoritarian teachers and peers, they will become more active "participants" in the classroom processes.

Taking a macro perspective, such a pedagogy can also play a crucial role in improving enrolment and retention in schools where students often dropout due to teacher apathy and a hostile classroom environment, both of which can be key factors in drawing children away from school. Further, we need to modify our assessments which currently focus on fact-based questions, thereby promoting efferent reading of literature. If response-based tasks/questions are included in our assessments, they will most likely have a backwash effect on classroom teaching which will further create spaces for learners' self-expression and improve their performance.

Talking about the teaching of language in the early years, Sinha (2000) focuses on the role of materials and delineates the artificiality of texts which, due to their over-reliance on graphophonics, have no coherence or meaning. Burdened with materials which can neither be understood nor enjoyed, learners lose interest in reading and hence, do not feel motivated enough to come to school. There is an urgent need to develop materials which not only focus on whole language, but which include interesting and enjoyable texts such as stories, poems, drama, etc. Such texts (and of course their follow-up tasks)

not only have the potential to make readers think but they also evoke their personal, critical and heart-felt responses.

Conclusion

Though reader-response theories originally dealt with the teaching of literature, today their implications are many and they have a far-reaching impact. The goal of education is not to produce literate mechanized human resource. It is to develop thinking and feeling individuals with sound perceptions, analytical minds and human hearts. A democratic and free response-based classroom can help us achieve this goal to some extent.

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Key Issues in the Teaching of English at the Primary Level

A. L. Khanna

Introduction

The importance of English is now widely recognized, not only in India but also across the globe. Although languages such as Chinese, Hindi and Swahili are spoken by a much larger number of people, it seems that entry into the world of higher knowledge and social mobility is possible only with English. It has therefore become imperative to know the language. However, it is equally clear that English cannot flourish at the cost of other languages; linguistic and cultural diversity is as important to humans as biodiversity. We must therefore think of teaching English in a multilingual context.

English today has acquired a global status and is seen as a language of opportunities. This view is very emphatically articulated in *Teaching of English, National Focus Group: Position paper vol. 1.4*. (NCERT 2006: p.1) as follows:

English is in India today a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independent India, tailored to higher education (as a "library language", a "window on the world"), now felt to be insufficiently

inclusive socially and linguistically, the current status of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena.

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC), Government of India, in its recommendations on school education submitted to the Prime Minister of India on 4th February, 2008 recognized

the significance of English not only as a medium of instruction but also as a determinant of access. An understanding of and command over the English language is most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities. School-leavers who are not adequately trained in English as a language are always at a handicap in the world of higher education.... And those who do not know English well enough find it exceedingly difficult to compete for a place in our premier educational institutions. This disadvantage is accentuated further in the world of work, not only in professional occupations but also in white-collar occupations overall. (p. 48)

NKC further recommends that the teaching of English as a language should be

...introduced, along with the first language (either the mother tongue or the regional language) of the child, starting from class 1. This phase of language learning should focus on using both languages to create meaningful learning experiences for the child without disproportionate emphasis on grammar and rules. (p. 49)

As a follow up to this recommendation of NKC, the governments of several states and union territories have resolved to introduce English as a compulsory subject from class 1. The following issues, however, need to be addressed for effective progress in the teaching of English at the primary level.

Learners' Social Milieu

We need to take cognizance of the variety of social backgrounds different learners of English come from. One type of speaker comes from what is almost a native-like situation, where English is spoken at home by everyone. The family socializes with people who share the same linguistic experience and use their mother tongue sparingly. Learners coming from such a social milieu though rare, are at one end of the continuum of learners of English. On the other end of the continuum, there are learners who have absolutely no access to English both at home and outside. Whatever English they learn is at school and there also, it is used occasionally. But

these learners have a very strong motivation to learn English because they have been made to believe by their parents or the members of their community that English is the key to get them out of their existence of misery and backwardness. They are therefore more motivated to learn English rather than their mother tongue(s) or the language(s) used by their peers.

Thus, when we talk of intervention in the teaching of English, we need to first identify the kind of learners we are talking about. What learners need to learn at one end of the continuum may have no relevance for learners at the other end of the continuum, though eventually both groups will be equipped to work in any place, be it a call centre, a corporate office, the army or a university.

The Teacher

The second important issue is concerned with the teachers' beliefs, practices, competence and availability. We have noticed that except in some urban elite schools, teachers of English have very little training in the teaching of English. Even those who claim to have received training in the teaching of English have been fed obsolete ideas about how languages are learnt and taught. They therefore continue to believe that the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge and his/her prior knowledge has no role to play in the learning of a new language(s). If the learner tries to make use of his/her mother tongue in articulating his feelings, ideas and emotions, he is immediately snubbed. The learner is treated like an island in himself/herself, having nothing to gain

from the community to which he/she belongs. This sort of attitude of the teacher is symptomatic of the malady that the teacher training is currently inflicted with. Unless these teachers are retrained in the new knowledge with regard to how languages are learnt, they will continue to pose an obstacle to the new paradigm of language teaching which lays emphasis on collaborative learning, learner autonomy, comprehensive evaluation, concept attainment in mother tongue, promoting bilingualism and metalinguistic awareness, shift from information to knowledge construction, critical pedagogy, etc.

The new breed of teachers need to be educated about the new paradigm and its classroom implications in terms of its methodology, materials and attitude towards the learner. Secondly, the State must make it mandatory that at least one fully trained teacher in the new paradigm is made available even in the remotest primary school, who can educate other teachers engaged in teaching English and other languages. This will have a cascading effect on teacher training in our schools.

Another very important issue connected with teachers is their lack of competency in English. It is sad, although a well known fact, that a large number of teachers who are responsible for teaching English lack proficiency in those very skills of English which they are expected to build among their students. Since the states have already decided to introduce English from class 1 without building essential infrastructure for its effective implementation, it is the duty of the State to organize workshops in competence building in English in which

teachers are helped to gain at least a minimal level of proficiency in English to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them. One of the ways in which this sort of mass teacher competence building programme can be carried out is to deploy the breed of retired English teachers from schools, colleges and universities who are really proficient in English. NKC suggests:

In order to meet the requirement for a large pool of English language teachers, graduates with high proficiency in English and good communication skills should be inducted without formal teacher training qualifications. They should be selected through an appropriate procedure developed by National Testing Service and then given a short-term orientation. The nearly four million school teachers all over the country, regardless of their subjects' expertise, especially teachers at the primary level should be trained to improve their proficiency in English through vacation training programmes or other short term courses. Most teacher training programmes are not based on a real assessment of needs of teachers. Thus, the entire teacher-training system catering to pre-service and in-service training that exists today, including training for language teaching, needs to be thoroughly reviewed, recognizing the centrality of language in curriculum. (p. 49-50)

The same sentiment and concern has been voiced by the National Focus Group in their recommendations, in which they emphasize that "All teachers should have the skills to teach English in ways appropriate to their situation and levels, based on how languages are taught."

Unless such steps are taken immediately, any effort and money spent in the direction of teaching English will be a colossal waste of national resource. As a result of this training, the teacher will also learn to respect the languages of the children and allow the usage of these along with English. In the initial stages of learning English, when the learner is more fluent in his first language, he could be allowed to use his first language whenever he is at loss for a word in English. This freedom to use his first language along with English will give him confidence and also motivate him to learn English without any fear or anxiety. As the learner acquires better control over English, he could on his own switch to English without suppressing or feeling ashamed of his first language. This state of mind is a necessary condition, in the opinion of many first and second language researchers (Krashen, 1987, 1988 among many others), for optimal learning of any language. This will have another very important fall out. It will lay a very sound foundation for producing multilingual users which, undoubtedly, is one of the goals of language education today anywhere in the world. The National Focus Group states in its recommendations, "Multilinguality should be the aim in English medium as well as regional medium schools" (Teaching of English 1, p. 30).

As a pedagogy, multilingualism has also been emphasized in *Teaching of Indian Languages*, a position paper of the National Focus Group which asserts:

...language-teaching methods can be suitable sites for utilizing the multiplicity of languages available in the classroom. A sensitive analysis of multilinguality obtaining in the classroom in collaboration with children will help in creating metalinguistic awareness among the teacher and the taught. (p. 23)

This position has been reiterated by Agnihotri in several national and international conferences and publications (Agnihotri, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2007). In one of his papers (Agnihotri, 2007) he remarks:

Multilinguality will have to become a basis for all future curriculum, syllabi, text books, and classroom transaction planning, initiating the implementation of a sociopolitical vision that will be governed by the values of equity, justice, social sensitivity, peace, and collective responsibility in a more meaningful way than empty rhetoric. (p. 3)

Textbooks

Most of the textbooks that are available in the market have been written with the assumption that learning takes place in a linear order, and learning a second language means mastering the structure of

that language first, which in the opinion of most textbook writers and teachers can be done by teaching the alphabet and grammar of that language before the learner learns to use it. Consequently, most of the English school textbooks begin with the teaching of the alphabet and structures such as "What is this?", "This is..."

Current research in first and second language learning has amply shown that second language learning does not take this route. Learners are believed to have a universal order of learning, and therefore it does not matter in which order the teacher or the textbook presents a grammatical or linguistic category. That does not mean that the teacher or the textbook has no place in the teaching/learning of a language. It simply suggests that both the teacher and the textbook have the role of facilitating the process of learning, which can be done not by forcing a rigid order in the presentation of language items, but by providing interesting and cognitively challenging inputs that the learner can relate to. Text books should therefore not only provide space to the learner for his/her creativity, but also allow the learner to bring to the learning situation his/her prior experience as well as the experience that he/she is gaining simultaneously in other languages and subject classes. This sort of learning across the curriculum will go a long way in making the learner grow holistically.

Other Teaching Materials

It is very important to realize that the learner is exposed to the target language in all its varieties to get him/her sensitized to it as in the first language. Just as in first

language learning, the learner experiences language in different situations, the second language learner should also be exposed to a variety of interesting materials through the use of audio-visual materials, TV, radio programmes, etc. He/she could also listen to stories, poems and rhymes, speeches and debates, see plays/short skits, etc. This sort of exposure increases the learner's potential for learning the language in actual use and helps him acquire the idiom of the language and its prosodic features.

Several NGOs working for elementary education in different parts of the country have produced interesting and innovative materials for children in the age group 3-12 years. For instance, Spark India, CIEFL (Hyderabad) produced a 'Spark Big Book' which tells a story titled "A Pot of Light", for children between three and six years (*The Hindu*, 6 February 2003). The story is beautifully illustrated and is meant to be read out to children while showing them the corresponding pictures. Spark India has also produced audio-visual materials that can be used by primary school teachers for teaching stories, poems and doing other activities. As noted in the above newspaper article, storytelling helps children to rapidly progress from monosyllabic replies to speaking whole sentences and then writing their own stories. It is however unfortunate that most teachers are not interested in teaching English through stories. Even when they do it, they simply read them out like any other text, and not like stories. Some researchers have noted that storytelling helps to increase the language learning ability of children coming from the middle and lower middle

class backgrounds, who do not speak English at home.

In earlier stages of learning a language, we also need to present content in a way that is less dependent on language. Among other techniques used by teachers to make input comprehensible is the technique of graphic organizers which relies very little on language to convey information. According to Carrier (2005), graphic organizers are very powerful tools to use with learners because as Swain (1985) adds:

...they display information with pictures, labels, or short phrases, thereby reducing the language load. Also, they are much less visually intimidating than full text. Graphic organizers can be used to present major concepts and relationships between them, comparison and contrasts, processes, cause and effect, and attributes, to name just a few of their uses. They also help ELLs focus on key vocabulary, instead of having to search for it in an overwhelming amount of text. Graphic organizers have the added advantage of serving as prewriting organizers and unit study guides. ELLs need to be fully involved participants in their learning, which includes demonstrating what they know. In other words, ELLs need to produce comprehensible output. (p. 7)

Evaluation/Assessment

Another very important issue that needs to be handled with urgency at the primary

level is the issue of evaluation of the learner. At present, most schools in the country evaluate their students three to four times in a year, in addition to an annual evaluation. This is done in the name of continuous evaluation. Those schools or teachers use grades rather than marks for scoring their children round the year, and yet do not have much clue as to what the children really know. What this year-round exercise tells the teacher, the parent and the education department is rather what the learner does *not* know. Researchers all over the world have opined that this method of evaluation is not appropriate for recording the progress of the learner at any point of time in a year. They have even suggested alternative ways of recording learner progress such as qualitative measures, including maintaining a portfolio of the learner and also taking the learner into confidence while evaluating the progress he/she has made in relation to his/her earlier stage. This sort of evaluation is believed to help the learner look at his/her learning more creatively and critically, and not get into the rat race of competing with others and losing track of himself/herself in the process. The objective of self assessment is to empower the learner to undertake self-evaluation with the teacher as a facilitator in the evaluation process. The teacher also needs to be equipped with the techniques of assessment and the parameters for evaluation along with the tools to be used for the same. Only then will a complete understanding of what the learner has learnt in different domains be known. Thus, there is a need is to identify

broad concepts/indicators of progress that can serve as reference points to assess students' learning at the primary stage, based on the NCF 2005. These would serve as a broad feedback mechanism around the quality of systemic functioning, responsiveness and accountability.

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What is this Hindi Used in Textbooks?

Uma Sudhir

Introduction

I would like to share some of my experiences of working with both students and teachers; trying to convey some basic concepts in Science. And this write-up is mainly about the kind of language we use to teach Science. I am sure the same problems will crop up when it comes to teaching Maths and Social Science too, but I cannot speak about them from first-hand experience. And specifically, this write-up is about the use of Hindi because my work has been in Hindi-speaking areas. Probably similar problems are being discussed across India, but once again, what I have to share concerns the use or misuse of Hindi.

Popular Writing in Hindi vs. Textbooks

Let me start by telling you about how I started reading articles in Hindi. Being a South-Indian, and having studied in English medium schools, my exposure to technical terminology in any other language was nil till I joined Eklavya. The transition to Hindi was facilitated to a great extent by Eklavya's publications because the language they use is user-friendly. And then came textbooks – eek! Not only did they use technical terms even where familiar and simpler words were available, the style of writing was also very stilted and

formal. I still remember stumbling over the word 'kvathnank' [which is ccvccvcc (?) – not that consonant clusters don't occur all the time in all languages, but this word has not just formidable, but rare combinations of consonants which makes it difficult for a tongue to get around it] for boiling point. The multiple consonant clusters defeated me each time, and I wondered – why can't one use 'ubalne ka taapman' in classes VI and VII and introduce the exact term somewhere down the line?

The Language Used in Textbooks

As mentioned earlier, it is not just the technical words that are difficult, the sentences in general use words which are not commonly used. And this makes it difficult for the students to read the text and make sense of it.

Some examples from the Chhattisgarh Class VI textbook (2013):

1 st Chapter:	1.urja ki punah prapti hetu aapko bhojan ki aavashyakta hoti hai. (<i>You need food to once again get energy.</i>) 2. jeevan ke liye jal anivaarya hai. (<i>Water is essential for life.</i>)
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4 th Chapter:	1.hast chalit apkendrak machine (caption for figure) (<i>Manual centrifuge</i>) 2. filter mein ceramic ke bane ek sarandra patra (candle) se jal ko pravahit karte hain. (<i>Water is passed through a porous vessel (candle) made of ceramic in the filter.</i>)
5 th Chapter:	bhautik parivartano mein ushma ka ya toh avshoshan hota hai ya utsarjan. (<i>Heat is either absorbed or released in physical changes.</i>)
6 th Chapter:	sarvpratham cylinder ke sabse chote bhag dwara darshaye jane wale ayatan ko gyat kijiye. (<i>Firstly find out the volume indicated by the smallest division of the cylinder.</i>)
10 th Chapter:	aap payenge ki sthir avastha mein vastuon ki sthiti mein samay ke saath koi parivartan nahi hota. (<i>You will find that a body at rest shows no change in position with time.</i>)
13 th Chapter:	swasthya kuch antarik तथा bahya karakon se prabhavit hota hai. (<i>Health is affected by some internal and external factors.</i>)

How will the Students ever Manage to Learn anything?

One wonders at this because policy documents have always stressed the use of the mother tongue: language which is familiar. NCF 2005 in the section on language says (page 36):

Languages also provide a bank of memories and symbols inherited from one's fellow speakers and created in one's own lifetime. They are also the medium through which most knowledge is constructed, and hence they are closely tied to the thoughts and identity of the individual. In fact, they are so closely bound with identity that to deny or wipe out a child's mother tongue(s) is to interfere with the sense of self.

Imagine the kind of violence being done to these students! More so given that most students are speakers of Chhattisgarhi, and many other languages like Halbi, Baighani, Bhulia, Kalanga, Surgujia, etc., not 'manak Hindi'.

Even the attempt to get the students used to technical terminology in Hindi by introducing it in middle school does not seem to have succeeded since I have had college teachers tell me that their students write the answers in Hindi but use the English technical terms. For example, they will not use the term 'prakash sansleshan' but photosynthesis.

Discrimination amongst Dialects with Manak Hindi Coming Out on Top

As my exposure to Hindi increased, I began to understand the difference, the textbooks

abhor the use of anything other than what is deemed to be pure Hindi, what I have come to call 'shuddh shakahari Hindi'. So go to any Hindi-speaking state and read the newspapers, you will find words like 'koshish', but will you find it in their textbooks? No chance! because 'koshish' is deemed to be 'Urdu' not 'Hindi'. So the vocabulary that comes naturally to the people in the given area is not acceptable to the people who pass textbooks and hence determine how they get written.

Language does Decide our Thoughts!

How this alienates people and makes them think that things discussed in textbooks are removed from daily life comes through in one of my favourite anecdotes of how words have the power to fashion what we think. Let us take water. Anywhere you go, people ask you (with different degrees of respect imbibed into the sentence) – 'pani piyoge?' But the word that is consistently used in textbooks (once again, I would like to reiterate that I am talking only about Science textbooks, I do not know if the situation is the same or different in other subjects) is 'jal'. We were in this workshop for teachers where we were talking about pure substances and mixtures (an important distinction for us chemists) and we wanted to discuss whether water is a pure substance. The teachers came to a general consensus that water usually has oxygen and other gases dissolved in it along with sundry salts and (horrors!) micro-organisms. So we asked 'lekin kya pani shuddh roop mein mil sakta hai?' This led to intense discussion on how salts, oxygen,

etc. could be removed. But all this died out suddenly when one teacher got up and declared – 'agar woh shuddh hai toh woh pani nahi hai, woh jal hai'!!!! So 'jal' has the same 'sanctity' as the formula 'H₂O' for water!

Technical Jargon is Always Problematic

I was quite amused to learn that native speakers of English face a similar problem. I once hosted a Portuguese post-doctoral student who had gone to England for her PhD after doing her masters in Portugal. She told me that she did not have problems with the scientific terms in English since they are mainly derived from Greek and Latin roots (like scientific terms in Hindi are derived from Sanskrit roots) which was close to her mother-tongue. And she said that the English students found these same technical terms strange and unweildy. For me, all English words are 'foreign' words and had to be learned, and the fact that Science used words derived from Latin and Greek was only interesting to the extent that they gave clues to their pronunciation (for example, 'chiral' is from Greek, so the initial sound is the 'hard' k, not ch!).

Keeping it (Language) Simple Essential for Learning

We are trying to teach difficult and counter-intuitive concepts to children when we teach Science, then why do we insist on making it even more difficult for children

by using words they never ever use outside of the classroom? I studied all of this in English and I had to only struggle with the concepts because I read extensively, so the language did not cause any problems. But I can figure out that even the English versions of the textbooks would be difficult. This is for a rather strange reason. With NCF 2005 and all the work that went into it, there were strange gaps in communication. Not just between subjects, but also between people working on the same subject for different classes (that is another story). But the fact that different subject people were working in different ivory towers meant that the people deciding the standards for languages were not talking to the people working on Maths, Science and Social Science. So take the textbooks for any class, the language in the English and Hindi textbooks requires a totally different level of competence from that used (and expected of) in the Maths, Science and Social Science textbooks.

Of course, one does not become competent in a language only by studying the prescribed language textbooks. As the NCF 2005 goes on to state on page 38: 'Language education is not confined to the language classroom. A Science, Social Science or Mathematics class is *ipso facto* a language class. Learning the subject means learning the terminology, understanding the concepts; and being able to discuss and write about them critically.'

But one has to construct any concept in one's own mind first, associating the 'right' word with it can come later. And this construction of knowledge can only be hindered if the students are not even able to comprehend what is going on.

Conclusion

I firmly believe that the more variety of topics you read up on, the more words you are exposed to, and learn to use. So obviously, you learn new words and how to use them in the Science class too. But if the textbook is incomprehensible, then you will not learn either, neither words, nor concepts. We should strive for the kind of writing that popular Science-writing goes in for, explaining in words an average citizen can follow. Maybe then all our children will excel in Science and other subjects too.

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Silence as Discourse Marker in Multilingual Classrooms in India

Sanchita Verma

Introduction

Silence is a complex phenomenon and interpreting it even in a trivial conversation exposes us to an entirely new dimension of language study. It is therefore surprising that silence, which forms an essential part of spoken communication, has been relatively under-researched in the domain of linguistic studies. Language and silence are in fact so dependent on each other that silence can be thought of as a complement to speech. Speech cannot find an identity without silence, and silence cannot find an identity without speech. Moreover, silence in communication is not silent; it communicates specific messages. Such a multifaceted and ambiguous phenomenon is an exciting challenge to study.

In everyday conversation, silence occurs in a complex and structured form and its interpretation exposes us to an insightful and revealing world of talk-in-interaction. More importantly, the discourse of silence can also be studied in multilingual contexts. In this study, I will concentrate on silence in primary school classrooms in India, which are almost always multilingual. Since this is a new approach to studying the sociolinguistics of an Indian classroom, this study (which is an extension of my Ph.D. thesis) can be classified as an exploratory work. Here, different forms of silence have been used as

variables to study the relation between the various aspects of multilingualism and their social and communicative functions. Theoretical paradigms of language use and the stipulated medium of instruction in Indian classrooms, as laid out in state language policies, have also been considered and questioned in this study.

An examination of the multilingual and multicultural Indian classroom in this study shows that the main cause that contributes towards a culture of silence in such a classroom is ...the lack of insight as far as determining the language of instruction is concerned. Be it Hindi or English, the medium of instruction in school is sometimes entirely different from the language spoken by the children in their homes and their neighbourhood. This analysis of silence in the Indian primary school classroom thus reveals the structuring of social roles from childhood onwards, and points towards a larger critique of the language policy as well as its implementation within basic educational institutions.

In the present study, the paradigm of language use and the medium of instruction in some Indian classrooms has been questioned and examined. The data for the study has been collected from Kendriya Vidyalayas in Delhi where majority of the children are Hindi speakers, whereas the

medium of instruction is predominantly English. In this case, English is not likely to be the first language (L1) but for a very small percentage of students, may be the second language (L2).

In this study, I will focus on talk-in-interaction between the participants—the teacher and the students—in a natural and non-obtrusive real world social setting of a multicultural Indian classroom. I have applied the method of conversation analysis to analyse the data, and this is an ethnographic method for investigating the micro-details of the structure and process of social interaction. Mapping silence, which has thus far gone entirely unnoticed in the very vibrant, noisy, dynamic, layered and often ambiguous space of the multilingual Indian primary school classroom has proven to be a highly productive exercise in this ongoing research work, yielding many rewarding research insights. My attempt here is to explore the different forms of silence by positioning them as variables in the data, and understanding the functions of silence in the process.

Theoretical Paradigm

The methodology adopted in this work is both ethnographic and interpretative in nature which, when combined with qualitative and analytic methods, provides a holistic picture of first language classrooms in India. In ethnomethodological studies, the field is fertile and ever-changing, with new forms of recording and recoding being developed; therefore there is no one method which will give optimum results on investigation and the existing

methods are revised and modified to cater to the dynamic field of conversation analysis (Nakane, 2007). I have also somewhat modified the participant structure of the research design to suit my data, and have not allotted any length of time to the gaps, laps and pauses (which is usually done in CA), owing to problems with the quality of the “noisy” primary school data I was dealing with. I have therefore used and relied on my own supplementary field notes and observations on the actual occurrence of the variables.

Before going further, it is imperative to explain the participant structure of the classroom conversations I have used as data. The orientation of a verbal participation depends on how a communicative interaction is organized and how much contribution is expected to be allocated to the interlocutors. In this study, structurally speaking, there are two main participants, the teacher and the students, and the conversation between them always privileges the teacher as having the authority to speak, nominate and elicit responses. However, very often the entire class, functioning as the second interlocutor speaks in chorus, and there is a great deal of noise and chaos as far as their talk-in-interaction goes. Therefore, the quantitative dominance in terms of speech appears to belong to the teacher rather than the students.

Conversation Analysis of Audio Recorded Data of Classroom Interactions

The variables that I have chosen to test the audio recorded data are: pause, gap, lapse/lull, silent response, repair (Goffman 1971, 1972, 1983; Sacks et al., 1974;

Sacks, 1987), intentionality of silence (Kurzon, 1997), and underelaboration (Nakane, 2007). In the next sections, a detailed analysis of two excerpts each of the classroom interaction in English and Hindi have been presented. The first is a transcription of a lecture from an English class in which the story of Bamboo Curry is taught using the text. It must be pointed out that the teacher here uses Hindi quite liberally in excerpts 1 and 2. The names of the students have been changed to protect their identity.

Analysis

Classroom Interaction I: English class

Excerpt 1/I

- Teacher: We have already completed this chapter. [1]
- Student: Yes ma'am. [2]
- Teacher: And take out the lesson "Bamboo Curry" now. [3]
- Take out. [4]
- aap kitaab nikaal lijiye.*
(You take out the book.) [5]
- nikaal liya?* (You took it out?) [6]
- kitaab nikaal lijiye.* (Take the book out.) [7]
- theek.* (Okay.) [8]
- Pin drop silence. [9]
- This is the last time I am warning you, otherwise I will punish you now. [10]
- Once I have given you chance, second time I will punish you. [11]

This excerpt represents the first five minutes of the class, which is usually very

chaotic. There is a lot of noise and the students take time to settle down. In [9], it can be seen that the teacher is so irritated with the noise and chaos of the class that she issues a warning to maintain a pin-drop silence and also warns of some punishment if the class does not obey her. This is how a class usually starts: with shouting, noise and total disruption for the first few minutes. After this issuance of warning to be silent, some discipline is seen to be maintained.

Excerpt 2/I

- Teacher: So, have already completed this. [13]
- Yesterday I gave you dictation. [14]
- Copies are neat. [15]
- Now we are starting with this chapter "Bamboo Curry". [16]
- Today is first and we are taking this lesson Bamboo Curry before the school starts for the summer vacation. [17]
- All right. [18]
- Page thirty. [19]
- Yes, *khade ho jaao.* (Yes, stand up.) [20]
- And before that I will give you summer vacation homework also. [21]
- So, the name of the lesson is "Bamboo Curry". [22]
- Has everybody... anybody seen the bamboo? [23]

- kisi ne bamboo dekha hai?*
(Has anybody seen a bamboo?) [24]
- Students: Yes ma'am. [25]
- Teacher: *accha* one minute. (Okay, one minute.) [26]
bolo kahan dekha hai ye? (Tell me, where have you seen?) [27]
haan ji? (Yes?) [28]
[Student answers in low voice] [29]
- Teacher: Loudly. [30]
- Student: [Indistinct voice] [31]
- Teacher: *gaon me dekha hai?* (Have you seen it in the village?) [32]
gaon me kahan dekha hai? (Where have you seen it in the village?) [33]
- Student: Ma'am *** *me hamara gaaon hai.* (Ma'am, we have village in ***) [34]
- Teacher: *accha, gaaon me kya kis tarah se use hua hai bamboo?* (Okay, how is bamboo used in the village?) [35]
- Student: *ghar banana ke liye.* (To build homes.) [36]
- Teacher: *ghar banana ke liye use hua?* (Is it used to build homes?) [37]
accha. (Okay.) [38]
Anybody else? [39]
Yes? [40]
[Student answers. Voice

indistinct...constant
murmuring] [41]

In this excerpt, it is clear that the students are responsive when the teacher asks them to **bid for the floor** [23] [24] [27] [28], but an overall silence is palpable. In [29], an **underelaborated** response is seen, as a correct response would possibly have made the teacher to ask another question. Unable to get a proper response, the teacher asks the students to speak loudly [30], but still the response is not audible [31]. In [32] and [33], the teacher gives a clue to the students to elicit a response from them, or more plausibly, repeats an indistinct answer from one of the students who takes the floor [31]. The students immediately pick up the clue and **repair** their answer [34]. Enthused by the response in [36], the teacher goes on to ask another question, expecting that someone would **bid** and **claim the floor**, but [41] shows that no one takes the responsibility of answering the question. One reason for this could be that the students fear that if they reply once, the teacher might ask them another question, or worse, ask them to reply in English (as has been the case many times before).

Following is an excerpt from the Hindi class in which the teacher is teaching grammar.

Classroom Interaction II: Hindi Class Excerpt 1/II

- Teacher: *jo shabd kisi vyakti ya insan ki visheshta batate hain use visheshan kahte hain ...* (Words that

describe the qualities of any person or human are called adjectives...) [1]

Students: *use visheshan kahte hain* (they are called adjectives...) [2]

Teacher: *kitne bacchon ko samajh aya hai visheshan?* (how many children understood what adjectives are?) [3]

ab aap ke samne book khuli hogi, usme underline kijiye ... (now underline in your book open in front of you) [4]

In this sequence of events, the usual energy with which a lecture begins is palpable. Also, there is a lot of noise and murmuring. In fact, the first few minutes of the recording are almost impossible to hear and transcribe. Finally, the teacher **takes the floor** and starts teaching the chapter and the students start participating from the second turn onwards. They are absolutely alert and responsive and almost repeat along with the teacher [2].

Excerpt 2/II

Teacher: *ab mai puchhu to tumhe batana hai kaun sa shabd sangya hai aur kaun sa viseshan* ... (Now when I ask, you have to identify the nouns and the adjectives...) [5]

yahan pahla vakya maine likha ... (I have written the first sentence here...) [6]

“lal phool mat todo”...(Do not pluck the red flower...) [7]

Students: *phool –phool...* (flower...flower...) [8]

Teacher: *han thik hai aj Hindi me puri class phool bol rahi hai* ... (Yes that is right. The entire class is saying “flower” in Hindi ...) [9]

ye phool shabd hai sangya ... (The word “flower” is a noun...) [10]

Students: *lal visheshan* (Red is an adjective) [11]

Teacher: *bagh ke andar safed phool bhi hai* ... (The garden has a white flower too...) [12]

peela phool bhi hai ... (There is a yellow flower as well...) [13]

neela hai lekin aapko instruction diya gaya hai lal phool mat todo ... (There is a blue one too, but you have been given instructions not to pluck the red flower only...) [24]

ye kiski visheshta bata raha hai? (What does it describe?) [15]

phool ki ... (of the flower...) [16]

ye hai visheshan ... (This is an adjective...) [17]

ab apko samajh aya? (Did you understand now?) [18]

kitne bachhon ko samajh

aya? (How many children have understood?) [19]

ab hum ye dekhenge ...
(We will see...) [20]

puri class ko samajh aya?
(Has the entire class understood?) [21]

achchha.... (ok...) [22]

ek minute Tanya aap khade ho jaiye ... (Now, Tanya, you stand up...) [23]

batao isme beta phool kya hai? (Tell me what is the flower in this sentence, child?) [24]

sangya hai ya visheshan hai? (Is it a noun or an adjective?) [25]

Students: madam *sangya...* (Ma'am noun...) [26]

In this sequence, when the teacher explains nouns and adjectives and gives a sentence to the children to identify the nouns and adjectives in it, the students do not even wait for the teacher to ask the question [7]. They are ready with their reply and start shouting out the answers in chorus the moment question is asked [8]. Again, when the teacher is explaining a concept [10], the students almost jump onto the next topic with their response [11]. This is when the teacher has not even explained the next topic and hence not asked the question. The participation from the students' side is robust and the entire class shouts the answers in chorus whenever a response is elicited. Tanya [23] is a new student, so she

is a little shy and is taking her time to adjust to the new surroundings of the school. The teacher makes an extra effort to ensure that Tanya is able to understand the lessons. In fact she almost interrupts the class in between the lecture to ask Tanya a question [23] and encourages her to **claim the floor**. Tanya immediately comes up with a reply, even though it is somewhat guarded, and in a low voice.

These are the representative data of the analysis which was done for thirty hours of the audio recorded classroom interactions. On the basis of this analysis, certain themes have emerged. These themes are summarized as follows:

Recurrent Features

English classrooms

The general trend which dominates in the English class is that students do not **volunteer** to read from the text (as part of the classroom activities), or show the interest and commitment that they show in a Hindi class. The overall occurrence of **bidding** and **claiming the floor** in the class is low. In an English class, the teacher ensures full participation of the students through nomination, as volunteering is rarely observed. When a student is nominated, she/he does not use this as an opportunity to exhibit her knowledge or freely participate in the classroom interaction. Rather students employ different skills to get away from speaking in the class. The data is densely scattered with **under elaborated responses** as they do participate if they are nominated, to save their face, but they resist giving proper answers so as to escape further questioning

by the teacher. They know that giving proper responses would lead to more questions and they do not want to do that lest the teacher nominates them again.

Some of the enterprising students attempt to answer in English, but they have to abort the sentence for lack of adequate registers while the others abandon the effort to be active and attentive in class. The data from the English classroom is scattered, with **pauses**, **gaps** and **lapses**. These three variables form a chain in their participation as on **nomination** or at the time of **turn-taking**, a long **pause** becomes a **gap** and a **gap** becomes a **lapse**. In terms of **volubility** and **class participation**, the English class presents a dark and slow picture. The other kinds of silence found in the English class are **intentional** and **unintentional silence**. Intentional silence was found only when the student wanted to steer away from an embarrassing situation to save her face. **Unintentional silence** and **underelaboration** is somehow connected, as in both the cases, due to unavailability of proper and adequate L2 registers, the student has to abandon or abort a sentence.

However, one of the most encouraging aspects here is the students' ability to **repair** their answers. They show tremendous understanding when the teacher drops a **clue** (including, prompts like repeating their answers) and they immediately repair their answers. They not only exhibit **self-repair** but they also repair others' responses and sometimes the entire class drops clues to help repair the answer of a student. So here, repair emerges as the most productive tool in the classroom interaction.

Hindi classrooms

The most distinctive feature of the Hindi classroom is its sheer **volubility**. Student participation in the classroom proceedings is robust and wholesome. They are enthusiastic and loud. They do not wait for their **turn** to make their bid and want to **claim the floor** right away. The teacher frequently issues mild warnings to maintain order and silence in the class. Individual **nomination** does not work here as they are ready with their reply in chorus, as soon as the question is asked. In one instance, the teacher had not even finished explaining the topic, and the students were ready with their answers. They had anticipated the questions from the text. During the Hindi classroom transaction, selected variables such as **pause** and **gaps** or missing a **turn** and **lapse** are rarely observed. **Under-elaborated response** and **unintentional silence** are sometimes present, but this is found only in those chapters in the text where the students are not able to connect with the cultural background of the story. When it is explained properly, they are immediately able to make connections.

Conclusion

In the present work, I have made an attempt to examine the discourse of silence through the narrative of education and classroom interactions. The aim was to understand the different forms and functions of silence in a primary school classroom as this is one of the basic arenas for language development. This work contends that if the medium of instruction for a child is not in her home or

neighbourhood languages, she may not only lag behind in cognitive development, but also becomes silent in the class. Therefore, it highlights the gaps in the educational policy, planning and implementation or we can say theory and practice through empirical analysis of the classroom interaction between teachers and students.

A classroom is not a place to be silent, so the child learns different strategies to negotiate nomination or turn-taking and the resultant structured silence emanating from the classroom interactions. Empirical analysis of data supports the fact that the academic performance of a child is best protected when she/he is encouraged to learn a new language with and in relation to her own language and nothing is thrust on her. This study also emphasizes the fact that a child comes to school with a flourishing linguistic competence in more than one language, but when the lecture in the classroom does not relate to her/his language, and she/he is not free to use her own language, then it brings about a culture of silence in the classroom.

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Other Minds and Stories

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Introduction

Something very intriguing about the use of language is the fact that thoughts in the speaker's mind are converted into a sequence of symbols and the sequence of symbols received by the receiver's sense organs are converted back into thoughts. Although this phenomenon may be hard to understand, it is presumably not a mystery. Sufficient research into the neurophysiology of language should uncover the mechanisms that underlie these processes of encoding and decoding. However, here I will try to give a social-psychological description of the nature of this relationship and offer a criticism of an influential contemporary approach, mentalism (Berwick and Chomsky, 2016) to understanding language and mind.

In this paper, I would like to ask how these systems relate to communication. In the context of communication, it is important for a listener to get a rough idea of what the speaker has in mind. The direction I take will be along the following lines. Firstly, I will provide a description for this essential component of linguistic communication, namely explicate what I mean by understanding other minds. Then I will discuss the idea of narratives to show how propositional thought is less explanatory than narratives in understanding the act of communication. I will illustrate this point

through a brief examination of a highly effective work of fiction (Achebe, 1995), which may also be read as a work of translation. I will further suggest that the requirement of formalism—so essential to “internalist” approaches—poses a problem when we try to build up a picture of language and thought. This will be followed by a conclusion which includes a brief look at how this view of the relationship between language and thought bears on language teaching.

Understanding Other Minds

The theoretical approach of generative grammar proposed and developed by Noam Chomsky and his followers over the last sixty years makes certain assumptions regarding the connection between language and thought. A major assumption underlying this approach is that language is a property of the human mind and hence, it is a window into thought. This relationship between language and an individual human being's thought makes this mode of inquiry an internalist one. Further, as part of this internalist inquiry, formal descriptions need to be provided for the structures of linguistic units such as phrases and sentences.

According to recent formulations of generative grammar, a single operation is sufficient for building the syntactic

structure of human language. This operation is called "Merge". "Merge" is defined as the operation that "takes any two syntactic elements and combines them into a new, larger hierarchically structured expression" (Berwick & Chomsky, 2016, p. 10). Basic formal semantics posits that the meaning of linguistic expressions gets formed incrementally as the syntactic structure gets built up, a principle known as compositionality. The unit of meaning corresponding to a sentence is a proposition, whose truth-value can be determined. This picture is more or less compatible with the philosophy underlying generative grammar, according to which linguistic structures correspond to units of thought. The correspondence between language and thought implies that the basic syntactic operation of "merge" is ultimately a property of thought. However, a major shortcoming of this view of linguistic meaning based on such a formal and internalist approach is that it is agnostic about how one person understands another's thoughts in the context of communication. There has to be something above and beyond compositionality that contributes to meaning, and beyond the factors having to do with a shared context; this has to do with understanding what the speaker has in mind.

For language to work in contexts of communication, it is important for the participants to have common meanings for linguistic expressions. This arises, according to Chomsky and Berwick (2016), from "shared cognoscitive powers" that lets human beings form common "mental constructs", "presuppositions", and so on (p. 86). Imagine a simple communicative

context consisting of two individuals X and Y. When X uses an expression not known to Y, then Y has to either guess its meaning from the context, or find out from X or look up a dictionary. In any case, for communication to happen, it is important for Y to have a working sense of what X has in mind.

In other words, the idea of "shared cognoscitive powers" is not very clear. If the cognitive content (mental constructs, propositions, etc.) associated with a word is a purely individual matter, how is it that two or more individuals come to share the same content with respect to a word? David Bleich (1988), offers an answer to this question when he takes a detailed look at the idea that language is fundamentally social. When two individuals are involved in an act of communication, according to Bleich, they acknowledge that they matter to each other and have a responsibility to understand and to be intelligible to each other (p. 67). If social relationship is inseparable from linguistic communication, having a shared cognitive content for an expression would be a simple consequence.

However, studies in pragmatics have made it clear that there is more to meaning than compositionality or the parallelism between syntax and semantics. Beyond pragmatic principles such as implicatures, I would like to propose that there is a narrative component to meaning. This does not obviate the idea that propositions are units of thought and as a result, are integral to how we understand language. Instead, it supplements that view by focusing on Bleich's point that meaning-making is a reciprocal and dynamic activity based on social relationships (Bleich, 1988). Thus,

meaning arises out of narratives shared by participants in a conversation. I will illustrate this point with the help of parables and myths shared by a community, as depicted in a work of fiction.

Narratives and Thought

There are many interesting examples of non-propositional thought in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which was written in English and which deals with what happened to the land, culture and livelihood of the *Igbo* community in Nigeria just before and during the early days of western colonization. An important component of the characters' communication are the stories known by most members of the community and explanations of truths about life. Interestingly, many of the stories involve animals. Such stories and explanations are important to the way in which members of the community think about and understand their world. Translating such thoughts to propositions might be missing an important point about how human beings think. This can be exemplified using two examples.

The first one is a description of stories that Nwoye, one of the children in the novel, hears from his parents:

So Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land—masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell, and which she no doubt still told to her younger children—stories of the tortoise and his wily

ways, and of the bird *eneke-nti-oba* who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. He remembered the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. Whenever Nwoye's mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy. At last Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before. And so heavily did it rain on Vulture that he did not return to deliver his message but flew to a distant land, from where he had espied a fire. And when he got there he found it was a man making a sacrifice. He warmed himself in the fire and ate the entrails. (p. 17)

Notice that the story told by Nwoye's mother shows deep emotional content and a world view that shows close connections between human and non-human nature. Stories like this suggest that thoughts relate to imaginative accounts and descriptions that help people understand the world around them. I would agree with the view that language is a window into thought, but

I disagree with the view that meaning is computed by determining truth-values of propositions, which seems to me to be a result of a formalistic requirement. The interesting fact is that the members of a community share thoughts that result from the common stories and myths that formed their world view.

The second story has to do with convincing the main character, who is ordered to move to his mother's land for a few years as a punishment for a crime he had committed. The excerpt given here is the advice given by a male elder of his mother's family:

Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother's kinsmen. He does not belong here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land. And so he is bowed with grief. But there is just one question I would like to ask him. Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme?" We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka –'Mother is Supreme.' Why is that? (p.44)

These two passages, about the relationship between human and non-human nature on the one hand and human relationships on

the other, respectively show that the members of the community share narratives that form an important part of their thinking. Notice that anybody can understand how these shared narratives within a community contribute to the way they think. So it is important to attend to the fact that the point of these examples is not to suggest linguistic relativism, according to which features of particular languages shape the way the world is viewed and understood (Whorf, 1956, p.213). However, I do want to indicate that the conception of thoughts as propositions with truth-values might arise from a very specific world view based on verification of linguistic statements.

Apart from the fact that literature is also a type of communication, there is another reason why literary texts are ideal for illustrating a view of language which gives emphasis on narratives. A process similar to the encoding and decoding described at the outset seems to be at work when we, as readers, are deeply affected by literature. Readers often remark how deeply they are moved by certain works of fiction and poetry. Formally, this emotional-aesthetic effect must have a component that works by compositionality, for the desired effect is produced by the combination of linguistic units. (An interesting discussion of the aesthetic effect of literary work occurs in Pollock (2010)). The similarity in the nature of this effect to meaning stretches beyond compositionality to understanding the author's mind, which includes the affective devices the author has used.

Translation

The act of translation is not a mere act of translating words and following the grammatical rules of the target language. Unless the translator has a sense of the culture and myths of the source language, the translation will be inadequate. Given that Chinua Achebe is an *Igbo* speaker who chose to write in English, it is possible to imagine *Things Fall Apart* as a work of translation. The author's deep understanding of the source language and culture would explain the power of the novel. Although not narrated in the language of the region in which the novel is set and in which the conversations in the novel could plausibly have taken place, the novel is successful in communicating the shared stories that are unique to that culture and offer entertainment and wisdom to its members. The effective transmission of culturally specific stories in *Things Fall Apart* illustrates an aspect of translation that goes beyond the mechanical acts of finding roughly equivalent words in the target language and applying the grammatical rules. I wish to point out that the idea of a deep cultural sensibility is applicable to normal linguistic communication just as it is to the domain of translation.

Conclusion

The key idea in this paper that dealt with a spectrum of concepts such as grammar, meaning, truth-values, fiction and translation was the importance of narratives with respect to the mapping between language and thought. This is a fact that is not sufficiently appreciated by linguists of an internalist orientation. Taking a step

further, one might suggest that the reason why fiction is an effective tool for language teaching is a result of this. Further, narratives take on a special prominence because of the fact that human beings use language as a mediator between the outer world and the inner domain of ideas. A special focus on narratives with respect to language helps us understand the ways in which we relate to the world, as illustrated by the passages from *Things Fall Apart*.

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Technology Innovations for Language Learning

Jennifer Thomas

The Austrian-British philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world" (1961). As human beings, language is something that we constantly use to symbolize; we symbolize our feelings, our needs and our thoughts. In other words, the language we use is deeply enmeshed within the social context of its use. But how often do we turn our language classrooms into spaces of vivacious talk and self-expression?

Talk in the Classroom

In a comparative education study across Russia, India, England, France and America, Robin Alexander (2001) found that on an average, "teachers everywhere spoke not only much more frequently than their pupils but also for longer" He also found that Indian students "were more monosyllabic in their utterances than those elsewhere." Alexander observed that in India, in most cases the teacher spoke to the entire class and the nature of this talk was largely instructional, explanatory or interrogative. There were few instances of informal talk in the classroom. Subsequent NCERT studies corroborate these findings, and highlight the lacunae in the current pedagogy of English in schools. Children do not get opportunities to speak or listen to

English (Dutta and Bala 2012). Classroom pedagogy leaves a lot to be desired, with the main focus often being on questions and answers (Noronha et al 2015, and Dutta and Bala 2012). According to Dutta and Bala (2012), "mostly the teacher asked the questions, students were not motivated to ask question [*sic*], this deprives the students of practice for communication, command and confidence. Across all the states, just 5 to 10% of students asked questions."

Ironically, the breakdown in communication seems most severe in the second language classroom. Students learning English as a second language have few or no opportunities to use it in informal situations. This is what Cummins calls Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). This is the language we use in social situations and is a stepping stone to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is essential for students to succeed academically in school. Large class sizes aside, the "textbook trap" that most teachers fall into, impedes teachers from enabling any kind of meaningful language use by children in the classroom, especially spoken English.

Technology and Language Learning

The last few decades of education technology in India have largely restricted

innovations to glamourizing ways of “transmitting” information to students. In fact, EduSat technology became an added appendage to the teacher who was already transferring knowledge to students in the classroom. The focus since then has been on digitizing content for easy dissemination and consumption in classroom. A recent report on teaching and technology by British Council and Central Square Foundation (Motteram 2017) corroborates this view. They found that teaching with visuals and videos was the most popular mode of using technology in the classroom. One purported reason teachers gave for this was their impression that children were able to understand and retain information better. However, there is little evidence to suggest that it effectively changes the nature of learning among children.

The Computer Lab: An Alternative Space of Language Learning

As language teachers, many of us feel that the computer lab is beyond the purview of our classrooms. We look at the computer lab as “another” space—a space to teach digital literacy skills, computer programs and even computer languages, but never the languages we speak. In fact, computer labs hold the promise of rich language learning experiences for students when teachers identify and use technology resources that allow students to be active agents of learning.

The audio output and recording functionality is a simple feature of computer technology that can be exploited to give students an immersive language experience. Currently

geared to provide English learning experiences to students, the Connected Learning Initiative (CLIX) is one such instance of using thoughtful education technology to deliver a meaning-focused English course material to high school students. Every lab session provides learners with opportunities to listen to conversational English, followed by activities that make use of interactive digital tools to improve their listening and speaking skills. The production tasks typically use audio or pictorial triggers to encourage meaningful usage of English in authentic contexts. Being mindful of collaborative learning principles, the course is designed to enable students to work in pairs at a computer terminal rather than individually. Teacher guidance and feedback on tasks are however essential to keep them motivated.

Most students are excited to be able to access spoken English material as very little English is otherwise available in their environment. In our observations, we have often seen students listen to audio clips more than once while simultaneously following the subtitles or reading the transcripts. Students appreciate the same language subtitling feature as it allows them to better understand what is being spoken.

What is most interesting to observe is the kind of talk that opens up around the listening and speaking tasks. Students talk to each other to try and understand the audio stories or conversations better. They discuss strategies to create conversations, recollect words, phrase sentences and then

record themselves. In most cases, the talk around the task is usually in the local language. However, it is interesting to note that in 100 per cent of the cases the final product, whether a story or a conversation, is in the target language. By not curtailing the number of attempts for a task, the design of the course fosters a safe space for learners to play with the language. For instance, students use the recording feature not only to speak but also to playback and listen to their audio recordings. Students describe this as a strategy to correct themselves and re-record conversations to their satisfaction.

The course scaffolds language learning by giving simple feedback to learners on tasks they attempt. Speaking tasks give learners opportunity to first listen to model conversations, pick words from a word cloud and then record their own conversations. As they progress through the sessions, students slowly begin to take charge of their own learning, and embark on a path of autonomous learning. In his book, *Mindstorms*, Papert (1980) notes,

The presence of computers begins to go beyond first impact when it alters the nature of the learning process; for example, if it shifts the balance between transfer of knowledge to students (whether via book, teacher, or tutorial is irrelevant) and the production of knowledge by students.

In other words what we are beginning to see in CLIX classrooms is how simple technological innovations combined with a thoughtful learning design and appropriate

content is putting students on a path of learning how to learn.

Let's move away from using technology to disseminate information and let us use it instead to create safe learning spaces buzzing with talk.

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Interview

Praveen Singh (PS) talks to

Professor Karuvannur Puthanveetil Mohanan (KPM)

Prof. K P Mohanan did his Ph. D in Linguistics from MIT in 1982. He has taught at various Universities including University of Texas at Austin, Stanford University and National University of Singapore. Currently he is the Visiting Faculty at IISER, Pune. His interests lie in Theoretical linguistics, Epistemology of academic inquiries, Critical thinking and inquiry in education, Integrative education and research. He has made significant contributions in the field of Phonology, Morphology and Syntax and has several research papers and books to his credit. He is best known for his book *The Theory of Lexical Phonology*.

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PS: Could you, very briefly, tell us about yourself, your entry into the world of language and Linguistics, how it came to be a part of you?

KPM: Well, my undergraduate degree was in Physics. And I hated Physics. So, when I was supposed to be studying Physics, I would read a lot of English literature. I barely scraped through my undergrad degree. Then my father thought that I should do a degree in English literature. I thought that was good, but when I joined the Masters program in English literature, I discovered that I hated that. At that time I started studying philosophy and psychology. And after my Masters in English literature I bumped into Linguistics accidentally. And one of the inspirations was N. S. Prabhu. I discovered that this is a very exciting subject. And I started studying it on my own. I went to EFLU (which was earlier called CIEFL) and started pursuing Linguistics, ended up at MIT. At MIT nobody tried to teach me linguistics. I did linguistics the way students in a pottery workshop work as apprentices to experienced potters, and learnt how to do linguistics. Since nobody

taught me Linguistics the traditional way, I came to develop an interest in Linguistics.

PS: You said nobody was there to teach you Linguistics. You learnt it like an apprentice at a potter's.

KPM: Yeah, that is the way MIT works. We started doing research in the very first year with experienced researchers and if at all there was any classroom activity, it was like a debate between the teacher and the student. MIT expects students to show that the teachers are wrong. I am talking about the MIT many years ago, in the late 70s.

PS: How did you find the education system in US different from the education system in India?

KPM: The education system that was practised in India during those days expected a good student to read a lot and repeat whatever the authorities had said. This is what I used to do before I went to MIT. When I went to MIT I found that everything I 'knew' about Linguistics was

no longer important, and I discovered it was extremely hard for me to keep pace with even what was happening in the classroom. Once I had a problem in phonology, and I went to Morris Halle to consult him. He listened to the problem and said it was a good problem, and asked me what the solution was. I said that I didn't know the solution. He said he didn't have solutions to all the problems of the world. He told me, "Go and find a solution, and we will have an intelligent discussion." I was first shocked when he told me that he didn't know the solution to the problem. I wondered, how could the foremost phonologist say that he didn't know something. How can a god say he is ignorant. That was a shock. And then this god said that what he couldn't solve, he wanted a first year graduate student to solve. You know, I had gone to MIT to sit at the feet of great masters and learn from them. I was shocked to hear the master saying, "Go away and figure it out on your own". Since he ordered me to find a solution, I had to obey. I found a solution, and then we developed it into a paper. That was a cultural shock. I discovered that graduate students' job was to think independently, and this is important because Morris specifically told me that my job as a student was to demonstrate that he was wrong, Chomsky was wrong, etc., to develop Linguistics further. That looked difficult to accept at first.

PS: You said you were already teaching even before going to MIT. Did you change your teaching style after having received these cultural shocks?

KPM: Absolutely. Before I went to MIT, as I said earlier, I went to CIEFL and did my diploma in English language teaching. I wrote a series of correspondence course lessons for CIEFL: Twenty lessons in Linguistics, and twenty lessons in Grammar. I wrote the ultimate truth. Do you know how I discovered the ultimate truth? From books! And my job as a teacher was to simplify things, make them more interesting and teach the ultimate truths to the student. I was, in a sense, indoctrinating my students. I was very popular because I was good at exposition, simple explanations and all that stuff. The lessons that I had written were extremely popular and continued to be used long after I had left CIEFL. I look back with horror at what I did to my students. I didn't know anything better so that's what I did. At MIT in my first year, I took a course that Ken Hale and Wayne O' Neil taught on Linguistics education. And the basic idea that Ken Hale and Wayne O' Neil suggested was that, instead of handing down readymade knowledge of Linguistics to students, you can design the course in such a way that they construct Linguistics.

The idea was that, it is not the content knowledge of Linguistics that is important but the ways of thinking that are characteristic of Linguistics as a science. So what students learn would be the methods of scientific inquiry. They said this could also be done in high school. And my response, I must confess, was, "This is completely insane..." I thought that was impossible. Ken didn't push it. He simply said, "Why don't you try it out and find out?" And even though I thought this was

just insane, I decided to try it out because Ken was saying it and I had trust in Ken. Tara and I taught a one week course in phonetics, following Ken's ideas. The course was meant for language teachers in Boston. And, to our pleasant surprise, it was almost like a shock. We discovered that students learnt Phonetics that could not have been learnt in a regular traditional course over a year. It was extraordinarily successful. Besides learning the content, the students learnt it with considerable understanding.

PS: From your experience as a teacher and later your experience at MIT, were there any insights that you found really crucial, which changed the way you looked at children or adults learning their first language and later, the second language?

KPM: The only change that I can remember is the change from total passive acceptance of indoctrination by authorities which was the state before I went to MIT, to thinking about these issues on my own without respect for authorities. And my primary interest during those days was Theoretical Linguistics and not language teaching per se. But, of course, you can't help glancing sideways at language teaching occasionally. I am not going to defend these views but since you asked me this, I will give you my personal subjective opinions. I am not talking as a researcher, because I haven't done any research in second language learning and so on. I find that within the Chomskian view of language learning, where children simply

experience language around them, you don't teach children a language. In the way, for example, you put a seed in the ground and water it and the seed develops into a tree.

The same way, the grammar grows in the mind of the child. And for children, you don't have to teach them, they pick it up on their own. This also applies to writing actually. So, our daughter learnt how to read when she was about three years old. We didn't teach her the letters of the alphabet, and we did not teach her any spelling either. We read to her and she was simply looking at the book, and she associated it with the stuff she heard. By the time she was three, she was a reasonably good reader. She read stories and she learnt spelling. She learnt letters like *a, b, c* and *d* long after she became a fluent reader. She *discovered* that letters existed. I still remember, we were standing in front of the Botanical Gardens in Singapore, waiting for a cab and she looked at the sign board and she suddenly discovered, she went to it and she pointed out the letter A. And then another letter, then another letter A, that's when she discovered these recurrent things with writing. And she learnt alphabet at that point. The same thing would apply to second language learning in schools as well. Teaching concepts like nouns and verbs and adjectives and so on is largely a waste of time. If we expose children to the use of language, that's all there is.

This is exactly what Chomsky would also say. There is a famous article 'Listener article' that Chomsky wrote in 1968 or so, when people asked him for advice on language teaching, he said, "If you are a

language teacher, don't come to me.” Modern Linguistics is kind of useless (for language teaching). This is like saying, you don't ask a relativity theorist or a quantum mechanics person, how to play basketball. That's a different game. Not even Newtonian mechanics. The interests are completely different. The kinds of things that theoretical linguists are interested in are of no use to the language teacher because they cannot be taught. And the kinds of things that the language teacher is interested in, for example, what is the past tense of [go], the linguist has no interest in that. Why should anybody bother about that stuff? The irregular things are what the language teacher is interested in. The universals are what the linguist is interested in. They have completely different interests.

PS: OK, but do you think that there is some understanding of Linguistics that might be of help to the language teacher?

KPM: Not the Linguistics of the kind that theoretical linguists are pursuing. The kind of stuff that the undergrad students of Linguistics get in their first semester of Linguistics is enough. It's not heavy structure, theory or anything like that. Just common sense stuff. That would be useful. But there is nothing beyond that.

PS: Do you think that language can be used to develop the capacity for scientific inquiry?

KPM: When you say language teacher, are you talking about an English language

teacher teaching English to kids who do not have English, or are you talking about the Hindi language teacher teaching kids who already speak Hindi fairly fluently? These are two different things.

PS: Would you take different positions on the two?

KPM: Yeah, because the teacher of Hindi, who is teaching Hindi to fluent speakers of Hindi can use Hindi as a terrain to build a capacity for scientific theory construction or scientific inquiry, in general. But, if the same teacher goes to Kerala, where there are many villages where they have no Hindi at all and the teacher's goal is to teach some Hindi. For that purpose, Linguistics is useless. For the first purpose, Linguistics is eminently suitable. It's fantastic stuff because theory construction in Linguistics is possible in a classroom. Theory construction in Physics is extremely difficult because you can't collect the data for Physics in the classroom. In Linguistics, you can get the data from the students. Not only that, but also variable data. So lab experiments and theory construction, all of that can be done in the same space. And I think that way, Linguistics is unique. So, I would say, it is probably the best terrain for learning how to construct scientific theories... Next to that, I would say, Biology is good.

PS: Now, getting back to the case where you have a Hindi language teacher trying to teach Hindi to a class that does not know Hindi. Do you think that there also knowledge of linguistics can be helpful?

KPM: No. There, linguistics is going to be a hindrance. Instead, all that you need to do is give the kind of experience that children/first language speakers of English/Hindi, or any other language for that matter, have. Nobody should *teach* them Hindi. Children absorb it from the environment through meaningful language use. So, what the Hindi teacher has to do is to provide environment in which children have to use the language meaningfully. And, they pick it up.

PS: How do you see a language teacher tackling situations where you may have 25-30 or sometimes even 40-50 kids speaking anywhere between 5 to 15 languages in classrooms and English is a foreign language for all those children. So, what can a language teacher do in such cases?

KPM: Let me tell you how I picked up English. I didn't pick up any English from school or college. I went to a Malayalam medium school. I couldn't speak a word of English. I couldn't read English. I couldn't write English. And after I finished my high school, my father gave me *Glimpses of World History* and asked me to read it. I struggled with it. I had to look up all the words. In one page I had at least twenty words that I didn't know. I consulted the dictionary and learnt the stuff. I learnt to speak English in my second year of the Bachelor's degree. I couldn't speak English till then. I learnt English through English movies. I can't recall anything that I learnt about English — whether it is English reading or writing, or accent — from any teacher or from any textbook.

I have also seen kids, for example kids in Hyderabad in CIEFL, who spoke about six languages by the time they were about three. Nobody taught them. They picked up languages from their surroundings. So, the question really is — can we give (to children) that kind of an environment, not in a city like Hyderabad where it is easy but in a rural setting, let's say a village in Kerala where you find a monolingual community? What can the teacher do? Yes. The teacher can expose the kids to, for example, English videos, and if they just watch the videos where the story is interesting, kids will pick up English. And then, the teacher reads out the stories to the kids. But there should not simply be the audio but also the text that they can see. Assume, for example, there is text coming up on the TV screen, and the teacher is reading it out, or may be the person who is creating the video is also reading it out. So kids hear the words, sentences, also see the written text. And kids will learn to read before they learn the alphabet. Kids are interested in stories. That's how our daughter learnt to read, because we would read the story half way through, and then stop and leave the book there, and then say we don't want to read it now, we'll read it tomorrow. She wanted to get the story. And, when we went away, she started reading it because she wanted to. It was meaningful for her. But if you teach kids letters a, b, c and standing lines and sloping lines, or if you teach some phonics, it is completely meaningless for them. They are not going to learn.

PS: What you are saying is that there is no need to teach a language. Language will happen automatically.

KPM: Most importantly, you have to engage in activities which are of interest to kids. But it is different when you are twenty years old and you want to go to Germany or to some other place. Tara learnt Spanish that way. We had to go to Argentina where they speak only Spanish. So, when you are thirty or forty or fifty [years old], those things don't happen. You know that you want to learn Spanish because you want to go to Argentina. So, she learnt Spanish by going to Duolingo which is like a combination of English and Spanish. Again, they were using the same principles. They use, for example, translation for that matter. So, Grammar Translation Method is pretty good.

PS: After the 1980s people have mostly looked down upon the Grammar Translation Method or any such attempt on the part of the teacher in classrooms and here you are saying that it is good. This is a new take on GT method.

KPM: I am not recommending Grammar Translation Method where Grammar is taught for its own sake, instead only for occasional tips here and there. Oh, okay! That's very different. Only when an adult needs it and also a self-conscious learner who is learning the grammar and has the question: Hey! Why does this language have strange things that my mother tongue doesn't have?

PS: Are there ways in which the language teacher, whether she is teaching small kids or adults, can somehow make the classes

more interesting for both the sets of learners in separate classes?

KPM: For the younger kids who are not interested in learning a language but they are interested in doing various things, playing games and so on. They might be interested, for example in singing songs, they might be interested in play acting in their mother tongue or in English. They would love to do that. They would like to hear stories. This is what the group called 'Karadi tales' used to do. They would sing songs and tell stories. [For example,] Usha Uthup comes and sings English songs, and kids learn to sing in English and they get the pronunciation; they get the words. But they think they are learning how to sing. I can sing Hindi songs and I don't know the meaning of any of them. The sounds just come to me. Of course, if I am also using [speaking?] Hindi, those words would come to me. It will assist me later. The same way kids will learn to sing. They would learn to start acting in plays and then you ask them to write the plays or modify the plays.

Let's say for example, there is a short play of two pages. Kids memorize the lines and then you tell them, what if you want to change the story? You write the play or modify it. They wouldn't even realize they are learning English. They would think they are writing plays. But they would be learning how to write. The same is true with stories. They want to know the stories and we ask them to write stories. But it has to be things that they want to do and they find meaningful. Very little in language textbooks that we use today are of any

interest to children. It is not something that they want to read but something that the teacher wants to do. So, the teacher has to shift, saying, what is it that children would like to do independently of language where I can keep language in the background. They wouldn't even know they are learning a language, and make them learn that. Language comes in sideways; language is not the object.

PS: What could a language teacher do where there is no chalk and no board?

KPM: Story-telling, singing, play-acting, all these are still possible.

PS: Can you suggest things that should be made an essential part of the teacher-training programmes that are carried out in this country?

KPM: Abolish all teacher-training programmes, that's the very first step because I have not seen a single teacher-training programme that is relevant to teachers. Let me explain why this is so. In the current system of education, let me stick to school education, class I to class X. Someone in the board, some CBSE or some state board decides what the syllabus is, they prescribe the textbooks, they decide everything including final examination and then the rest of the decisions are made by the principal of the school, not by the teachers. The teachers have no choice in any of these texts. What is the teacher's job? To use the textbooks to do something in the classroom. The syllabus is decided, the

textbook is decided, final examinations are decided, even the kinds of questions that the teachers have to ask will be decided by the principal. If you have to keep the job, you have to obey these masters. Then there are the parents who will say, "Have you prepared our children for the exams?" If you don't do that, your job is threatened. So, the teacher is simply a robot with very little choice. So, teacher-training programmes, instead of empowering teachers how *not* to do their jobs like robots, teach some irrelevant stuff like psychology of learning, Piaget's theory and behaviourist theory and constructivism and so on, a whole bunch of stuff that is completely irrelevant to the teacher's job. Waste of time.

If you want to change the quality of education, it is not just the teacher, the victim, the robot that you need to change. You need to first train the board members. Ideally you should change them, and give training courses to education ministers.

But I assume that education ministers are not 'educatable' nor will they be interested so leave that out. The next level would be the people who are, you know, in MHRD, other officials, and so on. They too will not come to any training programme, so forget that. Then there are the board members. So provide training programmes for NCERT folks and CBSE folks and State Board folks and so on. But we face the same problem. They too won't come. Okay so give up on all that stuff. Then there is the school management and the school administration. Not many school managements and school administrations will be willing to come to these programmes. But some rare cases might. Find them.

PS: So what do you think is wrong with our real classroom practices, the teacher-training practices and the administrative guidelines?

KPM: You see, teacher training is a professional programme. Any professional programme has to be based on some expectation, realistic expectation of the future function of the person you are training. That means you have to ask yourself: what is it that the teacher has to do in the school? Teachers cannot create materials. They cannot design their own assessment. Most of these things are done by somebody else. The primary preoccupation for the teacher is covering the portion. The teachers that I have interacted with say, we can't deal with any of this fancy stuff. We have to cover the portion. Okay, given that scenario, what can a teacher do? If the teacher doesn't cover the portion she loses her job. So, where should education reform begin? Not with the teacher, not with the student, these are both victims. Students have no choice. Teachers have no choice. Who are the people who have the power to change the system? Those people are not going to change it. That's why I said the mid-level: the school administration and the school management. They have some options, though not a great deal. Because even they have to go by what the board says in the final examination. If they don't help the kids do well in the final examination, there won't be students. And many schools have to make sure that kids do well in IIT-JEE. Both of these are detrimental to students' growth. The necessary evil. So, let me ask, "Does any teacher-training

programme teach teachers how to coach effectively and efficiently?" Coaching, what the coaching factories do, every teacher is required to do that. Do any of the teacher-training programmes do that? Not that I know of, because they think it is beneath their dignity to do it. Practical reality is that this is part of the teacher's function. In fact, in many schools that's the only function, nothing else. So, skip all the psychology of learning and constructivism and all that, it's totally irrelevant stuff.

Take for example, NCF 2005. They have a huge bunch of words about constructivism. I was in NCERT as an external member for some time and I asked many of them what constructivism meant. Nobody had a clue. It's just a word. The question that I asked was this – Imagine a classroom which is constructivist but they don't subscribe to other things such as experiential learning, interactive learning, activity based learning, task based learning, project based learning, problem based learning, inquiry based learning, peer learning, and so on. One teacher subscribes to everything but not constructivism, and another teacher subscribes to constructivism but not the other things. Is there a difference between the two teachers? Nobody has an answer. They don't know what the word means. They just use those words. Show me any person who wrote the constructivism stuff in the NCF 2005 who really understands what the word implies, except for about, I would say, 3 or 4 people and I have specific people in mind. I have read some of their work. The rest of the people have no clue. I have also asked, "Can you distinguish between a constructivist textbook and a

non-constructivist textbook? Can you distinguish between”, this is more important, “a constructivist examination question and a non-constructivist examination question?” The students learn what is needed for the examination, right?

If they cannot design constructivist examination questions, none of this has any use. It's simply rhetorical buzzword. Now, it is possible to define constructivism in a certain way such that you design constructivist examination questions such that constructivism spreads to schools. You don't need to do anything, all that you have to do is to design constructivist examination questions. Teachers will be constructivist automatically, because parents will force them, school principals will force them. You don't need training, they will learn or they will come and beg you to teach them how to do that stuff. All that you need to do is to change the examination. But who in our country is going to do that?

PS: There is a popular view that English connects people in different parts of this country. How do you think this view should be reflected in the pedagogy? Is that even needed?

KPM: If you ask the question why we need English in India, the main answer is we need English as a window to knowledge. If I want to learn mathematics or understand quantum mechanics I have to read English. So minimally English allows us to access knowledge that is constructed in the world. Some knowledge is also constructed in French or German and so on but

internationally English is the most dominant language. So monolingual speakers of English can manage but monolingual speakers of even French and German will find it hard because they may have to go to English-speaking countries. It just happens that economically the most dominant language is English. It may happen in 20 years or 30 years that Chinese is the language, that language in the sense that it [China] becomes the richest country and where knowledge is constructed in which case all of us would have to learn Chinese. This is simply socio-economic. So the reason for learning English is simply socio-economic-cum-academic and that's how we have to teach English — as a way of accessing knowledge.

PS: Thank you, sir. It was great talking to you.

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Landmark

Between the Lines

Rimli Bhattacharya

Entering *terra incognita*

Language is an unknown land of tricky delights. Words are used not only to mean this or that, but also to suggest multiple significations. To obscure as much as they reveal. To evoke as much as to state and demonstrate. To be ambivalent and multivalent. However hard humans have tried over the centuries to tailor language to the demands of different disciplines (the broadest one being “the arts” and the “sciences”), there are writers who delight in crossing borders.

They do so by using humour to speak of violence, without taking away from the horrors or effect of violence; by provoking readers to question the “authority” of the know-it-all omniscient author; by “explaining” or revealing the mysteries of nature without taking away the quality of the marvellous; by fabricating tantalizing titles...and so on. If the language of science and technology has to be precise and objective, does it necessarily mean that the language of literature is wishy-washy, vague and generally dreamy? Is subjective such a bad word? Does imagination have nothing to do with understanding facts? Are not facts liable to change? Can playing with language actually hone critical skills, cut across disciplines, move across

cultures? And how often do we find reading material that allows us to do so?

I wonder how many of these issues merit a mention in our conceptualization of textbooks and indeed in the teaching-learning process as a whole. On the contrary, increasingly—and this is happening at a global level—there is a tendency to think of language in a purely instrumentalist way. Answers must be written within “x” number of words, shrinking to the point, where Ph.D. entrance examinations in (once) premier universities are being held through multiple choice questions. Learning how to question and what to question are basic survival skills in a global age of big data and misinformation.

In this paper, I will draw on some short texts which seem to fit the bill with regard to the many questions raised here, although the texts were written for children about a century ago!

Introducing *Sandesh*

Diving into the digitized archives of a children's magazine of about a hundred years ago is fun, even addictive. I share some of my findings from *Sandesh*, a monthly magazine founded by Upendrakisor Raychaudhuri (1863-1915), who was also a

pioneer in printing technology. *Sandesh*, with its pun on news and the Bengali *misthi* or *mithai*, with full-page colour illustrations of very high quality, was meant for children, although adults also figured as its avid readers! The first issue came out in April-May 1913; Upendrakisor died in December 1915. In its first phase, the publication ended with his son Sukumar Ray's death in September 1923. *Sandesh* would be revived in only 1961 by Sukumar's son, Satyajit Ray. As the firm was called "U Ray & Sons", I shall hereafter refer to Upendrakisor as UR and Sukumar as SR.¹

UR represented a challenge to the frontiers of technology by developing as a colonial British subject, as a *swadeshi*, the most subtle and sophisticated range of printing in Calcutta. More significantly, he challenged notions of children as passive readers.

Great care was taken with the format, layout and illustration for each piece in *Sandesh*. UR crafted a meld of word and image that was an equally sophisticated mode of bringing to his juvenile readership, news of the world. He focused particularly on the latest marvels of technology in the realm of transport (submarines and monorails), various versions of air travel (balloons and aeroplanes), the latest in arms and ballistics (cannons and guns), as well as the printing press. World War I figured explicitly in many of these lucidly written articles.

As a children's periodical, eclecticism was encouraged. A precise description of the trajectory of a bullet within the body of a soldier might have been followed by a boisterous retelling of a Puranic tale or a

nonsense poem. Many of the texts mentioned loss of life, depicted violent deaths, even providing graphic details of cause and effect, whether in "raw nature" or in the workings of technology in nature. Little was censored. If the successes of technology imparts to its readers a sense of being a witness to new wonders, there was also the flip side of technology—what we euphemistically call "collateral damage" today. The implication was that understanding or harnessing the mysteries of science to construct a highly industrialized economy—constituting the British Empire, in this case—also entailed that the powers unleashed and put to use in more "efficient" ways were always in a state of experimentation. Technology was *not* the new god which never failed. Perhaps, the same questioning spirit can be used to analyse what goes by the general name of "development" in our times.

Narrative Modes

The articles in *Sandesh* aimed at a domestication of the latest technology not only by imparting its "secrets" and "incertitudes" to colonial children, but also by making the subject more accessible through a particular mode and medium of colloquial Bangla. UR created comfortable-sounding neologisms: for example, the submarine was called, "*duburi jahaj*"—literally, the diving ship or the diver-ship, thereby humanizing the machine.

There were several narrative modes in which UR illustrated the role of technology. A familiar trope (one we are increasingly suspicious of), was that of "mastering nature"—a piece featuring windmills and

fighter planes was called "*Prakritir Posh Mana*" / Taming Nature. He also illustrated how technology captured and brought to life for ordinary people the marvels of nature in distant lands—human beings using the cinematograph in the Polar region.

However, it was the third approach that was unique by all standards. Not only did it stand the test of time, it has sadly, become the test of our times: that even the latest technology is not immune to failure. "*Duburi jahaj*" / Submarine, carried the excitement of undersea scouting, details on how a periscope works. But there was a sombre note, as when the narrator gave instances of torpedoes destroying a submarine. He even asked the young readers to imagine a situation where humans were trapped (forever) in the inside of a malfunctioning submarine. He ended though, with an illustration of specially pressurised diving suits which would allow humans to escape.

The Lighthouse and Migratory Birds

Sandesh's focus (by way of text, image and layout) on the marvels of nature alongside the latest in technology was an intertwined legacy from earlier children's periodicals in Bangla, such as *Sakha* (1883), *Sathi* (1895) and *Mukul* (1895). Young UR had contributed as illustrator and writer to these periodicals. *Sakha* was radical for its time, as it carried articles on controversial social questions such as child marriage. With regard to science however, it strove to reconcile science with the construction of moral character and an abiding faith in the creator—"Our Father" (*Parampita*). Every piece in *Sakha* had an exemplary quality, whether it was in the genre of a biography (David Hare) or natural history ("*Sarpa*" /

Snake) or even in a descriptive piece on a place or a man-made object ("*Alokmancha*" / Lighthouse). In the last text, the lighthouse becomes a beacon of *dharma* or true conduct arising from belief in the "Supreme Father" through the stormy waters of life. This is more in tune with what Richard Noakes (2004) has perceptively termed a "theology of nature" in his study of Victorian periodicals for children, particularly those run by missionary/evangelizing societies:

"Scientific subjects [were] used in a variety of ways, from supporting a theology of nature and providing the basis for rational amusement, to furnishing material for inculcating mental discipline and satisfying children's taste for facts."²

The most popular of these was the *Boy's Own Paper* (hereafter BOP), to which SR and UR had access. The BOP was a penny weekly, launched by the Religious Tract Society (1879) in England with special attention paid to the seductive powers of fiction in helping readers absorb information—whether on historical or scientific or nature-related subjects.

Sandesh marked a departure from these earlier efforts, indigenous and foreign; firstly, in the range of narrative "tones" deployed in the meld of "scientific" and "fictive" pieces. I mean "tone" as both speech and mode of address, an idiolect—marking registers of belief, or suspension of belief. UR's project was driven by the need to overcome a colonized subjectivity, thereby enabling a juvenile readership to think through various modes of liberation. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, success is never absolute. The article on the lighthouse

in *Sandesh* (*Alok stambha*/ Pillar of Light), enthusiastically speaks of the life-saving quality of the lighthouse for ships at sea, but it does not leave out the unintended perils. The lighthouse, later called simply, “*bati-ghar*”, kills hundreds of migratory birds (*prabashi pakhi*) who are disoriented and driven off course by its brilliant light, finally dashing themselves to death against the glass panes.

UR's article carried a detailed photo of the lamp in the lighthouse with a human figure alongside, suggesting the scale, and an explanatory text on the system of its rotation, refraction, the use of mirrors and so on. But his concern for the birds and their flight route is evident in the full-page illustration by UR reproduced below.



আফ্রিকার কাছে একটা দ্বীপের দৃশ্য। হাজার হাজার পাবী সমুদ্র পার হবার পথে এইখানে ব'সে বিশ্রাম করে। বছরের মধ্যে প্রায় এগার মাস এখানে জনপ্রাণী থাকে না আর শীতের শেষে মাসখানেক পাবীর গোলমালে কাণে তাল লাগিয়ে দেয়—ছমাইল দূরে জাহাজের লোকেরা সে শব্দ শুনতে পায়।

Image courtesy CSSSC (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta) Archives

Flocks of birds are sitting, nesting, alighting on and flying over an island near Africa—one of their “resting places” on a long migratory route! The caption to this vibrant illustration was formatted with care. A rough translation follows:

The scene of an island near Africa. Thousands of birds come to roost and rest here, after they have crossed the seas. For almost eleven months of the year, there are no living creatures here; at the end of the winter, for about a month, the cacophony of birds deafen the ears—people aboard ships can hear the sound from two miles away!

The concise caption (43 words in Bangla) pushes the reader/viewer to make connections between distance and sound, land and ocean, people and birds, travel and rest, inhabited and uninhabited spaces. It is a classic example of how information can be combined with humour, objective detail with a personal comment, leaving so much still to the imagination!

Yet, there is hope that in time, science will come up with a safeguard against unintended consequences. Already, we are told, there are perches being placed on many such lighthouses so the birds may find a resting place before they set off again on their long flight. But again, the task of setting up the perches needs “careful calculation”: “If too close to the light, birds do not like to perch on them, and if too far, they do not see the perches”. UR sounds a cautionary, though optimistic note, in relation to the “marvels” of technology. The *unfinished* agenda of technology (vis-à-vis discoveries in science), the need to constantly search for better methods and

modes, to continuously calibrate results and measure consequences was characteristic of *Sandesh*. It reflected the constant experimentation with photography, printing and publishing that went on in the family concern.³

Intriguing Strategies

UR develops an entirely new mode of address, conceptualising his readers as actively engaged in the reading-viewing process. He also works on the 'dosage': that is, he does not wish to dilute the process of understanding or dumb down the data. At the same time, there is enough variation in the pace, focus and tone in each of the pieces to retain the reader's interest. The immediate attempt is to provide analogies from the known, familiar and everyday, to the unknown, obscure and even 'unimaginable'.

The general, the rule, the abstract is brought within the cognizance of the young reader's world not only through analogy, but by bringing the 'now' of the reader into the text: the narrative is self-referential both for the reader and the writer of *Sandesh*—thus demystifying *the making of the magazine*. So, the description of a printing press moves into the actual copy of *Sandesh* that young readers are holding and reading from. Rarely is there a 'conclusive' closure: rather, the idea is to embed questions and inspire a critical approach. This delicate balancing of information and interrogation, tempered by humour, is achieved in a number of ways, summarised below:

By creating a lively conversational direct approach that privileged colloquial speech even when the piece was written in formal

Bangla (*sadhu bhasha*). (Soon after, many writers, including Rabindranath Tagore, shifted to *chalit bhasha*, closer to the spoken language.) Information is indeginised; Latinate and/or Sanskritic constructions are assiduously avoided. So, 'differently abled' would not be 'translated' as *divyangana*.

Although in the first person, the writer is emphatically not the omniscient narrator who knows all. Rather, the tone keeps changing, with different registers ranging from the sure to the skeptical, to a frank 'confession' of "I really don't know..." or, "Well, it could be this or that"; or, "I have heard it said by a grandpa" type.

Sometimes, UR simply presented two versions and left it for the reader to decide. Some pieces showed a certain philosophical acceptance of varied responses; people were reluctant to change their minds even when the facts were before them. In "*Nuton Batsar*" / New Year, UR explained the difference between ancient Indian astrologers and contemporary almanacs or *panjikas*. He ended on resigned note: "However that may be, when that calculation is not to be; what will it gain to be lamenting about it?", followed by an ironic twist: "May your hundred years pass in supreme happiness as per the conventional mode of calculation."

The reader was often alerted by a note of scepticism when the writer was not willing to vouch for the authenticity of a printed text, as in "*Kumirer galpa*" / The Story of a Crocodile where the writer says "I've read in a book about an amusing way of hunting crocodiles. It is a story from America, but I cannot say if it is true or false." ("*Ekta pustake ek mojar rakamer kumir shikarer*

katha parechhi. Eta America desh'er galpa kintu satya kina boltey parina.") [emphasis added]. The critical use of the word "but" (*kintu*) in this sentence is fairly common.

The comparative approach in this text, juxtaposing facts about crocodiles in the Sunderbans in Bengal with a region of America (North), suggested to the reader about scientific disciplines being the great equalizer. That is, *potentially*, any one may observe and write about natural history in any part of the world. It was the observer's powers of discrimination—the ability to separate the true from the false, to verify and so on, that gave him authority, not his race or religion.

There are several ways in which pure information is made tolerable, and possibly memorable: (a) the semi-skeptical tone, mentioned earlier; (b) direct address to readers imagined as thinking subjects: for example, '*bhabia dekho*' (think about it)... '*dhare nao*', (consider or suppose); and, (c) anticipating intelligent questions from the readers: '*tomra hoito bolbe*' (you might say), in an article on how rocks are formed.

The articles show a consistent attempt to interrogate—to separate myth from history, scientific observation from unexamined beliefs; but *equally*, provide links between the above. They suggest that these are not entirely discrete modes of knowing or representing. Folk memory, mythology, hearsay and the latest scientifically proven information may well coexist—as they do on the pages of *Sandesh*. It is *critical* to discern between them, to enjoy them in different ways. Upendrakisor underlines his present (early 20th century) as a time of transition where different generations may

well nurture completely different belief systems; not to mention the license of childhood where the imagination holds sway.

Some of the stylistic and lexical devices are in the manner of the Russian *skaz*, a narrative form in which the first person narrator appears as the naïve teller, deliberately mystifying by professing ignorance. This opens up unexpected spaces for irony, often at the reader's expense; but encourages speculating and generating new texts.

Sometimes, the failure to understand something fully as a child is brought out by the adult narrator, usually in a tolerant kind of way. An example is, "*Pada aar Chhuti*" / Studies and Holidays, which incidentally refers to the Franco-Prussian war to speak about the laws of Western perspective!

There is one picture about that war that I remember very well. The Prussian soldiers were far away, at a distance, that was why they had been drawn on a small scale. But when we saw those pictures we didn't quite think of it that way; we thought that in reality the French were huge and the Prussians tiny. For a long time thereafter we were puzzled, wondering how on earth did those tiny Prussians beat the huge Frenchmen!

In *Sandesh*, the reader was invited to discuss the subject under consideration: the first person narrator shared his own ambivalence about almost everything, including about the wonders of science. On the whole, UR and SR stayed away from the sentimental and the nostalgic in showcasing nature as the legitimate object

of study in childhood. This sharing of a childhood illusion/ignorance with a young reader marked a break with the earlier periodicals. It was a direct comment on the stages of perception, without following a Piaget-like grid of progress.

Where do we go from here?

We had glimpses of how narratives of “information” may be inflected with (infected with!) a humorous, even whimsical tone. How, it is possible to present rigorous research with an interrogative note, destabilizing the authority of the omniscient or objective narrator of science or technology! The implications are many for our contemporary scenario, at varied levels of pedagogy and practices.

We might find ways of “hooking” readers into information-heavy texts, for creating rigorously researched texts that are also open-ended, for creating and initiating new modes of reading, and not the least, in the way we think about illustrations in relation to written text. Consider the simple yet versatile structure of the “*Bati-ghar*”/ The Lighthouse in *Sandesh*:

1. The focus: the special lamp inside the lighthouse;
2. The larger context: the dangers at sea for sea-faring vessels, especially on dark and stormy nights (touch of the imagination here);
3. The changes: leading to the latest technology in lighting and construction;
4. The evaluation: the pros and cons of the new system/invention;
5. The negative fallout: the unintended/unthought of effects—the death of migratory birds;

6. Possible solution: yes, but still evolving...

Consider too, the range of illustrations integrated into the article:

1. An actual sketch of a lighthouse atop a rocky height surrounded by water;
2. An illustrative “close-up” of details of the lamp enabling an actualization of the written text, with the figure of the lighthouse keeper indicating the scale;
3. The apparently digressive “inset”: an island of birds (somewhere not seen, the shipboard of people)....

And do not forget the evocative caption below the illustration!

Texts Outside the Textbook

Our present is immersed in unthinking moments of saturation, or, should I say, long moments where we are pushed not to think. A blitzkrieg of images bombards us across micro and macro screens. Every word and every letter is sought to be substituted by already composed icons, purportedly operating within a single field of global recognition; effortlessly reproduced across digital domains, losing all significance in infinite and limited replay. It appears that we have nothing to do until they are replaced by a fresh set of icons/emoticons—again, by anonymous agents of backroom boards. A make believe of participation with a single click, a zap and a swipe.

The instant coverage of violent acts—presented as narrative, or in random isolated or morphed images, captioned or

peppered with sound bytes, with contesting claims of sources/sites—does not admit of a space for reflection.

Our grids and our capsules in pedagogy are increasingly being pushed into this direction. The greater common good is taken to mean the lowest common denominator, as though, that which is ambivalent, or even unpleasant at first sight, is to be instantly censored or trolled. For this state of affairs the modes of mass communication and the imperatives of passive consumption are unambiguously responsible. The monopoly owners of channels and broadband, of signals and virtual worlds, are the game changers of the day.

Conceptualizing the “child’s perspective” is difficult, if not impossible. While this may still be feasible in anthropological or ethnographic studies, it can only be by an act of imagination... *dhare nao*/ suppose... as UR says. It means a sophisticated deployment of a range of linguistic tools that such perspectives—and not exclusively that of a “child”—find place in literature and elsewhere, or in what has been seen as its other—“science”.

Possible pedagogic exercises to create such literature:

1. *Image and caption writing.* Ask groups of children to cut out any image or a sequence of images from a magazine or newspaper that they find relevant to a particular text in the textbook. Ask them to write a caption (within a word limit) that does more than describe that particular image. In what ways is the selected image linked to the arguments

in the text? How does it move beyond the text?

2. *Descriptive texts about new discoveries and inventions.* Children can read up on, or be told by their teacher about a new scientific discovery (a new planet) or a new invention (a machine that...) and then write small texts that not only list its new exciting features but, also include possible or potential problems, speculate on the future impact of such a product over the next five-ten years.
3. *Working with linguistic features of description, commentary and speculation.* This could be an exercise in using conjunctions and prepositions in relation to a range of verbs.
4. *Comparative approaches:* highlighting analogies; marking out differences; researching the nature and possible causes for differences, implications.

These are only a few insights of language—image found in these articles from *Sandesh* that await refashioning by the apprentice scholar, the veteran teacher, the masterful writer, and also by children, and so made meaningful for a new century of challenges.

Acknowledgements

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- _____'Alok Stambha', *Sandesh*, 3rd year, Jyeshtha 1322 BS, No. 2, pp. 59-61.
- _____'Pada aar Chhuti', *Sandesh*, 3rd year, Ashad 1322 BS, No. 3, pp. 87-89.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Of Sukumar Ray's probable 166 articles written for *Sandesh*, 136 are science-related.
- ² Richard Noakes, 'The *Boy's Own Paper* and Late-Victorian juvenile magazines', p. 156.
- ³ Siddhartha Ghosh, *Kaler Shahar Kolkata*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Ltd., 1991, pp. 128-36.

Book Reviews

Investigating Tasks in Formal Language Learning

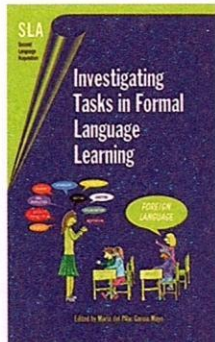
Clevedon Hall:
Multilingual Matters
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Reviewed by: Geetha Durairajan



Tasks have been used in English classrooms in some parts of the world for more than twenty five years. But as teachers in schools and colleges in most SAARC countries we use them only once in a while, to get students to engage with texts in an authentic manner or write something that is genuine and closer to what they would do with such language in their lives. Most teachers, particularly in the Indian context, would state that they spend a lot of their time teaching prescribed content.

A relevant question for us teachers is raised by Robinson in the first chapter of this book. He asks whether it is possible for a whole syllabus to be covered only through tasks. His answer is a resounding yes, with a reference to an Indian project. "The Bangalore Project described by Prabhu, (1987) was the first large scale attempt to operationalise an answer to this question

following a syllabus based entirely on tasks". In that project, however, according to him, the teacher's 'sense of plausibility' was the basis on which tasks were selected and used in the classroom. Grading and sequencing of tasks was based on the teachers' judgement about the challenge it would pose to students. The original set of tasks, that was the complete resource book of tasks, was designed with the existing syllabus (at that point it was the structural syllabus) in mind but one has to accept that the actual tasks that were used in any particular class was learner capability and teacher choice oriented.

From a research perspective, Robinson points out that this is not enough and that a rationale is needed for task categorization in a task-based syllabus/curriculum. The rest of the chapter provides the criteria for such task classification and discusses how these tasks can be used in class, along with the constraints in using them. This serves as an excellent framework for the remaining chapters.

Each of the other chapters focuses on different features of task categorization. Pedagogic tasks have been classified in the literature by focusing either on cognitive complexity, or nature of interactiveness or difficulty level of the task for the learner. The nature of planning time that students get to finish a task, the nature of collaboration between students and the support provided by more abled peers are some other features used for classification.

Each of these features have been researched and presented by a range of authors, across three continents, in the remaining chapters of the book. The editor must have strived hard to collect and present articles in such a comprehensive manner. The areas covered within task based research and the levels of proficiency are matched by the research methods employed which spans both paradigms, the empirical and the ethnographic. Some chapters are also devoted to tasks that can be used to enable only lexical growth, or examine the link between vocabulary and reading.

There are many takeaways in this book for researchers interested in the area. A budding researcher will get a very good sense of the various aspects related to task based teaching and the literature reviews in the individual articles will furnish a wide range of references. It is easily possible to get a very good sense of what can be researched from these articles. Researchers can easily decide to replicate a study in a different context, (as a small project) or adapt or modify an existing design for a larger piece of work. Most of the writers who have contributed to this volume have taken great pains to explicitly describe their research methods. Care has also been taken, in some articles, to provide the tasks, rubrics and checklists that have been used as research instruments in an appendix.

If I had to teach a doctoral course for students working in this area, I would use this book as a base for a course in Research Methodology. At the same time, while I am aware that this book was not written for the practicing teacher, I am forced to ask the

question: What will the practicing teacher get out of this book? Are there clear takeaways or do they have to be gleaned?

The answer is a tentative yes, for the takeaways are there, and can be identified, but only after careful reading, searching and collating. In the twenty first century, there is a huge demand for pedagogic classroom tasks. There is also immense pressure on teachers to take up projects and to grow and develop professionally. Such books, (edited volumes that present a range of research work done in a particular area) are a good beginning and should help teachers with their professional development. These books begin very well by setting the scene. They ought to end, however, with one afterword chapter, a pedagogic post script of useful ideas for practice and suggestions for small projects. If teachers would like to improve themselves, and that is what we teacher educators want them to do, it is unfair to expect them to read and understand such research based articles which are not written in the 'I have tried this, it works, you too try it out' format and then, also identify the tasks/experiments that are likely to be useful. Books such as these, with a wealth of information could also provide an appendix at the end of the book, with the tasks used in the articles, classified according to proficiency levels and language skills. A little scaffolding could also be provided in this appendix in the form of sample texts, instructions for using the tasks, and some guidance on possible modifications.

In his blurb on the book, Professor Michael Long says that the book has contributed to

'pedagogic task design'. For this to become a reality, teachers also need to be factored in as readers.

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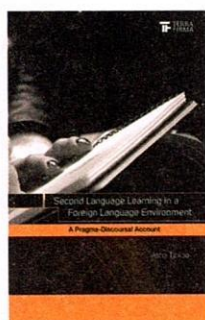
**Second Language
Learning in a Foreign
Language Environment:
A Pragma-Discoursal
Account**

Bangalore: Terra Firma.
(264 pages).

Asha Tickoo (2016).

ISBN 978 81 920475 9 1

Reviewed by: Iqbal Judge



This erudite book opens with a deceptively simple introduction in which the author puts forth the prospect of treating prose compositions as “unique modes of packaging” which present differences in information structure/design that resultantly produce varied pragma-discoursal effects. In this compilation of nine well-researched papers published in international journals from 2001 onwards, Asha Tickoo, explores a gamut of composing skills such as indefinite reference framing, marking of temporal passage and the structure of enumeration, that often present a challenge to the EFL learner.

In keeping with the title, six out of the nine papers comprise studies conducted on L1 users of Cantonese and Vietnamese, ranging from Form 3 level (age 12) to University. The subject of the seventh paper however, is L1 users of Spanish, Mandarin and Swedish. The eighth and ninth papers are more general in scope, being discussions on the design principle and message “undercoding” strategies that come into play in the composition tasks of high-intermediate level EFL learners. The pedagogical implications that emerge from the findings of the research undertaken have been further discussed in each paper.

In the first paper, the author focuses on the use of indefinite reference framing in narrative prose pieces. The hypothesis for this is that while ESL learners can successfully frame direct reference, they are unable to effectively execute indirect reference based on shared knowledge and economy principles. This hypothesis is based on an analysis of prose essays of 60 Cantonese speaking freshmen studying humanities at a university in Hong Kong. Most of these students studied English as a foreign language from age 3 or 4 to age 12, following which they received almost all of their education in English. They were asked to summarize *The Dream*, a short story by Somerset Maugham. Tickoo studied the learners' attempts at first-time reference with regard to the principal protagonist of Maugham's story. The findings showed that in the presentation of new referents, 87 per cent were judged to be “unacceptable” by users of standard academic English. Tickoo suggests that

classroom instruction should draw attention to the difference between focal and non-focal indefinite specific referring expressions, as well as features of saliency.

In her second paper, Tickoo posits that for Cantonese ESL learners, the acquisition of past tense is at variance from the universalist hypothesis which states that past tense is acquired in developmental stages, with event-like verbs marked for tense acquired before the correct usage of less event-like verbs. As with the first paper, this too presents a carefully detailed, microscopic analysis of students' writings. She suggests the transference from Chinese, in which the perfective participle "le" is used to signal foregrounded situations in a narrative as a possible reason for the grounding-sensitive selective marking of the English past tense by these students. Hence, for the ESOL teacher the message is that the learners' L1 should not be ignored when attempting to understand their needs.

The use of "then/after that" and the structure of enumeration are subjected to similar meticulous observation and analysis in the following two papers. While in the former paper, Tickoo considers Vietnamese learners enrolled in a pre-academic writing program in a US community college, in the latter paper she looks at English major students studying at a university in Hong Kong. In both groups however, learners have had many years of "passive" exposure to English through lectures and textbooks at school. The topic of the writings given are simple and personal such as "my first date", "my

favourite park", etc. The learners' use of "then/after that" has been analysed for its appropriateness of use. The propositional, semantic, syntactic and lexico-syntactic constraints on English enumeration that emerge from the analysis point to the need for an overt, explicit instruction on the two modes of information incrementation.

Carrying forward the analysis of written discourse and inter-sentential relations further, Tickoo investigates learners' use of the encapsulating sentence and the prospected sentence in her fifth paper. Explicating the difference between the two with the help of lucid examples, she points out how the encapsulating sentence retains the ideational component of its preceding text, while the prospected sentence increments the text without retaining the preceding ideational component. It is the encapsulating sentence which presents a greater challenge to the learner, for s/he has to know how to effectively split the ideational whole into units that are informationally appropriate for evoking a preceding text using suitable lexicalization. Tickoo presents evidence of the problems that learners experience in the fragmentation of ideational information through examples of "preferred textualisation" to illustrate the difference between the two texts. She reasons that learners experience difficulty in framing appropriate encapsulating sentences. This is because having "properly mastered" incrementation by the prospected sentence, the overt retention of a preceding text becomes problematic for them, being diametrically opposed to the earlier learnt discoursal behaviour.

In her sixth paper, Tickoo investigates variable temporal passage in storytelling. She compares the data culled from the analysis of the prose essays of 60 Cantonese speaking freshmen studying humanities at a university in Hong Kong from the first paper and a detailed analysis of Maugham's original story with some extracts from Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles*. According to her, it is the presence of the pattern of alternating peaks and troughs formed by a succession of foregrounded event clauses and backgrounded non-event clauses that gives a narrative the recognizable quality of a story, distinct from the mere re-telling found in students' writings. Tickoo's findings shed light on the rhetorical structure of the story genre, though she is careful to admit that her database is rather limited and needs to be investigated in more detail and depth before definite conclusions can be drawn.

In the seventh paper, Tickoo examines variance from established norms of micro-developmental features of "narratives in support of end-state statements" of EFL students. Such narratives outline successive chronologically sequenced events from the past right up to the present. Being extensively used in report and research writing, such narratives are of importance to ESL learners who are pursuing academic goals.

Building up from the theoretical underpinnings of oral narratives given by sociolinguists Labov and Waletzky, Tickoo delineates the macro-design and developmental design features of narrative-in-support of an end-state statement through a short sample essay. She further compares it with a similar attempt at writing by an L1

user of Spanish. Her findings show that while students may succeed in conforming to the macro-design features, their use of the individual, micro-developmental features is less effective. Thus, this is an area that requires targeted pedagogic intervention and support.

In her last paper, Tickoo demonstrates the use of "undercoding" as a viable and comparatively less challenging strategy used by EFL learners in effecting information packaging conventions, particularly in the context of the features discussed in the preceding papers. In fact, Tickoo suggests that FL learners apply this strategy when framing indefinite reference by marking inter-sentential relations and signalling genre much more than proficient users of the language would do.

Overall, the book is remarkable for its scientific, in-depth analyses and scholarly references to related research. It moves far ahead of the more common "error analysis" that language teachers would be familiar with. Though its sustained use of "technical" terminology and exploration of the more adventurous, uncharted seas of language acquisition might be challenging for the uninitiated, it is valuable for its insights. It also serves as a benchmark for good research, standing out luminously distinct from the damaging plethora of cut-copy-paste that often plagues academia today.

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**Peer Interaction and
Second Language
Learning:
Pedagogical Potential
and Research Agenda**

Language Learning
and Language
Teaching Monograph
Series, Volume 45.

Amsterdam/

Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing
Company. (395 pages).

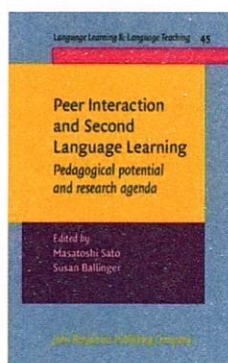
Masatoshi Sato and Susan Ballinger
(Eds.) (2016).

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Reviewed by: R. Amritavalli

Michael Long's "Input, interaction and second language acquisition" was published in 1981; Krashen's input hypothesis in 1982 and 1985. According to the input hypothesis, the learner's mental grammar determines both comprehensibility and the next ($i+1$) stage of input relevant to acquisition. Long, while acknowledging the role of input, argued in favour of the facilitative role of interaction in SLA. According to him, learner interaction drives conversational and linguistic modifications that make input comprehensible. As learners "negotiate" with native speakers for meaning, input may get modified, manifesting for example as "foreigner talk". Moreover, it is during interaction and corrective feedback that learners may "notice" lexical or syntactic aspects of the language.



Therefore interaction hypothesis is to input hypothesis of SLA what the "motherese" view of child language acquisition is to the Chomskyan view of it. The Chomskyan view is that a biological faculty unfolds inevitably and unconsciously in an appropriate linguistic environment. The "motherese" view is that a child's caretakers modify their input to the child in ways that facilitate language acquisition. That hypothesis of a straightforward correlation between maternal input and child language acquisition has been argued to be untenable (Newport, Gleitman & Gleitman, 1977; Gleitman, Newport & Gleitman, 1984).

In contrast, the interaction hypothesis (and its extension, the "output" hypothesis of Swain, 1985, 1995), have found wide acceptance in second language research, perhaps due to the formal classroom setting in which much of SLA occurs. The socio-cognitive character of learning in such settings was what interested Vygotsky. The Vygotskian search for socio-cognitive activities to promote cognition is extended and applied to language, foregrounding its "external" or communicative function, and blurring the Chomskyan distinction between conscious and unconscious knowledge (e.g. knowledge of physics versus knowledge of language). Corrective feedback is of "particular importance for acquisition" (Long, 2015, p. 53), as is the "noticing" of formal aspects of language, "nothing in the target language is available for intake into a language learner's existing system unless it is consciously noticed," (Gass, 1991 as cited in Mackey, 1999, p. 561).

Long's hypothesis emerged from Hatch's (1978) discourse analysis of native – non-native speaker interaction, and extended to learner-teacher interaction.

In their Introduction, the editors of this book assert that peer interaction between L2 learners has not received much attention, even though studies on the subject have been in existence since the early 1980s (albeit mainly in adult ESL contexts in North America, New Zealand, and Australia). This book is therefore “the first collection of empirical studies” to focus on peer interaction. The editors argue in favour of a synthesis of research based on the social and cognitive paradigms. The thirteen empirical studies that comprise this book are mostly classroom-based and originate from the Basque country, Chile, Japan, Spain, and Thailand on the one hand, and Australia, Canada and the United States on the other. They have been arranged into three sections of five, six and two chapters each, addressing respectively (i) interactional patterns and learner characteristics, (ii) task types and interactional modalities, and (iii) learning settings.

The introduction recapitulates available research on these variables and the uniqueness of peer interaction by positing that proficient peers may provide input as rich or complex as native speakers. Also, a higher level of comfort in interaction encourages feedback and self-correction in the learners, making this a versatile pedagogical tool. The author concludes the introduction by outlining the teacher's role in promoting and scaffolding peer interaction.

Teachers may find chapter two and chapters four to ten of special interest with regard to the methodology of teaching. These chapters are based on the premise that interaction and communicative activities promote language acquisition. In these studies, the authors investigate not just acquisition, but interaction as well, for e.g. “whether learners can be explicitly taught to be better interactors and feedback providers” (Chapter 2, p. 64). Other studies include how two low-proficiency learners engage in small groups at various proficiency levels (Chapter 4), differences in peer interaction patterns in proficiency-homogeneous and proficiency-heterogeneous groups (Chapter 5), and characteristics of learner interaction in face-to-face and computer-mediated contexts (Chapter 6). In Chapter 8, the author addresses how learners attend to linguistic form in these two modes, and in Chapter 10, there is a comparison of the collaborative writing in these two modes.

Chapters 7 and 3, cover a study of an EFL class in a Thai university and a Grade 10 class in Chile. These are of special interest to India because of the ecological relevance of their settings. In these chapters, the authors report a collaborative writing task and an intervention to promote past tense usage respectively. This mention of a grammatical item serves as an occasion to ask the question lurking at the back of our minds—what is the nature of linguistic knowledge that is offered or acquired in these studies? What happens when the peer input offered is incorrect?

To address these concerns, Chapter 3 offers only the promissory note that “productive knowledge of the past tense” exhibits

greater gains in the lower proficiency group, stating that its “primary focus is on the interaction data” (p. 100). Chapter 1, which also addresses the second question, is an insightful account of the “silent learner” in a group activity, whose language gains compare well with those of the “contributors” and “triggers” (learners who set off “language related episodes” or LREs through their queries or errors). The LREs, which could be grammatical, or lexical, together with CF (corrective feedback), comprise the central unit of analysis in these studies. Chapter 1 further reports lexical LREs that instantiate Spanish words prompted by picture cues: words for objects and persons (*boat, cruise, fortune teller*), as also actions (*predict, meet, take*). It would be of interest to check whether the “unresolved” or “incorrectly resolved” LREs pertain more to verbs than nouns, given that predicates pose an acquisitional challenge that nouns do not (Gentner, 2006; Snedeker & Gleitman, 2004). Interestingly, the percentage for learning or consolidation of wrong input (e.g. *to rain* instead of *to cry*) is lower than that for correct input; and the percentage for “missed opportunities” for wrong input (where the input is ignored) is twice as much for incorrect as for correct input (50 per cent to 24 per cent, p. 44)! This remarkable learner ability to privilege correct input over incorrect input calls to mind Gleitman, Newport and Gleitman's (1984) observation that “the child is selective in WHAT he uses from the environment provided; he is selective about WHEN in the course of acquisition he chooses to use it; and he is selective in

what he uses it FOR (i.e. what grammatical hypotheses he constructs from the data presented)” (1984, p. 76). Moreover, “the character of the learning is not a straightforward function of the linguistic environment” (p. 44). Just like the finding that silent learners also learn, it reminds us of the abstract, mind-internal nature of language learning.

Evidently, language is itemized in these studies (and more generally in this paradigm) as instances of vocabulary and grammar (“past tense”). Chapter 11 may be of particular interest to the reader with its metalinguistic task—construction of the grammar of the Spanish pronoun *se*, based on three 90-minute presentations of the target item in a narrative context. With this, the book comes full circle, from communicative through structural to grammar-translation approaches to language teaching. It is indeed salutary to remember that some SLA has successfully occurred through each of these methodological eras. The true strength of the interaction paradigm may lie, then, in its innovative approach to classroom activity, which learners may find more engaging and authentic than a teacher-fronted class.

Chapter 12 includes a sociocultural study in a multilingual environment. It brings together English and Spanish learners in an alternative space, an idea that has the potential to address concerns around privileging English and English language learning in our country. In Chapter 13, there is a unique, thought-provoking inquiry into the learning opportunities (if any) provided by a partner-reading task between learners

having different skill levels (two adolescent females, an Amharic newcomer with prior schooling and beginning-level oral English, and a Somali with strong English skills but low literacy and no prior schooling). Here the focus is on peer interaction during “the routine classroom literacy activity of reading a book aloud together”.

The book concludes with an epilogue that has a useful discussion on the scaffolding and social significance of peer interaction.

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Classroom Activities

Game 1: Word Rummy

Objectives:

- To practice sentence formation in English
- To develop the skill of constructing a story using a few sentences

Level: Grades V to VII

Materials: Two small stories. Each story has 30 words. One deck of playing card size cardboards for each group. Each group will get 60 cards. (360 for a class of 30 groups of students), pens, scissors

Time needed: One-and-half-hours

Procedure

Before the game, the facilitator has to:

Step 1: Select two very short stories or edit them (to about 25 words per story).

Step 2: Prepare playing card size rectangles with one side blank from reusable card sheets. The facilitator will need at least 60 of these per group. So you have to prepare six decks for a class of 30 students (5 students per group x 6 groups = 30 students. 6 decks of 60 cards = 360 cards per class).

Step 3: Cut out the words of the stories and paste them on the cards. Each card must have only one word. Five such identical decks have to be created for a class of 30 learners.

Step 4: After writing one word from the story on every card use the leftover blank cards in each deck to write the punctuation marks. Keep two joker cards in each deck.

The Game Begins

Step 1: Divide the children into groups of five. Seat each group around a table.

Step 2: Shuffle the cards well and place one deck of cards face down on the table.

Step 3: Ask one member of the group to deal seven cards to each member of the group. The deck as specified above has at least 60 cards

Step 4: Explain the following rules to the participants.

- a. The participants must not show the cards to each other.
- b. They should play in turns, taking one card at a time from the deck of cards in the centre.
- c. The participants have to try and create at least one sentence using the words on the cards in their hand. They replace the card they have taken face down near the pack. The participants must use the word on the card and replace the card they do not need (i.e. the word they do not need). They have to include the word they have taken in the sentences in their hand.
- d. The sentence may be changed if another member of the group comes up with a better sentence.
- e. The members must discuss their sentences in the group to ensure that they are correct.
- f. Participants are not allowed to pick up a discarded card. This is the one that was put face down near the deck.

- g. Lastly, it is important to remember that this is a game of cooperation, not of competition.

Step 5: Whenever a member of the group makes part of a sentence he/ she has to put it down or keep it separately. She has to try to complete the sentence in the next round. The cards need to be put down so that the group evaluates whether the sentence is correctly made.

(Remember this is a game of cooperation, if you put down the sentences you have made, the group members can help you to correct them or use the leftover cards in your hand)

Step 6: The game ends when a member makes a sentence or two sentences using all the cards in his/her hand. He/she shouts "rummy".

Step 7: All the sentences, whether complete or incomplete have to be used to compose a story.

Step 8: The members have to try and use all the leftover cards. If they are unable to do so, they forfeit one mark for each leftover card.

Step 9: If the group is unable to finish the story using the words on the cards, they may use other words. However, the facilitator or the groups themselves can limit the number of words the members can use apart from the ones they have to make the game interesting.

Step 10: The facilitator must ensure that the sentences used to create the story are correct. He/she may help them to complete their tasks.

Step 11: Once the stories are ready, the groups present them in front of the class. There may be discussions around the stories.

Debrief: This game can be used in various ways. It could simply be used to discuss problems with sentence formation or it could be used for revision of the understanding of stories the students have already read (as this activity involves a reconstruction of the story). The stories may be taken from the text book. To reconstruct the stories using a limited set of words is a very high level cognitive skill. It could also be used for creating new stories with limited materials.

The students will enjoy recreating a story they already know. Many versions of the story may emerge causing much enjoyment.



Game 2: Word Gradients or Shades of Meaning

Objective:

To build an understanding of shades of meaning in synonymous adjectives

Level: Grades V to VII

Materials: 60 square sheets of sticky notes/paper slips for writing words for 6 groups for a class of 30 students, (if you use paper slips then you will need glue), a 24 inch x 5-inch-long cardboard sheet for each group.

Time needed: 1 hour

Procedure

Step 1: Brainstorm with the class to come up with adjectives related to feelings—angry, happy, sad, tired, afraid, etc.

Step 2: Write them on the board.

Step 3: Divide the students into groups of five.

Step 4: Ask the group to choose one adjective from the board. Each participant will write more synonyms of the adjectives they have chosen, e.g. angry, irritated, upset. They may use a dictionary or a thesaurus. Give them ten minutes. Then the group collates the adjectives written discussing whether they are synonyms or not. They may consult a dictionary. They must write at least 10 synonyms of an adjective as a group. Remember only ten synonyms of an adjective per group! E.g. angry, irritated, upset, anxious, uneasy, furious, irate...

Step 5: Give 10 slips to each group and ask them to write down the adjectives on the slips. Ask them to put the slips in an envelope.

Step 6: Ask the groups to exchange the envelopes.

Step 7: The groups now have to arrange the adjectives they have received from the other group according to degree of intensity of the emotion, e.g. livid, mad, annoyed, irritated, upset.

Step 8: Ask each group to stick the slips on a long rectangular cardboard in order of increasing intensity.

Step 9: Get each group to present its arrangement of semantic gradients or shades of meaning to the whole class, with two members holding up the cardboard

with the arranged slips while the other three explain the rationale behind the arrangement.

Step 10: Initiate a discussion around the arrangement of the words, for example, Is livid stronger than mad or is upset weaker than annoyed?

Step 11: For homework, ask the groups to write a story where they use at least five of the words discussed in the class in an appropriate manner.

Step 12: Read the best stories chosen by the groups in class, follow it up with a discussion on how the words have been used.

Debrief: When children write descriptions, they often use the same word many times. It is important for children to understand the use of the appropriate word and the shade of meaning that it conveys.

Game 3: Four Pictures One Word

Objective:

To develop vocabulary by understanding polysemy

Material: 50 slips of paper, gum, pictures and a rectangular card board

Time: 1 hour

Procedure:

Step 1: Create a list of 50 words from the lessons in the text book which students are studying in the class, or from any other book. Each word should have at least four meanings, two literal and two figurative.

Step 2: Search for pictures which represent the different meanings of each word.

Step 3: Cut the four pictures related to the four meanings of words and paste them on one sheet.

Step 4: Underneath the pictures write the number of letters and draw the number of blanks for the letters.

Step 5: Display it on the notice boards around the class room.

Step 6: Give a demonstration of predicting the word from the pictures by holding up one of the sheets and asking the children what one of the pictures represents (use a simpler word for demonstration. Begin the demonstration with the picture which shows literal meaning of the word for example drum – that make a noise, ear drum and then do on to drum roll)

Step 7: Ask students to go around with a notebook in hand noting down the words which they think represent all four pictures.

Step 8: Go around and help the students. Do not give the answers, help them by asking relevant questions.

Step 9: When the students finish ask them to write their names and pin their papers with the answers on a bulletin board

Step 10: Then write the answers on the board. Let the students correct their own papers and verify.

Step 11: Discuss why almost all the students did not guess certain words. The reasons may be because of unfamiliarity of context, picture unclear etc. Discuss how familiarity of context is very important. We cannot learn words in isolation. We remember them in association with their context.

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Report

Feedback Report on *Language and Language Teaching*

Since its inception in 2011, *LLT* has brought out 10 issues, two every year. The editorial committee felt that it was time to get *LLT* assessed in terms of the degree to which it had been able to meet its primary objective of establishing “a dialogue between theory and practice so that practice contributes to theory as much as theory informs practice”.

The purpose of *LLT* was 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 around implementation of new ideas. Since its primary readers are practising language teachers and researchers, for this assessment purpose, one copy of all the back issues was sent to select school, college and university teachers requesting them to critically evaluate them and tell us whether *LLT* had been able to fulfil its objective. They were also requested to let us know about the areas where we had erred, and the changes/improvements we needed to introduce in order to make *LLT* more intelligible to teachers with a moderate proficiency level in English. When asked by reviewers whether there was a word limit, they were told to express their views freely, without any constraint of word limit. The reviewers who participated in this process included: Dr. Veena Kapur, Ms. Prachi Kalra, Professor Iqbal Judge, Ms. Snehlata Gupta, Dr. Chhaya Sawhney, Mr.

Ravinarayan Chakrakodi, Ms. Nivedita V. Bedadur, Dr. Sonika Kaushik, Dr. Kalpana Bora Barman, Ms. Rajni Dwivedi and Dr. Sabina Pillai.

The reviewers appreciated the fact that *LLT* addresses a wide readership and covers a vast variety of themes relating to language and language teaching in diverse circumstances. They also recognized that the articles used jargon free language and reported on pedagogical practices and their critiques, link between theory and practice, new ideas from research in language teaching, issues relating to disabled learners, hands on classroom language activities/games and book reviews of recent books on language and language teaching. Here are some extracts from their feedback:

- “The journal has a range of articles addressing different aspects of the pedagogy of language, from primary classes to the under-graduate level. Most articles are brief and written in accessible language. And they do include critiques of common classroom practices along with suggestions for alternative practices” (*LLT 1*: Prachi Kalra).
- “The language used in these articles is free of theoretical jargon and therefore is easily comprehensible to practicing teachers....Most of the articles try to link theories of language teaching, not

just English language teaching, to classroom practices” (*LLT* 2: Ravinarayan Chakrakodi).

- *LLT* “has enough meat to offer to in-service/pre-service teachers and teacher educators as it includes not only a range of articles, book reviews and suggested readings but also classroom activities.... This particular issue has a common theme of multilingualism running through seven out of thirteen articles. All these articles demonstrate why and how the use of mother tongue in the early years, or exposure to multiple languages can foster cognitive growth and high academic achievement... Overall, *LLT* is a great resource that offers insights and learning, hands on activities and pedagogical strategies from actual classrooms and contexts that the target audience would immensely benefit from” (*LLT* 3: Chhaya Sawhney).
- “It is a unique journal as it seeks to draw a vast range of practitioners into the discourse on issues related to language and the teaching of language in diverse contexts. The articles are mostly of accessible length written in fairly easily comprehensible language” (*LLT* 4: Snehlata Gupta).
- “*Language and Language Teaching* is perhaps the only journal in India devoted completely to language and its pedagogy....The journal also helps us to see where we stand internationally in our understanding of issues related to language teaching. All the issues put together will definitely indicate a

pattern of a certain kind....The range of themes and languages is impressive” (*LLT* 5: Sonika Kaushik).

- *LLT* provides “new ideas and insights from research on language and pedagogy.... Most of the articles are based on a reflective, critical analysis of actual classroom situations in India and the approach adopted by the writers is either that of applying pedagogical techniques to overcome problems being faced, or of improving the quality of teaching by adopting innovative strategies. In most of the articles the theoretical underpinnings of the suggested methods are elucidated.... Almost all articles maintain a good balance between theory and practice, seeking to inform rather than weigh down the teacher with academic jargon. Though none of the articles could be said to be path-breaking or new, yet they serve to re-call the teachers' attention to good practices that sometimes are forgotten in the pressures of day-to-day teaching.... The section on classroom activities would be particularly useful for the teacher who wishes to cut through the theorizing and wants merely a simple prescription slip to follow.... The book review sections are also informative, especially as the books reviewed are generally recently published” (*LLT* 7: Iqbal Judge).
- “The journal is a good one as it covers a range of issues.... Ranging over a wide variety of topics, including book reviews, the *Language and Language Teaching* journal addresses a number of

relevant questions in the field of language and its teaching. Its relevance in providing a platform for deliberations on these issues cannot be argued with.... In *LLT*, Issue 8..., the focus is on the teaching of language in the classroom especially in a multilingual environment" (*LLT* 8: Kalpana Bora Burman).

- "Congratulations on a comprehensive issue on the subject of disabled learners and the challenges thereof....The papers by some scholars are insightful as they are a direct outcome of their classroom interventions, hence of immense value to scholars and practitioners and kudos to the content" (*LLT* 10: Sabina Pillai).
- "The articles have been selected very carefully....They discuss the idea of disability, how it is represented in society and analyse the same with examples; there are real classroom experiences that throw light on the challenges faced by students and teachers, what can be done in the classroom and what should be the role of the teacher" (*LLT* 10: Rajni Dwivedi).

As mentioned earlier, the reviewers also made some suggestions for improving *LLT*. Some of the suggestions are given here as follows:

Among other things, Kalra, in commenting on a particular paper suggested that theory and practice should be organically linked and the theory section should be shorter than the practice section in order to reach out to teachers. Nivedita, in her feedback on *LLT* 6, commented on the difficulty experienced in using a theoretical paper in a classroom transaction or a workshop.

Kalra was very critical when she said that some of the articles included a whole range of pedagogy-related concepts and ideas without a reasonable explanation for them. According to her, such articles should focus on fewer ideas to make the papers more readable.

Chakrakodi drew attention to a serious drawback in the journal when he remarked: "Original studies on language learning and teaching seem to be very few in the 10 issues that have been published so far." He reminded the editors about the need for an editorial in each issue and suggested that the editors needed to exercise more rigorous scrutiny before accepting articles for publication. According to him, some articles made tall claims and sweeping statements with regards to certain concepts, but failed to explore them in depth. He suggested that the editors inform the contributors about the impact of the journal and the data bases where it was indexed. He further suggested that the editors should make *LLT* a multilingual journal by including research that is being done and reported in Indian languages.

Sawhney opined that the articles that did not offer any concrete suggestions and could not be substantiated by facts should be left out. She further recommended that greater weightage be given to articles that reflect practice rather than theory. She commented that since most of the articles published in *LLT* had been written either by researchers or consultants who had very little hands on experience of classroom teaching, more practising teachers needed to write for *LLT*.

Commenting on classroom activities, Kaushik observed: "It will help the readers

if the activities are presented as part of a larger plan of teaching. A better alternative to classroom activities could be offering coherent language lesson plans which include an activity or two. This could also include suggesting better use of textbooks and different ways of using children's literature for language teaching."

Barman pointed out that there should be more articles on how to improve the teaching of languages at a higher level; this included remedial measures that teachers/parents need to undertake. She suggested that since most articles were written by English teaching people/faculty, *LLT* should include articles focussing on the difficulties faced by non-English teaching people in higher classes.

Kapur expressed the need for more articles in which the focus was on how practice contributes to theory. The contribution of the practitioner was vital, since real life classrooms are the crucibles where theory is transacted. How theory and content is transacted by the practitioner itself informs theory and highlights the limitations of research. A mechanism should be in place that ensures that the practitioner appreciates the importance of their contribution.

Pointing to the need for an editorial, Pillai observed that *LLT* does not connect with the reader due to the absence of a voice that speaks to the reader on behalf of *LLT*. It seems like an impersonal vehicle carrying sundry voices without a link to the big picture. Pillai further added that while adhering to a theme is worthwhile, every issue could also carry a general menu of papers to ensure wider interest and

readership. For example, one of the issues was centred around the theme of disability to the exclusion of any other topic/theme. That can lead to limited interest and readership. She further suggested that a "Readers' Page" carrying the readers' comments and observations be included to make the journal more interactive and less remote.

Many contributors including Pillai and Dwivedi recommended that an issue should not carry more than one contribution by the same author.

Nivedita suggested that *LLT* should also include short conceptual pieces of one to two pages with examples to explain the concepts.

Kalra and Prachi pointed out to the need for pictures of pedagogical strategies as well as writing samples of children to make theory more accessible.

Prachi recommended that a section on children literature be included.

Chakrakodi expressed the need for a separate section, "Research Reports", where action research studies carried out by teachers and teacher educators could be published. He further recommended that the journal incorporate studies on research methodologies, data collection methods, statistical tools and research findings.

Snehlata suggested that there should be more articles that address the most problematic everyday practices and myths and false beliefs about language and language learning in classrooms today. According to her, such articles should be strongly grounded in research and theory,

with implications for instruction clearly spelt out. She further recommended that a mechanism for feedback on articles and other submissions be included in the journal to make it more interactive. She advocated the creation of an online forum where teachers and other readers could engage in discussions or conversation around the articles in any given issue.

Commenting on the book reviews, Kaushik suggested that books in Indian languages, both for children and on children also be reviewed in the journal. In addition, materials developed under various programmes and by organizations and private publishers can also be reviewed. This includes manuals, graded series, cards, charts, vocabulary development games, worksheets and other such material. A lot of materials and methods are available and very often teachers and teacher educators do not understand the underlying assumptions behind a given "kit" or "set".

man commented, given that NE states not only multilingual but are exposed to English very early in life (even before school), LLT should also include articles on NE states. She added that in Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, Nagamese is spoken, which includes English words. How does one teach English in such an environment?

The editors express their gratitude to the reviewers for expressing their appreciation of the journal and their suggestions towards improving the journal. The editors take care to incorporate them in the coming issues.

About the Reviewers

Dr. Veena Kapur, Associate Professor, University of Delhi, has been teaching for over thirty-five years. Her areas of special interest are language teaching, women's studies, alternative pedagogies as well as the use of technology in education. Dr. Kapur is presently working with national research and educational bodies as a resource person.

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Ms. Prachi Kalra teaches in the Department of Elementary Education at Gargi College, University of Delhi. She teaches courses in the pedagogy of language. Her main interests are children's literature and storytelling. Currently, she is doing a PhD on how stories can enable critical pedagogy in the elementary classroom.

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Professor Iqbal Judge, currently Head, PG Department of English, PG Government College for Girls, Chandigarh, has been teaching for 36 years. Her core interests include ELT, particularly classroom methodology, materials development and assessment. She is also keenly interested in gender studies, theatre and fine arts.

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Ms. Snehlata Gupta has been teaching English under the Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi for more than twenty years. Her areas of interest include literature for children and young adults; reading, writing and the teaching-learning of English as a second language, especially in students from underserved communities. At present she is working on a PhD at the Faculty of Education, University of Delhi.

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Dr. Chhaya Sawhney teaches Linguistics to the students of Elementary Education at Gargi College, University of Delhi. Her interests include teacher education, and interacting with and learning from her students about their internship experiences at school.

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Mr. Ravinarayan Chakrakodi is a member of the faculty at the Regional Institute of English South India, Bengaluru. He has an MA in TESOL from the University of Lancaster, UK. He is involved in in-service teacher education programmes, curriculum design and materials production. He has worked as a member of the D El Ed curriculum renewal committee for English, Government of Karnataka and as a Chairperson of the Textbook Committee for English.

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Ms. Nivedita V. Bedadur teaches at the University Resource Centre of Azim Premji University, Bangalore. She has 29 years of experience in English Language Teaching and teacher training in India and Nepal. She is currently designing courses for teachers and teacher educators in the area of literacy, language teaching and educational psychology.

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Dr. Sonika Kaushik is a senior consultant in the Early Literacy Programme of NCERT. Her areas of interest include development of reading and writing in the early years and children's literature. She has taught in primary schools and teacher education programmes and has a doctoral degree in early literacy.

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Dr. Kalpana Bora Barman teaches English at a College in Guwahati, Assam. She did her PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology,

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Ms. Rajni Dwivedi has worked with various states for developing curricula and textbooks up to elementary classes. She has developed materials for capacity building of pre-service and in-service teachers in several states. Currently, she is doing translations and developing/editing materials for teachers and teacher educators.

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Dr. Sabina Pillai is an Associate Professor of English at a Delhi University college. Her research interests include Literary Theory, feminist literature, ELT and applied linguistics.

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Forthcoming Events

Language Learning and Teaching '17: Second International Conference on Education and Language

Dates: 20-21 October 2017

Organization: DAKAM

Deadline for abstract submission: 14 July 2017

Conference information page link:
<http://www.dakamconferences.org/language-learning>

The INTESDA 3rd International Conference on the Globalization of Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education - GSLATE 2017

Dates: 30-31 October 2017

Organization: INTESDA

Deadline for abstract submission: 28 July 2017

Conference information page link:
<http://intesda.org/globalization-second-language-acquisition-teacher-education/>

3rd International Conference on Teaching, Education and Learning (ICTEL)

Dates: 6-7 September 2017

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

Location: Bali, Indonesia

Deadline for abstract submission: 4 September 2017

Conference information page link:
[http://adtelweb.org/23rd-international-](http://adtelweb.org/23rd-international-conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-06-07-september-2017-bali-indonesia-about-40)

[conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-06-07-september-2017-bali-indonesia-about-40](http://adtelweb.org/23rd-international-conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-06-07-september-2017-bali-indonesia-about-40)

24th International Conference on Teaching, Education and Learning (ICTEL)

Dates: 12-13 September 2017

Location: London, UK

Organization: ADTEL Imperial College London

Deadline for abstract submission: 10 September 2017

Conference information page link:
<http://adtelweb.org/24th-international-conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-12-13-sept-2017-london-uk-about-41>

26th International Conference on Teaching, Education and Learning (ICTEL)

Dates: 8-9 November 2017

Location: Nanyang Technological University, Nanyang Executive Centre, Singapore.

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

Deadline for abstract submission: 7 November 2017

Conference information page link:
<https://adtelweb.org/26th-international-conference-on-teaching-education-and-learning-ictel-08-09-nov-2017-singapore-about-43>