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Readers' Response

▶ I have received the latest issue of FORTELL. The issue is elegant and informative. I have especially liked the articles on Making Evaluation Authentic, Assessment an opportunity to learn besides the language games and activities..

Lalita Vartak, Principal, Adarsha Comprehensive College of Education, Pune

▶ I read with great interest 'The Classroom Reception of Spenser's Epithalmion' by Anamika. A teacher who is resourceful can do much to awaken the interest of first generation learners.It would be useful if other texts like that of Donne and Browning are also taken up by teachers of English.Theory must help us in taking up the challenge of teaching large classes.

N. P. Singh, Retired Associate Professor, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi

From the Editorial Desk

Since 1992, 3rd December is observed as the 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' by the United Nations. Till 2007, the day was called the 'International Day of Disabled Persons'; the shift in vocabulary from 'disabled persons' to 'persons with disabilities' is indicative of the change in society's stance towards the differently abled. However we need to question if the change in vocabulary is mere political correctness or has it brought about a change in society's attitude.

The UN theme for 2011 is 'Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development'; 'inclusion' is the key idea here and one feels that education is crucial and integral for the differently abled to integrate in the mainstream and be participants in the developmental activities. 'Right to Education Act' is a national mandate for free and compulsory education for children of 6 to 14 years of age, including those with special needs, differences and differentiation need to be eliminated in recognition of rights of differently abled. CBSE has taken a step in that direction by allowing the differently abled students to opt for science stream, while it is a welcome move it lays bare the disadvantages and segregation that they have faced till now.

'The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities'(2006) attempts to provide a framework under which the state, civil society and private sector must cooperate to ensure a dignified life for persons with disabilities and support to their family. Its guidelines regarding education include providing study material like talking text books and speech software, to have barrier free access to educational institutions including hostels and libraries, introducing shuttle services and ensuring equal opportunities in sports and cultural activities. All of us know that these guidelines are far from implemented in our educational institutions.

As teachers and as civil society members, we need to create the physical and mental environment for equal opportunities for education for all. We need to push for greater infrastructural support at schools and universities, and within the classroom bring about changes in attitudes. Sensitisation is important amongst fellow teachers and students. We also need to be aware that other senses and abilities take over in the case of deficiency in one of the abilities and need to address those abilities in the classroom to make for enactive learning. While sensitivity is important in interaction with those with special needs, our behaviour should be normalizing and not discriminatory aimed at their integration into the mainstream. The need is not to just pay lip service to the cause by celebrating certain days in the year but to make real concerted efforts for inclusivity. That can perhaps be one of our New Year resolutions.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU

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Skewed Testing and Washback

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Testing is undoubtedly an important area in the educational system of a country. A test is expected to serve not only as a monitor of educational achievement but also as a powerful tool of educational reform (Linn, 1992 cited in Cheng, 1999, p.254). While the high status attributed to a test may raise the stakeholders' expectations of test consequences, it may also be a cause of concern for several practitioners and researchers. This is because of the widely held belief that tests have negative impact on teaching and learning.

Introduction

'Washback' is a relatively common term in the field of assessment and applied linguistics (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Washback may be defined as the impact that tests have on teaching and learning (Alderson and Banerjee, 2001). According to Messick(1996), the term washback refers to 'the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning' (p. 241). Alderson (2004) reports that washback does indeed exist. Madaus(1988) has rightly pointed out that '[i]t is testing, not the "official" stated curriculum, that is increasingly determining what is taught, how it is taught, what is learned, and how it is learned' (p.83).

The concept of washback received much attention after Alderson and Wall (1993) raised the question 'Does washback exist?.' They have suggested some possible washback hypotheses:

1. A test will influence teaching.

2. A test will influence learning.

3. A test will influence what teachers teach.

4. A test will influence what learners learn.

5. A test will influence how learners learn.

6. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching and learning.

7. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.

8. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching.

9. A test will influence attitudes to the content and method of teaching and learning.

10. Tests that have important consequences will have washback on teachers and learners.

Further, Bailey (1996, p.262) draws our attention to Hughes' (1993) approach to the mechanisms by which washback works. Hughes (1993, p.2 cited in Bailey, 1996, p.262) states that a test may affect participants, process and product in teaching and learning. He includes students, classroom teachers, administrators, materials developers and publishers under participants. Their perceptions and attitudes towards their work may be affected by a test. Hughes (ibid) indicates that process refers to 'any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning'. Materials development, syllabus design, changes in teaching methodology and the use of learning and/or test-taking strategies are included under processes. According to Hughes (ibid), product means 'what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning (fluency, etc.)'.

> The nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practising the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of that work.

> *(Hughes, 1993, p.2 cited in Bailey, 1996, p.262)*

Based on various research findings, Green (2007, p. 24) presents a model of washback as given in Figure 1. The model starts from test design
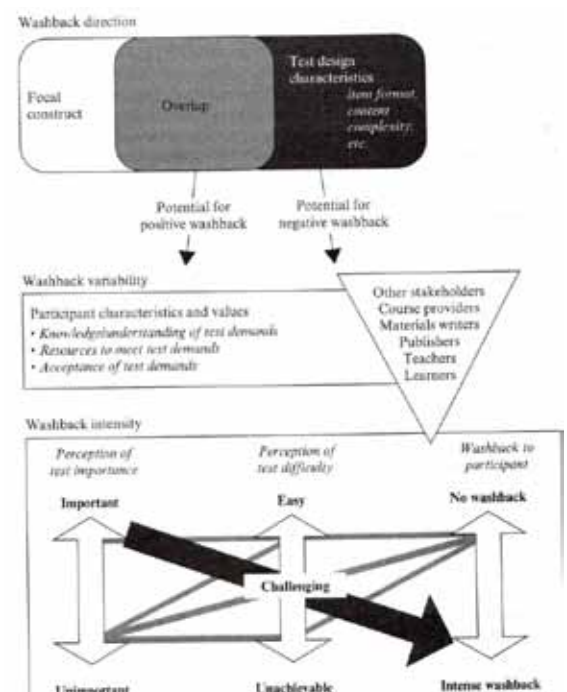

Figure 1: Washback model (Green, 2007, p. 24)

characteristics and constructs representation and relates them to test washback. Green observes that the likelihood of positive washback depends on the extent of congruence (overlap) between test design and skills developed by a curriculum. If there is no overlap, the effects are likely to be damaging to teaching and learning. The model then relates the design issues to contexts of test use. According to this model, washback effects will vary from participant to participant depending on the participant's awareness of and readiness to address the demands of the test and their willingness to accept beliefs about learning reflected in the test design. Furthermore, washback intensity will vary depending on the status of the test; a high-stakes test is likely to have most intense washback effects.

The research studies on washback may be broadly classified into two categories: studies on the washback effects of tests on (a) teaching and (b) learning. We will first look at the washback effects on classroom teaching.

Impact on teaching

A study (Slomp, 2008) conducted on the Canadian high-stakes writing assessment's effect on the teaching of writing in three grade 12 academic English classrooms found that the teachers seemed to narrow their teaching of writing in relation to processes taught, assignment design, and evaluation criteria used. Slomp concluded that the examination caused a negative impact on the teaching of writing. According to her, the negative impact was largely due to the fact that there were significant differences between the skills measured by the exam and the skills defined within the curriculum. The relationship between the skill-sets defined within both the curriculum and the examination may be illustrated as in Figure 2. Slomp (2008) reported that the skills contained in the overlapping sections were common to both constructs whereas the skills contained in the green area were ignored by the exam, and the skills contained in the pink were measured by the exam even though they were not contained in the curriculum' (p. 184).
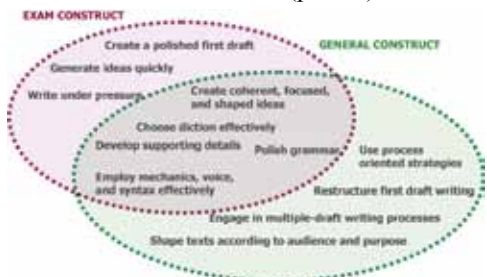

Figure 2:   Comparison of exam and curriculum constructs (Slomp, 2008, p. 184)

The washback of Board examinations is also clear in many classrooms in India. For instance, a cursory look at the test papers of many Grade X examinations of government schools reveals that nearly 60% of the questions are from the prose, poetry and supplementary reading parts of the text books prescribed. As a result, classroom teaching has also become textbook-centred and examination-oriented. As the Board examinations test students' mastery of content, only content teaching takes place in the classroom at the expense of skills development. For example, reading is taught in the classroom only through the prescribed lessons such as prose, poetry and supplementary reading. A variety of authentic texts such as advertisements, notices, posters, newspapers, magazines, instruction manuals, etc. are not made use of for developing reading skills precisely because such materials are not used in the final examination for testing reading. There is hardly any attempt made to develop skimming, scanning, critical thinking and other higher-level skills involved in reading. Similarly, listening and speaking skills are neglected in the classroom because these skills are not tested in the examination. Conversation in the classroom is limited only to questions and answers. Little emphasis is laid on the systematic teaching of writing skills. Writing is not seen as a form of communication and students are not encouraged to create their own pieces of writing.

Also, it is a common practice in the classroom to review past test papers and study test items that are likely to appear in the final examination. Teaching and learning are, thus, directed to examination preparation. The negative washback may be primarily a consequence of the high status attributed to the Board examination and also the test design.

Impact on learning

One of the washback hypotheses listed by Alderson and Wall (1993, pp. 120-21) is: 'Tests influence what learners learn'. However, Wall (2000) observes that there are few research studies that have paid attention to the impact of tests on the 'products of learning': 'What is missing . . . are analyses of test results which indicate whether students have learned more or learned better because they have studied for a particular test' (p.502). However, research works done by Ferman (2004) and Shih (2007) shed some light on these aspects.

Ferman (2004) examined the washback effects of

a national EFL oral matriculation test for Grade 12 introduced by the Ministry of Education into the Israeli educational system. The oral test consisted of four parts, namely, an extended interview, a role play, an extensive reading part and a literature component. The study was conducted using structured questionnaires, structured interviews, open interviews, and document analysis. The results indicated that there had been an increased attention paid to and efforts made on the oral skills in class by most of the students. Students also reported using specific learning strategies such as intensive learning for the test, memorization, self-learning and tutor-employment. Ferman (2004, p. 201) noted that most of the students found the oral test helpful in upgrading their overall command of English. Another interesting finding was that there was parental involvement in the test. The study indicated that 59.2% parents urged the students to learn for the test and 51.7% of them employed tutors to help students prepare for the test. Ferman also reported feelings of anxiety to quite a high extent among most students. Hence, the EFL oral matriculation test resulted in both positive and negative washback on the processes, the products, and those involved. Moreover, Ferman (2004) observed that the test resulted in differential washback which was reflected 'in the extent and type of teaching and learning for the test, both with regard to the different parts of the oral test and the different ability levels of the students' (p. 205).

Some of these findings are confirmed by Shih (2007) who studied the washback of General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in Taiwanese institutions of higher education using interviews, observations and reviews of documents and records. However, she found that the GEPT, though perceived as a high-stakes test, induced various but limited degrees of washback on learning among participants at two different institutions. As far as the time that the students spent on their test preparations was concerned, the test had a small impact on the participants at one university and a slightly higher degree of washback on those at the other university. Another interesting finding was that students, on average, prepared for listening and reading more than for speaking and writing and Shih cited the following reasons for this:

> ...because these output skills are predominantly tested in the second stage, for which only those who pass the first stage are entitled to register. In

fact, all 29 interviewed students reported that they would prepare for the second stage solely in the wake of their success in passing the first stage: if they failed the first stage, they would never gear themselves up for the speaking and writing skills tested in the second stage.

(Shih, 2007, p. 143)

With regard to the content of learning in their test preparations, the most widely used materials were GEPT preparation books or authentic test items produced by local publishers or the Language Training and Testing Centre in Taiwan. Shih (2007) reported that students either bought their own copies or borrowed them from their classmates, friends, teachers or family members. As regards learning strategies, students seemed to employ more diverse observable strategies in preparing for speaking skills than for any other skill area. Shih (2007) indicated that '[t]he possible reason for this phenomenon was that students seldom practised speaking skills, so they had to come up with strategies specifically for coping with the test' (p.143). She draws our attention to the fact that parents, siblings, spouses, friends, and classmates seemed to have influenced the students in their preparation for the GEPT by encouraging them to study for the test, offering reference books, giving test-preparation advice, etc.. This is in line with Ferman's (2004) observation about the parental involvement in the test in the Israeli educational setting.

Based on these studies, we cannot assume that teaching and learning consequences are reflective of test validity (or invalidity). It is important to carry out empirical washback studies in our context in order to understand better the causes and nature of washback. These research studies suggest that washback is a complex phenomenon. As Cheng and Curtis rightly note

> The relationship between testing and teaching and learning does appear to be far more complicated and to involve much more than just the design of of a "good" assessment. There is more underlying interplay and intertwining of influences within each specific educational context where the assessment takes place.

(2004, p.16)

The mere existence of a test does not bring about either a positive or a negative washback. There are, apart from the test design itself, several other factors in any educational context that influence

what happens in the classroom. It is important to understand and analyse these factors before any decisions about test impact are made.

Hence, changing a test, though a necessary condition, is certainly not sufficient for changing the teaching and learning behaviours of teachers and students. We need to tease out other forces that exist within the educational system that might prevent beneficial washback from appearing.

I would also like to highlight that it is time assessment professionals, testing agencies and teacher educators addressed the negative consequences of standardised tests and strived for achieving positive impacts on teaching and learning. In order for this to happen, assessment tasks should embody the full range and depth of what we want our learners to achieve by the end of the course. Test designs should reflect the philosophical stance of the curriculum and in that sense, an alignment of assessment and curriculum may be a desirable way forward. It is also worth considering the possibility of having a balanced and coherent assessment system where formative assessment procedures would receive as much attention as standardised high-stakes tests. This is not to argue that negative consequences of standardised tests may be overcome by having formative assessment system. On the contrary, not much is known about the washback effects of formative classroom assessment and hence future studies may concentrate on looking at the test impacts of classroom-based assessments on teaching and learning.

Washback is certainly an area that should be explored further. However, what is crucial is designing appropriate methodologies for washback research that include the development, refinement and validation of research instruments.

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Teaching Word Order in English

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Teaching word order in English to primary class learners is not as easy as many of us think and hence writers have to be very careful in writing teaching-learning materials. There may be few problems with controlled and guided exercises but free exercises can land teachers in unchartered territories that the teacher has not planned to visit at that level of the learners. On several occasions, the list of words provided can be arranged in more than one order which may be both grammatically correct and semantically acceptable. For example, let us consider the following example for joining to show its word order:

| Mother | baked | | a |
| today. | cake | delicious |

The list of words given in this example can be arranged in more than one order which may be both grammatically correct and semantically acceptable.

The clues that the letter 'm' in the word 'mother' is given in capital and that there is full stop after 'today' indicate that the teacher wants the learners to begin the sentence with 'Mother' and end with 'today' and the sentence expected is

'Mother baked a delicious cake today.'

But the given words can also be combined as 'Mother baked today a delicious cake', or 'Mother today baked a delicious cake' and so on and even 'Today mother baked a delicious cake' has to be accepted because the error here is not owing to lack of knowledge of the 'word order' but of punctuation marks found in the written sentence, as the word order would be perfectly acceptable in spoken English and hence may confuse young learners.

The problem becomes more acute when learners have to decide the order of several modifiers as, for example, tall, brown, wooden, given in the example below:

| Govind | stood | on | a |
| stool. | wooden | brown | tall |

Primary students, not aware of the acceptable sequence of adjectives, may produce different sentences by choosing to place the adjectives as they wish or deem correct. In such case, should the teacher give any explanation or clarification for these varied possibilities? I personally am of the view that this should not be done for this level of learners of English (primary classes) as it may

have more disadvantages than advantages even if the learners happen to be students studying in English medium schools.

Teaching 'word order' is a tricky task in English and in some other languages, including Hindi, as word order is often used to manipulate this resource of the language for conveying subtle meanings and for creative purposes, too, and its knowledge is very useful for language users, particularly in reading literature. Hence, in this brief article, I would want to suggest a way out and this lies in wisely selecting and grading – the two cardinal principles for teaching foreign/second languages - items for teaching word order to students in our schools. Selection, gradation, and presentation of learning materials have always been followed in the history of foreign/second language teaching though the items selected for teaching/learning have varied from structures to situations, functions and notions, tasks and activities, role plays and so on with corresponding changes in classroom presentation.

In this era of communicative methodology of language teaching, any talk of teaching word order of the target language so popular during the hey day of structuralism may be laughed at. But in foreign language/L2 teaching situation – as English is in India – practising teachers of English must not shy away from helping their learners understand the structure of modern English for practice particularly to students in primary classes studying in vernacular medium schools now that English is being introduced in Class 1 in some states, and for remedial teaching in upper primary and secondary classes as well, if necessary.

Historically, word order has been taught using what have been called 'Substitution Tables' in which learners are asked to pick one word/phrase from each column in the order in which the columns are arranged and frame a sentence.

Here is a sample exercise for those who may have forgotten, or are unaware of these tables:

Mother		cooking breakfast.
Shiela	is	watching television.
The mechanic	was	dusting windows.
Father		cleaning the floor.
My sister		reading newspaper.

These tables can be the beginning of learners' exposure to the structures of 'unmarked' or normal English sentences in the primary classes. Whatever their criticism as being mindless mechanical practice exercises, substitution tables for the beginners have many advantages. These give beginners a controlled and guided practice in word order; help learners 'perceive' the forms of words that can occur under 'subject' and 'predicate' and their order; there is no fear of learners producing a different word order; and it is better to give beginners rule-governed activities initially. And the fact that learners produce a correct sentence every time they form a sentence boosts their confidence level and this success in itself acts as an intrinsic motivation for learning the target language.

The next step in teaching word order can be 'Cognitive Tables' which elevated 'substitution tables' from being purely mechanical exercises. The following is an example of a cognitive table:

Mother		cooking	television.
Parents	is	repairing	books.
Teachers	was	cleaning	breakfast.
I	are	reading	windows.
We	were	watching	a table.
She	am	dusting	
My sister			

These cognitive table exercises also have all the merits we have stated above with regard to substitution tables; in addition, these force learners to apply their minds and focus not just on 'form' but also on 'meaningfulness' of the sentences being formed and hence, though not examples of natural language use, take the learners a bit nearer towards it.

Uncontrolled and unguided 'free' exercise is the next step but if the objective is to teach the structure of a sentence or the order of words in a normal ('unmarked') sentence of English then instead of words we ought to give phrases or chunks of words or what are also termed as 'sense groups' for re-ordering as :

I	only for a walk	out	took the dog

and not:

Took	the	I	out	dog	walk	only	a	for

Carefully constructed and jumbled 'sense groups' take learners beyond words to phrases that can occur in a sentence. This also prepares them for natural language use as speakers use 'chunking of words' in their speech and not one word at a time. The list of the jumbled words given above (but not the sense groups) opens itself to various combinations and therefore such an exercise can be done with learners at higher levels who have already mastered the structures of normal English sentences and their patterns through carefully selected and graded exercises.

Let us consider the various ways in which these words can be combined in a free and uncontrolled exercise:

- I took the dog out for a walk only.

- Only I took the dog out for a walk.

- I only took the dog out for a walk.

- I took the dog out only for a walk.

- I took only the dog out for a walk.

All these combinations are in order grammatically both in speech and in writing but each of these word order combination conveys a different meaning that the speaker intends to convey and hence such exercises, in my opinion, are not suitable for teaching word order – certainly not for primary class students. Spoken English also uses certain other features to convey these different subtle meanings and higher level learners should be consciously introduced to these features.

What I am trying to say is that this is a higher level language skill and ought to be taught only after the word order of a normal 'unmarked' sentence has been grasped as in these 'utterances' the focus shifts from 'form' to 'meaning' as in the following sentence from Shakespeare's Henry IV:

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown

Clearly this is an acceptable sentence but its word order needs explanation and clarification for L2/EFL learners. Examples of such constructions are found in abundance in literary texts and show how adept language users exploit the linguistic resources of a language for conveying subtle meanings. In fact, in secondary and higher classes students can be asked to rewrite such constructions into normal English sentences and compare the meanings these convey to realise what difference the change in word order makes to the sentence.

Integrating e-learning with language learning to enhance writing skills of the learners

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Introduction

The advent of technology has revolutionized all spheres of our life and education sector is no exception. Technology appended learning has to a large extent become a model in mainstream pedagogy. The theory and practice of on-line learning has ushered in new opportunities to the academicians and learners alike. Much has been proposed regarding the 'wide and diverse forms of teaching and learning that can be supported on the Web' (Anderson, 2004, p.55). This paper examines some of the concerns related to teaching-learning-writing through technology.

E-learning refers to all electronically assisted instruction, but is most often associated with instruction offered via computer and the internet to facilitate learning. Typically, it involves some form of interactivity, which may include online interaction between the learners and their peers or teacher.

Appeal of technology to educators

Innovation in technology and electronic gadgets encourages the educator to design an on-line approach to the teaching of writing skills. Here, it is worthwhile to quote Anderson's theory that on-line learning, like all forms of quality learning, is 'knowledge, community, assessment, and learner centered' (Anderson, 2004, p.55). Features like easy to use, share, store, carry, review, discuss have slowly but steadily captured the attention of educators and learners. The concept of use, reuse, with flexibility and inter-operability has wider appeal 'glocally'.

Creativity involved in e-learning

In writing pieces, creating multimedia presentations, in designing blogs and producing an e-portfolio, the student learners channelize their creativity to the best of their potential. Programmes, such as Microsoft Word, PageMaker, FrontPage, and communicative accesses such as the internet, intranet, e-chat and on-line forums facilitate their creative production. The students plan and cooperate as a writing community to participate in writing and editing sessions. They apply creative writing techniques as if in a writing workshop; learn skills in editing and criticism;

are introduced to technical presentation skills; and learn the processes involved in writing and publication.

Sample Task I (Group)

Task administration

The teacher has to post a new topic each week on a specific day, preferably Sunday, and throughout the week the students should be asked to continue their discussions by using the interactive/discussion dashboard. After the sixth day a student should be asked to summarise and send the essay as an attachment to the teacher.

Learning outcomes

1. The sentence construction of the students will improve.

2. It will enhance their ability of interpretation by reading others' posts.

3. They improve their vocabulary as they read, use and share many new words.

4. The sentential skills such as using proper intra-inter sentence connectors etc. are strengthened.

5. They learn the most important skill of paraphrasing and summarizing.

The above listed are only a few learning outcomes, moreover the students will get an opportunity of sharing and discussing with friends, siblings, parents and others, as the task performed is spread over a week. The learning continues even beyond the classroom.

Precautions to be taken by the teacher

There is scope of misuse of flexibility. While flexibility should be allowed within a designed structure, boundaries need to be imposed to ensure that the learning adheres to an academic framework. A few questions on one-on-one basis can be asked by the teacher to test the authenticity of the work submitted. Deadlines for the submission of assessed work are also to be adhered to.

Learning writing in the classroom v/s using e-resources

Writing has always been taught through an approach that requires the students to work individually and not as a community in a conservative classroom. Until recently, traditionally taught students had a disadvantage as the course was a single entity and its quality depended heavily on the time and ability of the teacher/instructor to incorporate new elements. Whereas the multi-level learning possibility of using e-resources of one-alone, one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many has ushered in a sea change in the learning process. Anderson claims, 'The Net provides expanded opportunities for students to plunge ever deeper into knowledge resources, thus affording a near limitless means for students to grow their knowledge, to find their way around the knowledge of the discipline, and to benefit from its expression in thousands of formats and contexts.' (Anderson, 2004, p. 37)

The French Marxist theorist, Pierre Macherey sees the writer not as a creator but as a producer, he has developed a model that looks at the correct literary form as a link between realist work and historical reality and the relationship between the writer and his text. According to Macherey, the producer 'works pre-existing literary genres, conventions, language and ideology into end-products: literary texts' (Jefferson & Robey, 1982, p.177). The role of the writer mirrors the process of labour in the production line, where raw materials are first collected, then combined and finally transformed into an end-product.

Sample Task II (Individual)

Task administration

The teacher has to ask the students to define their dream job, related to the course they are pursuing. The students should be asked to surf the net and gather information about the required skills for that particular position. They should be encouraged by the teacher to browse job portals like Naukri.com and Monster.com and to appear for online interviews to understand professional requirements. They should be asked to compile information and based on that information prepare:

1. Advertisement as an employer
2. Resume as a potential employee
3. Covering letter as a potential employee
4. Recommendation letter as a teacher/guide
5. Business card as the employee

Learning outcomes

1. The students will get exposed to the professional/career requirements and become more focused.

2. Irrespective of the stream/course they learn the needed basic/minimum technical HR jargon.

3. Processing the gathered material for different purposes based on functionality.

4. They will understand the different types of correspondence/writing forms.

5. It helps not only in enhancing writing skills but also sensitizes the learners about the professional demands.

Through this task the students will get an opportunity to experience and envisage the different stages involved in the job search. They begin with job portals and end with their business card. The data culled out can be of good use even for other students as useful information about future prospects and professional avenues.

Precautions to be taken by the teacher

There is possibility that the students may drift away and just imagine some 'fancy' job profiles. To ensure the maximum benefit from the task, the teacher should spend some quality time and make them understand the worth of commitment while completing the activity.

The beginning of individual writing process by the students

Burroway (2003, p. xxi) claims 'all writing is imaginative' and that the 'translation of experience or thought into words is of itself an imaginative process.' When the students voluntarily use e-resources their real individual self comes to the surface. This helps the students in understanding their traits, likes, dislikes etc. An analysis of the students' write up certainly delineates how the self becomes an inspiration to the writing process and production. According to Garrison and Anderson (2003, p.2), 'at the core of the e-learning transformation is the Internet.'

The flexibility of e-writing

A major advantage of using e-writing is that it can be both, a group activity as well as an individual activity. If a student out of self-interest starts blogging, he can post or upload material, share information and elicit suggestions. It will not be restricted to just the teachers or friends but will be presented to the global community, where he will get an opportunity to enhance information sharing skill.

E-writing : an aid to help write succinctly

When the students upload photos they write a caption for each photo. This hones the learners' ability in conveying the message precisely.

Sometimes even the one line updates from the dash board or status bar convey a lot. An examination of the written captions for status bar, titles, uploads etc. by the teacher, can reveal the student's flair and potential areas for improvement. Anderson (2004, p.42) claims that the World Wide Web is 'A multifaceted technology that provides a large set of communication and information management tools that can be harnessed for effective education provision.'

E-resources promote hassle-free and cost effective writing

The ease with which content can be updated and revised, either manually, or by the use of autonomous agent technology makes online learning content more responsive and current than content developed for other media. The availability of e-writing tools and user-friendly course-content management systems provides an environment in which without the aid of programmers and designers, the teachers and learners can create and update course contents themselves.

Conclusion

E-learning provides a fun-filled method of learning, it opens up unexplored vistas. Students are empowered by the autonomous nature of the internet when they 'publish' their write ups and creative pieces by uploading them into their e-portfolios. They bounce their ideas off each other and get the opportunity to explore the subject from diverse angles. The freedom of the internet also opens the writing of the students to instant feedback from visitors to their weblogs, which if tracked by people with ill intentions can be hazardous. Guidance of teacher thus remains essential to keep students focused on the task and not be led off-track by the limitless resources available.

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In-service Primary Teachers' Beliefs about Teacher Talk in ESL Classrooms

Mahesh B. Shinde and Tripti Karekatti

Introduction

In recent past, English has almost achieved the status of a global language. Educational policies in many countries are intensifying teaching of English as an essential part of the school curriculum to meet the challenges of globalization and internationalization. Indeed, primary education is the foundation on which the development of every citizen and the nation as a whole is built on. India has made huge progress in terms of increasing primary education enrolment, retention, regular attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two-thirds of the population. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic development of India. At the same time, the quality of elementary/primary education in India has also been a major concern. Therefore, the Indian government has made education free for children from six to sixteen years of age under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The current scheme for universalisation of Elementary Education in India

is the 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world.

Many states in India have included English in school curriculum and teach English from the first standard. In Maharashtra, where the present research was carried on, English is being taught as a first language in English medium schools and as a second language in regional (Marathi) medium schools. From June 2000, English is being taught from the first standard in Marathi medium schools. But, even after a decade, the desired goals have not been achieved to full extent. Apart from many other reasons, such as social and family background of the students, size of classrooms, and availability of teaching aids, the basic reason is unavailability of competent and well trained teachers. Teacher training is thus a significant issue in Maharashtra. However, teacher beliefs are important considerations in conducting teacher training, so, it's essential to study the belief system of teachers.

Teacher beliefs:

Beliefs are defined as personal constructs that can provide an understanding of a teacher's practice (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). During the past thirty years, research has made significant contributions to the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, which has produced important findings for both pre-service and in-service teachers. A number of studies have attempted to investigate and categorise the beliefs of ESL teachers through questionnaires or inventories (Hsieh & Chang, 2002; Johnson, 1992; Yang, 2000).

However, teacher's beliefs about his/her own talk in classrooms is also of equal importance. It shall be of great use if teachers are aware about the importance of teacher talk; how to reduce teacher talk time (TTT) and teacher talk amount and encourage student talk; what the various features of teacher talk are and how to develop/use them effectively.

Teacher talk:

In ESL classroom it is often seen that teacher's speech displays a variety of structural modifications, grammatical and lexical simplifications depending on the nature of the task and the competence of the learners. This is called 'teacher talk'. Rod Ellis (1985, p.304) describes it as 'teacher's adjustment to both language form and language function in order to facilitate communication'. Thus 'teacher talk' can simply and succinctly be defined as teachers' simplified,

but not unnatural, variety of language especially uttered for the younger and newer learners of a SL/FL.

Methodology

Subjects: Ten primary school teachers from Maharashtra (India) are the subjects of this study. Five of them are from English medium schools (henceforth EMTs) and five are from vernacular (Marathi) medium schools (henceforth MMTs). They have varied experience from one year to twenty years.

Procedure: A questionnaire was prepared which consisted of ten questions regarding teacher talk. Five-point Likert scale was used and participants were asked to gauge their beliefs by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each statement using (1) SD = strongly disagree, (2) D = disagree, (3) N = neither agree nor disagree, (4) A = agree, or (5) SA = strongly agree.

Discussion and findings:

Story telling skill: All of these teachers believe that in order to teach children English effectively a primary teacher must have the story telling skill.

Amount of teacher talk: Researches in language classroom have established that teachers tend to do most of the classroom talk; up over 70% of the total talk (Cook, 2000; Chaudron, 1988). However, no one from the subjects agreed with the view that in ESL classroom teacher should talk all the time and students should only listen. But it also depends on the level of students. If they are advanced they understand it easily and perform the given task/activity successfully. But if they are at beginner's level and especially from non-English background, teacher inevitably has to talk more. It reflects that a balance between teacher talking time (TTT) and student talking time (STT) is urgently required. But there are several factors such as the learner level, their cultural as well as linguistic background, lesson in progress, etc. that decide the amount of TT. Thus, the amount of TT should not be decreased arbitrarily.

Use of mother tongue (MT): Use of MT in second language classrooms has also been an important issue in SLL/A research. Research has shown that the occasional (or judicious) use of L1 by both students and teachers increases both comprehension and learning of L2 (Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002; Wells; 1999). These teachers also believe that use of L1 (Marathi) is useful in learning English. Though all five MMTs and

four EMTs believed that teaching English through English is more effective than teaching it with the help of bilingual method, eight of them (4 MMTs, 4 EMTs) also supported the statement that Marathi should be used if children are confused and baffled. It shows that these teachers believe that MT plays scaffolding role in second language learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that in Indian situation where MT has greater influence on SLL/A, MT plays important role as a great source of comprehensible input.

Use of foreign tone: Most of the time, teachers think that they should use foreign tone in order to give appropriate English exposure. In case of present teachers, eight teachers (4 MMTs, 4 EMTs) disagreed that using foreign tone is essential for giving appropriate input.

Questioning: Teachers have often been criticized for relying too much on questions designed just to elicit 'the right answers'. The view of a teacher-leading-classroom-interaction by series of questions to which only he or she knows the answer is partially true. Teachers do not simply make enquiries to assess their pupils' learning, but also to guide their activity. Thus a large proportion of teacher talk is indeed taken up by asking questions. The present teachers also agree that asking questions is important and useful. But knowing various types of questions like open/closed, display/referential, etc is also important. Most of the teachers agreed that 'questioning' is very important while teaching younger children as it helps to check the understanding of students and detect the lacunae so that they can be rectified. 'Questioning' also functions as a participatory classroom activity.

Paraphrasing and repetition: Giving explanations is one of the language functions that might be thought to be most typical of teacher talk. Teachers often try to make their directions and instructions more understandable by careful use of repetition and paraphrasing, in an attempt to simplify the language. Frequent repetition and simplified paraphrasing by teachers facilitates English learning to a great extent. Most of the teachers are well informed about it and support the statement related to it. (Item 7)

Giving feedback: Giving positive feedback at an appropriate time plays a significant role in SLL/A, and all the teachers agreed with the statement related (item 4) to it. But it is worth noting that negative feedback, if given supportively and warmly, will be recognized as constructive, and will not necessarily discourage.

The above findings show that these teachers are well aware about the relevance of TT in ESL classrooms, but they need to have more knowledge about use of TT effectively. This is reflected in their response to the last statement related to teachers training about how to talk effectively in classrooms which has been the most neglected area in the wake of learning new methodologies and techniques. The view is that even the most experienced teachers with 20 years and more of experience are expected to have such training.

Conclusion and implications:

To conclude, primary school teachers should be aware about the features and functions of teacher talk like questioning, paraphrasing, feedback, instructions giving, scaffolding, direct-repair, seeking clarification, teacher echo, teacher interruptions, turn completion, etc. It is true that using MT judiciously does not hinder the SLL process; rather it plays a scaffolding role in the students SL development. A primary school teacher is expected to be a good story teller, must know various ways to ask questions, give feedback on time, need not emphasis on use of foreign tone, and use paraphrasing and repetition to make the matter simple and comprehensible.

In formal training programmes designed for teachers it is quiet essential to give significant emphasis on how to 'talk' effectively in classrooms; especially how to ask questions, how to give feedback, how to paraphrase the contents, and how to decrease TTT and increase STT. Knowledge about teacher talk features and its adequate influence on second language learners should be included in such programmes so that along with effective methods, techniques and materials effective teacher talk will also assist them to be a successful teacher and it would automatically help in children English development in a better way.

It is hoped that the above research findings will encourage more language researchers and educators to learn about teacher talk features and functions in the primary school ESL classrooms.

List of statements included in the questionnaire:

1. *A primary teacher should be a good story teller.*

2. *In English classroom teacher should talk all the time and students should only listen.*

3. *Teachers should talk in foreign tone to give appropriate exposure to students.*

4. *Giving students positive feedback at appropriate time is very important in English learning.*

5. *Primary English teachers can give an excellent English input to students through their talk/speech.*

6. *Marathi must be used if children do not understand English.*

7. *As they are children and English is a totally new language to them, teacher should always make use of repetition and paraphrasing.*

8. *While teaching English, teacher should ask questions before and after lesson.*

9. *Marathi should never be used while teaching English to children.*

10. *Teachers should get appropriate training about how to talk effectively while teaching English to younger students.*

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Abuzz with Business:

Towards Holistic Learning and Reflection in the Business Communication Class

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Reflective practice is seen as critical to improvement in teaching and action research. Based on the cyclical model of Reflective practices in teaching(Kahn and Walsh), I have attempted to reflect upon the experience of teaching the paper of Business Communication to B.A. III year students of Functional English through an activity based approach. This paper has three main sections: Reflection for action, Reflection in action and Reflection on action. By 'Reflection for action' is meant the planning carried out prior to entering the classroom, keeping in mind a) the aims of the course and its contents, b) teacher's assumptions, expectations and aims, and c) the competencies and needs of the learners. 'Reflection in action' illustrates the process as it unfolded in the classroom, and refers to on–the–spot responses requiring quick thinking, especially in view of the changed roles of teacher and learners in adopting a task-based methodology. 'Reflection on action' involves review after the teaching event, noting the effects of the changed scenario, the fallout and feedback, and further plans in the light of experience.

Reflection for action:

Business Communication is a paper that B.A. students have to study in their final year of Functional English, a vocational subject for journalism and media-based careers. Apart from business correspondence, the syllabus includes the teaching and testing of oral, face-to-face communication in the workplace, through role plays and simulations.

Students opting for Functional English have to clear a screening test conducted by our Dept. of English in PG-Govt. College for Girls-11, Chandigarh. Most have studied in English medium schools, are from middle and upper class socio-economic backgrounds, and believe they are rather proficient in English.

I had taught this particular batch of 29 students in their first year; my assumption of their high self-image with regard to their communication skills was based on interactions with them. The students themselves stated: 'The business communication class had a lot of potential to be a not so interesting class, as we thought it would

just be about letter- writing, memos, notices and the like; which we have been doing since times immemorial.'

My aim in using a task-based methodology was to arouse and sustain the interest of my students. I wished to avoid the lecture-based method of dictating a set of rules and then getting them to write in accordance with 'model' letters from text-books. Importantly, I wanted my students to think about the 'why' behind the mechanics of business communication and develop some of the soft skills required in the world of work.

I adapted an idea from an innovative online project that I had partnered in last year. The Cross-cultural Business Communication project (www.2cbc.net) initiated by Prof. Neva Cebron from the University of Slovenia, has partners from institutions across Europe (Romania, Estonia, Austria, Hungary,etc.) and India (Bhopal School of Social Sciences; Bharati College, Delhi, PG-Govt. College for Girls-11, Chandigarh) who form companies and transact virtual business. Each partner sells its products to one designated company and buys from another. The students also prepare profiles of their country/region, institution and themselves, thus exchanging information about aspects of their lands and cultures.

For my class I planned that students would form groups of about 6 each. Each group would form a 'company', comprising of a director/ CEO, Purchase, sales and PR managers, etc. All the students had done a mandatory 4-week internship in the summer vacations prior to this academic session, so they could call upon their work experience and general knowledge of varied commercial organizations.

The focus would be on 'learning by doing'. 'Sample' material would acquaint students with standard formats and types of business correspondence, and some of the formulaic language/ conventions in terms of opening and closing lines, etc. Students would also be asked to procure, if possible, photocopies of letters used in actual business situations. They would discuss within their group and collaborate in the writing task, then send it to the concerned company. Each group would maintain a file of letters (photocopies) written and received. Role plays of business meetings of each group would be conducted in front of the whole class. Each group would record its activity in the teacher's log- book.

My role would therefore be that of a facilitator, wherein I would provide the stimulus for action and input in the form of key information;

pertinent questions would be asked, to get students to think for themselves; for example, why reference numbers are used in business letters.

Reflection in action:

The students expressed interest in the methodology proposed, though their main concern was how they would be marked for internal assessment if they were to work in groups. I assured them that I would be vigilant about who was working and how much. Emphasizing that ability to work as a team was valued in the corporate world, I exhorted the group leaders to ensure that all team members participated.

The following list of companies formed is illustrative of the students' inventiveness, use of their own knowledge base, and their willingness to work in large/ small groups:

Group I: Sublime Advertising Co. (subsidiary-J.K. Paper Mills)– 7 members (one had interned at an online web design and software development firm)

Group II: St.Claire's Convent School -6 members (two had interned at an international school and a centre for special education respectively)

Group III: The Hawk (TV Channel)—3 members (two had interned with a TV channel)

Group IV: Kafe Karaoke: 3 members(one is a member of AISEC)

Group V: Feel The Beat –Dance academy – 3 members (one is a finalist on a TV dance show)

Group VI: The Morning Bliss—newspaper – 4 members (all had interned with local newspapers)

Group VII: YP Developers—trading company -3 members

Examples of transactions done:

• Sublime Advertising writes inquiry letters to Morning Bliss and The Hawk for rates of advertising space/ time slots on behalf of their clients;

• St Claire's school invites editor of Morning Bliss to address their students at a career counselling seminar; inquires of Kafe Karaoke the estimate for catering at the event

• The Hawk writes to Kafe Karaoke to feature the restaurant in their new food show, 'Zaika'; draws up agenda and holds an in – house meeting to discuss details.

• Feel the Beat writes to St. Claire's, inviting them for the launch of their dance academy,

and offers free lessons

• Morning Bliss inquires and places an order for newsprint with J.K.Paper Mills

• YK Developers writes to Kafe Karaoke, offering food court space in their new mall

• Kafe Karaoke holds a meeting with St. Claire's to negotiate catering deal.

• Sublime Advertising holds an in-house weekly status update meeting; writes Minutes of the meeting

• Feel the Beat books a room for their chief guest at hotel

The challenge with these diverse groups was that I had to provide each company a different trigger and relevant input for them to conduct 'business'. Apart from being a resource and facilitator, my role also became that of a manager, and I often had to juggle among the groups and think up tasks for them to do.

The roles of the students changed too. Now they themselves were the resource; they had to think, talk and share their way through an activity. They and I were partners in a way, pooling our knowledge together. They read and assessed each other's work. Further, they had to ask questions, if they didn't understand something, whereas traditionally I, the teacher, would have 'told' them everything and received the stock 'yes' to the stock question, 'have you understood'? This was initially quite disconcerting for them. They also did not bring in any 'real' letters. I had to depend on my own resources for 'authentic materials'-- letters that I received from banks, clubs, insurance companies, and correspondence with my college.

Though the activities had been planned for all the groups to work in tandem, eg. all to write letters of inquiry and respond accordingly, in reality, each group's pace differed. Absentees would hold up the work. I often had to quickly devise alternative tasks. I decided then to let each group learn at its own pace. Thus, a new 'topic', for example, memos, was discussed and handouts were provided only to the group that was ready. Textbooks were used only for reference.

The lack of emphasis on direct, whole class teaching, with the students listening to a lecture or being read out to from a prescribed text book, caused some discomfiture among the students. The demand for 'structured teaching' in the feedback made me realize that the lecture mode is what students are overwhelmingly used to. Some of them probably felt that I was not teaching at all, despite the fact that after almost every class we would review the activity and consider the learning points that had arisen.

The role plays elicited much discussion of body language and tone, apart from the verbal content. At times, the students would be assigned 'personalities'-for example, being the aggressive type, or a shirker, and this generated a good deal of excitement, apart from discussions about how different qualities and personality traits can impact a work culture. Interestingly, when the PR manager of the dance academy was asked to do a hotel booking for their Chief guest, Mr. Prabhu Deva, both she and the student playing the 'receptionist' at Hotel Marriott found themselves stumbling. Here my assumption –and theirs- that this was a simple task, showed up as incorrect. The girls have obviously not done any hotel/ travel bookings, and perhaps had not heard or paid attention to their parents doing so! The solution came from a student –could we see some videos? I began to bring videos to class; some students said that they got a feel of the actual situation and could also be critical of unknown persons, whereas they hesitated giving negative statements in the case of their class mates' role plays.

Other interesting insights on gender and honorific norms arose --students invariably addressed letters to a 'Respected Sir'! There were new learning opportunities--the dance academy had to send a payment by cheque but only two students in the class had done so in real life and were now asking why 'two slant lines are put across the left hand corner'. My cheque book thus became teaching material.

Reflection in action:

1. Apart from my own observations, a very important part of this phase is student feedback. I asked each group to discuss among themselves and give me written feedback, apart from eliciting their opinions verbally.

    The key feedback received was:

    • "…gave the word 'communication' a whole new meaning…Letter writing was never so much fun, since now we have an actual, real person responding to it."

    • "Conducting a role play was the best part…the right kind of gestures, body language, which no book teaches, was taken care of."

    • "While the teacher is discussing stuff with one group, the other students create indiscipline..."

- "Certain students in the group perform nothing, but still would get marks…"

- " More notes should be given"… " During the time of exam we all need notes, as we developed a habit of studying from notes… the letters written in class were not taken seriously…

- "The teacher should become a little strict…

The following are my action points:

A plenary and revision lesson of overt teaching will be done for each topic, such as report writing, for students to feel that they have been 'taught'.

A performance chart of every group and its members has been displayed in the classroom, with ratings ranging from 1-3 stars and criteria as a) in-class activity b) punctuality and keeping to time schedules c) additional knowledge inputs shared. The performance chart will be updated monthly.

I shall be strict in ensuring that students do not exploit the freedom to discuss and talk.

I did not focus on the actual working of different kinds of companies. I could, for example, have asked Sublime Advertising to bring sample advertisements/cards, Kafe Karaoke to draw up a menu, estimate stock of serving ware, etc. Though this is not in their syllabus, yet it would go towards the holistic learning that is envisaged.

One success of this method, as I see it, has been the transfer, to some extent, of learning into their wider world. The students have shown remarkable enthusiasm, resourcefulness and responsibility in collaborating with me to host a literary fest for the first time in the college. They chalked out agendas and budgets, held meetings, bought prizes, prepared innovative posters, etc. The event was a big success.

Conclusion:

The aim has been the holistic development of students' skills and knowledge beyond the confines of syllabus. The experience of essaying a new approach has occasioned much cause for reflection and skills practice not only for myself as a teacher in pursuit of development, but also provided opportunities to my students to learn, to engage in analysis and to assess themselves and others. Thus they too engaged in reflective practice, looking back on what they had done and reviewing what they had learnt. This exercise has been highly stimulating and enriching for me, and hopefully for my students as well.

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Learning a Foreign Language: Gulliver's Way

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Readers of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) would know that during his four voyages Gulliver is under compulsion to learn the language of the country into which he lands. Gulliver tells us right in the beginning, and shows it through out the Travels, that he has great facility for learning foreign languages. We also come to know that that he was, at least, familiar with, a number of European languages – high and low Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French, Latin, Lingua Franca. However, during his four voyages he lands up in at least four different and strange countries and is forced to learn their languages out of the compulsion to survive; at the same time he is interested in not only acquiring a working knowledge of those languages but also a high

degree of proficiency because he as a traveller wants to study the manners, customs, political, legal and educational and other institutions of those countries. As a result, he learns four different languages with high proficiency, and it would be interesting to see how he goes about it.

In the first voyage to Lilliput, this is what he has to say about how he learnt the Lilliputian language:

> It was likewise ordered that … six of his Majesty's greatest scholars should be employed to instruct me in their language… All these orders were duly put in execution; and in about three weeks I made a great progress in learning their language, during which time the Emperor frequently honoured me with his visits, and was pleased to assist my masters in teaching me. We began already to converse together in some sort; and the first words I learned were to express my desire that he would please to give me my liberty,
>
> From *A Voyage to Lilliput* (p.57)

> I had made a good progress in understanding and speaking their language.
>
> From *A Voyage to Lilliput* (p.62)

In Lilliput Gulliver seems to have learnt to comprehend, speak, read and write the native language, for he talks of having sent 'so many memorials and petitions for liberty.'(p.67). He also translates for the reader three documents of Lilliput into English, all related to himself.

If in Lilliput the responsibility of teaching the language is given to the scholars, aided by the emperor himself; in the next country, Brobdingnag, the responsibility of teaching the language falls on his nurse Glumdalclitch. This is what he tells us about his instruction in language learning:

> She was likewise my schoolmistress to teach me the language. When I pointed to anything she told me the name of it in her own tongue, so that in a few days I was able to call for whatever I had a mind to.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.120)

This is how his progress in language learning takes place. Gulliver is shown as a special kind of animal by the farmer to his neighbour.

> I was immediately produced and placed upon a table, where I walked as I was commanded, drew my hanger, put it up again, made my reverence to my master's guest, asked him in his own language how he did, and told him he was welcome, just as my little nurse had instructed me.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.121)

It is clear that Gulliver is being trained to parrot certain words and sentences because he is expected to perform as a trained animal; just as we train children to memorise and recite the alphabet, the numbers or the nursery rhymes before our guests (or by the teachers in the class) to show off their foreign language abilities. Gulliver is carried to different cities to be shown as a circus animal, and made to do certain things. His performance improves with each show:

> I walked about on the table as the girl commanded; she asked me questions as far as she knew my understanding of the language reached, and I answered them as loud as I could. I turned about several times to the company, paid my humble respects, said they were welcome, and used some other speeches I had been taught.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.123)

Later we come to know that Gulliver is able to use the language with a certain degree of proficiency and he also learns the Brobdingnagian alphabet:

> I could now speak the language tolerably well, and perfectly understood every word that was spoken to me. Besides, I had learned their alphabet and could make a shift to explain a sentence here and there; for Glumdalclitch had been my instructor while we were at home and at leisure hours during our journey. She carried a little book in her pocket… out of this she taught me my letters and interpreted the words.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.125)

By the time he meets the queen and the king he is quite proficient in conversing, though his language is heavily accented and 'clouded' with many rustic phrases:

> This was the sum of my speech, delivered with great improprieties and hesitation; the latter part was altogether framed in the style peculiar to that people, whereof I learned some phrases from Glumdalclitch while she was carrying me to court.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.127)

Over time he becomes so proficient in the use of this language that he is able to hold conversations on subjects that require a very deep understanding of the Brobdingnagian language:

> This prince took pleasure in conversing with me; enquiring into the manners, religion, laws, government, and learning of Europe, where in I gave him the best account I was able.
>
> From *A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (p.131)

In Brobdingnag Gulliver also talks of reading books, though we don't see him doing any writing; his proficiency in language learning is confined to listening and comprehending, speaking and reading; however the levels of proficiency are quite high.

In the third voyage, to Laputa, this is the account he gives of his learning the native language:

> While we were at dinner I made bold to ask the names of several things in their language… I was soon able to call for bread and drink, or whatever else I wanted.

> After dinner my company withdrew, and a person was sent to me by the King's order … He brought with him pen, ink, and paper, and three or four books, giving me to understand by signs that he was sent to teach me the language. We sat together four hours, in which time I wrote down a great number of in columns, with the translations over against them; I likewise made a shift to learn several short sentences. For my tutor would order one of my servants to fetch something, to turn about, to make a bow, to sit, or to stand or walk, and the like. Then I took down the sentence in writing. He showed me also, in one of his books, the figures of the sun, moon, and stars, the zodiac, the tropics and polar circles, together with the denominations of many planes and solids. He gave me the names and descriptions of all the musical instruments, and the general terms of art in playing on each of the. After he had left me I placed all my words, with their interpretations, in alphabetical order. And thus, in a few days, by the help of a very faithful memory, I got some insight into their language.

> From *A Voyage to Laputa* (p.184-85)

> In about a month's time I had made a tolerable proficiency in their language, and was able to answer most of the King's questions when I had the honour to attend him.

> From *A Voyage to Laputa* (p.190)

In the fourth voyage, where the ruling creatures are horses, the situation is different. The houyhnhnms know no alphabet and writing; therefore, Gulliver's main concerns here are only to understand and speak their language. And this he starts almost immediately on his arrival. He begins by listening attentively to two houyhnhnms conversing with each other and he picks up the word 'yahoo' that refers to him and begins to pronounce and practice it:

> I could frequently distinguish the word Yahoo, which was repeated by each of them several times; and, although it was impossible for me to conjecture what it meant, yet, while the two horses were busy in conversation, I endeavoured to practise this word upon my tongue; and, as soon as they were silent, I boldly pronounced Yahoo in a loud voice, imitating at the same time, as near as I could, the neighing of a horse; at which they were both visibly surprised, and the gray repeated the same word twice, as if he meant to teach me the right accent, wherein I spoke after him as well as I could, and found myself perceivably to improve every time, though very far from any degree of perfection. Then the bay tried me with a second word, much harder to be pronounced; but, reducing it to the English orthography, may be spelled thus, Houyhnhnm. I did not succeed in this so well as in the former; but, after two or three further trials, I had better fortune; and they both appeared amazed at my capacity.

> From *A Voyage to Houyhnhnms* (p.253)

After Gulliver has been led to the house of his houyhnhnm master and begins to settle down as their guest, as it were, he immediately engages himself in the task of learning their language.

> My principle endeavour was to learn the language which my master and his children and every servant of his house were desirous to teach me… I pointed to everything, and inquired the name of it, which I wrote down in my journal-book when I was alone, and corrected my bad accent by desiring those of the family to pronounce it often.

> The curiosity and impatience of my master were so great that he spent many hours of his leisure to instruct me.

> To help my memory I formed all I learned into the English alphabet, and wrote the words down, with the translations.

> In about ten weeks' time I was able to understand most of his questions, and in three months could give him some tolerable answers.

> From *A Voyage to Houyhnhnms* (p.259-60)

It seems the master houyhnhnm is far more eager than even Gulliver himself that he should learn to speak their language; and he doubles the 'pains' to instruct him.

Over time Gulliver is able to achieve enough competence in comprehending and speaking the houyhnhnm language to be able to converse with

his master and discuss with ease the manners and customs and politics and all other affairs of the two civilisations.

One might sum up the advantages Gulliver has as a learner, the strategies he employs and the proficiency he achieves.

Factors that make Gulliver such a facile learner of languages

- His natural genius, and good memory;
- His compulsion as a foreigner to communicate for survival, food, safety;
- His eagerness as a traveller to learn about the manners and customs, institutions etc. of the new countries he visits;
- The eagerness of the people of those countries to teach him;
- His interaction with so many people, he gets soaked in the language he is learning; and
- Persistence and great motivation.

Strategies he employs

- Learning to speak out and memorise names of things and objects around him;
- Practising phatic conversation;
- Learning by rote, memorising words and sentences, repetition to improve pronunciation and accent;
- Matching pictures with the names of objects in the pictures;
- Role playing;
- Practising short conversations through questions and answers;
- Long and sustained interaction with the native speakers;
- Long conversations on serious subjects,
- Use of mother tongue; and
- Use of translation.

Books are seldom employed; there are no texts books. And the interesting thing is that learning takes place in a situation in which neither the learner nor the teachers have any understanding whatsoever of each others' language.

His achievement

Where ever he goes, he achieves a very high proficiency in speaking, listening, and reading; conversing on serious subjects; and occasionally writing.

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Motivation in the Classroom

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Motivation is a much discussed term these days in the context of learning, especially language learning. The concept of motivation was initially introduced by the socio-economic model of learning proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972). In simple words, motivation is understood as 'the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it' (Ortega, 189). Over the years the term has been used to refer to the attitude and efforts employed by the learners in achieving the goal of language learning. Different aspects and models of motivation have been proposed. Gardner and Lambert (1972) had divided motivation into two categories- instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation refers to the pragmatic and utilitarian reasons for learning a language like better job prospects or the desire for a higher educational qualification. Whereas integrative motivation comes into play when there is identification with the target language community or a genuine interest in their language, literature and the like. Gardner's AMTB (Attitude/Motivation Test Battery) (Gardner, 1985) has been one of the most commonly used instruments to measure motivational level. Some of the main antecedents investigated in L2 motivation research include attitudes towards the L2 community, attitudes towards the instructional setting, integrativeness, orientations, inter-group contact, social support, self-confidence in using the language and ethnovitality (Ortega, 2009, p.172). Dörnyei (2005) posited the motivational self system which is an improvised version of integrative motivation. From Gardner and Lambert to Dörnyei, the studies on motivation have come a long way.

Classroom is one of the most important places where the learner can be motivated to perform well in the language learning tasks. Motivation

could be incorporated in the classroom with some awareness on the part of the teacher. Learners could be motivated to perform exceptionally well if certain simple prerequisites are taken care of. There is no single magic formula to motivate the learner into an efficient language learner. Some aspects are of extreme importance and it helps to be aware of them in the classroom setting.

Personality traits of the teacher:

The teacher brings in much more than his or her degrees into the classroom. Enthusiastic and energetic teachers succeed in maintaining dynamism in the classroom. A cheerful disposition is the precursor to a fruitful session with the learners in the classroom. Teaching efficacy, in-depth knowledge of the subject, caring attitude and confidence on the part of the teacher can increase student motivation. The teachers who score high on these factors can raise the bar for their learners thereby helping them to learn better regardless of the other factors.

Extending respect and courtesy to the learner is an important part of motivating the learner. When this is coupled with a genuine passion for the subject of instruction, the battle is already half won. Each individual learner should be acknowledged as an important part of the group regardless of the proficiency displayed by him or her. The weaker learners will be motivated to push themselves to improve their performance when they are treated at par with the rest. The teacher should be willing to spend more time and pay special attention to the very weak and the very bright learners of the class. He or she should be able to satisfy the curiosity of the proficient and build bridges with the weak thereby creating equilibrium in the classroom. This gives out the message that the teacher is genuinely interested in them and that he or she is committed in the success of the learning experience. It would help if the teachers could share anecdotes from their own learning experience in the language, especially humorous stories of the mistakes they made as learners of the language.

Developing student responsibility and self-regulation:

The learner should be made responsible for his/her own learning. The learner should be helped to recognize the 'why' of his or her learning behaviour. When the goal is made concrete in terms of personal gains, learning would become productive. Teaching the learners monitoring and metacognitive awareness of learning strategies help in making them self-regulated and efficient. Teachers could set practical learning goals in

consultation with the learners in the classroom. For instance, a time frame for completing a particular task could be set and charts depicting the same could be hung in the classroom for appraisals. It can ingrain self-regulation and autonomy in the learner. This coupled with regular positive reinforcements will motivate the learner.

Classroom environment- involvement and interaction:

Teachers should show that they care about their students by being willing to spend personal time with them. The learners could be grouped into pairs according to the strengths and weaknesses thereby helping them to complement each other. A personalized approach reinforces individuality along with the learner being accepted as part of the learning group. The teacher should ensure complete involvement of each of the learner in the learning tasks. With a humane approach, the learner could be helped to relax and be natural and curious in the classroom. 'If teachers try to provide opportunities for oral discussion in the classes, encourage learners to initiate topics and put some responsibility on the part of the learners, the class would be enjoyable, creative and initiative' (Muho and Kurani, 51).

Involvement, along with full support of the teacher would help in creating a learner-centred environment conducive to the learning process. The learner should be free to ask questions and should feel in control of the learning outcome. Teachers could begin lessons with interesting examples and fun filled activities thereby attracting the learners' attention. Language games in the classroom are a source of great fun and potential in teaching. Not only they teach, but also lower the learners' inhibitions, if any. There are a number of language games that could be played in the classroom like puzzles, quiz, pictionary, guess the word, etc.

Classroom interaction also includes timely and helpful feedback about the learning process. A positive feedback goes a long way in increasing confidence and motivation.

Incentives and rewards:

Students who do not have powerful intrinsic motivation to learn can be helped by extrinsic motivators in the form of rewards. Unwanted behaviour or answers should not be criticized or taken personally. The teacher should reward and reinforce correct behaviour and answers. Psychological studies tell us that positive reinforcement of an acceptable behaviour can be turned into a regular habit. Teachers could be creative in rewarding the learners according to

the age group of the class. Younger learners could be rewarded with colourful stickers, smileys, toffees, and the like. Even remarks like 'well done!' and 'great answer!' (even at the risk of sounding 'childish') could evoke motivation among the learners. Older learners could be given books, book-marks, certificates or simply a coffee at the canteen. More than the monetary value it is the thought and honour behind such incentives that count and propel the learners to excel. Teachers who are generous with their praises are obviously some of the most popular people around. Verbal reinforcements add value to the learning experience. These external forms of motivation can, over a period of time, lead to intrinsic motivation. All of us like to be rewarded and acknowledged for our efforts and students are no exception. The feeling of accomplishment and recognition will induce a 'high' among the learner thereby reinforcing the learning behaviour. We should remember that one kind of motivation may not work equally well for all given the different personality traits of the learners. Teachers should be willing to accommodate different types of learners and reward them accordingly. Some of the possible rewards can be appreciation in front of the class, 'student of the week' title, free activity class and a special cup of coffee with the teacher.

Incorporating technology in learning:

Modern day classroom cannot and should not dissociate from the use of technology. The use of technology improves motivation, interest and attention of learners. Multimedia softwares designed to teach and learn language are fairly effective. Audio and video not only help to gain the learners' attention but also stimulate language learning. E-learning and m-learning are the buzz words in language teaching these days and young learners are quite technology savvy. Real time and differed interaction could be encouraged through online devices such as Skype and Cloud. Teachers could use interactive sites to further the teaching learning process outside the classroom.

The list is endless and each teacher brings his or her own style of motivation to the classroom. There is no joy comparable to that of teaching a group of motivated and enthusiastic learners.

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Inclusive Education

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Inclusive education is a fairly new paradigm but has now been accepted as the fundamental pedagogical tool in the education of the disabled persons. By inclusion we mean making all the students coming from the minority groups, especially the disabled, share their classroom space with those coming from the mainstream, presumably the non disabled students. Locating disability not in damaged bodies, but in oppressive social environment, inclusion becomes a social corrective to the discriminatory class structures and the cruel and superstitious approaches of social exclusion. Therefore the disabled students should not be sent to special schools to be taught by specially trained teachers in a space that keeps them on the periphery of the mainstream unless the extent of disability warrants specialized care. Inclusion is thus the fundamental principal and the universally accepted pedagogy of disability studies today. It also means:

• that persons with disability have to be a part of the main stream processes and are not to be treated as special or different

• that disability is a deficiency or a problem to be accepted and to be adjusted with and to

find ways to work around it.

- that every one in some way or the other is disabled temporarily or permanently, physically or mentally, attitudinally or practically.

- that in our social set up we are all adjusting with each other's disabilities or deficiencies.

- It also means that the change of the social mindset is now imperative.

Society which has survived so far with its norms of what is right and acceptable, the universal model and the ablest culture and which invests in and accepts only the perfect will have to restructure its thinking. It should not marginalize and reject all that that does not match with the perfect primarily because perfection is a myth. However, changing a mindset that believes and endorses the ablest culture is an extremely difficult task. The process of change is very slow because of the religious and cultural sanctity assigned to the deeply embedded, dogmatic positions and the vested socio political interests that obstruct any change. Main streaming, normalization or inclusion evolve from long struggles for equal rights and demand immense psychological reorientation before they get accepted and implemented.

Having accepted that, we have now to look at the new human dimensions of the classroom, which has small percentages of the disabled students from different categories. The new equations strike very different interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the students and between the disabled and the non disabled students in terms of sensitivity, physical requirements, principles, teaching strategies and curriculum.

The fundamental negotiation for any teacher in an inclusive class has to be with the teaching strategies that he or she has learnt in a teacher's training programme. Teachers in general who haven't opted for courses for special educators in their training programmes, have both to unlearn and relearn their strategies as they have been nurtured on the cultures of differentiation and ableism.

One of the primary strategies employed in the classroom is the heavy dependence on the text, the written word, and the print form of knowledge. Most teaching in the classroom revolves around the text whether it is language or literature as the text ensures content which the teacher may have otherwise to cull out of his own mental store house. Unlike the old days when knowledge was rendered through speech and the primary methods of communication were through *shruti* and *smriti*, knowledge today is stored, seen and read. In fact the text has further moved away from the written word to the computer word, from print on paper to print on the screen and is much more maneuverable than the printed word.

Inclusive classroom strategies demand a shift to the use of speech and audio forms along with writing and the use of the black board. The teaching methods will have to be multi pronged, repetitive and innovative in which multiple programmes will have to be used to meet the urgencies of different disabilities. Apart from the OH students whose disability is by and large overcome as soon as he or she is physically accommodated in an appropriate space in the class, others like the hearing impaired, visually impaired, persons with low vision and the mentally challenged students would demand different kinds of attention and tools of teaching. The teacher has to use both the audio and the video tools to reach out to them. There is a need for new techniques for transaction in classroom in place of traditional concepts of reading and writing, exams, time frames. The comfortable cocoon of the text may be replaced by drawing, dance, talking, sketching, sensory learning and other multiple literacies; by working together, discussions and other awareness raising programmes.

The curriculum for the teachers' training programmes has to be revised to include special educational strategies to meet the new challenges of an inclusive classroom. As a core philosophy of disability studies, inclusion has to percolate through all levels of education. The curriculum must accommodate narratives about disability, inter dependence and equal rights. It is important to select a text that appropriately focuses on the issues of disability. The issue of disability has to be introduced as imperative to think about.

The spacio temporal structure of the class gets richer with the deployment of multiple tools. The pattern of normalization is not in the inclusion of the disabled students in a non disabled class but vice versa because the benefits of this new method of learning and the new pattern of the class put the non disabled to as much advantage as the disabled one in an inclusive class room. The reciprocity of this new interaction has to be the new paradigm of education.

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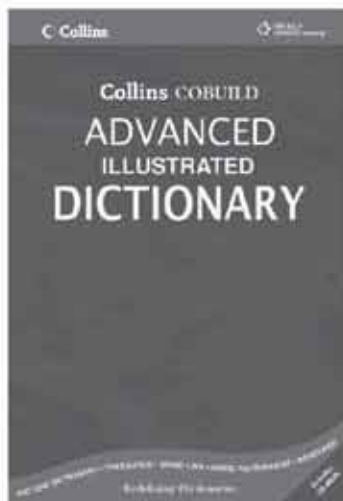
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# A Practical Course for Developing Writing Skills in English

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Writing skills is very crucial for better grades and greater academic achievement. Most potential employers care a great deal about writing skills. Academicians and business people view writing skills as very significant yet increasing numbers of these professionals note a steady erosion in the writing abilities among those who pass out both at the school and university levels. Many surveys have revealed that many persons who pass out of the education pipeline are unable to write even a simple letter. In view of this sad state of affairs the value of developing writing skills is increasingly felt more these days and there are all sorts of books in the market that address this need of the students who are either likely to pursue higher education or are getting ready for a career. Gangal's book is one such attempt to improve the writing skills in English at all levels, bur more specifically for college level students and those who are preparing for competitive examinations.

The book has 45 chapters divided into 8 sections. Section 1 describes the process of writing. It details with examples the steps involved in
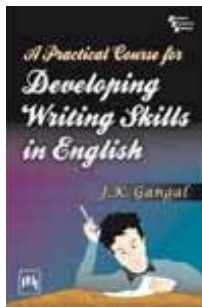
by J.K.Gangal. PHI Learning Private Limited, New Delhi, 2011, Pages 360, Rs. 250

producing a coherent and cohesive composition. Section 2 consisting of 8 chapters focuses on some aspects of functional grammar. Section 3 deals with the most common errors students make in their writings; it also suggests how these errors can be corrected or minimized with the knowledge of the rules of grammar taught in the preceding section. Section 4 has very useful chapters devoted to enriching students' vocabulary which is viewed as a back bone of writing skills. Section 5 talks about various types of composition: guided to free composition. Mechanics of writing are dealt with in Section 6.Section 7 is a very useful. It is devoted to all kinds of writing tasks for which students are expected to be prepared for success in any examination. The last section (i.e. section 8) suggests steps for creative writing; in addition it details the steps that are necessary to write a term paper. an article, or a dissertation more effectively.

The book is a very good handbook for those who wish to have a bird's eye view of what can be included in writing skills in English and also for those who are brushing up their writing skills.

Shakespeare:
The Indian Icon A Collection of Indian Responses: social-cultural-academic

S.Viswanathan

S.Viswanathan, a renowned Shakespeare scholar, retired as Professor, Department of English, University of Hyderabad. He has been Visiting Fellow at University of Kent, U.K. and Queen's University Belfast, Ireland.

I am glad and proud to possess Vikram Chopra's magnum opus *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*. The Icon is truly iconic of the great and long standing interest our country has had in Shakespeare and Dr. Chopra's personal love and devotion for Shakespeare. It is very handsomely produced, and Chopra has provided a helpful 'Introduction' to the large number of essays by scholars and memorable utterances of great persons of India about Shakespeare. This is the only place where all this material, some of it not readily accessible, can be easily consulted. There is so much by way of representing Indian critical opinion, performances of plays and adaptations in the several Indian theatres and other matters. As a bonus we have the visual delight of so

many plates in colour and photographs, generously included and reproduced with care.

The book, besides bringing a fairly comprehensive picture of the amount of work done here on Shakespeare, shows its range and variety, and inevitably variations in outlook, cast of mind and also overall quality. It is many voices and it cannot but be. The book has covered a very wide ground indeed.

Yet there is some room for work in certain areas. For example, the teaching of Shakespeare at school, college and the University from the

By Vikram Chopra

The Readers Paradise, New Delhi, 2011

ISBN No. 81-920751-2-9, pp. 836, Rs. 1995

beginnings, the large number of editions of the plays produced in India, some truly scholarly and many by way of notes and guides. The teaching, teaching methods and classroom experiences of dealing with Shakespearean plays is also worth looking at.

Another area is the Indian cinema in its several languages. Shakespeare has directly and indirectly influenced Indian films and is an area worth enquiring into. And of course there is the question of impact on the writers and their writings in India in its literatures. The book touches upon some of these, I hasten to add.

But what Vikram Chopra has provided is - plenty; we are thankful for it and welcome it. Congratulations!

Business Communication:
Techniques and Methods

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In today's globalized age where opportunities for international business have become increasingly fertile, there has been a simultaneously growing emphasis on honing communicative skills of business students and professionals to enable them to effectively interact with their peers across the world. The markets are flooded with a variety of textbooks on Business Communication and Juneja and Mujumdar's book is one such effort that introduces basic communication techniques to readers and subsequently attempts to nurture interpersonal skills in learners.

Comprising ten chapters, the book covers a lot of ground between the cover pages. The introductory chapter defines the meaning and process of communication; highlights important barriers that obstruct smooth communication and suggests ways of overcoming them. The next chapter focuses on communication in the context of trade and commerce. Thus the authors provide models for corporate communication; describe external and internal communications; explain patterns of communication within an organization and discuss strategies of managing grapevine effectively. Chapters three to ten deal with different aspects and techniques of communication. For instance, the emphasis of chapters 4, 5 and 9 is on non-verbal communication, effective listening and group discussions respectively. The benefits of information technology in making communication simple, fast and economical are dealt with by the authors in chapter 3 titled 'E-mail Communication' and in chapter seven called 'Audio-visual Aids'. Some extremely important

By Om P Juneja and Aarati Mujumdar

Orient Blackswan Private Limited: Hyderabad, 2010

ISBN: 978 81 250 4036 1, PP 164, Rs. 90

methods of communication by which an individual showcases his/her brilliance and creates an impression on others such as through presentations, interviews and CV's are discussed at length by the writers in chapters 6, 8 and 10.

The book is lucid and the authors have systematically covered diverse topics of communication in separate chapters. Explained simply and backed by real-life examples, the book contains interesting activities at the end of each chapter to help students assess their understanding of the text at different stages of reading. Far from loading the book with technical jargon in the field of communication study, the writers have incorporated theories of communication and cited useful quotes from works of communication experts in a manner where the reader can reflect on them and apply them to practical workplace situations.

However, since the social exchange nowadays has transcended local boundaries and become international with more and more people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interacting with one another, the book could have focussed a little more on the significance of inter-cultural business communication and analyzed how cultural variables affect business practices. Also, the issue of gender could have been given some space in the book to sensitise students to issues like stereotyping and biased behaviours at workplace resulting in strained relationships and poor communication. Undoubtedly, this book makes the reader think: not only of the issues discussed in it but also those that have been implicit but perhaps need more space and time to be deliberated upon.

The Inheritance of Loss

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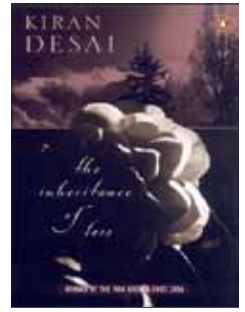
Kiran Desai's stylistic feat makes *The Inheritance of Loss* a great 'inheritance' to the genre of Modern Indian English writing because of its richness in characterization and multicultural ethos. The book arouses interest in its readers not only because it is a Man Booker Prize (2006) winner but also of its genre of diasporic literature.

It can be compared with Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), both exploring cross cultural references to North Bengal and America. Lahiri masterfully explores the complexities of the migrant experience and the conflict of tradition and modernity between the generations of a single family. On the other hand, Desai's novel builds a rich tapestry of characters from different backgrounds that are exiles at home as well as abroad. We see it in the case of Judge Jemibhai Patel, a Parsi who decides to settle in Darjeeling because of his sense of exile from his community and even abroad. On the other hand, the Swiss Priest, Father Potty feels more rooted in India as compared to his native land. Biju goes abroad as a cook to fulfill his 'American Dream' but ultimately returns to India because of exploitation. Moreover, the author also focuses on the inter-state migration as in the case of the anglophile Bengali sisters Lola and Noni. However, the peaceful multiculturalism in North Bengal is threatened by the uprising of the ethnic population of the Gorkhas. These issues broaden the scope of Desai's notion of insider/outsider dichotomy as against the limited scope of Lahiri's novel.

Desai's novel also has a unique dimension towards love as seen in Gyan and Sai relationship which parallels the history of the state. The tumultuous love between the Nepali tutor and his student juxtaposes with the tumult of the Gorkha insurgency of the 1980s.

by Kiran Desai, Penguin Books India, 2007

ISBN 9780143102786, Rs. 395

Moreover, the use of pidgin English by Desai impresses me since it adds a dose of humour to the exiled status of the immigrants. We clearly see it in Biju's mode of expression 'Is this the Amriken embassy?' and in his letters 'Respected Pitaji, no need to worry. Angrezi khana only…' This reflects his struggle between the concepts of home and exile and he notices a similar situation in the status of his migrant co-workers too. This makes him conclude that 'every nationality confirmed its stereotype' especially in its resistance to cultural assimilation. These aspects reflect the author's keen eye for detail in analyzing the diversity of immigrant experiences and make the novel reading a pleasurable experience, engaging the attention of the readers at an intellectual and emotional level.

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This outstandingly versatile transverse wave machine consists of a series of pendulums independently suspended on a common base and coupled together by long, light springs. It has two modules with 21 pendulums each, a damping unit with a paddle and water bath, and a motor-powered eccentric driver for controlled excitation of traveling or standing waves. The ends of the pendulums are bright yellow for excellent visibility of the wave pattern. Coupling hardware is supplies so that the demonstrator can be used with either a single module or with both modules couples to make a longer machine. A brake mechanism allows all the pendulums to be arrested simultaneously, "freezing" the momentary pattern of the pendulums.

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ANAGRAMS

Falguni Chakravarty

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Falguni Chakravarty is a Cambridge ESOL-CELTA certified ELT Consultant, Content Developer and Teacher Trainer, working on a freelance basis.

An anagram is a type of word play where letters of a word are rearranged to make another meaningful word.

Example: are   ear

ACTIVITY

Objective: To provide practice in making anagrams using the hints given

Level: Primary

Material required: Worksheet – one per student

Method: 1.   Prepare a worksheet as given below, for every individual student in the class.

                    2.   Allot a time limit to complete the activity.

Anagram	New word	Meaning
save		a metal or glass container to hold flowers
charm		soldiers do this on parade
below		a joint in your arm which helps you to bend it.
baker		to smash or reduce to pieces
ocean		a small boat
sore		a sweet smelling flower
there		a number
dealer		a person who leads or guides

SMILING SNAKES

Falguni Chakravarty

ACTIVITY

Objective: To provide practice in creative expression using a variety of nouns and verbs for a given sentence.

Level: Primary

Preparation: Nil

Classroom layout: Students to work in groups.

Method: 1.   Write the sentence 'I see a spotted snake sitting in the sun.' on the blackboard.

                    2.   Tell each group to give one noun in place of the underlined noun (here, sun).

                          Example: I see a spotted snake sitting on a wall.

                    3.   Make a list of all the nouns that have been provided by each group.

                    4.   Insist on students' saying the sentence aloud with the replaced noun so that they use articles a/an appropriately.

                    5.   You may use other sentences for variation.

I see a spotted snake sitting in the sun.

As a variation, you can also play this game to improve vocabulary with regard to verbs. You may elaborate the sentence as follows:

I see a spotted snake sitting in the sun and smiling!

Example (replaced verb): I see a spotted snake sitting in the sun and sing

You may allow for some creative expressions too!

A Report on **English Language Teaching Workshop** at Bal Bharti School

Miti Dhingra

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Miti Dhingra *is a PGT in English at Bal Bharti School, Rohini, New Delhi.*

An English Language Teaching Workshop on 'Material Development for English teachers of Classes VI-XII' was organized on 20th August, 2011 at Bal Bharati Public School, Rohini. The Principal, Ms. Rekha Sharma extended a warm welcome to the esteemed guests and English language experts. Dr. A.L. Khanna, co-ordinating editor, FORTELL, Ms. Shefali Ray, ELT consultant and children's book writer and Dr. Mukti Sanyal, Associate Professor in English at Bharati College, University of Delhi presided over the event as the eminent guests for the day.

The resource person for the occasion was Ms. Shefali Ray. Participants from over 23 schools participated in the workshop. Ms. Ray initiated the discussion by talking about 'Language Assessment' in English language learning. The participants were given ample opportunities for brainstorming and analysing the problems related to assessment and the speaker pointed out that 'Holistic Assessment' can not be based on any standardized test as such tests cater only to a child's cognitive domain and not his / her affective and creative domain.

The discussion progressed with Ms. Ray's valuable insight wherein she clearly demarcated the roles played by 'Summative Assessment' and 'Formative Assessment' in English language learning. It was indicated by the expert that though Summative Assessment is a useful evaluation method, yet it has its own limitations. On the other hand, Formative Assessment encompasses all the essential techniques that can be used to assess language learning in all the domains.

A discussion on ways of recording the results of English language learning also took place. According to Ms. Ray, one strategic way to do this is through the maintenance of portfolios which are the detailed accounts of a child's continuous and progressive (or regressive) growth in English language learning. Ms. Ray highlighted the relevance of self - assessment techniques in language learning. In another activity that was based on the reading of a passage, the participants were asked to frame different types of questions that could be used while teaching English in classrooms. An assortment of intriguing questions came out as a result of intensive reading, group discussions and real classroom contexts in which the participants were intellectually placed. The participants were provided with various checklists to evaluate language skills and language artifacts.

The workshop was extremely interactive and fruitful.

Report on book release function of

Shakespeare: The Indian Icon

N.P. Singh

N.P. Singh, *a poet and a scholar retired as Associate Professor from Rajdhani College, University of Delhi.*

Dr. Vikram Chopra has brought out a book on Shakespeare entitled *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*. He is the Founder Secretary of the Shakespeare Society of India (1987-93) and a member of the International Committee of Correspondents for World Shakespeare Bibliography maintained by Shakespeare Quarterly. Shakespeare has been the raison d'etre of his academic pursuits; *The Indian Icon* is yet another proof of Dr. Chopra's devotion to the immortal Bard.

The book presents a century's account of Indian responses to Shakespeare: social, cultural and academic. Broad in scope and comprehensive in coverage, this collection of essays, photographs and paintings offers some idea of the gradual but deep assimilation of Shakespeare into India's cultural ethos. As one turns the pages of the book one discovers the rich heritage of social, cultural, philosophical and academic traditions of India just as it unfolds the multidimensional, multilayered world of Shakespeare – the beauty and glory of its inexorable charm!

The book came out in July this year and was released on 11th July by Hon'ble Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman, Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Dr. Karan Singh observed 'Shakespeare is one of the greatest playwrights and poets ever. His great literature includes every emotion of human life. This book of more than 800 pages is an astounding corpus of wisdom.' Eminent theatre personality Dr. Amal Allana, Chairperson National School of Drama, was the Guest of Honour. Other distinguished speakers included Professor R.W. Desai (University of Delhi), Mrs. Lushin Dubey (celebrated actor on Indian and the world stage),

Professor Rajiva Varma (University of Delhi) and Dr. Sandeep Marwah (Director, Asian Film & Television Academy, Noida). All these speakers lavished high praise for the great editorial feat performed by Dr. Chopra in preparing 'such a monumental piece of work'.

In the beginning, welcome speeches steeped in warmth and cordiality, were delivered by the members of Dr. Chopra's family: son-daughter-in-law Vivek-Sangeeta Chopra, and daughter Superva Gulati, who had flown from Canada specially for the occasion. The entire programme was elegantly compered by Ms. Rachna Sethi, Secretary FORTELL and Assistant Professor in English, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi. The book launch ended with a Kathakali performance of scenes from Shakespeare's Othello by actor Arjun Raina.

I learn from Dr. Chopra that soon after the release in Delhi, the book was presented at the 9th World Shakespeare Congress at Prague (17-22 July, 2011) where it was specially displayed and exhibited. It received wide appreciation from scholars from different parts of the world including some of the most eminent ones.

'I have been working for this book for the last four to five years but intensively for the last one and a half year. There is a lot for everyone in this book, from a philosopher to a common reader. It has the sense of joy, the freedom, wisdom, beauty and celebration of life. Just as life has numerous shades, so does Shakespeare, and that is why he is loved, admired, adored and even revered in India. Hence *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*', said Dr. Vikram Chopra.

Wings

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for Fortell, May, September 2012 issues ISSN no: 2229 – 6557

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May 2012 issue 24,
Guest Editors: Ruchi Kaushik & Rachna Sethi

Date for submission: February 29, 2012

September 2012 Silver Jubilee issue no. 25, '**Using Literature for Developing Language Skills**' invites contributions that innovatively use literature as an effective tool for honing up English language skills. The contributors could focus on innovations like cyber-classroom and e-strategies. Guest Editors: Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla

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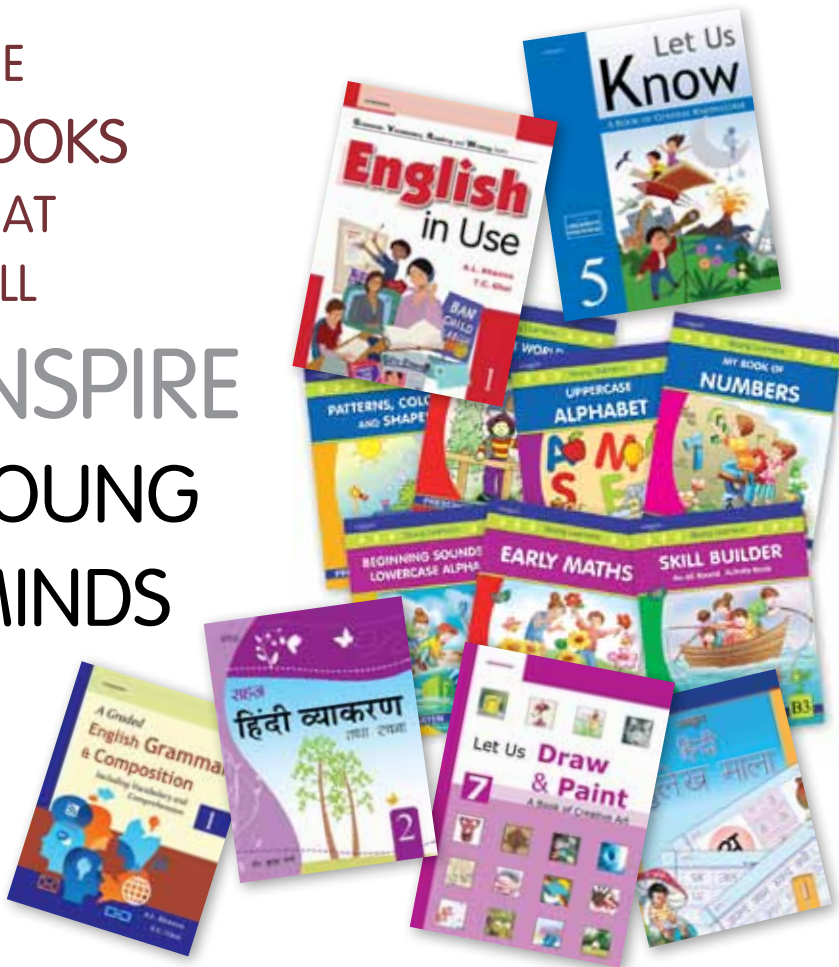
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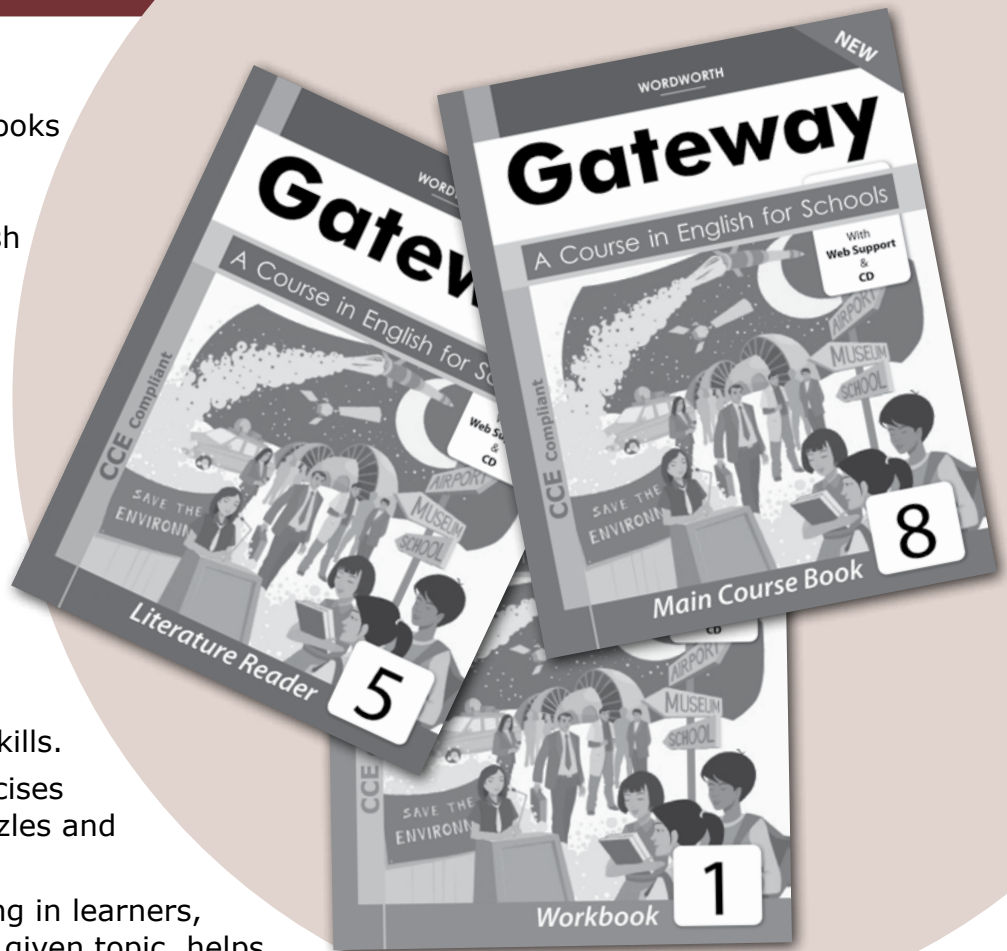
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