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CONTENTS

From the Editorial Desk

Writing is an important part of communication. Though we live in a digital world, writing skills still play a predominant role. Text messages, social media posts, emails, blog entries, etc., are all ways of communicating. Writing, whether by hand or with a keypad, still plays an important role in the social, professional and academic contexts of our lives. One of the most challenging tasks in the classroom has been the teaching of writing skills. Teaching writing is challenging because when students produce a piece of writing, they have to deal with many different elements such as content, syntax, grammar, mechanics, word choice and organization. The theoretical perspectives as applied to the teaching of writing, the challenges faced in the teaching and learning of writing skills and the options available to teachers are the focus in this issue of FORTELL. To engage the interests of readers and contributors alike, we have also addressed other concerns of English language and literature through articles, book reviews and an interview with Professor Christel R. Devadawson.

Nivedita V. Bedadur lays emphasis on using authentic material to teach writing in her article. She argues that in the product approach, the writer is not involved and hence the write-up lacks a distinctive voice. On the other hand, in the process method called CODER, writing is more important than spellings, layouts and standards of correctness. Like Bedadur, Deepti Chawla also gives importance to the use of authentic material. She discusses that wrappers, menu cards, metro time tables and flyers can be used to create a print rich environment in the classroom; not only will this aid learning, but it will also provide the learners with a connect with life rather than reproducing in writing things learnt by rote.

In S. C. Sood's article, process and genre-based approaches to teaching writing have been discussed and the experiences of L2 students in writing various genres have been examined. Divya John looks at the advantages of free writing in increasing the speed as well as the thought process in writing based on her experiences with a group of students in an engineering course. Yasmeen Lukmani reveals the inadequacies in student writing that constrain the meaning. She also looks into the different factors that subject teachers and English teachers consider as important when marking student scripts.

Prachi Kalra picks up on a problem frequently encountered by teachers, that of children being reluctant writers. She emphasizes that talking, reading and writing go hand in hand, and stresses on the need to move beyond the focus on rigid format, and instead feels the students should be encouraged to look for a form which fits their functional purpose. Like Kalra, Kirti Kapur gives importance to process writing, to encourage thinking and learning. She opines that right from content selection to the production of the final draft, critical thinking and writing go hand-in-hand.

Lina Mukhopadhyay takes the idea of teaching writing further by discussing the usefulness of feedback to appreciate what the learner has achieved. She provides various suggestions to enable learning through pedagogic feedback, both direct and indirect, and makes a case for keeping a record of student growth across sub-skills. In their paper, Bhaskar and Paliwal approach the problem of resistance of the students towards writing, and suggest that unconscious translation from L1 to L2 must not be rejected. The writers propose that an understanding of the processes and procedures of translation be used for language acquisition and supporting the writing skills of L2 learners.

Rajni Singh and Sanjiv Kumar Choudhary move away from the issue of writing to examine

the impact of parental involvement on students' achievement in learning English as a second language. And Devupalli Vishwa Prasad picks yet another aspect of concern, and elaborates on a few factors that materials writers need to bear in mind while designing textbooks.

Apart from different aspects of language, we have also included papers that delve into varied areas of literature in this issue. Neha Gaur poses a question about the politics at play when building a national identity by using the body of woman as a commodity, and of viewing the nation as woman and woman as nation. She critiques the idea of nationalism as presented in Tagore's *The Home and the World,* and the gendered accounts of violence and displacement in the works of Amrita Pritam and Bapsi Sidhwa. In "The Development of Theoretical Principles of Dalit Literature", Vikas Singh and Vikas Jain trace the spread of Dalit consciousness, the significance of the word "Dalit", and the tradition of Dalit thinkers that Dalit literature draws from.

The interview with Professor Christel R. Devadawson, Head, Department of English, University of Delhi, picks on the various threads discussed in the articles, and moves beyond to larger concerns about changing boundaries of literature and genres. The Nobel Prize for literature being accorded to Bob Dylan forces us to think afresh about literature beyond its textual sense, and to acknowledge that arts carry a sense of engagement socially and culturally. According to her, we are moving through a fluid, open-ended and complicated cultural space that the discipline needs to negotiate with. Professor Devadawson insists that even as there are shifts and changes at various levels in universities such as syllabi revisions, the important keystone is still the student in the classroom. With the increasing popularity of genres such as blogs, photo essays, graphic novels, cartoons and graffiti among the younger people, and the language shifts influenced by social media, changes are bound to storm into the classroom. She suggests that we need to discuss this, learn to mediate it, and moreover to widen our notion about what constitutes literature and intellectual enjoyment.

We hope that the wide range of articles, the book reviews and the insightful views of Professor Devadawson in the interview leads to invigorating discussions among our readers, in classrooms, staffrooms and through research papers. We look forward to your comments and feedback, and to have a continuing dialogue with you. Do write in if you wish us to focus on areas and themes that we have overlooked so far.

Dear readers, last but not the least, you would have noticed the new look of the FORTELL journal that we have launched from this year. This is just another step in reinventing ourselves to keep abreast with times, among other things it will allow us to include more articles of longer length. We hope for timely renewal of subscriptions and for you to spread the word about FORTELL among your colleagues. As always, you can read the current issue and access for back issues at fortell.org.

Happy New Year 2017 and Happy Reading!

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Using Authentic Literature to Teach Writing:
Pedagogy that Transforms Classroom Practice

Nivedita V Bedadur

Through this paper, I will trace the journey of a teacher educator's experiments with authentic materials to teach writing as a process. In the first part of the paper, I will discuss two approaches to teaching writing. In the second part of the paper, I will explore the classroom process of genre based approach to teaching writing, using authentic materials.

TEACHING WRITING: AS A PRODUCT OR PROCESS?

In middle school classrooms, even today writing is taught as a product and not as a process. What is a process based approach to writing? How is genre study through authentic literature an important principle of this approach? How does one teach writing as a process? Why should we teach writing as a process?

Let us look at the following two classroom vignettes to understand these concepts:

I had known Vidya since a long time. She taught in a small private school in Kasauli. She once invited me to her Friday afternoon writing class in which she had asked children to write a letter of complaint. The students were busy writing when I entered. The class was silent, heads bent over notebooks and pencils scratching on paper. Vidya sat at her desk, assessing the previous week's test. I asked her what she had done before the students started writing. She said,

> Ma'am I wrote a letter on the board and ask them to copy it. This is the sample I have given. They usually memorize it and change the relevant details. I will assess them on this work, so they are so quiet, otherwise they are very naughty.

Later, Vidya collected the notebooks and checked them with the children lining up at her desk. She pointed out the spelling mistakes and problems with the layout and returned their notebooks. I asked her what her next step would be. She said that next they would write other types of letters. She would give one more of this type of letter for homework.

Moving on to Daniel's classroom in a State Board School in Sirohi, I saw something different happening. He invited me to spend a week in his class. The students were writing about their dreams; just writing, without bothering about language, layouts, correctness, etc. What form their writing would take was to be decided by them whenever they felt ready. In the previous class, Daniel had selected a set of poems on dreams, just for fun. The children had read them, enjoyed them, recited them and discussed and analysed them.

The next day was completely devoted to closely examining some genres of

writing. Daniel and the children put up diary entries, letters and advertisements. Children moved around, read them, and discussed them with each other. They had a worksheet to note down relevant points. Later, they compared and analysed them in groups. Daniel had given them a worksheet for textual analysis of different genres. The worksheet contained the following elements: Examine the different kinds of words used by the writer, what are the different kinds of sentences being used, how is the writing structured? I was amazed that the students produced fairly good insights regarding textual differences within genres. The next step was to discuss the intention of the writer and the awareness of the audience regarding each of the genres. For instance, diary entry is a conversation with the self, while a letter is about communicating with clarity. The following day, each student wrote independently, not worrying about formats and layouts, just putting down thoughts. Then, they shared their writings, pairing up with anyone they liked. The write-ups were discussed, and rewritten, two heads bending on one. Daniel walked around the class and sat with the groups, especially those groups that raised a flag asking for his help. How did Daniel help? He did not use a red pen, he did not correct; rather he made suggestions, pointed out the relevant points on the different write-ups on the walls, pulled out earlier work by the same child and showed her how she had now changed, and finally, set goals for change. This went on for two days.

HOW ARE THESE TWO CLASSROOMS DIFFERENT?

Vidya followed a product approach to teaching writing. She gave a model and asked students to keep close to it. She placed a great deal of emphasis on formats, layouts, correctness and spelling.

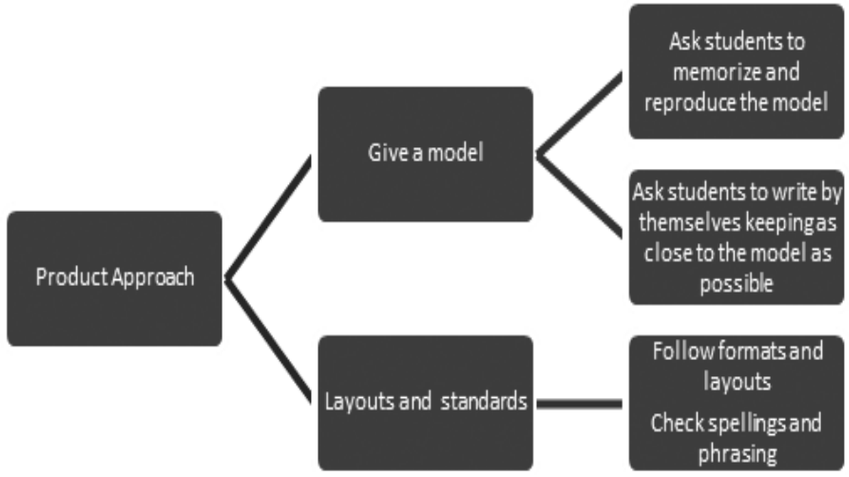


Figure 1. Product approach

Daniel on the other hand, followed a process approach to teaching writing. His main objective was to help each student to develop a distinctive voice and his/

her own writing style. He inspired the students by giving them opportunities for multiple ways of writing. He built confidence by encouraging peer feedback. He encouraged the students to analyse genres, he gave them worksheets for analysis and they did the analysis themselves. He gave them several opportunities to share their insights. Thus they did not copy but reconstructed the process that happened in the mind of the writer and constructed a new work based on that. Figure 2 illustrates the approach that Daniel followed.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF CLASSROOM PROCESSES TO DEMONSTRATE A GENRE BASED PROCESS APPROACH TO WRITING USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

A process approach looks at writing as a continuous process. The writer is a creative person whose voice is very important. The cognitive process that happens while writing is more important than spellings, layouts and standards of correctness. Sharing and support throughout the writing process builds language capability. The process gives multiple opportunities to revise and non-threatening expert scaffolding builds the confidence of the writer. The analysis of different genres is an intellectual exercise which builds both cognitive and literary skills. (Hyland, 2007)

In the product approach, memorizing and reproducing a model only satisfies the current need of the writer. The writer is not involved, he/she does not enjoy the writing process and more importantly the write-up is not in his/her own distinctive voice. (British Council, 2016) In order to develop this distinctive voice, the writer needs to write without the strangle hold of being corrected and watched, experiment with words, make mistakes, receive feedback and have multiple opportunities for refining his/her work. This writing process called the CODER has been depicted by Flower and Hayes (1981) as follows.

Figure 2. CODER approach

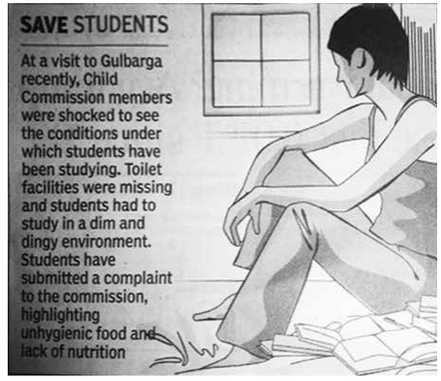
HOW DOES THE CODER WORK?

To answer this question, we will look into some classroom processes that I experimented with in my workshops for middle school teachers.

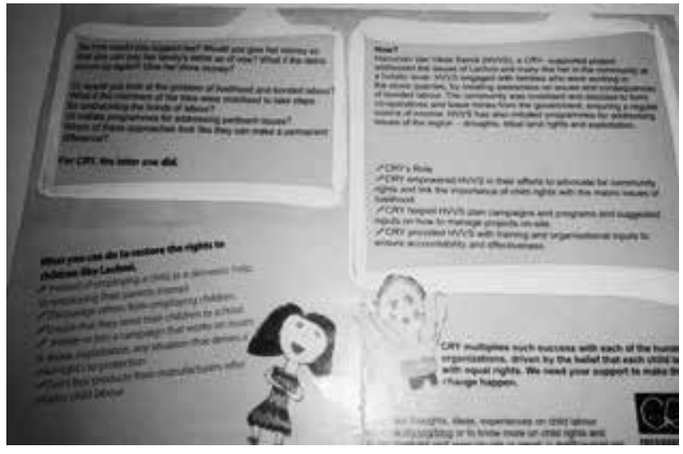
From Analysis of Authentic Materials to Writing Through a Process Approach

Using Newspaper Reports and Advertisements

The process began with the reading of a small extract from a news item on the condition of student hostels. The teachers read the piece which was accompanied by a very touching picture of a student in a hostel. The participants wrote a report about the condition of student hostels. The teachers then did a role play of a press conference with the health commissioner, the hostel manager and a grieved parent. This was followed by participants editing their reports.



The next step was to provide the teachers with an advertisement of the child rights organization, CRY asking for donations. We compared how the report and the advertisement were different in terms of their structure. What was the proportion of fact and opinion in the two? The report had a structure which was as follows: What happened (fact), Where (fact), When? (fact), How (fact) ending with opinion: how can it be avoided etc. An advertisement began with an emotional appeal, a structure of opinion, and opinion ending with facts. The activity ended with a film of a very touching advertisement. After this, the writing of reports and advertisements was easy!



In their reflection and feedback sheets, the participants reflected on why they now believed that authentic materials should be used in the classroom for teaching writing. They also outlined a framework for their use in the classroom.

CREATIVE WRITING WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

The participants were given pictures from newspapers which showed people and things, not prominent figures. There were three times as many pictures as there were participants. The pictures were grouped into bunches of three and distributed among the participants. The three pictures given to each participant were as dissimilar as possible. The participants were asked to create a story using the three pictures and share it with the entire group. After the presentation, there was a discussion on the elements/structure of a story. Many of the stories written by the participants were not stories in the real sense because the element of conflict and character were missing. Some stories were copies of films which had too facile resolutions, too easy a change of heart. There was a discussion around the structure, elements and language of a story. The participants then wrote their stories once again with a lot of sharing and discussion between themselves.

Reflections of the Participants

The participants felt that authentic materials need to be used for teaching writing because these materials connect with the real world. They would also help to enrich children's vocabulary, and enhance creative writing and analytical thinking. They felt that the use of authentic materials along with the process approach creates a complete experience- entertaining and educative. Moreover, both teachers and students would benefit from it as students like interactive activities and they help build higher order thinking. They felt that the children would have an "aha"

moment when they are able to decipher what they read outside and connect it to the class room. It would create a continuum of authenticity.

We culled out the following principles for teaching writing as a process using authentic materials.

1. Language learning happens when there is an environment of the language around us, we are immersed in the environment of the language which is available in authentic materials around us. We however need someone to help us notice, engage us in doing things with language and also to create opportunities for using the language.
2. Languages cannot be learnt by constant correction; mistakes are the stepping stones to language learning.
3. We need to be given opportunities for using language while doing things in a continuum with multiple confidence building opportunities.

At the end of the workshop what really made my day was the following letter written to me by one of the participants:

Dear Ma'am

I was fortunate to attend the last session on, "The Effective Use of Authentic Materials in the Classroom". Today I taught the 7th Graders Report Writing with reference to a newspaper report. It was so effective that it did not take much time for a lengthy explanation. I read each and every line and asked them to distinguish facts and opinions. The structure of the report- introduction, content and solution part was also done in the same way as you did in the workshop. Ma'am the result is amazing. I am really grateful to you for introducing that activity. Like a student, I am eagerly awaiting the next session.

Warm regards

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Examining the Role of Print Rich Environment in Developing Early Writing

Deepti Chawla

Ankita was teaching English to Grade five children in a government school. The school is located in a rehabilitated colony, and the majority of the students are Muslims and from a poor background. Ankita's classroom looked like an average class, with few charts hanging here and there. A couple of sceneries, a few moralistic sayings, one time table and a few random sketches were on display. The strength of the class was around 40. When we went to observe her class, she was explaining to the children how to write a paragraph on "Your Favourite Festival". She wrote the title on the blackboard and asked the students about their favourite festival. She also asked them if they celebrated Diwali and whether they liked it. The students answered that it stood for lights, sweets, crackers and holidays. She asked the students to focus on the structure of the paragraph, and told them that they should begin writing by putting the title on the top ("My Favourite Festival", in this case). After that, she quickly wrote some factual information about Diwali followed by the usual stock phrases, and lastly the message that we should not burn crackers.

Nisha, another teacher, also teaching the same grade and the same topic had a different approach. She started the class by talking to the children about festivals. Then she divided the class into groups and asked them to draw a scene from their favourite festival and write a few words associated with it. Each group took up a different festival. Once learners had finished this activity, she asked them to put up their work in a corner on the wall. This wall already had a lot of material prepared by the students including drawings of rainy season, charts on different sources of water and drawings of characters from stories in syllabus. At the end of the class, Nisha praised all the children.

The next day, she brought some pictures to the class and gave them to the learners to see. After this, she wrote on the blackboard all the key words the children had written on their drawings the previous day and discussed them. Learners picked their favourite key words and noted them in their notebooks. Each group was encouraged to make a presentation on how the festival was celebrated in their homes. The children were very enthusiastic and worked in groups to prepare for the presentation; the teacher went to each individual group to see how they were doing.

The following day, students were asked to make presentations and their written work was corrected in the class and also put up on the wall. Each group had a slightly different structure; one group began with details of the festival and the other began with preparations for celebration at home. There were a few spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, which Nisha explained to each group.

In both these classrooms the same topic was taught. However, in Ankita's class, the learners were passively involved in copying and were expected to memorize the paragraph on Diwali, even though many of them did not even celebrate Diwali. On the other hand, in Nisha's class, learners were actively involved in understanding the concept of festivals. They brainstormed, talked and wrote a paragraph using a lot of print that they had created in the classroom while Nisha tried to link their lives with the classroom.

Both these classrooms had learners who were first generation learners with no exposure to English at home. The environment around them lacked input in English language. By and large, English teaching in Indian classrooms tends to focus on the Phonics approach or Grammar translation method, especially in schools. Also, the present pedagogy stresses too much on drills, rote memorization and practice. We fail to understand the importance of language being treated as a part of culture itself, and that it has to be lived to be understood. A simple paragraph on the sharing of an experience such as a festival celebration that comes very naturally to us as human beings can become a dry and monotonous activity in a classroom such as Ankita's.

So what was different about Nisha's classroom that was aiding expression, both oral and written? This question has many answers; however, the most important factor working in Nisha's classroom was the print rich environment she had created.

HOW DOES A PRINT RICH ENVIRONMENT HELP TO PROMOTE WRITING IN YOUNG LEARNERS?

A print rich environment gives children an opportunity to read and simultaneously write about things that matter. It provides relevant experience to children, connecting them with written language in a meaningful context. This helps learners develop an understanding not just about the written text, but also about its utility and importance. Any written material found in familiar objects such as wrappers, brochures, calendars, drawings, etc. can be used to enhance real life print experience in the classroom. Learners take a lot of interest in such print, which is connected to their life in some way. It also helps them to connect their daily classroom activities and content with something that they use in their daily lives. Through reading they develop their writing skills, and the more they write to express themselves in a language, English in this case, the better their understanding about its use and other skills that aid in comprehension.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PRINT RICH ENVIRONMENT IN THE CLASSROOM?

If we refer back to Ankita's class, her classroom had some drawings, sketches, moral lessons, decorative pieces and pictures of landscapes. Do we call such a classroom a print rich classroom? The answer is "no". Such print is absolutely meaningless for children as it does not connect with their lives in any way. They are at best asked to create it, and apart from developing perhaps their motor skills, it does not encourage any understanding or engagement with learning.

According to the "Emergent Literacy Perspective",[1] language skills, among children, especially reading and writing, emerge through constant engagement with a print rich environment. This perspective has a parallel in a rather evolved new perspective called "Whole Language Approach", [2] which stresses upon the need to create a print rich environment in the classroom.

So in order to create a meaningful print rich environment that aids in developing writing skills in young learners, we need to focus on the following:

- **All print should provide a meaningful context to engage with**

  All print displayed in the classroom should offer a meaningful context to engage with, especially when we deal with English. In Nisha's class, we saw that she encouraged her learners to write and draw about their favourite festival in groups. Learners were working in a group and were talking about their own experiences, so the subject matter automatically got linked to their experiences. They were helping each other draw and write, which further brought them together. Klien (1989) in her classroom research found that students constantly find opportunities of meaning-making through reading and writing tasks, in fact they expect print to be meaningful which eventually develops literacy.

- **All print should be around the current classroom content**

  All print that the teacher creates or gets created from her learners should be around the content matter being dealt in the class else it becomes irrelevant. As long as it is linked to the content, learners and teachers will go back to it to comprehend and understand the concept. This going back and forth will provide them with an opportunity to engage with written language.

- **In the classroom, print should be created with a positive attitude by both teachers and learners**

  It is very important for the teacher to display learners' work in the classroom, even if it has some mistakes. When children produce something at a young age and are snubbed for making mistakes, they begin to hate the classroom. They become afraid of its imposing atmosphere, then they become self-conscious and withdraw, and gradually they become indifferent to what happens inside the classroom as they do not feel connected to it in any way. This problem becomes more complex with the second language. Pointing out minor mistakes discourages young learners and they fail to develop substantial understanding of the content or written language. The right kind of attitude towards learners' work, its appreciation and acceptance allows the learner to have a new kind of relationship in the classroom. This relationship is not that of a passive consumer but that of ownership. Once they establish this relationship, they themselves take the responsibility of corrections and ensure that the work they produce is accepted. They also become more careful and open to constructive feedback.

- **Print should be used in classroom for teaching-learning**

  The print created in the classroom should be used to explain, understand, build new content, connect with previous knowledge and engage children in meaningful writing or creative tasks. When print is used in the classroom in such a way, then it becomes easy for learners to write with a sense of meaning and feel attached to the process.

- **Print should be accessible to the learners**

  It is of prime importance that all print in the classroom is created for learners; therefore it ought to be positioned in a way that they can easily reach it as per their learning requirement. The charts, drawings, pictures, story books and all other material ("authentic"[3] or otherwise construed) ought to be at the eye level of the children. Positioning it too high on the walls is meaningless. If learners cannot reach the material, how are they going to read it? The story books should be kept in a place where they can be easily accessed, or hung on strings which are suitably placed. This ensures that learners will be able to read and write using the available print as a "cue".

Once we know what a print-rich environment is; we need to also know how to create one. There are several ways of creating it. Here are a few suggestions to ensure a healthy print rich environment in the classroom.

- Use different sources of written text in the classroom with a special focus on "authentic material" such as wrappers, post cards, menu cards, metro time tables or maps, brochures related to health or flyers of an event that the school is hosting.
- Write and put up information related to school such as attendance charts, mid-day meal records, etc. in English in the classroom and encourage learners to fill them every day. This helps them to establish a connection with the written language and understand how it is used, Leu and Kinzer (1995) discuss the "Morning Message" being an important medium of engaging students with print.
- Take learners' responses, name and draw with markers the resources in the classroom, write classroom instructions in English and place them suitably. This promotes children's understanding of print as a medium to construct meaning (Gerde et al 2016).
- Create a reading corner in the classroom and since we want to focus on English, stock it with lots of stories, poems, picture books and multimedia books for young learners.
- Use the classroom wall to display learners' work, ground rules, duty charts, daily activities, as well content that will engage learners to read and write in English. The wall can also be used to put up posters of upcoming activities in the classroom such as a movie screening or a forthcoming story-telling session. All such activities help learners engage with language in a meaningful way. As K. Kumar points out, "Walls are an excellent means of storing pictures that children have made as well as pictures that the teacher acquired. Both kinds of pictures can be used for eliciting talk and writing activities". (Kumar, 2000, p. 70)
- The bulletin board must be used very judiciously. It can be used to display a list of new books in the reading corner, the best of learners' work, other class or school related information, posters of stories or poems, poster of a film you may be using in your multimedia classroom and key points about it, etc.

SUMMING UP

Language acquisition is directly proportional to the environment a child is immersed in. If we provide learners with appropriate activities to engage with language in a meaningful way we may observe that learning will be organic and we as teachers will just be playing the role of a facilitator. It is important then that the teachers in the Indian classrooms where English is still an "alien language" create an environment in the classroom which aids in learning language. A print rich environment created on the suggestions mentioned above can provide a framework to school teachers to engage with language in a novel way. A print rich environment in the classroom not only engages the learners in the classroom and promotes writing and reading, but as they co-create the environment with their teacher, it also allows them to bring themselves to the classroom and become a part of it.

Endnotes

1. Emergent Literacy Perspective is being developed as a constructivist and cognitivist approach to understand literacy development among children. This perspective is an upcoming area of research. According to this approach, literacy skills are acquired by children continually since birth through constant engagement with the written and oral language.
2. The concept of whole language emerged from the works of K. Goodman, F. Smith and J. V. Hoffman to name a few. This approach stresses on the importance of providing learners with a complete language experience. This means that language input provided to learners ought to be real, meaningful and contextual. The approach underlines that learners are at the centre of the learning process and constantly need opportunities to use language which aids in self-learning and self-discipline.
3. Authentic materials are printed materials that are related to the real lives of the people using them. Examples include phone bills, wrappers, invitation cards, text created by students, etc. The concept of authentic materials emerged from Whole Language Approach. It has been found that use of authentic material in the classroom is very effective in learning English as a second language.

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Teaching Writing to Second/Foreign Language Learners:

Writing Skills, Learners' Problems and How to Deal With Them

S.C. Sood

INTRODUCTION

We can look at teaching-learning of second language (L2) writing under two broad headings—one, learning to write, and two, writing to communicate. Learning to write involves learning early writing skills. Writing to communicate requires going beyond mechanical copying or early writing skills. It requires learners to use the target language to think and to write something on their own so as to communicate with the readers who may be absent. In this paper, I will focus on writing to communicate.

Writing to communicate poses problems not only for second/foreign language (SL/FL) learners but also for first language (L1) learners, because writing to communicate is both a language and a writing problem (Myles, 2002). Widdowson (1984) also points out that the difficulty in writing to communicate is not in the linguistic medium only, but in the communicative mode as well. Written communication, he observes, is an interactive process of negotiation. It is interactive in that there is constant interaction between the writer and the reader but, unlike face-to-face interaction, this interaction in writing is conducted by the writer himself by enacting the roles of both participants—the writer as well as the reader. This poses a great problem for learners, both in SL/FL learning situations and also in L1 learning classrooms. Hence the aim of the teacher is to teach both writing skills and language proficiency.

Let us first look at what experienced teachers think these writing skills are. Next, we will try to highlight learners' problems as identified by teachers of writing and also what needs to be learnt/taught. I will then point out the different approaches/ methods of teaching writing and how these are practised. By presenting the topic succinctly for the benefit of a non-specialist classroom teacher, I hope to be able to help L2/FL teachers teach writing effectively at different levels in their classrooms.

EFFECTIVE WRITING SKILLS

Effective writing skills and some of the approaches to teaching these skills and strategies were described by this writer (*Fortell*, 11, May 2007) and Khurana(2013) - and I briefly mention them here once again even at the cost of some repetition as these are relevant to the topic and also because little more has been said on the subject since.

Experienced teachers and L2 writing skills testers such as Cambridge IELTS cite two main areas for teaching, testing and evaluating writing both with regard to

writing skills and improving L2 proficiency. These areas are: (1) Writing task-related skills, and (2) writing language-related skills. These also help us to work out learners' problems in these areas. Literature on the subject has given us different methods and approaches on how to teach writing skills in FL/L2 context. All these have been covered in some detail in both the articles referred to earlier.

To briefly recall what we said: task related skills involve task completion, task format, and tone and style. They also require the writer to organize the task in the format appropriate for task completion using suitable linkers, backward and forward references, and adequate paragraphing to show logical development of ideas.

In other words, task completion requires learners to make the purpose of writing clear, to use relevant and adequate ideas, to use appropriate text type and in the case of letters, appropriate tone and style as required by the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. It also requires awareness of different text types, text organization and rhetorical structures. Relevant and adequate ideas would require knowledge of the topic as well as background knowledge to complete the task. The different text types include paragraphs, essays, letters, notices, memorandums, proposals, reports, articles, research papers, and so on. Different kinds of text organizations refers to descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository texts. Again, these texts can be structured in different rhetorical structures such as classification or listing type, problem to solution type, advantages-disadvantages type, comparison/contrast type and so on. An expert writer has the ability to communicate effectively using these different types of written texts. The job of the teacher is to help his/her learners attain this ability.

Language related skills require the learners to show language proficiency; but what exactly do we mean by language proficiency. Language proficiency refers to the use of words and expressions appropriate to the given task; an awareness of word formation, style and collocation in the selection and use of words and expressions; accuracy of spellings; the ability to use a wide variety of grammatically correct sentence structures as density of errors in this area makes communication difficult; and use of important punctuation marks to make meaning clear.

The above two articles (by Sood and Khurana) also deal with learners' problems in these two areas (writing task-related area, and writing language-related area) such as inadequate and irrelevant ideas; misunderstanding of the topic; partial task completion; lop-sided task development. The articles also describe learners' problems in language areas – both vocabulary and grammar. Among other reasons, these could be attributed to a lack of time, slow writing speed, anxiety and fear and lack of motivation. However, besides these, socio-cultural factors can also be the cause. All these factors have to be kept in mind by teachers when teaching and testing writing skills. Format, text organization, rhetorical organizations, and tone and style have to be taught. Tone and styles is particularly problematic for FL/SL learners, where not much is taught about distinction between formal and informal varieties of English.

The teacher's job is to help L2/FL learners to think of ideas on the topic and teach them how these ideas can be presented using appropriate language to show logical development. Highlighting the importance of L2 writing to motivate learners and creating an anxiety-free environment would further facilitate learning.

Let us now look at two practices that I have found useful in FL/L2 teaching context; the first is a variant of the process approach and the second is genre-based language teaching. In the first, I will study how a four-skill integrated approach to language teaching is implemented in two stages. I hope that others may also want to give it a try.

Stage 1 (Pre-writing activities)

- The teacher displays the topic on which students are expected to write, making sure that the topic is stated as precisely as possible to avoid any ambiguity.
- He/she asks the students to first attempt the topic individually and put down in their notebooks as many ideas as they can think of on the given topic.
- The students are advised to put down their ideas in "notes" form and not in full sentences. They are also told that they do not have to worry about the order of their ideas at this stage.
- In the next step, learners are given relevant ideas on the given topic through listening, and reading activities. They are allowed to browse on the internet, and/or visit a library to use materials from books, journals, newspapers, and so on. The purpose is to get them to brainstorm, invoke their background knowledge, or give them enough and relevant ideas on the topic. Incidentally, this pre-writing activity also helps remove their linguistic difficulties, if any.

Once the students have gathered their ideas, they are divided into pairs or groups and asked to share the ideas with their peers. For this, the teacher follows the steps given in stage II.

Stage II: Group Work (While-writing activities)

- The class is now divided into groups as convenient.
- Each group is advised to select a group leader and a secretary/reporter.
- Next they are advised to share and discuss their ideas within their group and finalize their main points on the topic. It is the duty of the group leader to give an opportunity to all the members of the group to participate in this activity. One of the members or the reporter can draw up a list of all the ideas that the group finally decides to include. Further steps for each group involve:

1. Re-ordering ideas: Decide the order in which the group would like to present their ideas keeping in mind the audience and the purpose of writing. The ideas taken down in note form can now be rearranged in the order decided.
2. Expanding ideas: Expand on these ideas by using the various options available

and prepare a first draft.

3. Seeking comments: Exchange the draft with other groups to get their views and comments.
4. Editing and finalizing the draft: In light of the comments and feedback received, revise the first draft adding, deleting, modifying and rearranging ideas if necessary. At this stage, the group must pay attention to editing (attending to vocabulary, spellings, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics of writing).
5. Handing in the composition: The write-up is now ready to be handed in to the teacher.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Throughout this writing process, the teacher plays a complex role. He/she has to create in the classroom conditions conducive to learning, act as manager of the learning process, guide and even participate by moving from group to group prompting and helping learners move in the right direction.

The teacher must change group formation if he/she finds that the same set of students is always getting together in the same group. In such situations, if left to themselves, students tend to form groups on the basis of friendship, ability level, gender, and so on. It is therefore desirable to move away from this tendency and use the resource of the brilliant students in the class to lead the less intelligent ones, and thus also help students to mix with each other in the class. The teacher has to be careful and see that

- No student dominates the group, and also no one hides himself/herself behind the group activity;
- All students are given a chance to participate in the group activity;
- The group arrives at decisions through discussion;
- The group conducts its discussion in the target language though some use of L1 may be accepted initially;
- The noise level is kept as low as possible so that other groups and classes are not disturbed.

Writing teachers agree that intervention during the writing process—thinking, taking down ideas, arranging ideas and making drafts—helps student writers to improve their writing skills. Moreover, competence in the composing process is more important than linguistic competence. Grammatical errors, it is true, are much less disturbing to content than the perceived lack of maturity of thought and of rhetorical style**.**

Stage III (Post-writing activities)

Some teachers believe that once student groups have produced compositions using the process approach, these pieces can be put up on the board or the walls for

other groups to read. But I firmly believe that the compositions produced by the student groups may have some problems here and there, and may need to be further remedied by the teacher's intervention. Reading, discussing and analyzing these pieces of compositions produced by each group can be a good method of providing feedback and teaching writing to learners as shown by Khurana (2013).

GENRE-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING OR WRITING FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ACADEMIC/OCCUPATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL)

I will now turn to what is called writing for specific purposes. The process approach to teaching writing has not been without its critics. Let us examine in brief what English for Specific Purposes—English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and genre-based writing—tells us about the process approach.

This approach criticizes the Process Approach on various counts. It is pointed out (Sylvia, 1990) that the Process Approach does not consider variations in the writing processes due to differences in individuals, writing tasks and situations; the development of schemata for academic discourse; language proficiency, level of cognitive development and insights from the study of contrastive rhetoric. It also does not tell the learners how to structure their writing while attempting different types of text types. Furthermore, it

- aims to prepare students for academic writing;
- shifts the focus from the writer to the reader (who is this reader has been a topic of debate)
- maintains that among the three possible readers[1], the reader in this approach is a seasoned member of an academic discourse community;

The alternative that this approach proposes involves a focus on academic discourse genres and the range and nature of the academic writing tasks. It aims to help socialize[2] the students into the academic context and thus to ensure that the students' writing falls within the range of acceptable writing behaviour, as dictated by the academic community. In other words, this method brings us back to the importance of the format, and the manner of presentation or the product of writing. Students must therefore learn how to present academic writings such as reports of surveys, book reviews, articles for journals, research proposals, research dissertations, thesis, critical articles, book reviews, research proposals and research findings. All these have a certain format, which the academic community expects the students to follow. As I have said earlier, format does not mean simply the layout, but what is called the "text type", the use of lexis, language register, matter and manner of communication used in that text type.

The English for Academic Purposes approach emphasizes on the product or the format. Therefore, it becomes necessary for teachers to make their students familiar with and practice different text organizations and text types. This includes various forms of written tasks that students often have to perform either in their academic or in their professional lives.

CONCLUSION

In my article, I have described some writing skills that L2/FL learners need to learn as also the problems that learners encounter while learning them. I have also suggested some steps that can be taken to help learners such as adopting the right approach or a combination of two or more approaches. However, approach alone cannot solve all the problems. A concerted and coordinated effort needs to be made to plan the right kind of curriculum (syllabus, teacher training, materials writing, approach and method, and testing and evaluation) keeping in mind the objectives of teaching L2/FL so that even a non-specialized teacher can teach and test writing effectively in the L2/FL context.

Endnotes

[1] The three versions are: *one*, reader/audience created by the writer that conforms to the writer's text and purposes (expressionists view); *two,* the prospective reader(s) and writer as interactant; and *three,* the expert reader, an initiated member of the discourse community.

[2] The social constructionists view writing as a social act that can take place only within and for a specific context and audience – an initiated member of the academic community in our case.

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Introducing Free Writing to College Students to Enhance their Writing Skills

Divya John

INTRODUCTION

Students have all through their school years been subjected to endless corrections by their enthusiastic teachers, who often harp on their mistakes, blunders and other minor slips and admonish them for their "bad writing" in general. On the other hand, students take the corrections to heart and think they and not their mistakes are being judged. Thus, teachers inadvertently do considerable damage to the writing process of students, who consequently end up being reluctant to put anything down on paper. In this study, I will look at how teachers can introduce students to the realm of free writing from a new perspective, and encourage them to write with confidence and ease, thereby redeeming themselves from the mistakes committed in the past.

Look at the following extract on "Free writing" taken from *Writing Without Teachers*:

> The idea is simply to write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write "I can't think what to say, I can't think what to say" as many times as you want; or just repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The requirement is that you never stop. (Elbow, 1983)

What impressed the students in my class about "free writing" is the concept of writing without any editing during the writing process. This notion was acceptable because students naturally tend to edit and re-edit their thoughts, words, and construction of sentences, and eventually end up not writing. On the contrary, when an activity of free writing was first introduced by this teacher-researcher, the students were excited and they cooperated wholeheartedly by writing freely and continuously.

WHAT DO ADVOCATES OF FREE WRITING SAY?

A sensational point for students regarding free writing is, to put it in the words of Elbow, "The goal of free writing is in the process, not the product" (1998). The practice of free writing has been widely used for decades by teachers and academicians alike. Creative writing teachers believe that allocating ten minutes every day for free writing would help writers get over their writer's

block. Composition classes have been indulging in free writing extensively for generations. It has also been a part of journal writing and diary writing. Educators have experimented free writing in the academic setting and proved that it would enhance critical thinking:

> Free writing is a means of teaching freshmen critical thinking skills, as well as getting them to write at all. There is also evidence to support the concept that despite the haphazard ideas seen in student's free writings, that there are underlying organizational aspects to these writings, which if the student were to analyse fully, would discover that in the midst of their ramblings and/or venting of emotions, lies a focused idea that could be developed and expanded to aid in the production of academic papers. (Major, 1994)

Thus, it is a convincing fact that free writing can bring out students' voices and help them to respect their thinking process. Though there are claims that free writing encourages critical thinking, Rule (2013) writes about the students' difficulties in thinking during free writing. According to her, it is the teacher's interference that makes the students to think differently. Kenneth Macrorie (1991) points to "Engfish" ("academicism") that is, the artificial way students write academic English and advocates free writing as an antidote and guides students to forget for the moment, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Reynolds (1988) also argues that free writing helps to put initial thoughts on paper and it is a low-stress exercise that helps apprehensive writers to overcome their writer's block.

Dickson (2001) illustrates that the two types of free writing used in the classroom are unfocussed free writing and focussed free writing. In "unfocussed free writing" one can write about anything one likes, while "focussed free writing" involves writing on a topic with the help of hints and prompts.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN THE CLASSROOM

Free writing activities were conducted in the English classes of two first-year engineering batches in the first semester. The college, affiliated to Anna University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu (India), offers Technical English I and Technical English II in the first year. The free-writing exercises were planned to be run alongside the topics contained in the respective syllabus. A few activities have been explicated here to enable students to learn the art of free writing:

Activity 1: Free writing on an incident

This activity required more than the usual English period. In the first period, as a pre-writing task, the students were introduced to extracts from autobiographies, such as *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* by Mahatma Gandhi, *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") by Adolf Hitler, *Autobiographical Notes* by Albert Einstein and *Wings of Fire* by Abdul Kalam. In the next period, the teacher narrated an autobiographical incident from her life. (Note: The incident should be one that can be divulged to the students). The teacher asked the students to choose an incident from their lives, and then make a list of the events that occurred when that incident took place. She also provided them with sufficient hints on how to develop the incident and gave them 20 minutes to write it down.

Activity 2: Free writing addressed to the universe

This activity involved encouraging students to write a personal letter to the universe for 10 minutes. As guidelines, a few prompts were given in the form of existential queries: "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", "Why should I go through all this?", etc. They were also requested to write to the universe about their aspirations, and make a plea for their secret desires.

Activity 3: Free writing on the film, *Forrest Gump*

In this case, there was a pre-writing activity for the students. They were shown the Academy Award winning movie, *Forrest Gump* for two periods of 50 minutes each. Due to time constraints, the viewing of the rest of the movie was given as homework. Fifteen minutes of the third period was allotted to discussing the plot of the movie. Prior to the writing activity, the teacher instructed the students as follows: Write an informal movie review. Write whatever you think fit about the movie. Just pen down what you feel like. Comment on the actors, acting, direction, cinematography and theme. Take only 20 minutes for the writing. To conclude, write as much as you want, as fast as you can. Be cool and do not rush. Do not read what you have written but keep on writing; and above all, forget about your grammar, spelling and punctuation.

This was enough motivation for the students. There was pin drop silence in the class as they engrossed themselves in writing for 20 minutes, turning out between 500 and 1000 words.

Activity 4: Free writing on a debatable topic

The students were given a prewriting exercise to surf the Net <idebate.org> for the topic, "Should children below 18 use mobile phones?" They were given 15 minutes to write for or against the topic.

Activity 5: Free writing for a diary

The teacher introduced the students to diary-writing, a desirable free-writing experience. The students were then asked to write a diary of the previous day for 10 minutes.

Activity 6: Free writing on the art of "Free Writing"

In this activity, the students had to write on free writing for 5 minutes to find out whether they had successfully understood this art. The teacher gave the following prompt, "Did you enjoy the process of free writing? Comment on what you feel about it."

DISCUSSION

As a teacher, I used to find considerable resistance to writing from students whenever a writing exercise was introduced. They usually sat with a finger below the chin, their heads tilted upwards, and a blank page in front of them. Contrary to this experience, the students responded favourably to the first free-writing activity, "Free writing on an incident." This gave the teacher an impetus for more such activities. The result was commendable.

Prior to the first and second activities, "Free writing on an incident" and "Free writing addressed to the universe," the students were informed that they were writing only for themselves. Thus, their confidence levels were boosted right at the outset. Naturally, they took up the exercise as a private affair with paper and became engrossed in writing. This was in keeping with Southwell's advice to the teacher not to collect the scripts of free writing (1977). The teacher collected the scripts of the remaining activities.

For the third activity, "Free writing on the film, *Forrest Gump*," most of the students wrote continuously for 20 minutes. Some of them wrote almost perfect movie reviews with an introduction, summary and conclusion and with scarcely any grammatical mistakes as though they had been trained to write. On the other hand, many wrote just a lengthy summary, in order to utilize the 20 minutes given. Though disillusioned with the summary initially, the teacher felt gratified on realizing that summary writing is also a part of academic writing. If the students could convert a 2-hour movie to 20 minutes of writing, it was a remarkable activity which would be useful to them in the future in preparing summaries of research articles, reports of events, etc. One of the students wrote: "Should I write the story of the movie, now? Yes? So, Forrest Gump lives . . ." After writing a brief account she added, "I'm going to shorten things up for want of time." In display of critical thinking another student wrote:

> When Forrest is bullied by his school mates, Jenny says "Run, Forrest, run" -- probably the only meaningful line she says to Forrest in this story. And then he does run, as he discovers that his legs have perfectly repaired themselves. Although it is not mentioned here if that was Jenny's doing (That is, it is her love for him that fixed his legs, aka Bollywood logic).

Some writings revealed the wandering minds of the students. For example,

> I just remembered that there is cricket match going on. It is India against New Zealand. Just 10 minutes I have been writing and just heard the half time whistle. Boom! What do you know, from Gump to Boom, that's my weird mind? Ok now, I'll tell more about Gump.

In the fourth activity, "Free writing on a debatable topic," most of the students felt the topic chosen was too hackneyed, but the teacher did not want the students to run out of ideas, she wanted them to concentrate on the process of writing

continuously. It was heartening to note that students were speaking up on paper. To give an example, one student wrote, "Personally, I share a love-hate relationship with my phone. . . . The ideal child of this century thrives through the internet. A mobile phone provides access to all these." Some of them wrote very logically in an essay format with an introduction, a main body with the advantages and disadvantages of the mobile phones, and the conclusion.

The fifth activity, "Free writing for a diary," was an eye-opener for the teacher who got an insight into the students' anxieties and frustrations expressed in their writing. It was like reading about a day in the lives of engineering students, with their endless tests, record writing and hectic lectures. It is no exaggeration to say that this activity had a therapeutic effect on the students.

The sixth activity, "Free writing on Free Writing," was an exercise to enable students to give vent to their experience of free writing. It was indirectly a feedback on free writing.

EXTRACTS FROM STUDENTS' FEEDBACK ON THE SIXTH ACTIVITY

Positive comments

The feedback had varying responses of which a few extracts have been edited and given as follows. One of the students started his account on free writing thus:

- I like free writing. It's a nice experience because I don't have to write grammatically. I need [sic] write only what I know. I write a lot and I make a lot of grammar [sic] mistakes. As I need not read what I have written, I won't see those mistakes. So I'm happy.

The same student added, "Free writing is very easy writing. It is like water falling from the mountains. So it is nice." Another student saluted the thinking process in free writing: "This skill is not only used by writers but also by many orators." Yet another wrote:

> Free writing is like meditation. I found all the connections to the outer world disconnected and I found new connections within me. Now I think I should follow free writing . . . New neuron connections are made in our brain. It's like connecting dots. New ideas come fast like a bulb to my head. That's an amazing feeling.

Many others also testified in favour of free writing:

> Free writing is a useful tool to build the thought process. It is simple to learn. It might seem challenging to write, at first, but the longer one writes, the easier it gets. The biggest advantage this gives is that once the pen starts moving across the paper freely, true thoughts emerge. No time is taken to think or process the writing. So the end product is one hundred percent honest emotions.

Many students, apprehensive of grammar, showed a feeling of relief when they were told, "to forget about grammar while writing." Here is an extract:

> I like forgetting grammar for a change because making grammatical errors is considered bad. Everywhere, even on Facebook, there are those "grammar Nazis" waiting to correct grammar and spellings. Now that we are allowed to make such mistakes in free writing, and that too at the college level, it is simply great.

Many students appreciated the informal part of free writing: "All through school we were taught to write in a formal way. Well, where is the fun in that? The true emotions of persons [sic] are expressed in a better way when they are informal."

One student expressed a personal difficulty: "I had some vocabulary problem while I was writing. I was stuck at some places and was not able to write continuously." For such students, Stover says, free writing is an excellent tool to ease the writer's block and put down their ideas on paper. It is a way to begin writing essays in which the process starts with free writing, rewriting, editing and then the finished work (Stover, 1988). One or two students however, were not serious about the feedback: "I am pretending to write about free writing. The teacher is supervising whether we are writing. Even though I am not writing about free writing, I am writing freely."

Negative comments

A few students were vehement in expressing their dislike for free writing. Here is one such comment: "One's intelligence is not incorporated by any means in free writing. Simply writing something on a piece of paper for 10 or 20 minutes without considering the mistakes, is that going to yield any good results?" Another negative comment on free writing was:

> Free writing, as I had experienced isn't such a recommended concept of sharing our views and thoughts. I find it a tad inane to rush into words without setting our thoughts in an arrayed format . . . When there is an acclaimed topic to be written about, and when the writer wants to convey his ideas, and accentuate in detail the points of the topic, this style of writing is definitely a setback to his calibre.

Yet another student was bold enough to write: "I hate free writing . . . this is like detention for me. Are you doing this just to mess with us?"

Whatever the tone of the comments, the teacher-researcher vouches that free writing was a new experience for them because during all the activities the students utilized the allotted time to write continuously. It is true that in certain situations, the teacher had to motivate the students to write. This was done in order to make them experience the delight of giving vent to their thoughts and feelings. A student wrote: "I am thankful to my English teacher for initiating me into free writing. This kind of writing is new to me." Another comment said: "Free writing is one of

the many things I never knew existed before I joined college. It has been a good experience."

Free writing is a fantastic method of putting ideas down on paper. It is a liberating experience. It is excellent as a pre-writing exercise. When practised on its own, free writing is a wonderful experience as it enables a person to release pent up thoughts and feelings. It is also commonly used for the purpose of first drafts. The negative comments on free writing resulted from the fact that the students misunderstood free writing as the language of the final draft. May be if the teacher had been more vocal about explaining this and had emphasized that free writing is meant to be the first draft of any writing, the misunderstanding would not have crept in.

Though the teacher informed the students that they had to write ignoring grammar and spelling, and to not read what they had written, the teacher-researcher noticed that students kept editing what they had written. In fact, they were re-reading what they had written, and did some perfect editing process in their minds before penning down what they wanted to.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, it needs to be reiterated that the teacher-researcher conducted six activities to introduce free writing to college students. At the outset, the students were informed that they need not submit the scripts of the first two activities. However, the scripts of the rest of the activities were collected. The last activity was an indirect feedback on the experience of free writing for the students. The majority of them expressed delight at their new experience of free writing. Obviously, there were a few adverse comments too. On the whole, they were of the opinion that free writing helped them to think fast and critically, increase their speed of writing, and put their thoughts on paper easily. As already stated, free writing celebrates the process of writing and not the end product (Elbow, 1998). Needless to say, students found this new approach to writing beneficial and liberating.

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What Makes Student Writing Unacceptable?

Yasmeen Lukmani

When analysing errors, the sentence is a convenient framework in which to forget the realities of the undergraduate classroom. Sentential boundaries are narrow and well-defined, and many of the intricacies of linguistic form are included in it, so students' errors can be pinpointed easily.

However, convenience in analytical purposes is not the only criterion to be employed in the choice of framework. Other considerations, such as the degree of disruption of meaning, are perhaps more important. So also, are notions such as the overall intelligibility of what the student is trying to say, including relevance and precision of statement, and rhetorical organization of the ideas presented. These considerations point towards looking at a framework larger than the sentence, to the not-yet-clearly-analysed territory of text or discourse.

At the undergraduate level, students need to write at least their examination answers, in English. Their command over English is thus crucial in the assessment of their performance. It is also likely that their performance would be judged not by concord or article felicities, but by the clarity and the logical development of their argument.

In my study (1985), in which I analysed the nature of examination writing, I found that this was indeed the case. Also, in assessment, sentential correctness was the main concern of English teachers. Subject teachers for the most part were concerned only with an adequate statement of content. However, features of English rhetoric such as relevance and clarity which are beyond the sentence level, may play a significant role in determining adequacy in the statement of content. Certainly, a larger framework than the sentence, and a different set of criteria is required for a suitable analysis of students' errors. Two parameters are considered here, namely, 1) Linguistic and 2) Textual/ discourse-based.

1. **Linguistic Elements in Sentential Contexts**: **syntax** (subordination, coordination and completeness of phrasal and clause units), **lexis** and **cohesive elements** (leading to coherence)
2. **Text/Discourse:**

   A. Coherence; Textual Development

   a. The connection of related ideas (through appropriate placement and suitable orthographic devices, including paragraphing);

   b. The rhetorical development of argument, i.e. the differentiation of parts of the text and their organization.

B. Communication of meaning through Text/Discourse features

a. The degree of prominence to be given to each type of rhetorical unit in order to achieve the required communicative purpose (e.g. subordination to achieve focus in topic-comment relations)

b. The use of the established conventions of the rhetorical act in question, particularly in academic writing. These may include appropriate register, including correct spelling and appropriate levels of formality; the degree of abstraction required in terms of the demands of readership and of purpose; and the overt statement of implied meaning or relationship.

We shall now analyse a mini-corpus of student writing in terms of these two categories to arrive at the nature of the unintelligible and unacceptable features of the language produced. The mini-corpus consists of six examination answers in Economics (Students A to F) in the First Year B.A. level from the University of Bombay, drawn from the larger corpus created for the 1985 study. Due to lack of space, the full scripts of the original and doctored versions (doctored according to different parameters) of the mini-corpus are not attached. In the doctored versions, the unsuitable linguistic and textual elements of the original script have been changed along specific parameters. In this paper, only excerpts from the original scripts and the doctored version focusing on features of the text/discourse have been contrasted. The version doctored for linguistic elements will only be referred to in terms of relative acceptability to teachers; it will not be presented.

LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS IN SENTENTIAL CONTEXTS

a. Lexical and syntactic shortcomings

Student C wrote of the "relationship between ends and scrace". He should have written, "scarce means".

Student A wrote, "He states the nature of economic problems to scarcity resources", when what he meant was, "He *relates* the nature of economic problems to the scarcity of resources".

Student C wrote, "As first only Robbins stated that economics is science it is not pure science as well as physics and chemistry". What he actually meant was "but it is not pure science, *like* physics and chemistry".

b. Errors of cohesion: Signalling of transitions in argument

Student A was not able to signal the conclusion of an argument. He wrote "Human wants are unlimited if one of it satisfied, the other wants immediately replace. It is impossible for man to satisfy his all wants in a limited income". In order to make this statement acceptable, we need to insert the cohesive link "*therefore*", so that it reads: "It is therefore impossible for man to satisfy all his wants in a limited income."

Student A was also unable to handle the statement of a reason-effect relationship. He wrote "Robbins definition is states the nature of human behaviour it at once become too wide and too narrow definition." In order to make the statement coherent, he should have written, "*Since* Robbins' definition is states the nature of human behavior…" (Grammar is not being corrected in these examples; only the feature under consideration is being looked at, in this case cohesion).

Student D could not clearly state the fact that some features were being added to those already mentioned. For example, he wrote, "But in modern times after Malthus establish this theory, the Industrial Revolution take place in England, many new methods were introduced to produce more crops, fertilisers now can be increase the fertility of land." This could be more clearly stated as, "After Malthus established this theory, the Industrial Revolution took place in England, *and in addition*, many new methods…."

Student D also displayed an inability to make a comparison. He wrote in the line after the last quotation, "So Cannon's optimum theory of population is correct theory". It would make more sense to say, "Cannon's optimum theory of population is *more* correct in modern times than the Malthusian theory."

Student C displayed an inability to handle the statement with opposing viewpoints. He wrote, "As first only Robins stated that economics is science it is not pure science as well as physics and Chemistry." This may be better stated as, "He showed *on the one hand*, that economics is a science, *but on the other*, it is not a pure science like physics and Chemistry."

TEXT/ DISCOURSE

A. Coherence; textual development

(This section should be illustrated by the scripts of Students A, C and F. Unfortunately, lack of space prevents me from presenting them.)

a. Contradiction

The three examples provided by Student F in his answer script, relating to consumer's surplus, were seen to present contradictory views.

b. Redundancy and circumlocution

The answer scripts of Students A and C are good examples of this.

c. Lack of rhetorical organization in statement of ideas.

Lack of connection between ideas, as well as the absence of rhetorical development was prominent in the scripts of Students A and C.

d. Inability to manifest rhetorical organization in statement of ideas

Student C used no paragraphing at all, which made his ideas remain undifferentiated. The paragraphing introduced by Student A did not lead to organized production.

B. Communication of meaning through text/discourse features

a. Inability to handle topic-comment relations

In English, "new information" is normally given in the second part of the sentence (called the "comment"), "known information" (called the "topic"), being stated in the first part. A deviation from this pattern has to be clearly signalled, or else, the relationship between the sentences becomes unclear. Student A wrote, "The scarcity definition of economics is given by the economist Lional Robbins. He states the nature of economic problems to scarcity resources." It would have been more appropriate for the subject of the second sentence to refer to the subject of the first, making the second sentence start with, "It states…" A rhetorically organized version of this script would state, "The economist Lional Robbins gives the scarcity definition of Economics. According to him, Economics is the science which studies the human behavior…." This change reversed the student's topic-comment positions in the first sentence in order to focus attention on "the scarcity definition of economics", which is more important than "the economist Lional Robbins", in that context.

b. Inability to handle subordination to achieve focus.

Student B wrote, "Optimum theory of population improved over the Malthusian theory of population. It was first formulated by Edwin Cannon." This could have been more appropriately be stated as, "Optimum theory of population, first formulated by Edwin Cannon, improved over the Malthusian theory of population." This change combines the two sentences into one sentence by means of subordination, thereby making the information in the second sentence of the original seem subordinated or less important. This is necessary, because if every piece of information provided is to be given equal value, no topic can develop, much less develop with clarity. The proposed change gives the name of the formulator of the Optimum theory the position of an aside, which is its due.

c. Lack of appropriate levels of abstraction.

Students faced problems in expressing generalizations of ideas, or in relating a generalization to its concrete manifestation. Generalization or abstraction can be expressed in a number of ways; two of the problems students have in handling it are as follows:

i) Incomplete statement o f ideas.

Student F wrote, "When a consumer get a commodity which have ₹ 25 price in ₹ 20. This increase of ₹ 5 is called consumer's surplus. When a commodity which have a great important to consumer so he will buy it in more price." When editing this, in the interest of greater coherence, one could say, "When a commodity has great importance to consumer he will be *willing to buy it* at even more price *than normal*." Without these additions, the generalization lacked the crucial feature of abstraction, and remained at the level of an example.

The same point could be illustrated from the script of Student B: "The optimum size of population is neither bad nor good. The optimum size of population is not fixed one. The optimum theory of population is neither big nor small."

This could be more appropriately stated thus, "The optimum size is *not rigidly fixed*" or "An optimum population is not fixed in size; nor is it big or small *in any absolute sense*."

By making these changes, an idea implicitly contained within the statement(s) would be drawn out and the meaning clarified. In addition, Economics teachers felt that the addition of the statement "Optimum is best" was required, which also brought out the unstated meaning. By means of these additions therefore, a suitable level of abstraction could be provided for the answer.

ii) Lack of an appropriate level of formality or appropriateness of register.

Student A wrote, "Human wants are unlimited, if one of it satisfied, the other wants immediately replace. It is impossible for man to satisfied his all wants in a limited income." The phrase "*means* at his disposal" rather than the "income" would be more appropriate in terms of register.

Student E wrote, "Thus consumer's surplus means that we have prepared to pay for a commodity…." This would be more suitable if stated thus, "Consumer's surplus means that *the consumer* is prepared to pay…."

Student D wrote, "…when output or product produced by that population in that period of time is highest". This statement would appear much more appropriate to academic writing in Economics if it was stated instead as, "When *per capita output or product* produced by that population in the *given period* of time is *maximum*."

Subject teachers who assess student performance at an examination, are concerned with only some aspects of inadequacies in student writing, not with all (Lukmani, 1985). It may be interesting to analyse the reasons why some features are considered important for success, and others ignored. English teachers marking

these scripts, including the scripts doctored for grammar and those doctored for "coherence", have by and large restricted their attention to sentential grammar, showing little concern for meaningfulness.

FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

It was found that subject teachers are not disturbed by the following features in student writing:

1. Lack of rhetorical organization
2. Inability to manifest rhetorical organization, e.g. through paragraphing
3. Redundancy and circumlocution
4. Inability to handle topic-comment relations
5. Inability to handle subordination to achieve focus.

From this list, one can see that when marking examination answers, subject teachers are not concerned with ideas being logically connected with each other. In fact, so long as the points that the question demands are present in the script, even though they may be randomly scattered, the teachers are accepting of them. Again, teachers are undisturbed by the general lack of focus caused by inappropriate subordination and connection of sentences. They also do not care about redundancy and circumlocution. In fact, when presented with the same student scripts minus the redundancy and circumlocution, teachers awarded lower marks. So students are right in trying to "pad" their answers. They realize that lack of padding reveals only too clearly their paucity of ideas.

The inadequacies that subject teachers in Economics objected to are:

1. Contradiction in ideas
2. Lack of appropriate level of abstraction in terms of lexis or because of incomplete statement of ideas
3. Lack of transitional signals in argument, e.g., the use of words like therefore, since, etc.
4. Lexical and syntactic shortcomings.

Both Economics teachers and English teachers, one feels, have been forced by ever lower standards of student performance, to pass sub-standard scripts. However, in a way they have themselves contributed to perpetuating such a performance. It is time they concentrated on the essentials of getting meaning across, the value of precision, logical connection in ideas, clarity and relevance. Surely there is no question that logical connection and precision are much more important than dropping an article or failing to observe the niceties of grammar. Given the fact that students have to produce large chunks of writing, and given the limited classroom time to achieve grammatical proficiency at the undergraduate level, English

teachers would do well to encourage coherence in writing. They could do this by deflecting time away from grammar, so that what students have to say is expressed clearly and unambiguously, even though their grammatical infelicities might make the sensitive ear wince. At present, they are able to achieve neither coherence nor grammar. So, what do English teachers stand to lose by trying another approach?

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Writing: The Reality of the Classroom

Prachi Kalra

In a literate society, being able to read and write holds a lot of value. Policy documents of governments describe illiteracy as a "curse" and exhort citizens to "eradicate" it in order to be able to modernise society; and yet, the same documents reduce writing to being able to "sign" and reading to being able to sound out words. In the modern age of mass schooling, it has fallen upon schools to make children literate. In this article, I will focus on the teaching of writing. It needs to be pointed out that writing gets a lot less attention than reading, both in research and in the classroom.

Apart from reading, teaching writing is a huge responsibility of the school. Yet, most children grow up to be reluctant writers. Whenever a teacher assigns a writing task, a kind of collective sigh goes up in the class. Students would rather do anything, except write. There are many reasons for this reluctance and my article will address some of these. I will begin by discussing the similarities and differences between writing and talking/speaking. Next, I will point out the main pedagogical practices in writing classrooms and how these need to be reoriented. I will also discuss the challenges of writing in a second language classroom. In the final section, I make suggestions for enabling students to write for various purposes.

WRITING AND TALKING

Is writing an extension of talking/speaking? After all, in real life writing is purposive, communicative and often in response to something read or heard. Yet, it requires mastery of the script, control over the mechanics of punctuation and the ability to organize thoughts into a coherent order. Unless you are writing for yourself, it also means addressing someone not present in front of you. Among linguists and pedagogy experts, opinion is divided on whether the teaching of writing should regard writing as "natural" and "expressive", or as a set of skills and sub-skills which need to be discretely taught. In fact, the most helpful approach would be to see writing, like talking, not just as an attempt to make meaning and communicate, but also as a means to enable children to master the skills inherent in it to be able to write with impact and meaning. The most important thing to remember is that if language is a means of representing the world, then writing enables us to interpret, shape and represent our experience (Britton, 1972).

Another connection between talking and writing is the ability to find a voice. If children get opportunities in the classroom to express their opinion, to ask questions and look for answers and to voice a thought, they will want to do that in writing as well. Research on early writing shows that children want to write, it is the overemphasis on the perfection of the mechanical aspects of writing which puts

children off writing. The fear of the teacher's red pen is quite real.

Elements of good writing thus have important parallels in oral language that can be extended and applied to writing. As we encourage children to express ideas with fluency, develop a personal voice, and a sense of audience, we also foster their growth in writing ability.

TEACHING WRITING IN SCHOOL

For most children, the journey of writing begins by memorizing the shapes and sounds of the alphabet. In four-lined notebooks, children practice these over and over again, to form perfect shapes and to keep within the lines. Before this, many children may have enjoyed scribbling and drawing at home. In school, though, such attempts at self-expression have very little value as these experiences do not fall within the conventional understanding of writing. As a result, for most children writing seems like a very mechanical task, devoid of meaning and the pleasure of putting thoughts on paper. However, since children start their journey with self-expression, logically, even in the classroom, the focus should be on meaning and purpose and function. Yet, in classrooms we continue to focus mostly on the mechanical aspects of writing such as spellings, handwriting and keeping to a straight margin. Furthermore, writing happens in response to a teacher-directed task such as writing answers to questions or a hundred word composition on a topic decided by the teacher. Students know that all such tasks are meant for purpose of assessment. Students hardly ever write for a real purpose—to put their thoughts on paper, to share ideas with each other or to make sense of their lives. In real life, children see the adults around them writing for various meaningful purposes such as making lists, filling out a form or texting on the phone. This purposive use of writing is not often extended into the classroom.

In middle school and even later, writing plays a huge role in learning. For instance, in history or science, writing could involve doing research, organizing one's thoughts, analyzing and arriving at conclusions. By that logic, all teachers are "writing teachers", not just language teachers. However, most subject teachers lament that students just do not know how to write, but they do not see themselves as writing teachers. They feel that writing can be taught only in the language classroom. In the 1960s and 70s, Britton (1972) and Applebee (1981), spearheaded a movement called "Language Across the Curriculum" that suggested that literary writing in the language classroom needs to be balanced with expository or transactional writing to enable children to write and to learn concepts in subject areas. Britton distinguishes between expressive writing or written-down speech, which is our way of coming together with people and transactional writing, which is the giving out of information. On the other end of the continuum is poetic or literary writing, which demands reflection, both from the writer and the reader.

As children grow up they realize that spoken words are not the only way to represent reality. They pick up a pen, pencil or crayon with excitement and scribble

and draw on any surface they see around them. They draw their family members or images from stories they may have heard, or from visits and events that they may have participated in. These drawings and scribbles are attempts at representation and meaning-making. For instance, sometime ago, my friend's four-year-old son scribbled something on the corner of the page and described it as a whale's tail after the rest of the whale had moved out of the page; perhaps there is a need to regard children as writers right from the beginning.

A FEW IDEAS RELATED TO WRITING

Everyone can write, writing can be taught, and teachers can help children become better. So, what does the teacher need to do?

a) Create opportunities to write with meaning

Children in primary classes must get lots of opportunities to write for different purposes. In fact, some time needs to be kept aside for writing each day. This could be for writing a response journal where children put down their views about a story narrated by the teacher. Children in the primary classes could also maintain learning logs where they record new ideas and concepts learned. In fact, not only must children learn to write but they must also write to learn. Classrooms focus only on the former when teachers spend a lot of time getting children to practice the mechanical aspects of writing such as spellings, cursive writing or punctuation. What children really need, on the other hand, are opportunities to write to understand a concept better or to link it to their lives. Students might want to write a pamphlet for a school event, or research their favourite animal and put together a booklet on it, or to write down the arguments before participating in a debate. Writing must be exploratory- one must write to find out more.

b) Reading writing connections

Reading and writing are related to each other. Reading improves writing and vice versa. Both are constructive processes, which require us to reflect, analyse and compose meaning. It is important to underline that literacy is not a set of technical skills to be mastered, but a set of complex practices which are socially embedded. However, in our classrooms, even literature is read as a content text for the information that it might contain. For instance, children read a story to answer direct text-based questions, such as, "What was Ravi scared of?" Instead, we could teach our students to read to become better writers. This would require them to focus their attention on the language, the structure and sequence of the story and to reflect on how writers organize their thoughts. For instance, we could ask students to pick out the words and phrases used by the author to describe Ravi and what these tell us about Ravi. Or, while reading an essay on history, students could be encouraged to look for the structure of ideas on which the author might have built an argument.

However, it is also important to point out that this is a gradual process. The more children read the more they internalize the functions and structures of language. As Britton (1972) points out, this development happens both towards transactional writing and literary writing.

c) Process writing

The work of Graves in New Zealand has had a tremendous impact on the theory of teaching writing. Graves' process writing approach emphasizes the process involved in writing, rather than the exclusive focus on the final product that a student turns in for assessment. Process writing places a lot of importance on allowing students to decide what they might want to write about. The role of the teacher in this is not to suggest the topic and form of writing, but to ensure that children have exposure to a range of reading material. At the heart of the process writing approach lies the idea of choice, recognizing that author's choice is deeply connected to the motivation to write.

In our classrooms though, students write on topics suggested by the teacher, to a specific word length and submit their final product for evaluation by the teacher. In other words, students hardly ever get to experience the process of writing which requires them to write for a specific audience and for a specific purpose. Moreover, in Indian classrooms, the form is often considered more important, and independent of the content. When students learn to write a letter or a notice for the school notice-board, they are taught a rigid "format" which cannot be changed and is often assessed independent of its content. For instance, even if the body of the letter does not make sense, as long as the format is correctly reproduced, the student will get some marks. Students are rarely encouraged to look for a form which fits their functional purpose.

Process writing allows children to take control of their own learning and acquire the language to talk about their own writing process. They decide what they want to write about, work on a draft, discuss it with the teacher or a classmate, edit it for mechanical errors and finally have it published for others' reading. A lot of time is spent on brain-storming for ideas. Children must be allowed to write about what they value if they are to write with a voice. Conferencing with the teacher allows them to focus on the content and ideas, rather than spellings and grammar. Process writing enables children to acquire the language to talk about by using language to write. And, as critical theorists, such as Giroux (1987), have pointed out, this demystifies the process of writing for children and enables them to feel like writers.

In the end, it is important to emphasise that talking, reading and writing go hand in hand. In the classroom, writing often happens in a vacuum, in response to a teacher-directed task meant for assessment. If students are to use writing for the exploration of ideas, concepts or even values and dilemmas,

the teacher's role becomes even more important. He/she has to move beyond merely correcting errors to becoming a reader and listener.

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Writing Across Disciplines

Kirti Kapur

While reflecting on the process of writing, writer Anaïs Nin wrote, "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect (38)". Indeed, writing helps us to think critically, evaluate, analyse, generate ideas and present them coherently. While writing, one sifts through a range of new ideas and is able to present them through various forms- articles, essays, letters, notes, etc. Through writing, we communicate with a range of readers, in fact critical writing is a learning process in itself.

When students write frequently, they become comfortable with the process and are able to maintain or even improve upon their writing skills. Writing is an inherent part of all disciplines across the curriculum; be it science, social science, literature or even mathematics! From the expression of comprehension to the analysis of real world problems, everything requires advanced writing skills. Writing not only helps us connect with the real world, it is a method of learning as well. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) came to be acknowledged in the late 1800s as a method that creates a dialogue across specialized fields. It was further appreciated because it encourages students to think strategically about the words and formats in which they express their ideas about various subjects and the world around them.

WRITING AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING

Writing is most likely to encourage thinking and learning when students view it as a process. By recognizing that writing is a process, and that every writer uses the process in a different way, students experience less pressure to "get it right the first time", and are more willing to experiment, explore, revise, and edit. Yet, novice writers need to practice "writing" or do exercises that involve copying or reproduction of material in order to learn the conventions of spelling, punctuation, grammatical agreement, and the like. Furthermore, students need to write in a particular language through engagement with a variety of grammar practice activities of a controlled nature. Finally, they need to begin writing within a framework that is flexible and involves a number of activities such as generating ideas, organizing information, using appropriate language, preparing a draft, reading, reviewing, revising and editing.

While writing one has to keep in mind some points. These are:

- appreciate how writing is a means for learning
- identify how writing correlates with critical thinking
- understand that writing is a meaning-making process across the curriculum
- ascertain how writing as a process leads to constant improvement
- understand the difference between critical writing and descriptive writing

- use writing as a means to communicate with readers
- develop higher order thinking skills

How does writing aid learning? One must not think of writing as a mechanical activity. Instead, it is an engaging and invigorating process that involves thinking, reasoning and analysing. In the form of an argumentation, writing involves cognitive processing of ideas. Therefore, it is viewed as a tool for learning.

Today, we have moved on from the "product approach" to "process approach" of writing. The goal of writing activities therefore is not to focus on the finished writing product, but learning and self-discovery through the act of writing irrespective of the form of writing, which may be journal, response to prompts, collaborative writing, etc. This also makes writing less mechanical and helps many writers overcome writer's block or the inability to express oneself.

Combining writing with other educational activities as well as for representation becomes possible when appropriate writing strategies are used. For example, a problem-solving activity such as a writing task involves cognitive processes such as active knowledge-building and imagination. This process in turn promotes content learning as well as conceptual clarity.

Writing is effective as a learning tool because it helps us become aware of the knowledge around us; this knowledge can in turn be applied to other tasks as well. Writing becomes a lifelong learning tool for a variety of socio-cultural contexts as well because it becomes a source of shared meanings about subject specific terms/concepts. Furthermore, it enables us to reflect on the choices we make while explaining and analysing themes and issues across the curriculum. This cognitivist perspective of writing requires writing processes to be regarded as prisms for reflection, in which reflection takes place not only before writing, but also during and after the writing has been completed. Reflection in turn may lead to a revised draft; an improved understanding of the task or theme at hand!

WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING

So, how can writing across disciplines help to develop writing? For this, different types of tasks can be taken up as per the level and interest of the students. There are a variety of writing tasks for various purposes that follow different writing conventions across disciplines. Each discipline has its own unique language conventions, formats, and structures; and therefore presentation, style and organization techniques. The first step would therefore be to identify the common tasks or formats across disciplines such as reports, observational essays, review of literature, project proposals, summative reports, etc.

Writing and thinking are closely connected. Good writing cannot happen without critically thinking about the topic. Hence, content selection (information and ideas) has to be done carefully, followed by an assessment of the needs and expectations of the readers, and a plan of the presentation. These have to be then edited accordingly. Often, writers as well as their readers are not consciously aware of

these links. However, becoming aware of and developing oneself along these lines can make one a very effective writer. Writing and critical thinking come only with practice.

Right from content selection to the production of the final draft, critical thinking and writing go hand-in-hand. When a person has to write something, he/she has to gather data, either from memory or by doing research on that topic. One must decide during this process what information is relevant for the topic, using specific criteria to rationalize about what to include and what to leave out. Once a person knows which content is relevant, one must decide how to present the information. This involves thinking about how it can be presented in the most logical and clear manner. This goes well beyond the basic rules of syntax, grammar and organization since it takes into consideration an array of cultural constructs that might make a person's ideas or words come across differently than intended. Writers have to be aware of how they spin their work and what words they select. The fact that the "best" way to present information is subjective is what makes one writer distinct from another. Different literary "voices" are essentially an evidence of the different paths of critical thinking and writing.

The editing process is another way to relate critical thinking with writing. During this part of the writing process, a person has to think about which data is most important, and isolate the most important elements in order to make edits. Sometimes, editing creates a need for new transitions or connections, so the writer has to think about ways to make one section flow easily into another once the edits have been made. This process is imperative to precise and clean writing.

Critical thinking and writing connect through the reader's assessment as well. As a person reads, he/she draws on his/her own knowledge and expertise to ascertain whether what the writer is saying makes sense, even if the ideas presented are fictional or speculative. If it does not make sense, then the writer may lose credibility with the reader. Conversely, readers may think about what caused the writing to be particularly persuasive, i.e. emotionally or cognitively stimulating. Readers may also use critical thinking to predict how far the writer may go with the work.

Writing and critical thinking are intrinsically linked with imagination and creativity. Each piece of writing has many smaller ideas, scenes or characters that a writer can expand upon. Once a person has completed a piece of writing or has finished reading it, he/she can think of other ways of presenting it.

WRITING FOR A PURPOSE

Writing is a process that involves detailed planning. It requires practice, and in due time generally leads to an effective product. Noted writer Leo Tolstoy revised his novel *Anna Karenina* (1877) about seventeen times before finalizing it! However, there has been a conscious effort to move away from the product approach to the process approach of writing. The process approach requires us to keep in mind

two crucial aspects—ample space and time are needed to generate and try out new ideas, and feedback on the content is critical to learning and development.

Following the process approach, students can be asked to generate ideas for writing. They can think of the purpose and target audience for the text, and write multiple drafts in order to present written products that communicate their ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to develop ideas independently and then provide feedback on the content of their drafts. In such cases, writing becomes a process of discovery for the students as they present new ideas and identify or discover language forms to express them.

Negotiation with peers and teachers, and a collaborative conversation to construct meaning are also inbuilt components of the process approach to writing. Another essential aspect of the process approach is feedback and guidance. Though these require considerable amount of time, they are essential in order to develop the skill of writing. One of the ways in which the teacher's time for feedback and guidance can be minimized is by encouraging the students to share their writing among themselves, thereby creating a system of peer evaluation. After the initial vetting, students can then share their ideas with the teacher.

Furthermore, learning to write is a developmental process that helps students to write like professional authors—choosing their own topics and genres, and writing from their own experiences or observations. A process approach requires that teachers give students greater responsibility for, and ownership of their own learning. Teaching and learning therefore become collaborative as the learner writes and the teacher facilitates.

During the writing process, students engage in pre-writing, planning, drafting, and post-writing activities. However, as the writing process is recursive in nature, they do not necessarily engage in these activities in that order. Writing is a means to communicate something to a target readership. However, we communicate not only simple ideas and information through writing, but also complex and abstract ideas; and writing needs to keep the communicative purpose in mind and evolve strategies to maintain contact with the reader, have coherence and organization.

The most important things a writer must keep in mind are the readership, purpose and genre. Communication can't happen without an audience or a specific agenda. For a writer, it makes sense to know who you are directing your work towards and what it is that you want your work to accomplish. Also, it is equally important that your readers feel that they are a part of your endeavour and that they understand what you want your work to say. In this sense, readership and purpose share a symbiotic relationship; a writer's readership will influence purpose, while purpose will determine the target reader.

While readership and purpose are the writer's main concerns, but the way a writer's purpose is communicated to the reader depends on the genre, the presentation, and the main idea of the book. The main idea connects readers with the purpose and therefore requires attention.

EFFECTIVE WRITING

Theories on writing have evolved in a way in which the emphasis has moved away from written products to the process of writing. This involves a gamut of choices—locating, organizing and interpreting information via note-taking and drafting, guessing from the context, examining facts and opinions, transferring information, carrying out investigations, studying layouts, recording results, reviewing, editing, skimming, scanning, summarizing!

So, what makes for an effective writer? According to M. L. Tickoo (2003), an effective writer:

i. always thinks of the readership

ii. does not deviate from the main purpose

iii. spends considerable time to plan (ideas and arguments)

iv. makes good use of reliable sources of knowledge

v. lets ideas flow smoothly (coherence and cohesion)

vi. follows a rough organization plan

vii. seeks and makes use of feedback

viii. gives a lot of attention to the choice of words (lexis)

ix. willingly (re)revises (accuracy and appropriacy)

x. looks back at the writing after long intervals

To summarize, writing as a process helps to develop ideas and enables us to discover what we think. Writing becomes a process of making meaning across the disciplines. Collaborative conversations help arrive at a shared meaning relevant to the discipline being studied. Unlike descriptive writing, which is summative, critical writing encourages reflection on the motivations of the discipline and its implications. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed. In this lies the essence of all teaching and learning.

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How ESL Teachers can Give Feedback to Treat Writing as a Process?

Lina Mukhopadhyay

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE CONTEXT

In ESL classrooms, academic skills such as reading and writing get a lot of prominence, but the learning of writing is mostly seen as a product. Hence, it is expected that students produce texts that are well formed every time they are given a writing task. Furthermore, they are expected to show knowledge of writing on various genres. They are given tasks such as essays, letters, and notes and are expected to express a variety of language functions such as informing, narrating, describing, explaining, elaborating, exemplifying, expressing opinion, and arguing. Their scripts are evaluated and scores are awarded and this is done some three to four times in a year. ESL teachers rarely ever treat writing as a process because this means showing an understanding that the skill would gradually develop over a period of time. However, to treat writing as a process is not easy as it requires teacher involvement at every stage. It needs that the teacher look for smaller gains and not treat the script as a finished product on which he/she can mark errors.

Writing to express meaning is therefore a complex process and involves a lot of inherent sub-parts such as:

1. genre knowledge or who are the likely readers of the text
2. task specific vocabulary, grammar, and language functions
3. discourse structure knowledge or how to communicate ideas coherently
4. topic knowledge and its integration from sources

The aim of this paper is to look at the different ways of giving feedback to students on their writing and treat the learning of the skill as a process and not as a product. In this regard, a few ideas have been presented for teachers to consider how to make feedback effective.

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Feedback is a very useful strategy that teachers can use to enhance student writing. To give feedback, teachers need to engage with the script at various levels. They need to take note of what a student is capable of doing and contrast it with the sub-skills which need to be further worked upon. Thus, feedback is essentially an estimate of student capability and may be used to appreciate what has been achieved and give support to what needs to be further acquired.

Based on his/her estimate of what needs attention, the teacher can provide feedback at two levels: general feedback on the writing aspects (e.g., language, coherence)

and specific feedback on instances of errors in the student's text. Feedback on specific features will direct the student's attention to those errors and make him/her rectify them for a specific text. In the long term, such feedback would help the writing knowledge of students grow and make them self-reliant.

HOW TO PLAN FEEDBACK?

As writing is a complex skill made up of various micro skills. Teachers therefore first need to plan bearing in mind the following points:

- What are the different parts involved in writing a text?
- How to give feedback on problems related to each part?
- How to keep an account of the type of feedback each student needs?
- How to understand that a student has been able to incorporate the feedback?

Teachers need to create a mechanism to provide feedback. This can be done quite easily by creating a simple framework that is suited to the current levels of the students as well as the demands of the writing task at hand. Thus, for every writing task, three sub-parts can be considered for feedback –

a. content
b. text organization
c. language

As a second step, teachers need to consider a writing task and create a bank of ideas pertaining to each of these sub-parts for that task. The "idea bank" will comprise of ideas that the teachers expect to find in the students' writing for a specific task. Let us consider how a teacher can do this for a pre-intermediate level task described as follows:

Task description

Your class is being taken for a summer camp to a place outside of your city for a week. Write a letter of apology in about 150 words to your class teacher for not being able to go for the camp. Give appropriate reasons why you cannot join.

Table 1: *Idea bank*

Sub-parts	Cue questions to generate ideas
Content	What ideas to include in the letter? Express apology: -I am sorry to inform you that…; -I regret to inform you that…; -I apologize that I won't be able…;

	Give reasons: - parents did not give permission/parents have planned a trip to…/ - plan to visit grandparents cannot be cancelled/some guests are expected to come/we will have a family function **Conclude:** - Next time would like to join; talk to classmates after they get back
Text organization	- How many parts will the letter have? (assuming that the students already know the format of a formal letter) - Introduction – express apology - Body – cite a reason or two - Conclusion – express willingness to go the next time
Language	- What tense do you need to include? - Use present tense to state your inability and express apology. - Use simple past tense to cite reason(s): My parents have already booked tickets to visit… - Pay attention to subject-verb-agreement - How to connect ideas? Use linkers to express addition (and, also), contrast (but, although), give reason (because, as, so)

One of the easiest ways of making the idea bank is by asking cue questions that would draw the students' attention to specific details of the task and the sub-parts of writing. This is shown in table 1. To keep an account of every student's capabilities, the teacher can add a third column to the table and make notes for each student on each aspect.

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK?

The style of giving feedback is very crucial. Usually teachers provide corrections of grammar and vocabulary. This is the most direct form of feedback. Teachers adopt this style because they believe that the aim of feedback is to correct errors. While this style is the easiest for the teacher to adopt, every time he/she corrects an error in a script, the student misses out on an opportunity to consider the mistake and work it out on his/her own. The learning therefore remains incomplete and the student continues to rely on the teacher for error correction. Also, this kind of

structural feedback fails to improve the writing quality, especially coherence.

In real life, parents or caregivers mostly give feedback to show how to do a job better. In school, this can translate into giving a report to the students of what they have been able to do. This appreciation is to motivate them, since the school is a formal learning context. The other role of pedagogic feedback is to "enable" learning by giving suggestions that may help students do the task better. The feedback would serve as a guide for the students to work a way out of their mistakes on their own and to attempt writing an improved version. Only then can writing knowledge emerge. So in this section, we will discuss a model of feedback that can "enable" students to become self-reliant and show them "how to monitor" their writing continually.

To turn a mistake into a learning opportunity, teachers should make their feedback as indirect as possible. Their written comments followed by oral feedback should help students arrive at correct form and express meaning better. I have listed the steps of feedback, beginning with the most indirect form where less help is given, to levels where more help is given by directly providing the corrections and supporting exercises.

FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK

Less help

1. Look at the script and comment on what has been achieved and what has to be worked upon. You may need to give feedback mostly at the discourse level. This is the most indirect feedback.
2. Use a strategy to make your students notice the problems. Try not to identify the exact error. Underline the problematic parts and give general comments in the margin beside each paragraph. Some examples of comments are: "Is there anything wrong here? You need to review/rewrite this section. Here the link is missing." This feedback is a bit more direct, and can largely be at the discourse level with some language suggestions.
3. Ask direct questions for each problem: "Is this correct? Why have you used this word here?" (Refer to the idea bank in table 1) This will help you identify the error more directly than the previous two stages. If the student is not able to answer, give some cues or alternatives. Help him/her arrive at the corrections independently. This feedback can be both at a discourse and language level. If the student comes up with a nearly correct answer, appreciate him/her: "That's correct! That's a better answer! Now your text reads better, isn't it?"

4. At this level, you can point out the errors directly. But explain with examples the reason behind each error and what needs to be done to rectify it. For language errors, you can give the correct forms. For idea level problems, ask questions such as: "What can you do to improve your writing? Can these two ideas be linked? How? You may need to work with all three parts listed in table 1.

5. Those who have recurrent problems with grammar, vocabulary, linkers, and sentence construction need to practice some tasks for each aspect. For instance, if a student has problems in maintaining uniformity of tense, give texts with tense errors and ask him/her to edit them. If they have problems in the content, give them some topics and ask them to prepare a list of ideas for each topic. Tell them whether the ideas they have listed are appropriate or not. Provide an explanation about ideas that may form "a set" for a topic. Allow the use of L1 when required (Mukhopadhyay, 2016) on the use of L1 for feedback on L2 writing.

More help

A point to be noted here is that the "degree of directness" in the feedback will depend on students' level of proficiency. For instance, at beginner and pre-intermediate levels, teachers can give more direct feedback, i.e. use steps 4 and 5 more often.

HOW TO RECORD GROWTH?

In classes, teachers mostly deal with a large number of students and to give individual feedback is daunting. It is even more difficult to record individual growth patterns. So, teachers may not attempt this task often. However, they can do it occasionally to get a sense of how the writing skills of their students have developed over a period of time. While recording growth, teachers can use the idea bank and keep a note of each student's progress across a series of tasks in a given course. Then across tasks, comments for each student and the correction carried out can be collectively tabulated and interpreted. This will give a student specific assessment of growth in each sub-skill. Also, the frequency of use of the steps—indirect to direct—can be collected for each student. In this way, teachers can systematically build estimates of student growth over time and understand the process of writing better.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in this paper I have outlined the different ways of giving balanced and systematic feedback to help students understand what they have achieved and the areas where they still need to work. I have looked at writing as a process—one that

can be developed based on the feedback received. I have also tried to explain the distinction between direct and indirect feedback for the benefit of the teachers. The ideas presented in the paper, especially the ones on recording student growth can be taken up for further research to study the impact of feedback on student writing.

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Translating and Learning to Write

Abhishek Bhaskar and Anchala Paliwal

The adequate development of writing skills is crucial not only for a student or an individual but also for the greater interest of society. While reading skills are largely understood as an integral aspect of an individual's personality, the cultivation of writing skills remains neglected. The reasons for this may vary, from assuming all writing to be creative writing and therefore a natural talent, to the immensely prevalent methods of rote learning which have reduced the act of writing to merely copying. Also there is a wrong widespread conviction that writing skills are simply spoken communication "written down". Such misunderstandings about writing have further distanced learners from even acknowledging the need to learn to write.

It is imperative to consider writing as a necessary skill which requires thinking, planning and editing. Among other aspects, vocabulary, punctuation, correct grammar usage, knowledge of syntax, spellings and composition of sentences into paragraphs are inseparable components of writing. Let us look at the pedagogy of writing skills. As Coe et al(1983) have identified in their book *Writing Skills Teacher's Book* that "learning by doing" (p. 2) is their preferred method of teaching writing. They add:

> First, learners find that doing something (i.e. being relatively active) is more interesting than being told about it (i.e. being relatively passive). Second, if learners come to understand through using their own resources to solve problems, then their understanding will probably be more thorough, and they are more likely to retain what they have learnt. Third, it is only when learners put something into practise that any incorrect or imperfect learning is revealed, and it is revealed both to the learners themselves and to the teacher. (Coe et al, 1983, p. 2-3).

They successfully argue that writing can only be learned through repeated practice of writing exercises. However teachers routinely face resistance to writing exercises in the classroom on the part of the students. When asked to do a written exercise, students usually respond by stating that writing exercises should be given as home work; or that they are experiencing a "writer's block" and do not wish to write. There is a psychological barrier associated with writing, which hinders them. This resistance declines once the process of writing, as broadly outlined in multiple writing manuals, is explained, which includes pre-writing exercises of thinking on the given topic, jotting down points, arranging these points in a sequence and then writing and if possible, editing. Students are pleased to find that their written work has a coherent structure and consistent meaning.

Teacher trainers frequently suggest two methods of inculcating and enhancing writing skills -free writing and collaborative writing. Free writing encourages

learners to write whatever comes to their mind. It must be mentioned here that there should be no judgemental criticism of their writing in the first few instances. This is a useful first activity to make learners start writing. As mentioned earlier, learners generally suffer from low confidence; in order to overcome it a collaborative writing exercise can be conducted in the classroom. In this, learners exchange ideas in a group activity before selecting the appropriate words to articulate them. This enables peer learning and familiarizes them with the process of writing. In both these methods, the teacher can act as a facilitator.

Learner resistance to writing is greatly magnified when it comes to second language acquisition and writing skills. Under confidence due to lack of exposure to the second language dominates the mind of the learner. Dana R. Ferris points out with regard to learners:

> First, they are simultaneously acquiring both second language skills and writing/composition expertise. Further, compared with L1 writers, L2 students (in most instances) have not had equivalent amounts of exposure to spoken and written input in the L2. As a result, they are typically more limited in their knowledge and control of lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical tools to express their ideas effectively. Finally, L2 writers often have had little experience with producing (or even reading) extended pieces of L2 text, and thus lack fluency and confidence in their ability to write longer papers in academic or professional settings. (Ferris, 2012, p. 227)

L2 writing therefore becomes a more complex task and requires attention at multiple levels. As an area of expanding academic interest, Manchon and Matsuda (2016) point out that "L2 writing has evolved into a well-established interdisciplinary field of inquiry" (p. 1). Teaching English writing skills in Indian classrooms can be analysed in this broad framework. There is simultaneous learning of the second language as well as honing of writing skills. Neither can be limited to being a means to an end, in fact, both are intrinsically woven together.

During second language acquisition, the first attempts at speaking and writing mainly comprise of unconscious translation from the learner's first language into the second language. To comprehend this aspect of unconscious translation, an understanding of the process of translation is required. Bassnett notes in *Translation Studies:*

> Translation Studies, therefore, is exploring new ground, bridging as it does the gap between the vast area of stylistics, literary history, linguistics, semiotics and aesthetics. But at the same time it must not be forgotten that this is a discipline firmly rooted in practical application. (Bassnett, 1980, p. 16)

Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (1999) in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* observe that "Translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems, and in history" (p. 6). Isadore Pinchuk (2007) in the essay "What is Translation?" emphasizes that "Translation is the transfer of meanings" (p. 6).

The process of translation is highly complex; it is much more than just looking for a substitute for a source language word in the target language. As Basnett and Trivedi have rightly pointed out, translations are highly embedded in cultural and political systems; a translator has to understand the implicit politics of SL and express it in the TL. Generally, a student of L2 unconsciously looks for a substitute of L1 to express himself. However, this hampers his eloquence in L2 because he merely looks for the substitute of L1's signifier whereas what translation actually requires is the reflection of L1 in L2's signifier. Let us consider the example of the word "water" and its equivalent in Hindi language i.e. "jal", "neer" and "paani". "Jal" is generally used for holy water, "neer" is used in poetry and "paani" denotes drinking water; the three are thus not synonymous but have a specific usage because the signified concepts attached to them are different. A translator has to therefore understand the dynamics of language which is intricately woven with cultural and political aspects to correctly present it in L2. When a speaker expresses L1 in L2, he has to first understand the layers of ideologies (political, cultural, etc.) and only then is true articulation in the new language possible.

As explained above, translation is a complicated process. It is not merely rendering substitute words from one language into another language as language is deeply embedded in its cultural, political and social context. For adult learners of L2, even a basic understanding of the process of translation can help them to appreciate the multiple aspects of language and not view it as just a means of communication. It also aids their manner of assimilating any language. However, this is not to suggest that an advanced level of perfection in translation is the goal of English language teaching in the Indian classroom. It is however proposed that an awareness of the process of translation may help L2 learners in grasping language and its articulation, thereby supporting their writing skills.

So instead of considering translation as a hindrance to learning L2, it can be used as a learning experience about nature of language. It can broaden the learners' understanding of language and its functioning. Language acquisition will be successful if it is accompanied by an understanding of various nuances of language, which in turn will affect both competence and fluency.

Teachers need to therefore look at the instinctive act of translation by the learner during the first few attempts at writing in L2 with a more evolved understanding of translating and writing. These attempts must not be arbitrarily rejected, but counted as a step towards language acquisition. Introducing the basic tenets of translation can be an enriching enterprise in an English language classroom. To be able to "think" in L2 can be an aim, and it can be useful if the method to achieve it incorporates translation. In a country as diverse as India, learning to write in English will enhance the classroom experience if there is an array of words from indigenous languages that are included in the learning process. For the teacher also, the prospect of learning words from so many different languages could be an exciting one.

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The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Students' AESL at Secondary Schools

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"Home is the place where children spend most of their time while growing up, parents being their primary 'teacher'" (Dorothy, 1978).

The above statement highlights the role of parents in whether a child's learning is formal or informal. Parental involvement is a prominent variable affecting children's learning outcomes at all stages of learning, be it the child's early education (Hara and Burke, 1998; Hill and Craft, 2003) or youth academic success (Fan and Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003/2007). Children and youth, both are perceived to be encouraged and motivated to perform better when their parents are involved in their homework or assignments given in their school. They start valuing their schooling and learning (Chowa et al, 2013). All these findings indicate the important role played by parental involvement in the educational achievements of their children. Parental factor is also one of the scales of "socio-educational model". This reflects the important role of parents in their children's performance. Involvement provides emotional support which may develop high motivation among learners.

In one of the studies carried out by Wilder (2014), the findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement, regardless of the definition of parental involvement or measure of achievement. In the same study, Wilder noticed that the impact of parental involvement on the student's academic achievement was weakest if parental involvement was defined as homework assistance. The literature survey revealed that in developing countries, the overall impact of parental involvement on academic performance in the formative years is negligible (Chowa et al, 2013). Hence, in accordance with these findings, the present study will assess the relationship between parental involvement and students achievement in learning English as a Second Language (AESL) at the secondary school level in the Indian context.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Can students' AESL at secondary school level be predicted by looking at the parental involvement?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we adopted an Ex-Post-Facto design (Nworgu, 2006). We considered this design suitable because parental involvement had already taken place and the

AESL variable was not manipulative as it had already occurred. This research design is used when it is not possible to manipulate the characteristics of human participants. It is an alternative for experimental research (Simon and Goes, 2013) and also without interference from the researcher. The study targeted the students of class 10 of residential and non-residential secondary schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan (India). Out of the thirteen cities comprising forty-six CBSE affiliated schools in Jhunjhunu district, one city was chosen by simple random method and all nine schools of that city were included in the sample. The data comprised a sample size of 823 students.

A survey was conducted with the help of a questionnaire to collect information about parental involvement, using Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test battery (AMTB). The questionnaire had a parental involvement scale comprising three indicators on a five-point Likert scale as: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. Here, parental involvement was defined as English homework assistance and supervision. The students' achievement in learning ESL (AESL) was collected from the respective schools in the form of grades awarded by CBSE.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data was analysed in two stages. In the first stage we looked at the frequency distribution (table 1), and in the second stage studied the formulation of linear regression (table 2) of the dependent variable—students' parental involvement and AESL.

HYPOTHESIS

Our hypothesis was that parental involvement has no impact on students' AESL at a secondary school level.

Table 1

Demographic data of respondents

Factors	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
PI	Low (2-6)	115	14.00	2	10	8.2126	1.50659
	Middle (7-8)	266	32.30				
	High (9-10)	442	53.70				
AESL	Low (45)	13	1.60	35	95	75.8384	1.15006E1
	Average (55)	71	8.60				
	High (65-75)	399	48.50				
	Very High (85-95)	340	41.30				

The demographic data (table 1) of respondents indicated that the maximum number of students had high parental involvement with respect to assistance with their school work, followed by middle and low level of parental involvement. Further, the respondents' AESL also reflected that more than 50 per cent of the respondents were in the categories of high and very high AESL.

Table 2.
Relationship between Parental Involvement and AESL (Results of linear regression)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	61.611	2.680		22.988	0.000
	Parental Involvement	1.132	0.211	0.184	5.371	0.000
R^2=0.034						
F= 28.849*						

Model 1: Predictors: (constant), Parental Involvement

Dependent variable: AESL. *p<0.001

A simple linear regression was performed to evaluate how the independent variable (parental involvement) contributed to the regression equation when the variance contribution (R^2) of the factor in the regression model had been accounted for. The output revealed a correlation between the independent and dependent factors, r = 0.184. The model summary highlighted (R^2 = 0.034, F (1,821) =10.89, p <0.001), indicated a statistical predictive capability of parental involvement on the respondents' AESL. The F test was significant, which meant that the model fit the data and established that there was a relationship between the independent and dependent factors. The variance shared by parental involvement was only 3 per cent on AESL. Parental involvement with a coefficient value of B=0.211, *p<0.001, was statistically significant to influence the respondents' AESL. This demonstrated that there was a positive relationship between the respondents' parental involvement and AESL, and for every unit increase in parental involvement, AESL increased by 0.211 points. The results of simple regression revealed that parental involvement possessed a predictive capability. Although the value of R^2 was very low, i.e. only 3 per cent, it was statistically significant.

Many researchers (Erlendsdottir, 2010; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003) have found a significant impact of parental involvement on academic achievement. According to Xu et al (2010), there is positive prediction between parental involvement and a child's reading achievement. In the present study, the relationship was found to be significant, although not very strong. There may be many possible reasons for this. There are many studies which indicate that parental involvement in the form of

expectations for academic achievement (Wilder, 2014) and authoritative parenting (high acceptance, supervision, and psychological autonomy granting) (Steinberg et al, 1992) is strongest in the form of home assistance. Parental involvement also differs based on the context (at home versus in school) (Giallo et al, 2010; Jeynes, 2003). There is a sociological significance of parental involvement in the education of their children (Rafiq et al, 2013). Parental involvement in students' learning, particularly in English, lead to an overall improvement in English language skills, development as well as confidence among students. The more students interacted and practiced with their parents, and remained under their supervision, the better they performed.

However the socio-economic status of the parents (parental education, occupation or income) may affect the level of parental involvement (Vellymalay, 2012; Smith, 2006). English proficiency and cultural differences are some of the other issues which prevent parents from getting actively involved in their child's education (Scarcella, 1990; Olsen, 1988) It can be said that parents being involved gives confidence to the children. This may help children in developing their own goals, objectives and positive attitude towards learning. A further study on possible strategy adopted by parents for involvement and the level of their exposure and parental engagements with school meetings and activities may help to comprehend the entire situation. There is also a need to explore the various kinds of parental involvement and its measurement at different educational stages. Parental involvement and guidance needs to follow different strategies like providing assistance in their homework, interacting with them, providing encouragement and support, attending regular school meetings, etc. according to the emotional needs and age of the children.

CONCLUSION

The present study has found positive impact of parental involvement in the form of English homework assistance and supervision on students' AESL at secondary school level in Indian context. However, there is a need to explore further what type of parental involvement has more impact or possess stronger relationship with achievement in particular context. There are many other factors like parental education, exposure, strategy of involvement, etc., which make parental involvement contingent on it and its impact on learning achievement. These need to be further explored. This in turn would enhance the learning outcomes.

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Selecting English Language Materials: Some Factors to Consider

Devupalli Vishwa Prasad

Questions related to quality in teaching depend on the "what" of knowledge and the "how" of knowledge, and these questions keep challenging the educational institutions. The "what" of knowledge deals with the content knowledge present in the materials, i.e. thematic issues. "How" deals with the ways and means by which knowledge should be disseminated to help students attain the standards set for them. It also deals with how English language materials are presented to the learners. In my article, I will deal with the quality of the English language materials used in teaching.

Presenting English texts as a second/foreign language to learners is a daunting and challenging task. It needs a thorough understanding of the proficiency levels of the learners, in addition to an understanding of their first language, social class, culture, and the level of difficulty of the language itself. These factors play a vital role in determining how well a learner can learn English. In the light of these issues, textbook writers should attempt to fit together the language level of learners and materials. They should also try to present the topics in a more interesting manner so as to motivate the learners to read the texts. This would help the learners to attain the standards set for them in the programme.

Before we look into the problem of solving the language barrier, let us define it. Hallberg (2010) defines language barrier as a kind of a psychological barrier in which language is a psychological tool that affects communication. This definition explicates the point that a language barrier paves the way for incomprehensibility. The materials that writers develop have to therefore be comprehensible as well as learner-friendly texts.

From my observations of student teachers who learn English as a foreign language over a period of ten years, I have concluded that there are three important points that a materials' writer should take care of while writing textbooks. They are:

1. Register
2. Style of writing
3. Lexis, syntax and discourse

REGISTER

Every discipline uses language to posit its theories, laws, etc., and the vocabulary used is generally technical and restricted to that discipline only. For example, mathematics, sciences, etc., use specific technical terms to explain concepts/ theories. The specific vocabulary/technical terms of a discipline are known as

register. For example: salicylic acid, ketones, alkynes, etc., belong to the field of Chemistry; and focal length, capillary system etc. belong to Physics. Once the register is known, it is easy to understand a science text as the remaining language elements mostly comprise of frequently used simple phrases. This is an advantage for any science student.

However disciplines of social science and literature have a limited register, there is more creative usage of language in these disciplines. Consequently, these texts pose problems to learners due to their incomprehensibility. Simply selecting and grading the vocabulary as per the level of the learners does not suffice. The textbook writers must also bear in mind the different Indian contexts and proficiency levels of Indian learners in rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

STYLE OF WRITING

Compare a science text with that of a literary or social science text. We find a significant difference between them, especially, in the usage of language. Very often, there is excessive use of unfamiliar language in literary texts, which is usually not explained. This makes an ordinary learner uncomfortable with the text and he/she loses interest in reading it. This is probably why many learners rely more on question papers from previous years rather than on prescribed texts. Hence, textbook or materials' writers must adopt a simple style in writing, which will help learners at both ends of the normal probability curve to perform well.

LEXIS, SYNTAX AND DISCOURSE

Usually, textbook writers do not seem to pay much attention to the selection of words or language structures while presenting points or themes. It is important that writers select vocabulary which is simple, structures which are short and direct, a discourse which is clear and logical, and finally, produce a text which is comprehensible to learners. In this regard, Stephen Krashen's comprehensible input will help learners learn English easily.

Another point to contend with is that learners have different levels of English proficiency. Hence, textbook writers, while writing must bear in mind the weakest of learners. Stephen Krashen talks about comprehensible input in languages. He says that any new language input should be at i+1 level where "i" stands for the current level of a learner and "1" stands for the immediate next level, in terms of input. It implies that a text should be written in such a way that it is just one step above the learner's level. If it is i+2, for example, there is a difference of two levels between the current level of the learner and the target level. Therefore, there is every chance of misunderstanding the input and forming wrong notions and beliefs. If on the other hand, a text is pitched at the learner's level and made appealing, the learner will certainly find it useful and interesting.

Therefore, given the Indian context, the necessity to learn English for communication and employment, textbook writers should remember the following

points when writing a book. The book must:

1. Have a sound theoretical knowledge of materials preparation
2. Have elements of humour.
3. Relate language to real life contexts
4. Present ideas and concepts in a logical flow.
5. Have a glossary giving the meanings of difficult words so that the learners may know the contextual meaning of the word immediately.
6. Avoid figurative language
7. Use simple vocabulary
8. Write short sentences
9. Use active voice in the text
10. Use the English equivalent for an unknown foreign phrase
11. Have a text where every phrase speaks to learners.

CONCLUSION

The aim of all teaching-learning materials in ELT is to disseminate knowledge of English. If the materials have redundant or uncontrolled language structures, vocabulary, etc., they pose difficulties for learners in comprehending the text. This is compounded by the fact that English is a third/foreign language in the Indian context (Devupalli & Mandly, 2010). In addition, Indian English language learners studying in government schools are frightened of English. In such a situation, materials' writers should feel the pulse of our learners and write the materials accordingly. Materials which are simple, brief and student-friendly will help learners to move forward in attaining a certain standard and ultimately, the quality of education will improve.

A sample text for high intermediate proficiency students is given as follows.

The Window

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour a day to **drain** the fluids from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours **on end**. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vocation. And every afternoon when the man in the bed next to the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed would live for those one-hour periods where his world

would be broadened and **enlivened** by all the activity and colour of the outside world. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake, the man had said. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Lovers walked arm in arm **amid** flowers of every color of the rainbow. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in **exquisite** detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the **picturesque** scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a **parade** passing by. Although the other man could not hear the **band**, he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window **portrayed** it with descriptive words. Unexpectedly, an **alien** thought entered his head: Why should he have all the **pleasure** of seeing everything while I never get to see anything? It didn't seem fair, he began to feel **envy**. He began to brood and found himself unable to sleep. He should be by that window - and that thought now controlled his life.

Late one night, as he lay **staring** at the ceiling, the man by the window began to cough. He was choking on the fluid in his lungs. The other man watched in the dimly lit room as the struggling man by the window **groped** for the button to call for help. Listening from across the room, he never moved, never pushed his own button which would have brought the nurse running. In less than five minutes, the coughing and choking stopped, along with the sound of breathing. Now, there was only silence—deathly silence.

The following morning, the day nurse was sad to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, and called the hospital attendant to take it away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the **switch** and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he **propped** himself up on one elbow to take his first look. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it all himself. He turned to look out of the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

(Author Unknown)

Glossary

drain	draw off
on end	continuously
enlivened	brought back to life
amid	in the middle of
exquisite	extremely beautiful
picturesque	visually charming

parade	a music troop in uniform marching in step with one another
band	music created with the help of drums, trumpets, and other musical instruments
portrayed	described
alien	strange
pleasure	happiness
envy	jealousy
staring	looking fixedly
groped	trying to find out
switch	change
propped	supported

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Was it Really for *her*? Gendered Perspectives on Nationalism

Neha Gaur

The title of this article poses a question much serious in its intent than words can possibly express. The argument here draws from the politics that was played in building a national identity by using the body of a woman as a commodity, a token to gain monopoly over the other.[1] I would also like to highlight that the "her" in the title stands not just for woman but also for the country, thereby emphasizing my focus on the rhetoric of viewing the nation as a woman and woman as the nation. Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* stated:

> For each new class, which puts itself in the place of the one before it, is compelled, simply in order to achieve its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all members of society, i.e., employing an ideal formula to give its ideas the form of universally valid ones. (Marx and Engels, 1976, p. 65-66)

The new class that was to appear in the forefront after the foreign rule was removed from the Indian subcontinent was the bourgeois middle class, and I do not hesitate to clarify here that the quote applies to both India as well as Pakistan. The identity of both countries was being formed at the time, and India particularly was recovering from the loss of land to Pakistan. In building a new national identity, the body of the abducted woman became the specific focus, and recovering her was the redemption that was offered by the nation to the communal madness, bringing about the desired reinforcement of national identity. In the classic transposition, hers therefore became the body of the Motherland (woman-as-nation), violated by the marauding foreigner. Though it would be a cliché to say that in reality no nationalism in the world has ever granted the same privileged access to the resources of the nation-state, and thus it can be said that women have been subsumed only symbolically into the national body politic.

I would like to develop my critique of the idea of nationalism further by using Rabindranath Tagore's ideas about nationalism as expressed in his novel *The Home and the World.* In the novel, through the voice of the protagonist Nikhil, Tagore clearly expresses his discontentment with the idea of nationalism. According to Tagore, the country was an object worthy of love, while nationalism, or nation worship, was a deeply suspect emotion. Tagore viewed nationalism as a very powerful but devastating force as opposed to the constructive ideals of universal humanism and morality.[2] He recognized the interconnectedness of countries via colonial domination and competition, and also realized that nationalism was founded on a destructive competitiveness which inculcated willingness towards violence. He watched with dread the violence, and without mincing words declared

that behind this violence lay the dark force of nationalism. He anticipated the harm that was about to be caused by the growing spirit of nationalism among the people of the world.

The mind of the Indian male as well as the public arena had already been affected by the colonial rule; the only thing that remained unfettered by it was the domestic realm. Tanika Sarkar points out that the Indian male idolized womanhood rhetorically while controlling or oppressing his wife within the ancient Hindu traditions. From here began the valorization of woman as mother on the one hand and the jeopardizing of her female subjectivity on the other. As has already been stated, the Indian male had been forced to surrender under an alien system of rule; the burden of protecting the nucleus of nationhood therefore now fell on the woman. It is not surprising that Bimala was invoked by Sandip as the representative of the nation, "I shall simply make Bimala one with my country" (Tagore, 2001, p.106). Speaking in the same vein, Bimala conjoins herself with the nation, and seeks, in the awakening of the enslaved country, an analogue to her own self-assertion: "In that future I saw my country, a woman like myself, standing expectant. She had been drawn forth from her home…by the sudden call of some Unknown…" (p. 120). Sandip also pulls the lover and the country together, "My watchword has changed since you have come across my vision…It is no longer Hail Mother but Hail Beloved, Hail Enchantress…The mother protects, the mistress leads to destruction…"(p.241). Tagore found in the interchange between the mother and the beloved, between nurture and sexuality, a disturbing trajectory for nationalism. He saw it as a movement which discarded the welfare of the people in favour of politics of passion and destruction.

But a country that comprised of people looking towards modernity and liberalization but still holding onto the traditional values could not have allowed Bimala to experience her liberation (although sexual). Bimala is left alone in the end, hinting that a woman always has to tread alone on the path of her freedom. Sadly, evil reared its ugly head, and competitive nationalism had a devastating effect on women, who symbolized the nation. The equation of national integrity and female chastity resulted in an obsessive preoccupation with "the signs of the final surrender, the fatal invasion of that sacred space". It would not be wrong to say that nationalism produced a gender discourse that was ultimately repressive for women.

The gender discourse focused on "honour" during independence and Partition. Women were disenfranchised as sexual objects, communal commodities, and patriarchal property by both the nation-state as well as their families. Daiya discusses Butalia's critiquing the role of the patriarchal Indian state and the dominant ideology in abducted women's disenfranchisement and exploitation suggests:

> If colonialism provided Indian men the rationale for constructing and reconstructing the identity of the Hindu woman as a 'bhadramahila', the good, middle class Hindu wife and mother, supporter of her men, [then] Independence, and its dark 'other', Partition, provided the rationale for making women into symbols of national honor. (Daiya, 2008, p.65)

I will discuss this argument further through two novels written about the condition of women at the time of Partition, Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man.* Both Pritam and Sidhwa witnessed the Partition and give us a firsthand gendered account of the violence and displacement it caused. *Pinjar* is the story of Pooru (a Hindu girl of the Sahukar community) who is kidnapped before her marriage by Rashida (a Muslim, member of the Sheikh community) to avenge the injustice done to her aunt by Pooru's uncle. The kidnapping took place before Partition because of family rivalry. Pooru managed to escape and got back home within fifteen days of her kidnapping, but her parents refused to take her back. She gets married to Rashida, is converted to Islam and gets a new name Hamida. But Pritam here notes, "She was neither one nor the other, she was just a skeleton, without a shape or name" (Pritam, 2009, p.25).

At this point, the entry of a mad woman in the narrative stirs up the anxieties of the masculine and communalized groups. The mad woman gets pregnant and dies while giving birth to a boy. The people who had earlier refused to accept her, now call for meetings to discuss the custody of the male child. They argue that the mad woman was Hindu and the child, who is in the meanwhile being taken care of by Hamida, will be converted to Islam. One of the men in the Panchayat asks, "Are we sure that the mad woman was a Hindu?" (Pritam, 2009, p. 57) Another man asserts the tattoo of "Om" on the hand of the mad woman proved that she was Hindu. There is more to this dispute than the custody of the child; behind it lies the politics of communal identities and the identity of the nation-states representing the two communities.

The injustices done to women were not a recent phenomenon during Partition. The movie *Pinjar* uses *The Ramayana* as a contextual background which permeates the narrative through songs and allusions. One explicit link to the epic is the name of Pooru's betrothed husband, Ramchand, who sings a song about Sita's fire ordeal. The song ends on the note that although Sita survived the fire ordeal to be united with Rama, who stood on the other side with outstretched hands, her real exile began on that day. In the epic, Sita chooses to be subsumed by the earth and not be united with Rama. In the same way, Pooru chooses to stay in Pakistan and says, "My home is now in Pakistan". (Pritam, 2009, p. 125)

In the meantime Partition takes place and what happened to Hamida/ Pooru in the wake of familial revenge, is now experienced by thousands of women of both religions. A recovery programme is started by both the countries in which women are sent back "home". It is interesting to note that one "impure" Pooru was not accepted by her parents and the community, but now thousands of women are exchanged across borders and are accepted by their parents. Pooru/ Hamida does not go back to her parents after Partition. She says to herself, "Whether one is a

Hindu girl or a Muslim one, whosoever reaches her destination, she carries along my soul also." (Pritam, 2009, p. 125)

Thus Pritam shows how Pooru/ Hamida defies the patriarchal and territorial boundaries, and effectively uses her agency to critique the reality of Partition by choosing to stay in Pakistan. Pooru's choice resonates with the attitude of women who resisted the "recovery", and legitimized their cross-religious relationships.[3] Pritam has presented before us the feeling or more clearly the question that troubled Hamida's mind while reflecting on her abduction, religion had acted as an obstacle earlier and then became so accommodating.

It is pertinent to recall Shibban Lal Saksena's (the then General of the United Provinces) words in relation to the situation of women:

> Sir, our country has a tradition. Even now *The Ramayana* and T*he Mahabharata* are revered. For the sake of one woman who was taken away by Ravana (the demon in *The Ramayana*) the whole nation took up arms and went to war…reminding the House of its "moral duty" to behave honorably. (Jeffrey and Basu, 1999, p. 21)

Here, apparently two "traditions" are being invoked. First, an ancient Hindu "tradition" of chivalry towards women and the fierce protection of women's honour. Second, a "tradition" in making of a responsible government, secular principles, and democratic practices. Another important aspect of the story that can't go unnoticed is that from the very beginning, the concern with abducted women went hand in hand with alarm over "forcible conversions". This preoccupation was at the centre of all the important debates of the All India Congress Committee with regard to Pakistan. Menon and Bhasin observe:

> Abduction and conversion were the double blows dealt to the Hindu "community", so that the recovery of their women, if not land, became a powerful assertion of the Hindu manhood, at the same time then it demonstrated the moral high ground occupied by the Indian state. (Menon and Bhasin, 1998, p.54)

Recovering Hindu women (in most cases forcibly) also meant, ensuring that a generation of Hindu children was not lost to Islam, and this was very clearly reflected in the case of the mad woman's child in *Pinjar.*

In the movie *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (Keni and Sharma, 2001)*,* a stereotypical representation of masculinity in the working-class Sikh Tara Singh (played by Sunny Deol) is employed to instigate a jingoistic, hyper-masculinist Indian nationalism. This nationalism is based on the demonization of Muslims and Pakistanis as the menacing, unregenerate and mercenary "other" that threatens the Indian state. The politics of nationalism is equally potent in Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man,* where a small polio-ridden girl witnesses how Partition reduces people to tokens rather than complex human beings:

> Ayah is no longer my all-encompassing Ayah- she is also a token. A Hindu. Carried away by renewed devotional fervor she spends a small fortune in joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples. (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 93)

Sidhwa also shows how the gendering of the nation, and the emphasis on manhood which involves protecting the nation and its (or "their") women, has terrible consequences for actual women. The novel dramatizes the abduction of the Ayah as a visual spectacle; its telling details about her lips, throat, mouth, bare feet, torn sleeve, the stitching of the blouse seams, her eyes and hair signify the material and bodily rupture of her routine life in postcolonial Pakistan. (Diaya, 2008, p. 65) Such an account marks the communalization and reification of sexual desire. For the ice-candy man who desired Ayah, but had been rejected by her for a masseur, identifying Ayah as "Hindu" facilitates her objectification and violation. On the dominant gendered ideology about Partition violence in India, it can be said that the women who survived rape and other such heinous crimes were refused entry into the domestic space. They were left with the only plausible choice of committing suicide in order to render the nation state as pure. This, however, was not a choice at all.

One is reminded once again of *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha,* where while on a train to India, Tara Singh's mother gives her daughter a packet containing poison, telling her that she must die "chaste" and "pure" rather than getting raped. In the novel however, it is the ayah who refuses entry into the domestic space of the new nation Pakistan, offered by ice-candy man's ideas about romantic partnership.

The three novels that I have used in this paper help to describe different aspects of relating woman with the identity of the nation. Tagore's anticipation of viewing the spirit of nationalism as a devastating force was not wrong. How nationalism led to the destruction of women's lives is seen very clearly through these novels. The dichotomy that while we want freedom but do not believe in freedom for others is apparent. The Indian state, in its eagerness to restore normalcy, and to assert itself as the "protector", became an "abductor" that forcibly removed adult women from their homes and transported them out of their country. It became, in effect and in a supreme irony, its hated Other. (Jeffrey and Basu, 1999, p. 31) It can be said that what went into the making of a national identity was more than just the lives of our brothers; it was not the physical but the spiritual death of our sisters.

Endnotes

[1] I use "other" as a representative of Pakistan in general and the Muslim community in particular in the context of India.
[2] The feeling was thus echoed in his essays on *Nationalism.*
[3] Butalia's comment cited in *Resisting the sacred and the secular*

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The Development of Theoretical Principles of Dalit Literature

Vikas Singh and Vikas Jain

When the term Dalit appears in conjunction with the term literature, then this literature clearly stands apart from traditional literature. The cause of this standapartness is the consciousness embedded in the word Dalit, which rests on a social and cultural foundation. Before the use of the word Dalit, the jatis that had been considered untouchable were identified by names such as Chandal, Antyaj, Shudra, Avarna, Asprishya, Pancham, Harijan; names which reminded them of their inferior position in society. These labels were ascribed by the Savarna groups, with the assumption that they were superior and others were inferior. Having rejected all these ascriptions, these jatis have now decided upon the word Dalit as their identity. It is the consciousness embedded in this word that is the cause of them having arrived at such a self-description. We can appreciate the sentiments embedded in this term on the basis of the following opinion of Ramachandra:

> The word 'Dalit' is a word that denotes pride. This term also carries the awareness of oppression and victimization. The revolutionary sentiment of being continually reminded of the acts of the oppressor class is also embedded in this word. It also has an echo of consciousness. The word 'dalit' makes one aware of a sense of responsibility, and not one of sympathy. It can then be said that along with communicating the meanings of the word 'dalit', the dalit discourse is also geared towards social change and transmission of a 'dalit consciousnesses.' (Ramachandra, 2003, p.179)

In this explication, the word dalit can be seen as the thought and theoretical principle on which the entire Dalit literature rests. Several authors have attempted to define it on the basis of the question "Who is a Dalit?" However, we believe that these definitions do not merit a recapitulation here. All that we require to recollect at this point is that a Dalit is one who has suffered *dalan* and *daman*, oppression and victimization; one who has been suppressed; one who has been oppressed; one who has been exploited; one who is on the margins of society; one who is considered abhorrent; one whose human rights have been denied. Other than this, the social class which has been called "Scheduled Caste" in the Indian Constitution is mainly included in this category.

In India, brahmanical ideology and state power have been in alliance for centuries, on account of which the lower castes have been oppressed. The *Manuwadi* (based on the prescriptions of Manu) social order had strongly snared the lower castes in its tentacles and state power had always lent its support in this act. Even today, there are many political groups in power who support such a *Manuwadi* social order. However, whenever the alliance between the *Manuwadi* ideology and state

power has weakened, the jatis considered inferior have experienced a new political consciousness, and they have spoken for their independence, equality, and rights. The rise of the *niraguna* saint poets (coinciding with the arrival of Muslims) from the jatis deemed inferior, and the emergence of thinkers such as Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar after the arrival of the English can be considered as good instances of this phenomenon where the Dalits have experienced an awakening.

The British made an important contribution to the form in which the Dalit consciousness presents itself today. Shukla (2013, p. 39) opined that the Bhakti movement arose because of the arrival of Muslims; we believe that the Dalit movement arose because of the arrival of the British. This however does not mean that there was no Dalit consciousness before this. The consciousness was surely there. However, the opportunity to grow and spread became available only after the arrival of the British in India, when the doors of education and knowledge were opened for the jatis considered inferior. This made them aware of their ancient history, and oppression. The emergence of thinkers such as Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule and Dr. Ambedkar became possible only because they could access education, and the Dalit consciousness spread as a consequence of their thinking, and spread in the form of a movement. Along with the development of Dalit consciousness and Dalit movement, Dalit literature also developed at the same time.

Buddha, Sarahapa, Kabir, Ravidas, Guru Ghasidas, Jyotiba Phule, Narayan Guru, Periyar Naicker, Mangu Ram Ji, Swami Achhootananda, Chaand Guru, Hira Dom, Dr. Ambedkar; this is the tradition of Dalit thinkers from whom Dalit movement, Dalit politics, and Dalit literature acquired an ideology and built independent theoretical principles of its own.

Budha's thoughts were developed by saint poets, among whom were several Dalit poets and the foremost among them was Sarahapa. Buddhism lays great emphasis on equality and logic and this is what Dalit literature has foregrounded. Saint poets rejected the existence of God as well as the Soul, which also forms a major pivot of Dalit consciousness.

Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule together undertook several very important tasks for the emancipation of Dalits and women. In 1848 CE, they started a school for women. Then in 1873 CE, came Jyotiba Phule's *Gulamgiri*, which helped Dalits become aware of their oppression. For such undertakings, they had to face much hardship and opposition, and despite not being untouchable themselves, they were treated as such. Narayan Guru gave the clarion call of "One Caste, One Religion, One God". Mangu Ram Ji popularized "Ad Dharm" in the Punjab. Swami Achhootananda published many magazines and launched the Ancient Hindu Movement. Chaand Guru launched a movement to eradicate the word chandal, and inaugurated the "Matua Mahasangha".

It is in this chain of thinkers that we recognize Dr. Ambedkar, who imbibed the most significant aspects and principles of the Dalit tradition and presented them

in their contemporaneous form. He laid great emphasis on education, equality and independence. In 1956, he abandoned Hinduism based on oppression and the varna system, and converted to Buddhism, a religion based on equality, independence, and scientific thought. He took 22 sacred vows while converting; vows that have an important place in the Dalit consciousness, and permeated Dalit literature, thus contributing to the building up of the theoretical principle of Dalit literature.

It is necessary to cite the significations of the word "Dalit" and the tradition of Dalit thinkers because this is where Dalit literature draws its ideology and energy from. There is a general consensus that the prime source of the energy of Dalit consciousness is the life of Dr. Ambedkar. On this basis, Om Prakash Valmiki (2008, p. 31) has drawn up a list of the main postulates of Dalit consciousness. These postulates hold a significant position within Dalit literature. They are:

1. Acknowledging Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy on questions of liberty and independence.
2. Buddha's atheism, rejection of Soul, scientific temper, and his opposition to pietism and ritualism.
3. Opposition to varna system, caste discrimination, and communalism.
4. Support to fraternity and not to separatism.
5. Support to freedom and social justice.
6. Commitment to social change.
7. Opposition to capitalism.
8. Opposition to feudalism and brahminism.
9. Opposition to hero worship.
10. Disagreement with Ramchandra Shukla's definition of epic.
11. Opposition to traditional aesthetics.
12. Support to varna-less and classless society.
13. Opposition to linguistic and gender chauvinism.

Shukla (2013, p. xxviii) opined, "Literature is the collective reflection of the ideology of the people." Therefore, as these postulates permeated the ideology of Dalit thinkers and writers, they also found a significant place in Dalit literature. Denial of the existence of God, opposition to varna system, support to freedom and equality, and opposition to feudalism and capitalism; these concerns have been foregrounded in Dalit literature. Om Prakash Valmiki acknowledges this fact and writes:

> A new consciousness was instilled among Dalits by the life struggle of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. It would be more appropriate to call it the consciousness of liberation struggle. The same consciousness, with its serious concerns for

> Freedom and Independence, then becomes an inspiration for writing and is reflected in Dalit literature. Questions that concern Dalit literature include atheism, denial of Soul, scientific temper, opposition to pietism and ritualism, support to social justice, opposition to varna system, opposition to feudalism, opposition to capitalism and free market, opposition to communalism, and opposition to cultism. (Valmiki, 2002, p.52-53)

The key points that Valmiki has highlighted are precisely the theoretical underpinnings of Dalit literature, and can be postulated as under:

- Dalit literature is a literature of suffering.
- There is rejection and rebellion in Dalit literature.
- Dalit literature is based on self-realization.
- Dalit literature carries social commitment.
- Dalit literature reposes no belief in God or Soul.
- Dalit literature supports scientific temper, and opposes pietism and ritualism.
- Dalit literature advocates equality, independence, and rights.
- Dalit literature opposes feudalism, capitalism and free market.
- Dalit literature rejects the appreciation of literature based on Sanskritic and Western poetics.
- Dalit literature stands in opposition to brahminism and varna system.

The theoretical principles of Dalit literature were built on a combination of these characteristic features. It may be pertinent to discuss these postulates at length.

The agony that the Dalit castes suffered for thousands of years was revealed to us only through Dalit literature; it manifests itself clearly in its poetry and autobiographies. This agony is neither of one person nor of one year; it is of thousands of people over centuries, which is why this agony comes before us as being that of a society. The rejection and rebellion that mark Dalit literature are also consequent upon this suffering and oppression. In fact the experience of living in such an oppressive tradition is what has been elaborated upon in Dalit literature and has given rise to questions of empathy and self-realization found within the literature. How is it possible for anyone to acquire a feel of the life that Dalits have lived for thousands of years?

Dalit literature is the literature of social commitment. Its main objectives are equality, independence and the establishment of a social order free of oppression. Elements of revenge and violence do not figure in Dalit literature. It stands in firm opposition to theism and belief in the Soul, and this is abundantly clear in Dalit poetry, short stories, and autobiographies. In "*Tumhari Gaurav Gatha"* ["The Tale of Your Glory"], Om Prakash Valmiki (2013, p. 28) writes,

> Why does the deity not awaken,
>
> after it is anointed?
>
> Why does the deity stay fixed,
>
> when it is witness to hunger and cruelty?
>
> How much milk have you poured in drains,
>
> having snatched it from the mouths of hungry children?

Similarly, Dalit literature opposes religious ritualism and displays of piety. It stands in opposition to all such rituals of Hinduism which are rooted in oppression. In his poem "*Asthi Visarjan"* ["Immersing the Ashes*"*], Valmiki writes,

> I have decided not to bathe in such a Ganga
>
> where the vulture-eyed priest
>
> locks his eyes
>
> upon the coins and rupees
>
> kept among the ashes.
>
> To swoop down,
>
> even before they are immersed. (Thorat and Badtya, 2008, p. 32)

Just as it opposes religious ritualism, Dalit literature also opposes brahminism. We can read this in Malkhan Singh's "*Suno brahman"* ["Listen, you Brahmin!"]. He writes,

> The journey of our slavery
>
> begins at your birth.
>
> So will be its end,
>
> when you meet your end. (Thorat and Badtya, 2008, p. 29)

We read such opposition to God, Soul, brahminism, and religious ritualism in Om Prakash Valmiki's stories too. Situating itself in opposition to all such established systems, Dalit literature speaks of equality which lies at the foundation of Dalit literature.

Dalit literature also rejects the critical tools and theories of Hindi literature which are derived from Sanskrit and Western po etics. Om Prakash Valmiki avers,

> The aesthetics of Hindi literature are based on Sanskrit and Western aesthetics. Thus, their critical yardsticks prove incapable of appreciating Dalit literature. The foundational roots of Sanskrit literature are feudal and brahmanical worldviews. Similarly, the aesthetic perspective of Western literature is also capitalistic and feudal. (Valmiki, 2008, p.45)

Therefore, it is required that we create new critical standards for appreciating Dalit literature, the worldviews of which are neither feudal nor capitalistic. Only a worldview rooted in equality can inform critical perspectives to appreciate Dalit literature.

To conclude, it may be stated that the long tradition of Dalit thinkers, taken together with Dr. Ambedkar's influence awoke a new consciousness among Dalits. It is this consciousness that informs Dalit literature, and is now revealed to us as the theoretical principle of Dalit literature. This theory of Dalit literature inaugurates an era of democracy in Hindi literature by according Dalit writings their rightful place, which had been hitherto ignored.

[Translations of all quotations from Hindi sources to English by Vikas Jain.]

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Rachna Sethi
in Conversation With
Professor Christel R. Devadawson

Professor Christel R. Devadawson is Head of the Department of English at the University of Delhi. Apart from contemporary British poetry and fiction, she has worked on nineteenth century representations of India, detective fiction and popular culture in India. She runs courses on contemporary popular fiction, detective fiction and visual cultures.

Rachna Sethi (RS): Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I hope you have had the opportunity to have a look at the recent issues of *Fortell*.

Christel R. Devadawson (CRD): You are welcome. I have very fond memories of Fortell, [I] had been aware of the work it was doing but lost touch for a couple of years. I am happy to see that *Fortell* has worked very hard over the years to reinvent itself to be where it is today.

RS: Let's begin by opening the Pandora's box of controversy about the Nobel Prize for literature being awarded to Bob Dylan. Is it a reflection of the expanding and dynamic definition(s) of literature?

CRD: I think the Nobel Prize like a great deal of other international awards is meant primarily to raise awareness and build consciousness along lines of thought that appear revolutionary. If we are looking at revolution of the literary space, then one would have problems. At the same time it is a very valuable kind of gesture. By focussing on the 1960s, which is a watershed time in the formation of public opinion, it tells us a lot about individuals, where their thoughts and struggles demolish and alter public institutions including the government institutions that Dylan writes/sings about, and also impacting different sites of institutional authority including universities. So I am very happy that this kind of work is recognized.

And if the Nobel [Prize] is one way of reminding us that these were ideas that we have let go and have tended to forget, then I would say it is justified. We need to think of literature beyond its textual definition. My own sense is that if the arts are to evolve, if they are to remain continually relevant to society, then they must engage with revolution, on the ground and in terms of structure. And when you think of the kind of changes that Dylan's work seeks to address; they carry a sense of engagement, a need for change, and place the individual as the parameter of the social and the cultural.

RS: While the idea of literature and revolution works on the thematic concerns, let us focus on the formalistic aspects of literature. Considering the interest of the students in genres like blog writing, graffiti art, films, cartoons and graphic novels,

are we moving towards genre fluidity? Are the boundaries of the discipline being pushed and expanded towards cultural studies?

CRD: Genre fluidity is an integral part of human activity, we may engage with it in the classroom or not, but it will exist, and it will be foolish of us not to engage with it as it will make changes in the world on its own terms. So the better idea is for us to engage with it in the classroom. Having said that, it will make its own space and win its own battles.

I think cultural studies will always be a hugely exciting phase through which the discipline moves but I would say that the imperative term here is "moving". We are moving through a much more fluid and a much more open-ended space and we need to engage with a new kind of globalization, not the globalization that was feared as a great public enemy some time ago, but a certain kind of a very broad and complicated cultural space through which we must negotiate.

RS: What changes does this new kind of globalization bring to university spaces and structures? Does it necessitate new curriculum designs, pedagogical practices and evaluation systems? Ideally this should not be a linear process but a back and forth engagement, the examination pattern requiring new pedagogical approach. However the purpose of a revised syllabus is often defeated if the questions continue to be traditional in nature and non-challenging. Should the fluidity not flow from syllabus to evaluation?

CRD: I agree, but I think that the critical component that we need to look at in the march that we have taken is the student, even though syllabi and exams have vital roles to play as you have pointed out. The keystone in the academic arch will be and always has been the student in the classroom. We have to admit that with the passage of time, there have been many valuable and altering shifts in the definition of who constitutes the student in the classroom. We need to address who is the student, what would the student benefit from or take away by engaging say with English Studies rather than another discipline, and what would be the role of the syllabus for the student, will it provide a floor or a ceiling. All of us need to think and talk about this, and people will think differently about these variables, but I would repeat that in these critical variables, the student is the most important keystone. We need to look at definitions of the discipline, the role of syllabus and examination, and we need to look at them in terms of an evolving discipline and an evolving student or evolving ways of student life.

RS: To be more specific about the disjunction at times between syllabus and evaluation, a lot of my colleagues felt that if the question paper skirts around the queer aspect of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, it in some ways defeats the purpose of including it in a revised syllabus. Why should the exam paper ignore that vital aspect?

CRD: When we included Selavdurai's *Funny Boy* in the syllabus, the other text we had in mind was Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a Man*, and we chose the former.

We ultimately went with *Funny Boy* because we felt that in it Selvadurai captures a particular moment of performative change in the self, the national self and also the sexualized self, or rather the self that is in the process of sexualizing and socializing. When this was discussed, some of our colleagues expressed concern about how many of these performative, socializing, nationalizing, sexualizing changes could be taken on board by students from very different backgrounds. It is possible that the exam paper seeks to address what I would call the common denominator; not so much the specialized notions but generalized notions, of say society, national change and the self. I would be sorry to think of an examination system that wipes out completely the question of performative sexuality. If an examiner thinks of that question but does not include it I would be sorry, but I would be sympathetic. I would be much more critical of an M.Phil. course if it wiped out this question, and we have had *Funny Boy* as part of a course earlier. But with a first year undergrad kid, if the examiner tells me the limitations of how much an exam paper can address, I would be sorry but I will understand. If it comes to push or shove, I would say, better that the text is taught and examined partially rather than an area of literary concern not dealt with.

RS: Approach to texts varies as you have just pointed out, from B.A. to say M.Phil., and would bring about a corollary difference in the quality of writing expected. Students write assignments and tests right from school to college, and yet writing is never taught as a skill. At what grade do you think its formal aspects should be addressed, of course they would vary with the grade/level one is addressing?

CRD: I think the moment one begins to shape letters, some component of writing has to be introduced, and generally is introduced in school. I think at the undergrad level, it will be a good idea to look at the basics of academic writing, the use of work of other scholars, quarrelling with works of other scholars, quarrelling with one's own work, placing texts in contexts, placing texts in history; I think these basics can be and should be discussed.

Can we ever talk in terms of a separate component [of writing] within the syllabus, I am not sure about that. And the reason I am not sure is because the size of the class varies widely in our university. It would be more feasible in a relatively smaller college/university, which has a good student-teacher ratio. While we are aware of the UGC guidelines of student-teacher ratio, we know that in the reality of bargaining of posts, these ratios are not followed. While I realize the need for these [writing skills] to be taught and to be examined separately, I bow to the good sense of my colleagues in colleges who tell me that these are unrealistic requirements; and that is how the notion of not just the internal assessment but continuous assessment is excellent in terms of concept and theory, but it very difficult to manage on the ground.

RS: Now we have an independent paper on Academic Writing at the undergraduate level in University of Delhi, and you have just pointed the practical difficulties of executing it. In an ideal scenario, editing and revising are integral to the process

of writing. Do you think only a workshop format will make it more feasible rather than a classroom?

CRD: Or a tutorial format, where the student teacher ratio is favourable, but I am aware it can be viewed as elitist. That kind of arithmetic does not always translate into either a pedagogical proficiency or social responsibility.

RS: So revising, which is central to writing, is an issue that is not addressed probably till the time one comes to a research programme like M.Phil., as the huge size of the M.A. classroom is daunting.

CRD: With the Masters, internal assessment attempts to take care of this difficulty, of course it does not deal with it satisfactorily, nothing ever does. In fact, even when we come to M.Phil., we do have the pressure not just of numbers but of timelines, and research continues to be affected by it. Most M.Phil. students go on to teach, and of course they want to be independent, and that makes it difficult. If the timelines are rigid and have to be kept, then perhaps one needs to wipe out other concerns like taking care of funding.

RS: Moving from academic writing to Creative Writing that has recently been introduced, how do you respond to the idea that creativity is inherent, or is it a craft that can be taught? In fact, that view is expressed about all art forms, that one is born a dancer and can't be taught how to dance.

CRD: True, but you can be taught about the discipline of dance and that is where the teaching component comes in. You can be taught to write, say fiction. We might have courses where at the end we have more rather than less competent writers of fiction. Most of the creative writing programmes, say in the United States, rely on guest and visiting faculty, and that makes it possible to offer these courses, and these are generally offered as non-credit courses, and I imagine it would be very difficult to manage that within Delhi University. We had an experience once at South Campus where we had a poet in residence, Keki Daruwalla. He was very generous, very forthcoming, read students' poetry but it was not something that can be done on a broader scale.

RS: It is often argued whether translators make good theorists or not. Do you think one needs creative writers to conduct creative writing courses?

CRD: I find it difficult to say, since I haven't tried it. I think my attitude would be somewhat old-fashioned and somewhat sceptical. I recall Narayan's idea in *The Vendor of Sweets* where Mali goes to United States to undertake a creative writing course. Mine is not a position of opposition but of concern about these courses.

RS: Stylistically one can discuss and teach different aspects of writing, but what about the language aspect. The language of young people today is heavily influenced by social media, and while we keep it outside the formal exam-writing with great difficulty, the lingo is bound to infiltrate creative writing. Can we or should we even hold onto purist notions of language?

CRD: Language change will come about, no matter what. It will storm into exams halls, into media, our personal space, whether or not we approve of it. I think it is not so much whether we allow it to or not, but how we decide to negotiate it, how we decide to mediate it, to talk about it, and let's face it to enjoy it. One needs to be much more open-ended in terms of ideas of what constitutes intellectual enjoyment. And I would return to your earlier question about Dylan and one of his critics Christopher Ricks, who has made a name by writing about Milton, but his enjoyment and critical appreciation of Milton does not dent his enjoyment and critical appreciation of Dylan. We need to have fun and be a little more tolerant about what constitutes literature within universities.

RS: Dylan brings us back to stretchable boundaries and fluidity. Not just officially as part of syllabi, but as forms that are increasingly popular and forms that the young associate with. Where does one locate blog writing and photo essays, both in our academic and creative writing?

CRD: With creative writing, it will storm in, no matter what. With academic writing, it is about how much time the student has and there are conferences being held on various kinds of writing. The question is not whether we will allow it, the question is how much time the young have where we have expectations of them, and depending on what is culturally and commercially valuable, and this is the direction in which this argument should be pushed.

RS: Thank you Ma'am. We have covered much ground regarding various aspects of writing, among other concerns. I am sure our readers will find the ideas of stretched and stretchable syllabus, and genre fluidity interesting, which make the field of literature and language an exciting space to negotiate within the classroom and outside.

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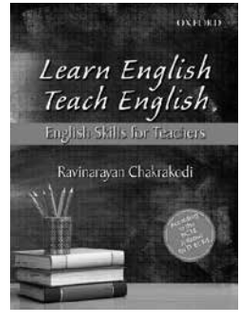
Learn English Teach English: English Skills for Teachers



Chakrakodi, Ravinaryan. (2016).
New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (144 + viii pages)
ISBN 019946636-X
₹240/-

Reviewed by Santosh Mahapatra

In *Position Paper National Focus Group on Teaching of English 2006*, there is a discussion on the importance of language proficiency for teachers. Another important policy document, *National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009* also emphasizes "the teacher's language proficiency and communication skills" and explains in no ambiguous terms why they are "critical factors in school education" (p. 36). Though these suggestions were made a long time ago, few changes have been made since, in terms of designing textbooks or training materials to cater to the language needs of pre-service English language teachers. *Learn English Teach English* written by Ravinarayan Chakrakodi, an experienced and well-known teacher educator, can thus be considered as the first such attempt. While this book may be classified along with books such as *English for Primary Teachers* by Slattery and Willis (2001), Chakrakodi has written the book specifically for English language teachers in India. Another factor that makes this book unique is that the author not only concentrates on developing teachers' language ability, but also offers guidance on how to teach the major language skills and components. The "Forward" written by Dr. Richard Smith, a Reader in ELT/ Applied Linguistics at University of Warwick, very aptly introduces the book to the readers.

The book is divided into six chapters, the first three of which focus on reading, listening and speaking respectively. They are followed by chapters on grammar and vocabulary, and writing, and pronunciation. In addition, there are two sections in the last part of the book: "Answer key" and "Learning with Technology: Resources and Activities". While the key is meant to facilitate self-learning, the section on technology provides information about word processors, ICT tools, blogging, concordance software and evaluation of materials. Except for the (last) chapter on pronunciation, which seems to be an attempt to introduce teachers to the basics of Phonetics, all the other chapters contain elements of both learning and teaching of the focused skills/components, which include reading, listening, speaking, grammar and writing. The first five chapters also contain a balanced mix of theory and practice. In fact, in the "About the book" section, the writer suggests that the classroom session be divided into four phases: activity phase; analysis, reflection and discussion; theoretical input; and classroom implications. Though it is easy to understand what the author means by these terms, an explanation about the phases could have made it even better.

In the chapters on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, the major sub-skills are mentioned in explicit terms and exercises have been provided to reinforce teachers' knowledge about them. Throughout the book, the writer draws the theories inductively from the examples/tasks provided, which can be an effective strategy for enhancing teachers' ability to use the language. This strategy is adequately supported by some well-designed and interesting tasks. The book could have possibly made more impact had it included exercises based on authentic audio files, especially in the listening and pronunciation chapters. In addition, some suggestions related to the teaching of pronunciation could have helped. It is interesting to note that a good percentage of pages in the book are devoted to grammar and phonetics, which indicates that accuracy is on top of the author's agenda. Though there has been some debate over the emphasis on accuracy, helping pre-service teachers to become accurate is justifiable.

Quite reasonably priced and thoughtfully written, this book can be used as self-learning material by English language teachers as well as teacher educators in teacher education courses such as D. Ed. and B. Ed. All institutes of teacher education should include this book in their syllabus in order to have more linguistically proficient teachers of English.

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In Which Margaret Atwood Revisits Shakespeare's Brave New World: A Review of *Hag-Seed*

Hag-Seed by Margaret Atwood
Random House, 2016
Paperback₹ 599
Kindle, pp 245, ₹ 274.86

Reviewed by Saloni Sharma

A new Margaret Atwood book is always cause for much revelry in certain bibliophilic circles, and she never disappoints. The latest from the Atwood production line is a brilliant adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* Excuse the irreverence. It is only a homage to the masterful irreverence with which Atwood shifts the focus away from the primary cast of Prospero and Miranda, and chooses to draw her title from the often uni-dimensionally villanized Caliban. In Atwood's novel, Caliban becomes that Shakespearean insult— the spawn of the hag Sycorax— Hag-Seed. The destabilization apparent in the title continues for the rest of the text.

Hag-Seed is Atwood's contribution to the Hogarth Shakespeare series. The Hogarth Press was founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf with the intention of publishing the best new writings of the early twentieth century. The revival of Hogarth in 2012 attempted to do the same. The Hogarth Shakespeare project was started in 2015 to re-tell Shakespeare's stories. It has had Jeanette Winterson adapting *A Winter's Tale* and Howard Jacobson re-telling *The Merchant of Venice*. Atwood's book is the third in the series, contemporizing Shakespeare's plot, substituting a prison house for the prison that Prospero's island was.

Hag-Seed, like a lot of Shakespeare's plays, is difficult to pigeonhole. At a pinch, it works like a revenge drama. The protagonist Felix, the director of a drama festival, is overthrown in a coup by his next in command, the very Antonio-like Tony. Removed from a seat of power rightfully his, Felix withdraws to the peripheries of the world, disappearing into a space that is rustic, almost hostile and far removed from civilization, hidden away from the intrusions of the world- again, in an echo of Prospero's island. His misery is exacerbated by the grief of having lost his daughter Miranda, briefly before losing his position in the world of theatre. He starts afresh as a theatre instructor and director at a correctional facility, with a new name (Mr. Duke, because Atwood is not one to let an opportunity slide by). A chance event brings his antagonists back into his space— the jail where he is the magician/craftsman teaching theatre and the prisoners are all following his orders for reasons of their own. He decides to stage *The Tempest* as a counter-coup in which those who wronged him would be forced to reinstate him and the novel almost becomes a study of how theatre can become a tool of the restitution of justice.

Like all of Atwood's fiction, the novel is rich in irony, gleefully using inversions, adding details from popular culture, exposing the vulnerabilities of its protagonists. Felix, having lost his daughter, and perhaps unable to deal with the grief, begins to see her, not just as a sporadic hallucination, but as the virginal child-woman whose only point of contact with the world is her father. The parallels with the Shakespearean text are only too apparent, but Atwood cannot help but engage politically with her canvas. There is, therefore, ample evidence of corruption and nepotism in the political circles, the need for prison reforms and rehabilitation, and the downward incline the education system. Much immediacy informs her words when her Felix insists on the uselessness of money in his grand scheme of things:

> 'I'm not doing it for the money,' Felix says out loud. He turns: Miranda's sitting at the table, a little pensively (…) 'I never did,' he adds. Miranda nods, because she knows that to be true: noble people don't do things for the money, they simply have money, and that's what allows them to be noble. They don't really have to think about it much; they sprout benevolent acts the way trees sprout leaves. (Atwood, 2016, p. 54)

A statement that is ironic, wry, and characteristically Atwood.

Atwood's adaptation might not be a post-colonialist, Aime Cesare type, agenda-driven political text, but it does a stellar job of giving voice as well as agency to the hitherto disempowered. Her Felix is a controlling, and insistently although unconsciously patriarchal father. Her Caliban, played by one of the jail inmates, is a radical who wants to break out of oppression. He re-claims the curses thrust on him and turns his aggression outward to exact revenge on his oppressors. Like a introduction to his character states, "Here comes Caliban, From his prison in a stone, Kept in slavery, Made to groan, But come what may, He got to have his own say!"

Coming on the back of Atwood's last work, *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), a dystopian novel, *Hag-Seed* furthers Atwood's preoccupation with the state of human existence in a world that is rapidly losing both meaning and freedom, where control rests in the hands of the privileged few, and where lines between good and evil have been blurred to a degree where both seem to merge into each other. Whether or not this adaptation has direct relevance to the cultural context we occupy is something perhaps best left to the reader to decide.

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Activities for the Language Classroom

Nupur Samuel

Grammar may be dreaded by some students if they are only asked to fill grammar books. On the other hand, grammar activities encourage learners to speak and write in complete sentences without overtly focusing on grammar. In my paper, there are activities based on conjunctions, adjectives and the past tense, which encourage students to practice grammar in a fun way. While teachers need to know what the focus of the activities is, students should only concentrate on using the right word to communicate and express themselves. For elementary learners, these activities could be modified in various ways so that the classroom becomes a more enabling place. For instance, students could be allowed to use their L1, or write before they speak. Thus, we can take some simple steps to make them confident users of English.

Activity 1: Find the Other Part

Time: 15 minutes

Skills: Speaking

Materials required: Cue cards (handout 1.1)

Methodology:

1. Begin the class by distributing cue cards which have only part of a sentence. Make sure that each student has one part of the sentence. This is a pair activity so you may have to join in if there are odd number of students in the class.
2. Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group of students to move around and read out the phrase on their card. The group that is sitting has to identify their partner by selecting the phrase that completes the sentence on their card. They could ask their peers to repeat the part of sentence written on the card to check whether they got the right pair.
3. Once the pairs have been made, ask one member to read aloud the completed sentence.
4. Ask students how they identified their partners, highlighting the use of conjunctions.
5. You could repeat the exercise again. Swap the groups this time making sure that the group that was sitting now moves around to find the missing part of the sentence written on their cue card.
6. Write all the conjunctions on the board. Ask the students to make sentences using these conjunctions. In case of elementary learners, ask them to write down the sentences before reading them out in class.

Activity 2: Descriptions

Time: 10 minutes

Skills: Speaking

Materials required: Picture cards and adjective cards

Methodology:

1. Make two sets of materials—one with pictures pasted on a hard board and another with a list of adjectives.
2. Divide students into two equal groups. Distribute the picture cards in one group and the adjective cards in the other.
3. Explain to the students that they have a set of cards with pictures and adjectives. They have to pair the pictures with the adjectives that best match them. Give them some time to move around asking each other what adjective/ picture they have.
4. With a more advanced group of learners, you could ask the students to describe their pictures instead of showing them. Encourage the students to use English and to use their L1 only if required. They could take your help in substituting the L1 word, or make a note of the word for later reference. Make sure that you have a variety of pictures of the outdoors, indoors, activities, people or festivals, etc., for the students to work with.

Activity 3: Oh Where?

Time: 30 Minutes

Skills: Writing

Materials required: Handout

Methodology:

1. Before the students come into the classroom, place various objects around the room. Place them in visible positions that students can describe using prepositions, such as *under* the desk, *on* the wall, *behind* the table, etc.
2. Divide the students into pairs and give them handout 3.1 (given at the end). Ask them to describe where each object is kept. Make this a timed activity to make it more exciting.
3. To make this activity more challenging, you could club it with activity 2. For instance, students could describe the object using adjectives, before giving its location; or you could put similar objects together to make it interesting. Example: The red box is on the table while the black one is behind the door.

Activity 4: Memories (or Dreams)

Time: 20-40 minutes

Skills: Speaking, Writing

Materials required: Picture cards

Methodology:

1. Select some pictures according to themes that you think might appeal to your students. For instance, childhood, outdoors, vacations, toys, etc. Make sure you have an equal number of pictures for each theme.
2. Mix up the pictures. Ask the students to pick one picture each and hold it up for the entire class to see. Ask them to make pairs/groups (depending on how many pictures you have—two each for many themes or many pictures for a few themes) according to the picture they have selected. For instance, all those with photos showing a vacation make one pair/group.
3. Encourage the students to share the reasons for their choice of picture and what memories/feelings it evoked in them. You could ask them to refer to the previous activity where they had used adjectives.
4. The focus of this activity is on using the past tense and adjectives to talk about experiences. However, there is enough flexibility to allow students to share their dreams/future plans using the present continuous or future time. For instance, a student may pick up a picture of the beach to share his/her wish to visit rather than talk about her experience.
5. More reticent students could be encouraged to talk when their peers ask questions. Therefore make sure that there is a dialogue between where students share their experiences by talking and asking questions to elicit information such as: when did you go?; what was the highlight of your trip?; what do you remember most about the place; rather than a monologue.
6. The activity could take between 15-25 minutes of conversation or more, depending on the group size. After the speaking activity, students could be given a short paragraph or an email to write. Again this would depend on the level of the learners and it could either be an in-class activity or assigned as a home task.

Handout 1. Oh Where is it?

Box

_____

Marker pen

_____

Globe

_____

Novel

_____

Bag

_____

Water bottle

_____

Handout 2

The bus was parked outside	because the kids were going on a picnic.
When she entered the park,	all the people were doing yoga.
We spend time in the gym and	the library with equal ease.
Chiku is mischievous but	extremely sincere with studies.
I can't decide if I want vanilla	or chocolate sundae.
I rushed early to class	since it was a test day.
The book got soaked	as it was left out on the bench.
The children ran fast	but couldn't catch the puppy.
Although my dad doesn't like trekking,	he goes to keep my mom happy.

Cut out the columns along the lines and distribute them in class. You could make more cards and increase or decrease the level of difficulty according to the language proficiency of the students.

Nupur Samuel is interested in assessment, especially assessment of English language skills, teacher training and English language teaching. She teaches English language at Ambedkar University, Delhi. She also holds workshops for teachers and students and develops teaching-learning materials and tests.

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Talk on Indian Classical Literature

A talk by Professor Avadhesh Kumar Singh, School of Translation Studies and Training, IGNOU on "Revisiting Indian Classical Literature" was organised by the English Literary Association of Rajdhani College in collaboration with FORTELL (Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature) on 25 October 2016. The talk gave an insight into the concept of Classical Literature, keeping in view the undergraduate syllabus and students. Professor Singh began his talk by defining classics; referring to Longinus, he reiterated that a classic is sublime, it is a distinguished discourse that moves all and is applicable to all places and at all times leading to a state of ecstasy. He illustrated his points by using texts such as Vyasa's *The Mahabharata*, Homer's *The Iliad*, Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam* and *Mrichchakatikam* and how these texts aimed not at persuasion but ecstasy or lifting the reader out of himself. He further added that initially, *The Mahabharata* was a fluid text; it had various additions and interpolations over centuries until it finally became a settled text. Not only do its characters appear as real human beings, but it also appeals through its artistic style, and like other classics it has withstood the test of time and circulation. He linked notion of classics with Goethe's concept of World Literature. World Literature basically meant the best texts from the best traditions, and in a way they are classics. He stressed on the need for studying a classic not just in isolation, but in comparison to other classics from different traditions.

With this insight on classics, Professor Avadhesh Kumar Singh compared the two epics, *The Iliad* and *The Mahabharata,* and how war is common in both texts and yet is different. In *The Iliad*, heroes are made out of war, whereas in *The Mahabharata*, war is fought to establish *dharma*. Professor Singh also talked about Sri Aurobindo, who thought of world poetry in terms of the poets' rankings. Sri Aurobindo ranked Valmiki, Vyasa, Shakespeare and Homer at the top in world poetry; Kalidasa, Virgil, Dante, etc., were ranked second; Goethe in the third rank, and rest of the poets dumped in the fourth rank. He emphasized that a comparison between Vyasa's *The Mahabharata* and Kalidasa's *Abhigyanshakuntalam* is difficult as both belong to different ranks. *The Mahabharata*, according to him "is like a wild forest whereas *Abhigyanshakuntalam* is a well chiselled, manicured garden though its germinal theme comes from *The Mahabharata".* Vyasa writes about Shakuntala and her son Bharata in his reference to the lineage of the Kauravas in "Shakuntala Upakhyana". Vyasa's Shakuntala is simple, straightforward and uncultured, who does not suffer from any kind of inhibitions unlike Kalidasa's Shakuntala, who is weak, soft-spoken, beautiful and docile. Vyasa's Shakuntala accepts Dushyant's proposal on the condition that the child born of their

relationship should become the emperor. Later, when Dushyant rejects her, she reiterates blatantly that she is superior to him by birth as she is born of the union of a sage and a celestial nymph called Menaka. Therefore, he does not have any right to talk to her in such a dismissive manner. She adds that her son would become an emperor even without him. Shakuntala is at the centre of the story in Vyas's narration but in Kalidasa's play, recognition becomes central as suggested by the very title, *Abhigyanshakuntalam*.

Lastly, Professor Singh discussed the methodology that the students should use to enhance their knowledge and the different ways of increasing their critical acumen. He touched upon all the issues pertinent to the topic in a very lucid way, which was highly enriching for the students. This was followed by an interactive session with the students.

Varsha Gupta is Assistant Professor in Rajdhani College, University of Delhi. Her areas of interest are romanticism and Indian Literature.

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Writing With a Purpose: Annual Lecture at MAC

The Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College organized the 4th Annual Lecture on "Writing with a Purpose" by Dr. Anjana Neira Dev, Associate Professor of English at Gargi College, University of Delhi on 27 November 2016. Drawing upon her immense and eminent experience as a teacher of English Literature, English Language Teaching and author of University prescribed text books on Academic Writing and Creative Writing, she designed her presentation around the objective of redefining what these two activities (academic writing and creative writing) mean, comprise and require.

Keeping the presentation interactive through relevant examples and questions, Dr. Dev emphasized the need for the oft-employed pre-writing strategy of "brainstorming" by drawing attention to some of the questions that we need to ask before beginning on a draft for academic writing. The students jotted down the very usable and doable tips she shared throughout the presentation copiously and enthusiastically. Strategies for effective academic writing, for example, were mnemonically conveyed through the 4 Cs: coherence, cohesion, conviction and citation. By talking about the different modes of writing like expository writing, argumentative essay, descriptive article, she highlighted the purpose and feature of each of these. She had the students riveted as she formalised writing into a structured attempt by explaining the techniques of crafting a good beginning, a

thesis statement, inner linkages, body paragraphs, and a convincing conclusion. As good writing evolves through successively improved drafts, she explained how a critical mind-set of strict revision and detached self-analysis should to be employed at the editorial stage of writing.

As Dr. Dev progressed to creative writing, the audience noticed a change in the content as the sombre slides of the academic writing session transformed into colourful vibes in the creative writing section. She dwelt at length on the elusive definition of creative writing to make as lucid as one possibly could the complex idea of "creativity". She took the audience over the highly invigorating as well as challenging business of creative writing through its constituent elements of character, setting, plot, conflict and theme. For the budding writers of today or people for whom the project of writing was too demanding, the lecture provided both motivation and advice. Her valuable tip of "journaling" or collecting experiences and thoughts on a daily basis found many takers as it promised to provide fodder and energy to overcome the proverbial "writer's block". The presentation also alerted the students to the very sensitive domain of plagiarism by shedding light on the need to make relevant and correct citations wherever required.

The lecture was received with great applause and appreciation by both the faculty and the students of B.A.(Hons.) English, B.A. (Programme) and the student community at large. With Academic Writing as a Generic Elective paper, Creative Writing as a Skill Enhancement course and *Fluency in English* as a text book for B. A. (Programme) focusing on Writing Skills, the students greatly benefitted by the lecture. As writing comprises both academic expression and enhancement, the talk was an enabling and empowering experience for the student community. The purpose of co-scholastic activities is to augment classroom learning with allied approaches and practices, and this lecture significantly served that purpose. Language teaching is a highly technical task involving specialised and expert pedagogy. It was a matter of great satisfaction to see students responding to Dr. Dev with a wide gamut of queries and observations. These ranged from the personal challenges they faced while writing to the political nature of writing, the impact of technology and the much debated areas of originality and intellectual debt. The lecture was a great success, and we hope that through this annual feature we bring our students face to face with more such teachers, thinkers and practitioners of note.

Sangeeta Mittal is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. She has been awarded doctorate degree for her work on "Delhi Culture: A Literary Perspective". She continues her interest in urban studies and memory studies through her academic publications and research projects.

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Call for papers

for

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SPECIAL ISSUE on

ASSESSMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The 21st century has brought the realization to educators and State education boards worldwide that the proficiency of students cannot be captured through mere summative tests and stressed the need to evaluate and assess student performance continually and systematically in a variety of ways resulting in valid ability related inferences. Mere testing has given way to assessing students through assignments, term papers, projects and the like. The mandate of a Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has given the term 'evaluation' a different hue and shape. It is not by chance that the last letter of that acronym, CCE, is not A, for assessment, or T for testing but 'E' and that too, E for evaluation and not examination. It is true that globally, substantive research is being carried out in the domains of assessment for and as learning. Attempts are being made to document the varied shapes, sizes and forms of CCE. However, there is little documented evidence in the Indian context of such research and there is a long road ahead. This special issue on Assessment: Issues and Challenges is an attempt to fill this gap. We invite teachers and research scholars to share their research and views that deal with varied aspects of formative assessment, classroom evaluation or testing at all primary, middle and tertiary levels. Contributions that showcase innovative research, critical thinking and creative approaches would be given special preference. Along with articles on the above-mentioned theme, general articles are invited as well.

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Guest Editors: Geetha Durairajan & Prem Kumari Srivastava

Geetha Durairajan is Professor, Department of Materials Development, Testing and Evaluation, EFL University, Hyderabad.

Prem Kumari Srivastava is Associate Professor, Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

Last date for submission: April 30, 2017

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Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language Policy and Planning

Date: August 24-26, 2017

Place: University of Calgary, Toronto, Canada

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Further Information, write to OISE. LPP@utoronto.ca.

International Conference on Multilingualism and Multilingual Education (ICMME 17)

Date: May 11-13, 2017

Place: University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

Call for Papers: February 15, 2017
Write to: bragaconfmultiling@gmail.com

15th Asia TEFL International Conference & 64th TEFLIN International Conference

Date: July 13-15, 2017

Place: Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Theme: ELT in Asia in the Digital

Era: Global Citizenship & Identity

Call for Papers: Feb 15, 2017

Further Information: Email: asiatefl2017@uny.ac.id

BAAL (British Association for Applied Linguistics) 2017

Conference theme: Diversity in

Applied Linguistics: Opportunities, Challenges, Questions

Date: 31 August - 2 September 2017

Place: the Centre for Language Education Research, University of Leeds

Call for Papers: 31 March 2017

For further information: http://www.baal2017.org.uk/

The 2017 Asia TEFL International Conference

Date: July 13-15, 2017

Venue: Royal Ambarrukmo Hotel in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Theme: "ELT in Asia in the Digital

Era: Global Citizenship

Call for papers: Feb 15, 2017

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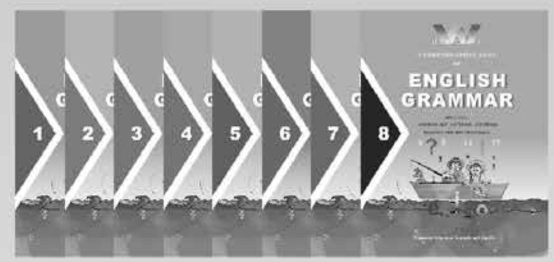

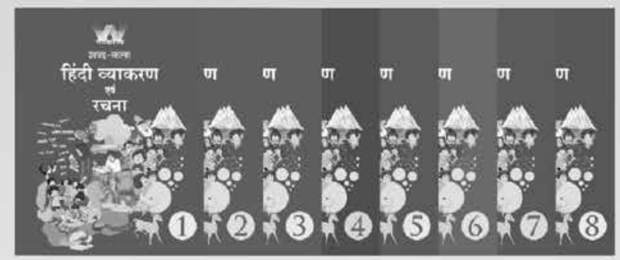

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Each manuscript should include an abstract of 100-150 words on a separate page.

Consistency in the style used for writing numerical expressions should be maintained throughout the manuscript.

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Double quotes should be used throughout the article. Single quotes should be used only within double quotes.

All references must be cited in text and in endnotes.

Contributions must follow the style specified in APA style sheet (6th edition).

A detailed list of references in alphabetical order must be provided at the end of the article following the endnotes.

References should include the author's name, name of the book/name of the journal with issue number, publisher, place of publication, year and page range/ number (in case of chapter from an edited book, journal, magazine, weekly, periodicals, newspapers).

Examples

Book

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1979). *The guide to everything and then some more stuff*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Chapter of a Book

Bergquist, J. M. (1992). German Americans. In J. D. Buenker & L. A. Ratner (Eds.), *Multiculturalism in the United States: A comparative guide to acculturation and ethnicity* (pp. 53-76). New York: Greenwood.

Journal Article

Becker, L. J., & Seligman, C. (1981). Welcome to the energy crisis. *Journal of Social Issues, 37(2), 1-7.*

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Tables and figures should be completely understandable, independent of the text and must be cited in the text. Tables and figures should be attached at the end of the manuscript following the list of references.

Book reviews must contain details like name of the author/editor and book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, scanned copy of the cover page and number of pages.

All submissions must be mailed to the Coordinating Editor at amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com.

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