

authors take care to show the relationship between time and tense, and the different type of mapping possible between them, such as present tense to talk about future time etc. In a clear departure from traditional approaches, the book aims to teach the students that “choice of tense... follows from a few basic generalizations related to how time is perceived in English”, referring to the underlying perceptual factors responsible for language structures. ‘Modals and Modality’ is a detailed chapter; it discusses the different ways to use modal verbs to communicate either epistemic or non-epistemic meaning. The discussion brings out the equation of modal meaning with respect to temporal reference and aspectual distinctions, thus creating a holistic picture of the rules governing the function of verbs in this language. The last chapter on discourse is short and crisp. At the end of the chapters, there are exercises on each chapter, which is of great use to the language teacher as these exercises can be used in classroom teaching as well as by the students themselves to sharpen their skills.

On the whole, this is a very welcome book that fills a gap between traditional grammar approach and pure linguistics analysis, and is written in a style that steers clear of the intimidating prose of linguistic analysis and the prescriptive nature of traditional grammar. It is perhaps because of the long teaching experience of the authors that there is a conversational attitude in the writing that can be expected to be student-friendly. Though the book is primarily addressed to the non-native learners of advanced level English, it could also prove useful for the native speakers as a reference book, owing to the systematic analysis of the underlying rules of the language. The idea of a nagging necessity of teaching language through linguistic theories is not entirely new, and books with this approach have been fruitfully engaged to fill the gaps (Wardhaugh, 2002). All in all, this book provides the readers with a refreshing viewpoint of the traditional method of teaching English and a linguistic

analysis of language. In addition, there is companion website to accompany the book, from where users can download resources.

References

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Masti Ki Paathshala (in Hindi)

By Kamalanand Jha (2009).

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Reviewed by: Parmanand Jha

Stephen Spender, the celebrated British poet, in his famous poem, ‘An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum’, portrays, with down to earth realism, the depressing faces of school children confined within the four walls of the school classroom. On the room wall are the pictures of Shakespeare, the Tyrol Valley and a map of the world—all far removed from the interests and concerns of the children coming from a socially and economically backward background, and whose world is represented by

the foggy world of slums. Spender concludes the poem, emphasizing that education should help these children re-establish contact with nature and life. Kamalanand Jha's *Masti Ki Paathshala* not only vindicates Spender's views to a considerable extent, but further examines various issues and concerns underlying school education in India. Based on the personal experience of Jha's stint as a school teacher, and his findings as a research scholar at JNU, the book covers all the aspects of teaching school children. The fourteen chapters of the book, divided equally into two parts, have a nice introduction. The first part focuses on issues such as the relevance and role of course books, question-oriented education, self-image of teachers and students, cultural context of modern education and the role of children's magazines. The second part of the book examines the challenges and relevance of homework, and suggests interesting methods of teaching poetry, story, drama, essay, social sciences and grammar.

Course-Books, Jha believes, are fundamental to teaching but they should be child-oriented; related to children's lives and backgrounds; completely free from communal, political or sectarian biases; and be taught by trained and competent teachers who understand the psychology of children and rise above class and caste contempt. Jha's concern for a proper training for teachers so that they may create targeted support programs in schools for children coming from underprivileged backgrounds stands vindicated by a recent survey conducted among more than a lakh of class 5 students in 6602 schools across India under the aegis of NCERT. "After fairly exhaustive questions in Mathematics, Environmental studies and language, it was found that the performance of students from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe backgrounds was rather worse than that of students occupying the general seats." (The Telegraph, 14 September. 2012).

Jha favors attempts to encourage inquisitiveness in children rather than disciplining them into silence. In one of the chapters, *Aadhunik Shiksha ka Nachiketa*, Jha frankly admits that education for children has become a source of boredom in place of an interesting and delightful activity. When scoring marks becomes the be-all and end-all, the whole purpose of imparting education is reduced to an exercise in futility. Jha's views are fully corroborated if one reads Anil Thakkar's remarkable defense of the poor performance of Indian students in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) on the grounds "that a standardized test can produce any sort of objective picture of students' abilities is a ridiculous proposition." (Times of India: Counter View, 7 September 2012).

Cultural disconnect, according to Jha, has led to a gnawing gap between tradition and modernity—the biggest irony of modern education. Only by striking a balance between traditional and the modern strategies of teaching can we make our education meaningful and relevant. Jha mentions educationists such as Gijubhai Badheka, Prakash Chandra Shukla, Anil Sadgopal, Krishna Kumar and Rama Kant Agnihotri, whose contributions to the field of education have been significant and have generated fruitful debates and discussions all over the country. Books authored by them have helped tremendously in honing the skills of teachers. Jha suggests three specific magazines (*Eklavya* from Bhopal, and *Primary Shishak* and *Bharatiya Aadhunik Shiksha* by NCERT) that may improve the standards of teaching substantially. The last chapter of the book condemns banning of books or portions thereof due to vested interests, and strongly advocates a shift of marginalized materials to the centre.

Part 2 of the book begins with a realistic account of the challenges faced in the teaching of Social Sciences, and offers strategies to handle them. History teaching, Jha holds, requires objectivity

and impartiality on the part of teachers who must also have a historical insight. Geography and Civics can be made more interesting by relating them to the children's 'immediate surroundings, and through group activities and team work. While assigning homework, the teacher must take note of the different levels of students in the same class. The next five chapters explore innovative methods to make the teaching of poetry, short story, drama, essay and grammar more interesting and delightful. Traditional methods of teaching these genres have also been critically examined. Jha concludes by asserting that many of the old methods need to be dispensed with in favour of new ones which make the students stay connected and enjoy what they read.

Masti ki Paathshala is indeed a seminal work, which presupposes that education grows out of, and is impacted by the socio-economic-cultural environment. Education, as Stephen Spender says, should instill in students the spirit of freedom and enjoyment. Jha wants to add the elements of fun and frolic in the teaching methodology so that we allow children to retain their childhood and learn the lessons simultaneously.

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