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# Language and Language Teaching

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# Editorial

## Rajesh Kumar and Devaki Lakshminarayan

The articles in this issue of LLT are centred around three themes: language teaching methods, language planning with special reference to mother tongue and English language education.

Ruchi Kaushik, Tanya Brooks, Sharoon, and Somya Budhori deal with a variety of teaching methods. Ruchi Kaushik talks about the use of task-based teaching for developing spoken skills, and Tanya discusses the use of content and language integrated learning to teach listening skills. The two articles look at teaching methods in higher education. Tanya looks at teaching listening skills to students in Aviation and Hospitality courses and Ruchi talks of improving oral skills in undergraduate students. Two other studies also focus on teaching methods, but at the primary level of schooling. Sharoon examines the use of songs for teaching grammar; Somya's paper is concerned with teaching vocabulary and gender issues through rhymes. These two papers show that grammar teaching need not be dry; moreover, children can be taught to be sensitive to gender roles from a young age. The article by Santosh Upadhyay traces the history of reading comprehension and suggests some ways to improve it. Teachers will find the articles useful for their classrooms.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj dwells on the way her teachers used creative teaching methods to teach curricular subjects and physical education. She describes how she as a teacher used novel methods to teach economics to students of the upper secondary level. In her writing, she highlights empathy as one of the hallmarks of a good teacher and she draws from her experiences to illustrate this feature. Saba Parween and Mohammad Jahangeer Warsi write about Needs Analysis and its importance in the curriculum; they also present a model of Needs Analysis for developing English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses. According to this model, teachers must understand the needs of learners—their background, the purpose of joining the English course, and so on.

The second theme addresses language planning and mother tongue education. Rajesh Sachdeva interviews Professor Hans Raj Dua to underline the critical sociolinguistic perspective that underpins Dua's works. The interview brings out the continuing hegemony of English on the one hand and the lack of active encouragement for promoting mother tongue education and development of Indian languages on the other. The landmark article by Rajesh Sachdeva distinguishes between language planning at the macro and micro levels and observes that at the micro-level, all teachers are language planners. Drawing from his experiences of working with languages of the Northeast, he presents a few cases to show how the mother tongue or multiple languages can be used in classrooms. Seema Manbodh and Om Prakash argue in favour of providing space for mother tongue education in the national dialogue for education reforms in Suriname.

The third theme concerns English language education. Elizabeth Eldho and Rajesh Kumar discuss how the actions of the state, processes and outcomes influenced the

English language in India during the precolonial, independent and contemporary globalized India. Their analysis reveals that even though access to English education has increased, the quality of English education is a problem that needs to be addressed for English education to be democratized. Srishtika Prakash uses the language acquisition framework of Ray Jackendoff to discuss the similarities in acquiring proficiency in English as a first and as a second language. She also looks at instances where learners use the first language to acquire the second language, thereby contributing to differences in the process of acquiring English as a first and second language. She draws implications from the similarities and differences between learning English as first and second languages for English language teaching. These contributions will be helpful to teachers engaged in self-capacity building, and to researchers working in English education.

The two classroom activities, one by Richa Goswami and the other by Devaki Lakshminarayan deal with teaching methods. In the activity called "Treasure Hunt", Richa details the use of maps to improve reading comprehension and map reading skills. This activity is meant for Class one students. The activity described by Devaki is meant for Class five students and outlines how children can be helped to imbibe socially responsible behavior through developing rules, and the use of positively worded language to communicate the rules. The Book Review section consists of two articles. The first is a review of *Dialogues: English Studies in India*, edited by Sethi and Khanna. Veena Kapur reviews the book to highlight the changing paradigms of English language teaching in India and how it has impacted its curricula and pedagogy. The book is in the form of interviews. She notes that this form in which the interviewer and the interviewee are both academicians gives the book a fresh and invigorating appeal. Manjari Chaturvedi observes that editors Prem Kumari Srivastava & Mona Sinha seek to break the hierarchy between 'the Popular' and the 'highbrow' literature in the book *Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces*. Parul Sharma, Arindam Chakraborty and Ameya M. R. present a report on online capacity building of field personnel in the English language.

# Articles

# Needs Analysis: The First Step of Curriculum Development in Language Pedagogy

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**Key Words:** Learner-centered, Needs Analysis, English for Specific Purpose (ESP), Target language (TL),and Curriculum Development.

## Abstract

In recent studies, one can see a fundamental change in language pedagogy from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches with an emphasis on the needs of the learners. Needs Analysis (NA) has become an important feature in the development of a curriculum for any English for Specific Purpose (ESP) course. The paper discusses different models of Needs Analysis and uses the elements in these models as a framework to discuss Needs Analysis Model in the Indian multilingual context.



## Introduction

Coping with advances in curriculum development is a challenge because of globalization and technological advancement. The diversity in the foreign language classroom has increased along with increased attention to the role of the learners in acquiring another language. Analysis of the needs of learners is critical as teaching is becoming learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. In teacher-centered classrooms, decisions on teaching methods and materials were with the teachers. But in a learner-centered classroom, teachers play the role of facilitators, and students have the autonomy to decide what they need. The challenges in developing a Needs Analysis-based curriculum in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses unfold the role of Needs Analysis.

## Needs Analysis and Curriculum Development

According to Nunan (1988), Needs Analysis refers to the gathering of information about learner's needs and communication tasks for syllabus design. It is "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: P.19). In the Indian educational context, the emphasis on Needs Analysis came through a survey by Michael West in 1926 on the Bengali student's need for English (For more details, see Fatihi, 2003). Needs Analysis is an important part of curriculum development.

Curriculum development in language teaching began in the 1960s with the

notion of Syllabus Design (Richards, 2001). Curriculum development is a comprehensive process, and syllabus design is a part of it. According to Richards (2001), curriculum development in language teaching comprises seven systematic stages; (a) needs analysis, (b) situational analysis, (c) planning learning outcomes, (d) course organization, (e) selecting and preparing teaching materials, (f) providing for effective teaching, and (g) evaluation. Dudley-Evans (1998) observes that four interrelated activities: needs analysis, syllabus design and material selection, teaching and learning, and evaluation are the key stages in ESP.

The design of the syllabus comprises the selection of the syllabus and preparing teaching materials. It considers the needs of a group of learners for developing the aims and objectives of a program (Richards, 2001). Needs Analysis is the first step in the development of a curriculum (Jordan, 1997). According to Fatihi (2003) Needs Analysis identifies and defines curriculum and instructional and management objectives to help learners learn by creating authentic learning environments.

## Curriculum Development is a Challenging task in a Multilingual Country Like India

India is a land of diverse languages and cultures. Every state has a Regional language, an official language, and mother tongues. Given such diversity, designing a course for a group of learners is challenging. Regarding ESP, this situation becomes even more difficult because students come from heterogeneous backgrounds with varying

levels of English language competencies.

Besides, there are some drawbacks in the current curriculum which hinder curriculum development. Syllabus changes happen every five years, whereas batches of students of ESP pass out every year. In the five years, these students will miss out on the new techniques that are added to teaching methods. So, one has to revise the syllabus every year and the revision should be through a Needs Analysis. Another challenge is that English is not a mandatory paper at the school level; instead, it is additional and teachers teach English through the regional languages. Further, learner needs are not considered in designing the syllabus, resulting in teacher-centered classrooms. Competency assessment is also not a part of the curriculum hindering evaluation of learning. All these, together, pose a challenge for developing a curriculum that is based on an analysis of the needs of the learners.

Before talking of the components of the Needs Analysis-based curriculum in the Indian context, one needs to understand the models of curriculum development.

## Curriculum Development Models

There are various models for curriculum development (Taba, 1962; Richterich and Chancerel, 1977; Munby, 1978; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). All these models emphasize on needs analysis of the learners and place students at the forefront. Since teacher's awareness of learner's needs is essential, Taba (1962) points out the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development. Munby's model goes into more details about the processes. He suggests considering the communicative needs for

analyzing the needs of the learners, in which participant profile is the result. Munby's model has some drawbacks one of them is that the participant profile is not connected to the syllabus design.

Richterich and Chancerel (1977) make this connection by noting that teachers examine information about learners before the start and during the course. They propose a Present-Situation Analysis (PSA) that ascertains the learners' stage of language development. The drawback of this model is its over-reliance on learner's perception of their needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest that instead of concentrating on language needs if courses are designed considering the learning needs, it will yield positive results. Target needs and learning needs are the key factors in this model because it facilitates learners to move from the starting point to the target goal.

The above models consider the learners and their role as central to learning because they are the experiencers/beneficiaries. The role of the teacher is also an important one, as a teacher-facilitator implements the course. Besides these, the course aims and objectives, the syllabus, appropriate teaching methods, and evaluation are a necessary part of the processes. We try to apply some of these elements as a framework to talk of a Needs Analysis model for an ESP course in the Indian context.

## An Effective Needs Analysis Model in the Indian Context

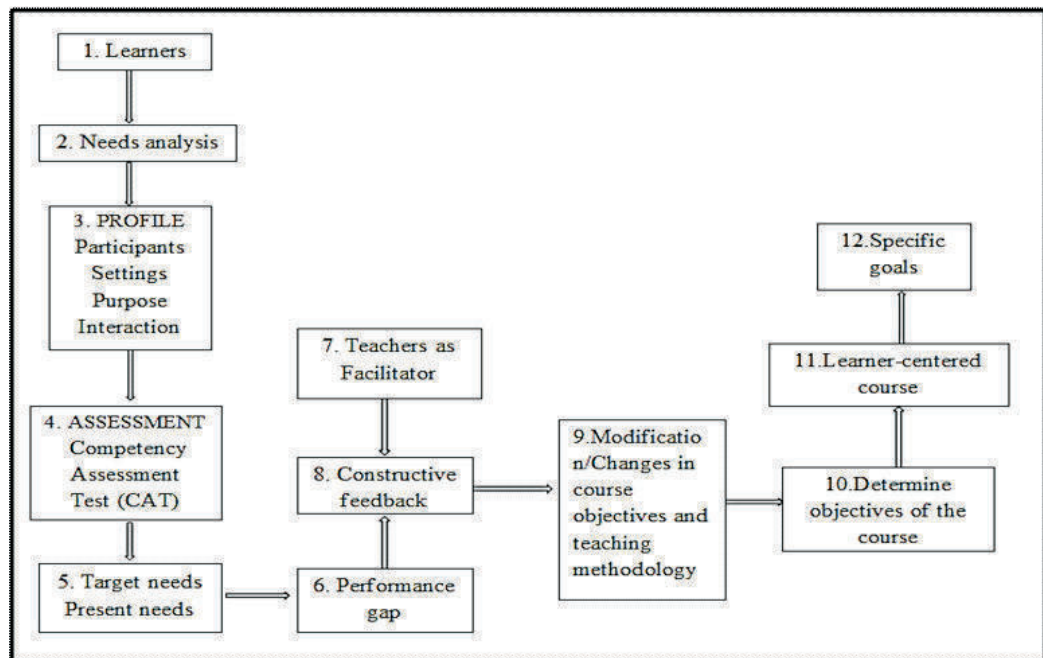
In the Indian context before the development of a curriculum for an ESP course, analysis of the needs of learners should consider the following factors: the proficiency levels in English, the aspect

where they need help, the problematic skills, and the techniques to overcome these problems. Teachers play the role of a guide and a facilitator transacting the course. The components of the needs-based curriculum would include task-based activities; the proper practice of all the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, vocabulary building techniques, drilling of situational sentences, introducing technical terms, and language material based on selected approaches and revision of syllabus every year, creating a learner-centered classroom, using English as a medium of instruction, using competency assessment test and evaluation. This approach will enhance the outcome of an

ESP course.

A visual representation of a model is given in Figure 1. The model takes a learner-centered approach and is based on needs analysis. In this model, the profile of the learners is a crucial factor for course designers because the social background of a learner affects learning a particular language. The profile includes who the learners are, in which environment they are going to use the English, with whom they will interact and the purpose of learning English. The next crucial component of the model is assessment.

**Figure 1**  
*Needs-based Model for Learner-centered Curriculum*



Before starting the English language programme, the Competency Assessment Test is used to assess the proficiency of learners and on that basis develop a proficiency questionnaire to include the target and present needs. The gap

between the two is used to generate constructive feedback. The suggestions of teachers who are going to implement the program in the class also feed into the feedback. The learner's feedback, the teacher's feedback, and the performance

gap together shape the framework of the needs-based curriculum. The framework helps to rework the curriculum, for example, reframe the objectives or change the teaching methods. Such a systematic approach to Needs Analysis and syllabus design is necessary for the Indian multilingual context, to enhance the effectiveness of the ESP course

## Conclusions

The rationale for an approach that uses Needs Analysis in Curriculum Development is that it potentially provides a solution for the problems faced by most English language learners. The curriculum

considers the socioeconomic backgrounds and covers the specific needs and wants of the learners. Therefore, for developing an effective curriculum it is critical to know why learners study English and under what circumstances will it be used. Needs Analysis focuses on the specific goals even as the approach curtails the adjunct goals. Therefore, in the Indian context, Needs Analysis is a solution for developing a learner-centered curriculum for an ESP classroom.

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# Fostering Undergraduate Students' Speaking Skills through Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching

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**Key Words:** English language skills, Proficiency, Task-Based learning and teaching, Academic settings

## Abstract

Recent research has highlighted a grave concern of undergraduate English language teachers in Indian colleges. Despite studying English in school for several years, students often exhibit ineffective English language skills, particularly the oral skills. These students hesitate while expressing their opinions, making presentations, taking part in discussions, etc. This paper emphasizes the effectiveness of task-based language learning and teaching (TBLLT) in developing spoken English skills in academic settings through two sample task-based activities.

## Introduction: Importance of Developing College Students' Oral Skills in English

English language in India serves as "a global language in a multilingual country" (NCERT, 2005, p.38). Proficiency in English is important since it the language of information, employment, upward social mobility and career growth (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1997; Sheorey, 2006). In an academic context, proficiency in spoken English is important for expressing opinions, participating in class discussions, making presentations and appearing in oral exams. English communication skills are increasingly the prerequisite for business employment and career advancement (Wardrope, 2002; Rausch, Elmuti, Minnis, & Abebe, 2005; Tuleja & Greenhalgh, 2008).

Teachers find that even though college students have studied English for several years they are inadequately skilled in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kaushik, 2018). Recent reports and surveys show that there is a perceptible lack of good English communication skills in today's graduates (Aring, 2012; Aspiring Minds, 2013; Wheebox, 2019). Teacher-centred teaching is a major reason for a shaky foundation in the English language since it deprives students of the opportunity to speak in the classroom. As students prefer to converse in their native languages outside the classroom, the use of oral English becomes limited. Therefore, it is important to involve students in activities that promote communicative competence in the

classroom, and this is where task-based learning and teaching could prove useful.

## Why Adopt Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching (TBLLT)?

The term "task" refers to an outcome-based activity that involves learners in meaning-focused language used to enhance communicative competence for real-world interaction. According to Prabhu (1987), a task "is an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (p.24). Nunan (1989) elaborates that a task "must have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right" (p.10). According to Ellis (2003), a task comprises a work plan with a focus on the meaning and any of the four language skills or a combination of them; and a specific communicative outcome that engages learners in authentic language use and involves employing cognitive processes. A TBLLT approach aims at creating a natural context for learners to practice their communication skills in the target language.

Several studies on TBLLT have shown that when learners are given opportunities to express and share their opinions, their oral skills improved (Thompson & Millington, 2012; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Sariçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Safitri, Rafli, & Dewanti, 2020). However, practitioners have also critiqued TBLLT (Van den Branden, 2016). The concerns are around tensions between meaning-focused tasks and

form-focused prescribed tests; problems in implementing TBLLT in large classrooms; increased use of L1 by learners during task-based work; and so on. While these concerns need to be addressed in implementing TBLLT, it is significant to remember that TBLLT comprises of many dimensions that "can be adapted to take into account the needs of teachers and learners in different instructional contexts" (Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert, 2019, p.xiv).

## Sample Task-Based Activities

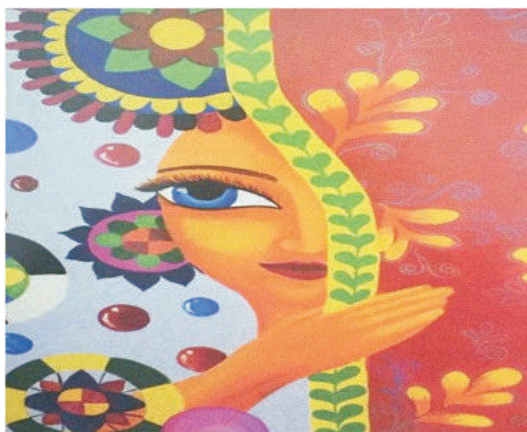
The paper shows two sample tasks designed by the author (Kaushik, 2018). These have been designed as "task-as-work plans" (Breen, 1989, as

cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 5). Discussing the transaction of tasks and how they affect students' oral proficiency are beyond the purview of this paper. Although TBLLT practitioners have proposed different task frameworks, these sample tasks follow the three-stage structure of pre-task, during the task and post-task (Ellis 2003). The following tasks are similarly modelled.

### *Sample Task 1* **What's Your Take? Generating Perspectives**

Introduction: This is a "pedagogic task" (Nunan, 1989) aimed at developing learners' everyday communicative competence in expressing their opinion, assimilating different viewpoints and making a formal presentation in academic settings.

**Figure 1**  
*Example of a Painting*  
(From Pradarshini Brochure 2016, Raghuvansham School of Modern Art)



Materials required: One A4 Size Paintings or photos (Example: Figure 1) and a handout of the evaluation grid (Table 1) for each group.

Nature of activity: Group work

Pre-task: Brainstorm what the term "perspective" means and how perspectives differ.

Introduce the learners to the painting for which they are required to offer their insights on it.

**Table 1**  
*An Evaluation Grid for Evaluating a Presentation*

Rating	Content (Ideas and opinions)	Body Language (Posture, Eye contact, gestures)	Audibility	Pronunciation	Grammatical errors	Participation of every member
1 (Basic level)						
2						
3						
4						
5 (High Proficiency level)						
Total						

*(Scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents basic competency and 5 represents high proficiency).*

During the task:

1. Make groups of 4-5 students each. Two groups have to select the same painting. Hence, if there are 8 groups in the class then 4 paintings/photos are required.
2. Distribute the evaluation grid to each group (Table 1).
3. Ask the group members to reflect on the painting and to share their opinions.
4. The two groups who have selected the same painting share their views with the class, so that other students can notice contrary viewpoints, an extension of the same idea, repetition, etc. Encourage the students to be creative while expressing their opinions; they can include statements, stories, personal anecdotes, contemporary examples, and so on. Every group member speaks at least 2-3 sentences each. Familiarize students with the dynamics of group presentation—agreeing or disagreeing with another participant, adding a point, contradicting or repeating to emphasize, etc.

5. While a group is making the presentation, encourage other groups to make notes about the presentation and subsequently rate the presentation on the evaluation grid. The grid has to be completed before the next presentation begins.
6. This task can be accomplished in a time-bound manner, where each stage of task-work is assigned a time limit.

Post task:

1. After the group presentation, ask the students to reflect on their experience of sharing their views, arriving at similar or contrary opinions, presenting creatively, etc.
2. Invite one evaluation feedback per presentation. Encourage students to share how they have rated the presentations, offer positive feedback and suggest improvements.

Options:

1. The tasks can either be time bound or run over a few classes.
2. If required, provide students with a list of connectors (illustratively,



additionally, and, moreover, in addition to, besides, furthermore, but, too, although, besides, as well as, nevertheless and so on).

3. Alternatively, you could provide a list of phrases such as:
  - I think this painting/picture describes a . . .
  - My friend mentioned that this painting is . . . but I have a different opinion.
  - Another way of looking at the painting is . . .
  - I would like to draw your attention to . . .

### Sample Task 2

#### Get Interview-Ready: Role Playing in Different Situations

Introduction: This is a "real-world task" (Nunan, 1989) aimed at developing learners' communicative competence in taking and giving interviews.

Materials required: Any cartoon strip related to interviews (as Figure 2), a laptop with speakers, some interview-based roleplay cue cards (Table 2).

Nature of Activity: Pair-work

Pre task:

Use a cartoon strip related to the interview to start a discussion. Invite students to share personal experiences of their interviews.

Brainstorm about different types of interviews (formal, semi-formal, informal); various formats (telephone, face-to-face, one-on-one/panel) and their purpose (discussion, selection, evaluation, persuasion, etc.)

**Figure 2**

*Example of an Interview Comic Strip.*



Source: <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=cartoon+on+interviews&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=g6Do2J2mU00nPM%253A%252C36>

1. After the discussion, play a short audio clip of 4 to 5 minutes on an interview (excerpt from David Rubenstein Show: Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella's interview – Youtube).
2. Ask the students to discuss the following with their partners:
  - Interview Etiquette: The way the interviewer begins and concludes an interview. Is it appropriate and polite?
  - Questions: What are the types of questions asked? Can you think of some other questions?
  - Framing of questions: How are the questions framed? Can you suggest other ways of asking questions?
  - Qualities of the interviewee: Observe the way the interviewee answers the questions. Can you describe some qualities of the interviewee (manner of speaking, volume, speed, word stress, pauses, content, body language)?
3. Invite the student-pairs to discuss their views with the class.
4. Prepare for Mock interview. Ask the learners to incorporate the do's and the don'ts of an interview as they role-play in the next stage.

During the task:

1. Ask the students to choose a situation for role-playing for which you have prepared cue cards (Table 2). Some interview situations could be: A placement interview with a company, an interview for "The Best Student Award" scholarship, an interview with the principal on the golden jubilee year of the college to be published in the college magazine

(Try to provide situations that students can identify with and feel comfortable while role-playing, rather

than abstract, futuristic workplace situations)

**Table 2**  
*Cue Cards for an Interview for "The Best Student of B.Com (Honours) Award"*

Cue Card for the Interviewer(s)	Cue Card for Students
Smile and welcome the candidate	Seek permission to enter, greet the interviewer(s) and wait to be offered a seat to sit down
Ask the candidate to summarize their achievements.	Briefly recount your achievements mentioning only the most important ones.
What are the reasons for selecting this candidate over others?	Mention some of your positive qualities. You could talk about your extraordinary achievements or consistent good academic record, etc.
What are the other accomplishments that support this candidate's case?	Mention any position that you have served. This includes sports, dance, office-bearer of some society, etc.
Wind up the interview by thanking the candidate and inform them that the results will be announced on . . . . (mention the date).	Answer questions politely and honestly and thank the interviewer before recording
General tips: Be welcoming, do not ask personal questions, do not embarrass or insult any candidate.	General tips: Be conscious of your body language and paralanguage; keep smiling; maintain eye contact; be honest, do not bluff; carry supporting documents; etc.

2. Distribute the cue cards to every student pair, but encourage them to role-play without its help.
3. Give some preparation time.
4. Invite the student-pairs to role play in front of the class.

dissemination of disciplinary knowledge, undergraduate students must have effective English communication skills. TBLLT facilitates students' English speaking skills by engaging them in authentic tasks that provide a natural context for target language use. The paper shows two sample tasks to develop student's oral communication skills.

## Conclusion

In the contemporary scenario where English occupies a significant position as a global link language and is widely used for communication and

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# Teaching Listening through the CLIL Method

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**Key Words:** Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Listening skills, Vocational and skill development, CLIL activities, Scaffolding

## Abstract

The study outlines how the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method can be used in the classroom to improve the listening skills of students. It uses three activities to demonstrate how this method works. The study was conducted in the Aviation and Hospitality sectors of two vocational and skill development institutes in Guwahati, Assam. The paper discusses the language and the cognitive scaffolds used. It concludes by giving insights into how CLIL influences the listening skills of students and the teacher's opinion about CLIL.

## Introduction

This study was conducted in the year 2019 and involved learners from the aviation and hospitality sectors. The study aims to show how the CLIL method can be used to teach listening skills in English in classrooms.

## Importance of Listening

Listening skills are receptive skills that help learners garner information to produce language. It is essential for both academic and communication purposes. It is central to the language learning process (Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2002). Vandergrift (ibid) points out that researchers realized the criticality of listening from the early 70s, as is evident from the works of scholars such as Asher, Postovsky, Winitz and Krashen. He asserts,

*"Listening skill is an interactive interpretive process where listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in the understanding of a message. The degree to which listeners use one process or choose to use the other will depend on their knowledge of the language, familiarity with the topic or the purpose for listening."*(p.2)

Besides hearing, the role of the listener is to understand, acknowledge and respond appropriately. Suitable listening activities and materials provide situations for acquiring and expanding the language skills of the learners.

## What is CLIL?

CLIL is an approach that teaches content and the second language simultaneously.

For example, when students learn Math or Science in English, they learn about the subject, subject appropriate English vocabulary and also develop their language skills. The approach includes the use of project work, class exams, drama, chemistry practicals, mathematical investigations, physics models, life science experiments, performance art, and so on (Coyle 2006). Although CLIL is associated with learning mother tongues or indigenous languages, it is predominantly perceived as an approach to English language and subject learning. Graddol (2006) sees CLIL as a part of a growing trend in many parts of the world to use English as a medium of instruction.

## How is CLIL Different From Similar Methods?

CLIL as a method of teaching differs from the traditional language courses and courses such as teaching English as a Foreign language. In such language courses, content is chosen according to how well it supports the syllabus (Richards & Rodgers, 2016) and no subject is taught through it. CLIL differs from Content-Based Language Learning as the language teachers teach the subjects. For instance, in the Mathematics class, the language teacher teaches Math with a focus on the language and not on Math. It differs from the conventional English medium education (also called the immersion model), where the focus is on the subject and not on the language. The following table (Table 1) gives a snap shot of the differences between the various approaches to language learning:

**Table 1**  
*Differences between CLIL and Other Approaches to Language Teaching*

Educational approaches	EFL/language courses	Immersion/English medium instruction	CBLT	CLIL
Who teaches?	Language teacher	Subject teacher	Language teacher	Subject teacher or expert language teacher
Feedback focus	Language	Subject	Language	Subject and language
Assumption	Language is learnt by studying the content	Content is learnt without specific attention to language	Language is learnt by studying content	Language depends on the content and vice versa
*Teaching listening	Language	Content	Content	Content and language

*\*inserted by the author*

*Source. <https://www.clilmedia.com/different-types-of-language-learning-explained/#:~:text=Immersion%3A%20Integration%20of%20the%20subject&text=The%20main%20difference%20with%20CLIL%20is%20thus%20obvious.,an%20immersion%20course%20does%20not.>*

## Teaching Listening through the CLIL Method

Like all the other skills, listening develops through practice. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes provide students with suitable materials for listening practice. The problems in listening comprehension come from two sources—the language (the accent of the speaker, the delivery speed, use of complex structures); and the content (background knowledge about the subject and conceptual complexity). The teaching of listening skills should factor in these two barriers. Listening in CLIL promotes active and strategic comprehension and thinking. It uses a variety of materials such as teachers' input, peer suggestions and interactions, and informative materials such as videos, and podcasts. The teacher provides the

cognitive scaffold by activating background knowledge, thereby giving opportunities for prediction, evaluation, comparison, and so on. Through repetition, rephrasing, questioning and feedback, the teacher provides the language scaffolds. Teachers integrate these scaffolds through instructions in the pre-listening, during listening and post-listening activity phases. This study uses some of these strategies to demonstrate to the teachers how CLIL can be used in the classrooms.

## Research Methodology

The study was conducted in two vocational and skill development institutes in Guwahati. The participants were in the initial stages of their training and were enrolled in either Aviation or Hospitality programmes. There were fifty participants in this study and their age group ranged between 16 and 25 years.

Excluding the planning of the study, the interaction with the students and teachers took sixty hours spread over one month. The tests used in the study were as follows:

#### *Before the Study*

A Needs Analysis was conducted to assess whether the students were aware of the importance of listening skills. Materials provided by the British Council were used to design the test. A language competency test was used to assess the current levels of participant proficiency levels.

#### *During the Study*

Teachers had to observe student's engagement with the tasks in the CLIL classes using an observation checklist.

#### *At the End of the Study*

Interviews were conducted with the students and teachers to know how they felt about the study.

The students were asked to fill a questionnaire to understand what they had gained from the CLIL method.

## The CLIL Method

The first step towards designing the CLIL lessons involved meeting the content and language teachers responsible for the two programmes. The purpose of these meetings was to understand the aims of the programmes. These discussions helped in designing the material and planning activities for the study. The activities discussed by Ball, Kelly and Clegg (2015) and the suggestions given in the "Directed Activities Related to Texts" (DARTs) by Davies & Greene (1984) helped in shaping the activities. In any CLIL method, activating the knowledge of a topic, the purpose of listening and the

scaffold plays a central role in promoting strategic listening comprehension. This core idea influenced the setting of expectations and defining what students had to do during and after the listening activity. Three activities were designed for the programme. These are detailed as follows.

#### *Real-Life Situations*

In this activity, learners listened to a real-life audio conversation related to aviation/hospitality. Before starting the activity, participants had to think of situations at the workplace which required them to communicate with their guests. This allowed them to use their background knowledge to draw conclusions and to predict the responses of their guest's behaviour. While listening to the audio recording, participants were encouraged to take notes and to write the keywords that gave them clues about the conversation. After listening to the audio recording, participants shared their answers to inferential questions. They also gave clarifications and summarizations of the conversation and evaluated their own and others' answers.

#### *Cloze Activity*

In this activity, participants had to listen to an audio recording of a discussion between a manager and a member of the staff. They then had to fill in the gaps in the recording with words and phrases that fit the situation and the intent of the communication, in a worksheet. The gaps were both content and language-driven. As part of the pre-thinking activity, participants had to think about the topic and the rules of grammar that it could potentially involve. For example, if X talked about a room cancellation that happened last week, would X use the past or present tense? What phrases would X use to convince the guest to not cancel?

After the activity, the participants shared and discussed their answers.

#### *Label the Map*

Maps are an essential part of the aviation and hospitality sectors, and understanding maps and instructions are a vital part of the job profiles of these two programmes. Participants had to listen to an audio recording of a set of instructions and label a map (seating arrangement on Flight 101). Before the start of the activity, learners had to make assumptions about the function of maps. After marking the map, the participants shared, discussed and evaluated their answers.

## Findings

The purpose of this study was to show teachers the use of the CLIL method. It was not concerned with showing the effectiveness of the CLIL method. However, I will touch on the affective consequences of the study on learners and the thinking of teachers.

The findings of the Needs Analysis showed that the participants were not aware of the importance of listening or reading skills. They did not see their inadequate listening skills as problems. They wanted to improve their speaking skills. The pre-test on language competency showed that most of the students had difficulties at the word level. Their sentence and paragraph-level writing were better, and this is perhaps because our education system emphasizes these skills. Participants had problems with the content questions as they did not understand them. Their vocabulary was also inadequate. Student participants were extremely hesitant while writing the pre-test and exhibited low self-esteem about their language and content skills.

After the study, a majority of students reported that they realized the importance of listening in their daily lives and were keen to improve their listening skills. They said that the design of the activities made thinking compulsory, listening inevitable and understanding crucial, throughout the process. The participants also mentioned how the content and language-driven listening activities gave them a better idea of the vocational sector they were venturing into. The activities helped them understand their content areas and use of language. The participants showed increased confidence, a readiness to share their thoughts, clarity in their thinking, and enhanced competency in forming correct sentences. They were less afraid of making mistakes.

Two teacher observers, one from each programme, had been asked to observe the class using a checklist. The teachers observed that students taught through the CLIL method were more engaged and participative compared to the traditional method. They reported that such an approach would aid in bridging the gap between content and language, and hence benefit the students. The teachers had found it difficult to teach listening skills. This study gave them insights into how they could engage and develop strategic listening skills in the learners.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the study helped to demonstrate the use of the CLIL method in classrooms to enhance listening skills in content and language. While increased awareness of the importance of listening skills was the direct benefit of this study, there were several affective benefits as well. The learners' confidence increased, they became less fearful of committing mistakes and started enjoying the learning process. A language is best



learnt under nonstressful conditions. In this environment errors become learning opportunities and perhaps acts as a catalyst for developing listening skills. Scaffolding from the teacher's end is equally necessary. This study shows that the CLIL method of teaching promotes cognitive, content and language skills in listening.

A limitation of this study is that very few activities were used. The use of more

such activities will enrich teaching of the listening skills. This study attempts to bring the CLIL method into the higher academic levels of education in the vocational sector. It provides a direction for improving listening skills in vocational and skill development courses—something that the New Education Policy (2020) emphasizes with the view to transform vocational education.

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# Songs and all that Jazz

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**Key Words:** Songs as ELT materials, learning language through songs, grammar teaching

## Abstract

This report on using songs for grammar instruction is a small part of my ongoing doctoral dissertation on teacher beliefs on language learning and teaching. The study was conducted on four urban English high school teachers in Bangalore. The teachers used songs as an authentic resource to teach grammar. The teachers reported that songs provided an ideal context for language learning because the students learned language structures without explicit instruction, while also being able to use them in contexts outside the classroom. This paper describes in detail the procedure I used to teach phrasal verbs.

## Introduction

While attending a language conference in Malaysia, a certain plenary drew much attention, and several conference attendees queued up in front of the main hall to find a seat to listen to Carolyn Graham, the creator of Jazz Chants. Graham had come up with interesting ways to connect the rhythm of spoken American English to the beat of jazz. At the conference, Graham began her plenary with a song.

Fresh fish

Fresh fish for breakfast

Fresh fish for lunch

Fresh fish for dinner

Come on come on come on

Munch, munch, munch

Fresh fish

Who'll catch it?

She will

Who'll cook it?

He will

Who'll eat it?

We will!

Fresh Fish . . .

She had over two hundred adults clapping and singing voluntarily and enthusiastically to her chants. She introduced some more songs and interspersed her singing with tiny doses of instruction on how the repetition of lines in songs could be used to teach language structures. She also stated that songs were an interesting medium to introduce conversations about diversity and gender. In reversing the role of who would catch the fish and who would cook it, Graham pointed to a potential opportunity for discussions on gender since in certain cultures, men do not cook.

Songs provide repetition and identifiable language patterns. In addition, they also help to improve pronunciation and rhythm, develop listening skills and create an atmosphere of fun, all of which are integral to learning. In using songs, several aspects of a language can be delivered and reinforced. They include primary materials sometimes, and at other times, teachers use them as gap fillers and for warm-ups. Lastly, songs never get "old".

I was already familiar with Subrahmanian's (2001) use of songs to teach grammar as part of the teacher education programs at the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, but after seeing Graham's performance, it became somewhat urgent to try using songs in an Indian school context.

## Relevance of Songs

Learners readily accept language instruction when songs become an integral part of second or foreign language learning. They motivate learners to learn a language (Israel, 2013). Good, Russo & Sullivan (2015) compared vocabulary development among students taught through songs and speech-based methods. They report that the students taught through songs showed more improvement in English vocabulary and pronunciation compared to the comparison group. Kara and Aksel (2013) report that teaching grammar through songs is more effective compared to the traditional method of grammar teaching. Subrahmanian (2001) finds that children learn the meaning and use of phrasal verbs effectively when songs are used. Several studies have shown that music enhances content knowledge as well. Songs have been used to teach science (Governor, Hall & Jackson, 2013); mathematics (Geist & Geist, 2008); and language especially phonemic awareness (Dyer, 2011). Integrating songs into teaching enhances cohesiveness and has

a positive effect on classroom behaviours (DiDomenico, 2017).

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis is the most referred to theoretical perspective when using songs in language teaching and learning. Essentially, Krashen's theory maintains that affective variables such as boredom, fear, nervousness and resistance to change possibly hinder the acquisition of a second language by preventing the input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device that is integral to acquisition. Songs reduce the affective filter by providing an atmosphere that is relaxed and anxiety-free, which then draws the learners' interest and builds motivation. When learners learn a language where the acquisition is induced by self-motivation, they develop an intrinsic love for language learning.

In first language acquisition, children in their natural setting, receive considerable meaningful input. In a second language, successful acquisition depends on the coming together of several factors, since language learners attempt to map form and function to produce meaningful utterances based on their language experiences (Ellis, 2002; Lieven & Tomasello, 2008). Therefore, in ESL classrooms, if teachers could provide a natural, anxiety-free environment through interesting activities, learning a second language could be accomplished with greater ease.

## Details of the Study

The current research was a minor part of larger doctoral research encompassing teacher beliefs on language learning. The study was carried out in an urban school where the medium of instruction was English. The participants included four high school teachers who taught classes seven, eight and nine. The proficiency level of teachers, assessed using The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) ranged between B1 and B2 levels.

In this study, songs were used as supplementary materials to teach phrasal verbs. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their learners' lack of motivation in learning grammatical structures. They added that despite repeated instruction, learners translated from their mother tongue into English, which resulted in repeated grammatical errors. Moreover, the teachers used a PPP method (present, practice, and produce) of grammar instruction, which added to the fatigue in grammar learning. I trained them to use songs to teach phrasal verbs to address this problem.

I used non-participant observation to get an insider perspective of everyday interactions, instructional styles of the teachers, and teacher and learner proficiency levels. The insider perspective allowed me to design training that was easy for the teachers to implement. As part of the training, teachers received two hours of instruction on phrasal verbs. They were asked to identify phrasal verbs in one or two lessons in their prescribed textbook.

### Procedure for Teaching Phrasal Verbs

1. Before the teachers were given formal instructions on phrasal verbs, they were asked for some of their favourite songs. The list of songs was then put to vote to select one song. The song that received the most votes was used for instruction. For this training module, Phil Collins' "Another Day in Paradise" (<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/philcollins/anotherdayinparadise.html>) was used.
2. The teachers were supplied with the printed lyrics in which certain places were left blank.
3. I played the song three times using my mobile phone. The first time, I asked the teachers to just listen to the song. The second time, the teachers had to listen and fill in the empty blanks. The

third time they had to correct mistakes and fill any remaining gaps.

4. Once everyone had filled in all the blanks, the answers were read aloud. I followed this up by checking to see if anyone had any incorrect answers. I made a note of the incorrect answers.
5. I then asked the teachers what the phrasal verbs meant in the context of the song.

Besides eliciting explanations of the meanings of the phrasal verbs, I asked the teachers to share different interpretations of the song—these moments of interaction created a balance between teacher and student talk time. This activity was then followed up with explicit instruction on phrasal verbs.

The teachers repeated the same steps with their students.

## Observations

While the teachers did not explicitly teach the target language structure, they helped learners build an understanding of the target language structure from the context. This allowed the learners to learn and discover the language independently, resulting in a sense of success. By eliciting first-hand experiences about the song, the teachers helped their learners connect previously learnt words and language structures to the ones that the learners would learn through the song.

Through the questioning cycle (Paul, 1996, p. 7), the teacher systematically helped the learners to recognize the new language forms. This motivated the learners to learn further by applying their

knowledge to other songs. Learners unravelled patterns and structures by consciously and cognitively paying "deep" attention (Schmidt, 1990, 2001) to the form and meaning of certain language items in their inputs, thereby contributing towards internalization and learning.

Once the learners could identify phrasal verbs in other songs and the teachers were confident that their learners could recognize them, the concept was explicitly taught. After the lecture, the teachers encouraged the students to identify phrasal verbs in the short stories included in the prescribed textbooks. All students could identify phrasal verbs in the story, thereby reinforcing the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990).

The teachers found this approach of teaching grammar rewarding from a learning and pedagogical perspectives. Therefore, they decided to experiment with using songs in other areas of language instruction as well, such as vocabulary teaching.

## Conclusion

By using songs that the students chose themselves, the teacher ensured that authentic learning material was used, which in turn allowed for language instruction to be effective. Ensuring the involvement of the learners is the key to promoting deep learning and producing much of the language content outside the classroom. If the students feel that learning is teacher-initiated and that the songs are being used to "teach", they may lose interest. Therefore, having "fun" must be integrated with language learning.

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# Rhyme Teaching in English for Primary Classes

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**Key Words:** Rhyme teaching, rhyme chart, contextualization, recontextualization

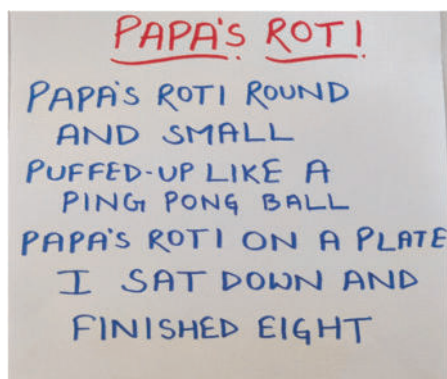
## Abstract

Rhymes and songs have been and will always be an integral part of the primary classroom owing to their fun element, to which children are attracted. They provide oral input to students, and with proper actions and gestures, rhymes enable the students to comprehend unfamiliar words. This study is on the use of rhyme as a pedagogical tool to develop English language vocabulary, reading and writing skills. The study was conducted in a government school with students of grade III in the Bageshwar district of the state of Uttarakhand.

## Introduction

Rhymes are one of the most widely used pedagogical tools in a primary classroom. They help to make a classroom interesting and vibrant and ensure the involvement of even the shy students. Stephen Krashen advocates "comprehensible input", which according to him is a crucial ingredient for the acquisition of a second language (1982). Rhymes are authentic teaching materials where students are exposed to the target language in a low-anxiety environment. They help in phonological development (Dunst, Merter, and Hamby, 2011), development of vocabulary (Mohanty and Hejmadi, 1992; Regina and Li, 1998) and reading (Peterson 2000). The purpose of this study was to use rhymes as a pedagogical tool for developing vocabulary, reading and writing in the English language. The study was conducted for seven days in a classroom of 10 students of Grade III in a government school in the Bageshwar district of Uttarakhand. The rhyme selected was called, "Papa's Roti" (Figure 1)

**Figure 1**  
*Rhyme Selected for the Study*



## Process of Teaching the Rhyme

The rhyme was taught using a seven-step process: contextualizing the rhyme,

reciting it, building vocabulary, working with the rhyme chart, recontextualizing the rhyme, writing and home assignment. In this process, the oral language skills were integrated with the writing skills, and the entire process was then personalized through recontextualization. Each step in the process is detailed below.

### 1) Context Setting

Krishna Kumar (1987) states that a school where little children are not allowed to talk freely in class is a useless school. Indeed, teachers who do not let their children talk have no business complaining about a lack of funds to buy books or other resources; they are already wasting a highly valuable resource that costs nothing at all. In this study, I made use of children's talk. Before starting the rhyme "Papa's Roti" (Father's Bread), I discussed its theme with the students to familiarize them with it, and also to introduce the vocabulary in the rhyme. The rhyme was also used to discuss gender-related issues.

Somya: /क्या आप आज एक नया तुक सीखना चाहते हैं?/  
[Do you want to learn a new rhyme today?]

Students: /हाँ (उत्साह के साथ)/  
[Yes! (excitedly)]

I drew a circle on the board and asked what it could be? Immediately, one student replied, "roti". Other responses included "ball", "plate", "potato", "rolling-board", "egg", and so on.

Somya: /यह चाक या डस्टर या पेड क्यों नहीं हो सकता?/  
[Why can't it be a piece of chalk or a duster or a tree?]

Students: /क्योंकि वह गोल नहीं है/  
[Because they are not round.]

Somya: /तो, इसका मतलब है कि यहां खींची गई वस्तु गोल है, और आपके द्वारा दिए गए सभी उदाहरण गोल-गोल वस्तुओं के हैं/  
[So, this means that the object drawn here



are round, and all the examples you have given are of round objects.]  
I wrote the word "round" on the board and asked the students what it meant.

Students: /गोल/  
[round]

Somya: /हाँ। लेकिन क्या आप उच्चारण कर सकते हैं जो वहाँ लिखा गया है?/  
[Yes. but can you pronounce what is written there?]

The students spelt the word but were unable to pronounce it, so the teacher pronounced the word for them, "round".

Somya: /इसलिए, बच्चों, जबसे आपने इसका उल्लेख किया है, हम आज रोटी के बारे में चर्चा करेंगे/  
[So children, since you have spoken about it, we will talk about "roti" today]

Somya: /आपके घर पर रोटी कौन तैयार करता है?/  
[Who prepares rotis at home?]

Students: /माँ, चाची, दीदी, बहन/  
[Mother, aunt, paternal grandmother, sister]

Somya: /क्या आपके पापा रोटी तैयार करते हैं?/  
[Does your papa make rotis?]

Student 1: /कुछकुछ समय/  
[Sometimes.]

Student 2: /जब माँ घर पर नहीं होती।/  
[When mother is not at home.]  
Most students responded that their fathers made rotis when they were away from home on work

Somya: /ठीक है, अगर आपके माता-पिता दोनों घर पर हैं, तो रोटी कौन तैयार करते हैं?/  
[Okay. If both of your parents are at home, who makes the rotis?]

Students (all): /माँ/  
[Mother]

Somya: /पापा क्यों नहीं?/  
[Why not papa?]

[Why not papa?]

Student (girl): /यह उनका (पुरुषों) का मन ही बल्कि महिलाओं का है/  
[This is not their (men's) work but women's.]

Somya: /आपको क्यों लगता है कि यह काम महिलाओं के लिए है?/  
[Why do you think this work is specifically for women?]  
Nobody responded.

Somya: /आपकी राय में कौनसे कार्य हैं जो केवल महिलाओं के लिए हैं?/  
[What other work do you think are meant only for women?]

Students named several tasks such as washing clothes, bringing water, cleaning utensils, clearing the cow dung, and ploughing the field. During the discussion, most of them argued that the male family members could also do all these, but they did it only when the women were not at home or if they were staying away alone. In response to the question of why fathers could not make roti, the students replied that since he was "working" outside the house, he would not do these household chores.

Somya: /अगर आपकी माँ भी बाहर "काम" कर रही है, तो रोटी कौन बनाएगा?/  
[If your mother is also "working" outside, who will make the rotis?]  
All the children remained silent.

Somya: /क्या आप मुझे एक ऐसे काम का उदाहरण दे सकते हैं जो केवल आपकी माँ करती है और आपके पिता नहीं? और इसके विपरीत?/  
[Can you give me an example of some work that only your mother does and not your father, and vice-versa?]  
Students started discussing amongst themselves.

Student 1: /दैनिक मजदूर का काम/  
[Work of a daily-labourer.]

Student 2: /नहीं, मैंने देखा है कि ममहिलाएं अपने सिर के ऊपर रेत और सीमेंट ले जाती हैं/  
[No, I have seen women carrying sand and

cement on their head.]  
 Student 3: /खेत की जुताई/  
 [Ploughing the field.]

Somya: /महिला ऐसा क्यों नहीं कर सकती?  
 [Why can a woman not do that (plough the field)?]

Student 4: /क्योंकि वे कमजोर है/  
 [Because they (women) are weak]

Somya: /अगर वे सीमेंट और रेत ले जा सकते हैं,  
 तो क्या वे खेतों की जुताई नहीं कर सकते?/  
 [If they can carry cement and sand, can't they also plough a field?]

Students (most): /लेकिन वे ऐसा नहीं करते/  
 [But, they don't do it.]

Somya: /जब पिता घर पर नहीं होते तब भी?/  
 [Even when the father is not at home?]

Students: /नहीं, हम उस काम को करने के लिए  
 किसी को नियुक्त करते हैं, लेकिन महिलाएं ऐसा  
 नहीं करती हैं/  
 [No, we hire someone to do that work, but the women don't do it.]

Somya: /लेकिन आप सभी का मानना है कि वे यह  
 कर सकते हैं, है ना?/  
 [But you all believe that they CAN do it, right?]

Students: /हाँ/  
 [Yes]

At the end of this discussion, students agreed that both their mother and father could do all the chores mentioned earlier, but the division of labour (who will do what) was a debatable issue.

#### ii) Rhyme Recitation

After this discussion, I recited the rhyme and asked students to repeat it with me. All the students sang the rhyme, along with gestures. After they finished singing the rhyme several times, I wrote it down on the blackboard.

#### iii) Vocabulary Building

Rhymes recited with actions and gestures

helped the students in meaning-making without translation. New vocabulary was further reinforced by discussing the word and connecting it to the students' context. For example, the word "round" was introduced by asking questions such as, "What are the round things around you?" Similarly, the word "small" was introduced by comparing two different-sized objects and introducing the opposite words "big" and "small".

#### iv) Working with a Rhyme Chart

The rhyme was written on a chart paper, and pasted on the classroom wall. The art was used for the identification of letters, words and sounds and to familiarize students with the script. The discussion was around some questions related to the chart.:

- Identify the words "round", "small", "puffed-up" and, "finished" written in the rhyme?
- How many times is the word "roti" written in the chart?
- Where is the title of rhyme written?
- How many times is the word "and" written in the chart?
- How many words start with the letter "p"?
- How many words start with the letter "r"?
- Identify the rhyming words.

These types of questions involved the students in meaningful learning of the script.

#### v) Recontextualizing the Rhyme

The process of language-learning and meaning-making becomes easier when the content is related to the learner's context. To contextualize the rhyme, the students were asked to replace the pronoun "I" with their names, or the names of their friends, and also to change the number of rotis. So, the contextualized version of rhyme could be:

Papa's roti round and small  
 Puffed up like a ping-pong ball  
 Papa's roti on a plate

----- sat down and finished-----.

Each student was asked to come forward and recite the rhyme by pointing to the word while reciting and contextualizing the rhyme by changing the names and number of rotis. This process provided the students with an opportunity to read with understanding.

vi) A Step towards Writing

Some worksheets were designed based on the rhyme to involve students in the process of writing (Figure 2). The worksheet was filled by the students after a discussion around it.

vii) Home Assignment

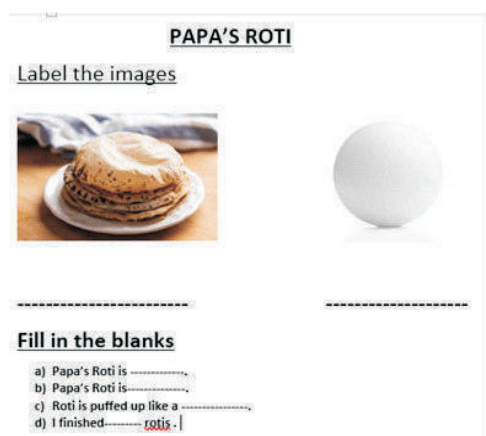
Students were asked to recontextualize the rhyme and to write it in their notebooks by replacing "papa" with any family member who made rotis at home, and replacing "I" and the number of rotis with whatever they wanted. The aim was to involve them in the process of purposeful writing.

gestures and provide the word without the aid of translation. They were able to use the word in different contexts as well. For instance, when students say a stool, they immediately said 'round'.

Students were familiarized with keywords before starting the rhyme. This helped them identify those words in the rhyme and multiple readings of the rhyme developed reading skills. When students were called individually to read the rhyme, most of them were successful. In case they were stuck, the use of actions and gestures helped them to identify and read the word. In writing, students engagement with writing was high in modifying the rhyme by adding their names and changing the number of rotis. In filling the worksheet, students tried to read the questions refer to the rhyme and fill in the blanks. They made a lot of spelling mistakes. Nevertheless, it was a significant step since the writing process includes thinking and not merely copying.

**Figure 2**

*Example of a Worksheet*



## Conclusion

The process of rhyme teaching was completed in one week and students were exposed to listening, speaking, reading and writing. They were able to apply the vocabulary to objects in their surroundings, read the rhyme and think and write. We have used the classroom experience in many teacher workshops. Most of the teachers shared that they found the idea of using rhymes as a pedagogical tool enabling English learning. They also learnt ways of talking about sensitive issues such that students could relate to them. This study demonstrated how rhymes can be a pedagogical tool for English language learning.

## Findings

The use of rhyme helped vocabulary development as words were introduced through action and gestures and discussion around the concept. Students were able to guess the meaning through

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# Reading Comprehension: What is it and how to Develop it?

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**Key Words:** Reading Comprehension, Cognition, Phonemics, Schema, OK4R

## Abstract

Reading is an important contributor to learning outcomes. Reading abilities have to be developed in students. Reading Comprehension is an important part of reading ability. The paper traces the history of reading comprehension to highlight its complexities. It then provides a few suggestions for improving reading skills in students.

## Introduction

Reading is important for school learning. Effective reading helps in higher achievement levels. If students do not read effectively, it has far-reaching consequences, such as low levels of learning outcomes (Zakariya, 2015), affects mathematical problem-solving abilities (Ozsoy, Kuruyer & Cakiroglu, 2015), and is related to low rates of college enrolment (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). The findings of ASER (2018) that 44.2 percent of class 5 students cannot read beyond the Class 2 level textbooks underlines the need to emphasize developing reading abilities. Reading comprehension is the core of effective reading. An understanding of reading comprehension and how it can be increased therefore becomes critical.

## What is Reading Comprehension?

Reading involves an understanding of the written or printed words and symbols and creating specific meaning besides decoding. Thorndike (1917/1971) refers to reading as a process of reasoning. Effective and purposeful reading works at two levels. The first level involves code-breaking and the second level is the comprehension and is influenced by why the reader is reading the text. Most readers generally reach the process of code-breaking, however, many have problems with comprehension due to inappropriate reading. Moreover, the tasks in comprehension differ according to the situation. For example, reading an "Exit" sign, or a text, or a comic, or abstract ideas make different demands on the reader. Effective comprehension depends on reader's understanding these demands.

## Evolving an Understanding of Reading Comprehension

The history of reading comprehension unfolds multiple layers of this concept. Its history has been discussed by several scholars (Ahuja & Ahuja, 1991; Pearson, 1985; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). According to Pearson & Cervetti (2017), reading comprehension became a "fact of everyday classroom instruction" (p. 12) in the 1980s. It dominated curricular instruction for 15 years (from 1975 to 1990). From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, it took a backseat because of curricular politics. It made a comeback with curricular and assessment reforms brought by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Broadly speaking, the history of reading comprehension is divided into four periods:

1. Precognitive revolution period (roughly the first 75 years of the 20th century)
2. Cognitive revolution period covering a period of 15 years, from 1975 to 1990.
3. Shift away from the schema theory—re-contextualisation of reading comprehension (from the 1990s to mid-2000).
4. Shift back to the schema theory covering a period of curricular and assessment reforms ushered in by the Common Core State Standards, up to 2010.

There is however considerable overlap between these periods.

### **Pre-Cognitive Revolution Period**

During the oral tradition period from the 17th to the 19th centuries, reading emphasized the purity of pronunciation and accuracy in rendering the hymns. The

emphasis was on text memorization, and reading comprehension did not find any place in instruction.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Edmund Burke Huey (as cited in Pearson & Cervetti, 2017) and Edward Thorndike (ibid) tried to understand the cognitive processes involved in reading. Huey argued that the hallmark of an expert reading is sense-making rather than a rendition of the text. Thorndike defined reading as reasoning, suggesting that reading is made up of several components. These observations were precursory to the 1970s constructivist view of reading comprehension.

Then came the Basal Reading period which lasted up to the 1970s. The early Basal readers (from the 1860s to 1960s) stressed phonemic awareness and decoding. The readers assumed that when decoding skills are acquired and practised, reading comprehension would take care of itself. Later Basal readers (produced between 1965 to 1973) took a different approach to reading comprehension. These used sight words and the whole word approach. These basal readers assumed that comprehension is developed by teaching reading skills (like connecting to background knowledge, making predictions based on the picture and title of the story, verifying the prediction after the story is read) separately.

### **Cognitive Revolution in the 1970s**

The cognitive revolution highlighted the complexity of reading comprehension. Two components of the concept were identified - the characteristics of the text and the reader's nature of knowledge. The text characteristics explained reading comprehension as the readers understanding of the text structure and its

organization. The nature of knowledge saw reading comprehension as a dynamic process of continuously revising text meaning and integrating it with the schema. The reader was important in this view. This view encouraged teachers to link the text to the prior knowledge of the reader (including their socio-cultural background), called the schemata. The schema theory was important for it raised critical questions on meaning: where did meaning reside? In the text, or in the author's mind, or the reader's mind, or in the interaction between the reader and the text? The schema theory privileged the idea that meaning emerged from the interaction between the reader and the text.

The schema theory gave rise to the notion of two kinds of knowledge— declarative (knowing that) and procedural (knowing how). An implication of this distinction was the focus on procedural knowledge in reading comprehension. Classroom instruction consisted of teaching various strategies to enhance comprehension. Some of these strategies are summarize the text, predict the purpose of the text (to provide information, to entertain, to persuade), connect to prior knowledge, note-taking, SQ3R strategies (survey, questioning, read, recite/recall, and review), the OK4R method (Overview, Key terms, Read, Recall, Reflect and Review) and so on.

Metacognition was another way of understanding reading comprehension. There were two strands to the metacognitive understanding. According to the first strand, readers develop tacit and explicit strategies for remembering. The second strand emphasized the actual strategies readers use to monitor, evaluate, and repair their comprehension of the text.

### **Shift Away From Schema Approach: 1990s to Mid-2000**

The aftermath of the 1983 report of *A Nation at Risk* was the achievement testing and standards-based education reform. Assessment findings showed a decline in Reading and Math scores and rampant functional illiteracy. The poor learning outcomes were attributed to the belief that constructivist pedagogies did not pay adequate attention to the basic skills (read decoding skills). This period saw reading wars between the whole word approach and the phonics approach and the phonics approach was a winner with reading policies arguing for 'back to basics'. The National Reading Panel, formed in 1997 identified phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension as focus areas for effective reading instructions. The reading program was later incorporated into *No Child Left Behind* in 2001. The momentum of reading as a meaning-making process diminished in this period.

### **Shift Towards a Modified Schema Approach (up to 2010)**

Until 2010, the impetus for redefining reading comprehension was provided by the curricular and assessment reforms ushered in by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Reading and writing were subsumed under literacy. The view of comprehension changed from the dominant schema theory to mental models. The mental models saw comprehension as a dynamic process, sensitive to shifts in the focus of comprehension. For instance, while reading a mystery story, readers may have a hypothesis that character A is the antagonist. As they read further, the focus of their comprehension shifts to character B, likely to be an anti-protagonist. Other

theories such as cognitive flexibility theory, situated cognition, readers response theory, and so on also contributed to the modified schema approach. These theories argued for an expanded notion of the context.

To conclude, the history of reading comprehension shows a shift from a relatively undifferentiated ability to looking at ways comprehension is affected by contexts, purposes and content areas.

The history of reading comprehension suggested to the practitioners' several ways of improving comprehension. Some of these are suggested in the next section.

## **Suggested Ways of Improving Reading Comprehension**

### **Teach Skimming and Scanning Skills of Reading**

Skimming and scanning are advanced reading skills. Skimming is reading rapidly to get the gist of a passage. It is developed by reading vertically rather than horizontally. Scanning is a close reading of any text to answer specific questions. Scanning a text becomes easier if the reader has already skimmed it. Together, they enhance reading comprehension. The teachers have to provide opportunities for developing these skills.

### **Teach Reading Strategies**

Reading comprehension can be improved by skilling readers through strategies. One such strategy is the OK4R method (Overview, Key terms, Read, Recall, Reflect and Review), developed by Pauk (1974). The OK4R method does not advocate reading a text from beginning to



end. Instead, it advocates reading for long-term remembering. This strategy assumes reading to be an interactive process between the text and the reader, and involves monitoring comprehension to construct meaning

- a. Overview: Take about five minutes to read the introductory and summary paragraphs of a text. Then read the sub-headings or topic sentences and their sequence to get an overall understanding of the content.
- b. Key Ideas: Identify the key ideas and distinguish them from secondary ideas or supporting materials. Change headings into questions by inserting words such as "what", "how", "who", "why", "when".
- c. Read: Read the lines or paragraphs to answer questions such as "what", "who", "how", etc., and see how supporting materials clarify or prove key points. Do not try to read too quickly at this stage.
- d. Recall: After reading, test your memory and understanding. Try to enunciate or write down the main points. Then make a summary or go back and underline or highlight the main points.

- e. Reflect: Think about what has been read. Connect it to your experience or prior knowledge.
- f. Review: At regular intervals, review the text by re-reading the notes.

Studying from school textbooks does not usually help in developing reading skills. Students learning to read should enjoy the material they are reading. The reading material should neither be too easy nor too difficult. It should be chosen according to the reading proficiency of the students and their interests. Further, students who are learning to lead should have access to reading material with big prints. The library plays an important role in developing reading abilities in students by providing appropriate and suitable reading materials.

Finally, the role of a teacher is also critical in developing the skills of reading comprehension in a learner. The teacher should use various strategies and a wide variety of texts, such as narrative, descriptive, persuasive, and procedural, to teach reading skills. It is also suggested that the school time-table have a dedicated reading period which can be taught jointly by the librarian and the class teachers.

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# Observations on Language Learning: The Indian Context

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**Key Words:** Language-learning, First language, Second language, Language universals

## Abstract

This paper is an account of my observations on language learning in the bilingual and multilingual context prevalent in India. As a part of my profession, I had ample opportunities to observe how children learn English as a second language across a set of schools in Tamil Nadu. This experience led me to revisit Ray Jackendoff's chapter "How Children Learn Language", based on which I have attempted to draw a comparison between first and second language acquisition. Through this paper, I will share my notes and perspectives on the process of second language learning in primary school students.

## Introduction

Between 2018–2019, I visited multiple schools in and around Tamil Nadu to implement an English reading program. The school children I observed during these visits were between the ages of 4 to 12 years, and mostly spoke Tamil, which was their first language. Interacting with them gave me some insights into how children learn a language in the classroom. In this study, I have used Jackendoff's approach (1994) to language acquisition as a framework to compare the acquisition of English as a first and a second language.

## Comparing the Acquisition of English as a First and a Second Language

### Grammatical Commonalities

Jackendoff posited,

"The real problem of language acquisition is not just to describe the child's behavior, but to induce from this behavior the nature of the unconscious grammar that guides it, and to discover how this grammar changes as the child matures." (1994, p. 104)

He proposed that language expressed the innate properties of the brain; his belief in the universality of language led to the emphasis on grammatical commonalities across languages. This hypothesis has two implications for language acquisition; (a) acquiring English as a second language is similar to acquiring it as the first language, with a few minor differences (which will be discussed later), and (b) the nature of errors committed in English as first and as

second languages are similar. Jackendoff claimed that children who were exposed to a second language while learning their first language found little difficulty in learning it. They picked up the grammar of both languages quickly and learnt to speak the second language. By the age of two years, native English speakers speak two-word utterances. Children in India learn English as a second language in school around three or four years of age. We see evidence of the two-word utterance stage among Learners of English as a second language in India in Grade 1 or Grade 2 children, which is approximately around 6 to 8 years old. They learn the sounds of the language through the alphabets and learn 3-letter words, 4-letter words, and so on. They eventually pick up its underlying grammatical structure by the age of ten to twelve years. This process is very similar to the one followed by any person learning English as their first language. Children brought up in a bilingual environment learn English as their third language. These children make the same errors as children learning English as their second language.

Jackendoff claimed that comprehension of speech is greater than its production. Children understand the adult language and its sound system, but they often cannot map the sounds to the right organs and also cannot form complete or grammatical sentences. They confuse the /g/ sound with the /k/ sound (like native English speaking children) and utter words such as "guck" or "gug". Sometimes, they also substitute "s" for "th-", and "th-" for "f" in words such as "sick" and "thick".

### Similarities in Errors

Based on various experiments and observations, Jackendoff strongly

asserted his argument that there exists an underlying mental grammar that is universal to all humans. Children's utterances with consistent systematic mistakes cannot be a coincidence. This underlying mental grammar gives each person an inherent capacity to learn any language. The stages of development in "wh-" questions, in negative and past tense sentences are the same between children learning English as their first language and those learning it as their second language; and the mistakes are also the same. Jackendoff (1994) summarises the following stages in the development of 'wh' questions, negation and the past tense.

#### *"Wh-" questions*

1. Non-use of an auxiliary verb before the subject. (For example, "What book name?", "Why you smiling?", "Why soldier marching?").
2. Use of auxiliary verb without an awareness of its position. The sentences so formed are similar to declarative sentences with the intonation of a question. (For example, "What he can ride in?", "Which way they should go?", "Why kitty can't stand up?").
3. Achieve the adult order. (For example, "Where will you go?", "Why can't kitty see?", "Why don't you know?").

#### **Negation**

1. Use "no" to indicate negation.(for example, "No the sun shining", "No a boy bed", "No sit there").
2. Use "no" but inappropriately and without an auxiliary verb such as "did". (for example, "He no bite you", "I no want envelope", "I no taste them").
3. Use auxiliary appropriately, but still donot use the un-tensed forms "do" (for instance, "I didn't did it", "You didn't caught me").

#### **The Past Tense**

1. Do not show knowledge of the relation between "walk" and "walked", or "go" and "went". For them, these words are as different as "sit" and "Gary". They learn such words—"walked", "played", "came", "went"—as individual and separate words.
2. Become conscious of the past-tense patterns of regular verbs ending in "-ed" and apply them to every verb.
3. Recognize that irregular verbs are exceptions and something different is to be done to form its past tense.
4. By the fourth stage, they figure out the complex pattern completely.

These common errors that Jackendoff observed are also seen in Indian children learning English as their second language. In the Indian context, we often hear children saying "putted" for "put" and "eated" for "eat". In addition to passing through the stages of acquiring negatives, "wh-" questions or past tense, Indian children have to become aware that the language structure of English is different from their first language. Through my school visits in Tamil Nadu, I observed that children reached the third stage by the age of 10 years on average.

Growing up surrounded by regional tongues, some children speak impeccable English, while others find it difficult to speak the language. This is because English proficiency depends on several factors such as the age when they start learning English, the consistency of interaction, exposure to English, the source of learning, their motivation and the resources available to them. Adding on to these factors, the knowledge of their first language formally also influences the acquisition of English as a second language. The language that they end up

learning is most often dependent on their environment and exposure. Second language learners of English use their first language as an operational framework for acquiring English. The next section discusses the differences in first and second language acquisition.

## Use of the First Language as an Operational Framework

In learning a second language, children often use their first language as an operational framework. The first language influences the second language. The word order of the small English phrases that children construct is governed by the structure of their first language. For example, a lot of children use direct translations from their first language to form sentences in English. Some examples of such translations are: "your name what?", "her/his give", "lunch eating", and so on. Simultaneously, they also miss out on the auxiliary verb just as English speakers commonly do while acquiring English as their first language. English follows a subject-verb-object word order while Tamil (and most Indian languages) follow a subject-object-verb word order. This difference in word order influences the phrase construction in these languages.

With my theoretical linguistic knowledge, I would like to add that it takes a long time for Indian children to learn tenses in English. This could stem from the differences in the system of person and number being distinctively used in Indian languages and English. Most Indian languages consist of words that either belong to masculine, feminine or neutral

gender. More often, the verbs, pronouns and possessives have to agree with each other to be grammatically correct. The inter-relationship between the system of number and person is relatively more complex here than it is in English. For example, in the following sentences, notice the relationship between the pronouns/possessives and the verb/noun as translated from English to Hindi:

Set A

1. *They went* to Sara's house.

Wo Sara ke ghar *gaye*  
[vo sara: keʃ gɐ: r gɐ: ]

2. *He went* to Sara's house.

Wo Sara ke ghar *gaya*  
[vo sara: keʃ gɐ: r gɐ: ja:]

3. *She went* to Sara's house.

Wo Sara ke ghar *gayi*.  
[vo sara: keʃ gɐ: r gɐ: ji:]

Set B

1. His/her house.

Uska ghar.  
[ʃ ska: gɐ: r]

2. Their house.

Unka ghar.  
[ʃ ŋka: gɐ: r]

3. His/her watch.

Uski ghadi.  
[ʃ ski: gɐ: .ri:]

4. Their watch.

Unki ghadi.  
[ʃ ŋki: gɐ: .ri:]

In English, we have clear denominators of gender and number that are limited to pronouns and possessives and a few (modal) verbs. Whereas in Hindi, the gender is inflected in the verb while the pronoun is the same for all genders (Set A). Moreover, the possessives are determined by the gender of the noun and the inflection shows the agreement

between the two (Set B, where the noun 'house' or 'ghar' is masculine and 'watch' or 'ghadi' is feminine). Any sentence in Hindi demands the agreement of person and number in many different ways depending on the complexity of the sentence.

I assume this difference contributes to the challenges that one may encounter when learning English as a second language. Children have to first understand the differences before they can acquire them successfully. This needs added time and effort and explains the delay in children speaking Hindi acquiring the second language English.

Another source of difference is the accent. Since speakers are used to producing the sounds of their first language, the articulation of sounds in the second language is influenced by the first. For instance, Indian learners of the English language commonly pronounce /r/, /b/ and /d/ sounds differently from native English speakers. We do not roll the /r/ sounds in words such as "cars", "bird", "jar", etc. Also, we often get confused while pronouncing sounds such as /b/, /p/ (bilabial sounds), /d/ (alveolar sound) and in recognizing where they are aspirated or unaspirated. For example, "bear" sometimes gets mispronounced as "bhear" or "doll" as "dholl", and so on. This is influenced by the way we learn to pronounce these sounds in our first language. Acquiring the knowledge of acceptable articulatory combinations among sounds of the English language also takes time. I am speculating about this because the way Indian languages combine sounds to make a word is governed by a different system of rules from the English language. It is also a challenge to get acquainted with the number of exceptions that exist in English.

If one compares Indian languages, one sees similar patterns. For instance, In Hindi, gender is attached to nouns and verbs. Gaining this knowledge is a challenge for Tamil or Malayalam speakers. Despite these differences, the similarity across Indian languages outweighs the difference between them, owing to their common language structure. Hence, it makes the process of learning English as a second or third language almost the same for all Indian speakers.

The Universality principle highlights the similarity in the process of acquiring English as a first and second language. I have been able to account for these commonalities and differences in learning English as a first and second language through my professional experience. I believe that the influence of the first language—when used advantageously to promote learning a second language—can make the second language learning process more favourable and faster.

## Conclusion

It would benefit us to conduct more research on the process of language learning and on how the first language interacts with the second or third language when a child is learning it. As educators, it becomes important to have this knowledge and accordingly create teaching strategies for better language learning outcomes. These strategies will leverage the knowledge of the first language and will use the similarities or differences in the grammatical structures between the first and the second language as scaffolds. Such scaffolds will give every learner an equal chance at becoming successful in learning a second language irrespective of the resources available to schools or children. Equipping

children with the knowledge and skills of English along with those of their first language, accompanied by well-designed

language programmes will open up global opportunities to all.

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# The Dynamics in Democratization of English Language Education in Tamil Nadu

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**Key Words:** Democratization, State action, English language education, Tamil Nadu.

## Abstract

This paper investigates the factors influencing the democratization of English education in Tamil Nadu. A historical analysis of access to English education shows that it is dependent on State action, political prioritization and applicability. The dynamics among the variables and their influence on English language education has been examined in this paper. Though access to English education has increased in the contemporary globalized context, the quality of education varies. The opinions of the teachers, students and community members have been analysed to understand their views on the quality of English education. This paper suggests areas for improvement for the democratization of English education.

## Introduction

English is crucial for Social mobility and economic development (Sharma 2020), and gender equality (Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian 2008). Though the power acquired by English buttressed the administration and education system in India, it also created social divisions between the urban and the rural population, in addition to gender inequality and disparity between the English educated and "English-less" people in the country (Bhatt, 2010; Aula, 2014). It is because of these disparities that the democratization of English language education has become imperative.

## Democratization of English Education

Democratization of the education system is a powerful tool to combat discrimination, and remove inequalities in access to English education. According to the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, democratization is a process that leads to an open participatory society (Boutros-Ghali, 1996). English language education has become more accessible with Tamil Nadu introducing the English medium section in Government schools in 2013. The enrolment in Class VI in English medium Government school has gone up. The enrolment rates in the districts of Madurai, Melur and Usilampatti has gone up from 1674 students in 2013 to 1870 students in 2014. (The Hindu, Sept 3, 2013(<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/enrolment-in-madurai-governmentschools-on-the-rise/article6375434.ece>). Nevertheless, it is posing learning challenges to many students, particularly in the rural regions.

In this article three factors—the actors and the state action, the political process and prioritization, and outcomes in applicability—have been analysed to show how they influence the growth of English education during colonialism, after independence and in the contemporary globalized world. The opinions of the stakeholders for improving the quality of English education have also been discussed, along with interventions to strengthen its quality.

## Actors, Processes and Outcomes in the Growth of English Language

Significant policy changes have motivated compartmentalizing English education in India into three periods, the colonial period, the Independent India period and the contemporary period of globalization. In these three periods, the growth of the English language was influenced by three factors:

- i. State action: State action comprises the efforts of the actors and the governing apparatuses in influencing English education. It includes the infrastructure built by the State to promote the learning of English.
- ii. Political discourses: Political discourse denotes the narratives and counter-narratives on the role of English and its impact.
- iii. Applicability: Applicability refers to the different ways in which the language can be applied in various fields; the employment opportunities it opens up as a part of the outcome of English education.

## English Language in the Colonial Period

The British could not understand the local languages (Evans, 2002). So, they set up English schools like the St. George Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School (Chennai, 1715), Bishop Heber Higher Secondary School (Tiruchirappalli, 1762) and St. Johns Vestry Anglo Indian School (Tiruchirappalli, 1763). All these English schools continue to have their roots in the oldest English language teaching institutions outside England (Muthia 2014). This initiative produced a community of English-speaking Indians (Mukherjee, 2010). State support for English education continued until Independence with infrastructure developed from primary school to universities. However, access to English education was available only to the elites (Naregal, 2002). Consequently, the political discourses around English seldom reached the masses. The applicability of the English language opened jobs in teaching, administration and bureaucracy so that the English-educated elites could act as mediators between the State and society.

## English Language in Independent India

In Independent India, the maxims of linguistic pluralism and unity in diversity became a value of the Indian democracy (Bashir, 2006). As linguistic diversity was connected to cultural and linguistic identities, it facilitated the formation of the states based on language. Tamil Nadu has always given an exalted place to Tamil as the oldest language in the world (Shulman, 2016). After the formation of Tamil Nadu in 1956, Tamil was prioritized by all the governments (Hardgrave, 1973).

In other words, compared to the British era, In independent India the State support shifted to Tamil from English. This however did not mean that the State opposed the English language; it simply took a neutral stance towards English. On 26 January 1950, the new Constitution, in the name of national unity, declared Hindi as the official language of India, with English continuing as an associate official language for fifteen years, after which Hindi would become the sole official language. However, counter-narratives challenged this discourse based on the view that historically and culturally, Tamil was more significant for the people of Tamil Nadu than Hindi. This was a turning point in the history of the English language in Tamil Nadu. The English language was incorporated into the political discourse to counter the national unity argument. In the 1960s, the Dravidian political parties led the opposition to Hindi by linking it to Tamil linguistic identity. This politicization gave the party an edge over other national parties (Chandran, 2011), which in turn led to the re-prioritization of the English language across Tamil Nadu. Consequently, the State's actions in support of English as a medium of instruction in educational institutions also intensified. This prioritization helped to dismantle the elitist status of English.

## English Language in the Contemporary Period of Globalization

Now, English continues to enjoy its role as a medium of communication with active State support. The English language has vertically deepened and horizontally widened its application in the contemporary period. It is accessible to a large section of the population due to the

State's actions and political prioritization. From 98 English medium schools in 2008 to nearly 950 schools of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), (Sundaram, 2019) shows the growth and acceptance of English medium education. However, while the enrolment in English medium schools is increasing, the quality of English education is questionable; hindering the democratization of English education.

## Issues to be Addressed for Democratization of English Education

Interviews were conducted with teachers, students, principal, educational administrators, and community members to know their views on the quality of English education. Some of the concerns raised by the participants have been briefly discussed as follows:

- a) *Issues related to how Tamil is perceived:* There are two types of issues that have to be dealt with to bring about a change in the quality of English education. The first issue relates to the positioning of Tamil as a Classical language leading to its politicization; The second is the perception that English is learnt for routine communication in everyday life.

The State, to reinforce its legitimacy and acceptance among the masses, has politicized Tamil. The politicization has created a perception that the knowledge of Tamil alone is enough to secure the future of children. The mother of a child from the rural district of Theni says, "*Tamizhnattilvaazhvathukkthamizhm attrumeengalkkupothum*" (We need only Tamil to live in Tamil Nadu). This attitude promotes Tamil

monolingualism and hinders the spread of English education despite the state policies. The perception can be overcome by conducting awareness programmes on the importance of English with the assurance that English education does not mean loss of Tamil identity. The value of English is further diminished when the purpose of English learning is limited to communication. In the words of a 22-year old postgraduate student participant:

English I feel is just a medium of communicative [sic] language, more than that I won't give any preference to English [sic] so it's just a medium of communication. This is because I am possessive about my language that is Tamil [sic]. If we know English up to some level that we can speak so that others can understand [sic], that's enough!

Such perceptions can be tackled by emphasizing by creating opportunities for the learners to use English in challenging contexts. This will show the need to think in English.

- b) *Skill related challenges:* The quality of English education also suffers because the communication skills and comprehension levels of students and teachers are inadequate. Building student's English speaking skills develops their confidence and helps learning. A 28-year old woman participant shared:

I am not good in English. Even now I am not so good in English [sic] . . . I doubt myself at times whether I talk good English [sic] . . . that is why I struggle a lot while speaking. I was in State Board [sic]. I had no confidence in talking English and I will be [sic] so hesitant because I don't know whether

I will be in a good grammar or something [sic]. I don't have any fluency in that.

A first-year college student recollecting his experience in an English medium government school has this to say about his teacher:

In my school, though teachers talk in English, they don't know how to teach . . . . When I was at school, I felt that I should have got a better teacher to teach English . . . . They said they had a rule to talk only in English but they did not practice [it]. They didn't make use correct English whenever we talk a wrong word or sentence [sic]. They laugh at us, but they don't correct us, which creates an inferiority complex among the students that our English is not good. So, we should not talk.

The State must provide financial assistance to build quality infrastructure for English language education. Spoken English should become the core of teacher training and teaching in schools. This will help build their confidence in teachers and students.

- c) *Teaching related Issues:* The teachers barely teach in English despite their academic qualifications. A 30-old lecturer participant describing his experience said:

Even teachers used to talk to us in Tamil only and we also talk to them in Tamil. There was no push [sic] to talk in English. When I went to 11th and 12th, i.e. during my matriculation in that school, they were compelling us to talk in English, if we don't, they will fine us [sic]. They use teaching methods that are outdated and rote learning is still followed in English classes.

The Head of the English Department in

a college in Chennai added:

As a teacher of English for several decades, I feel that the teaching methods are kind of outdated. There is no timely revision in teaching methods to incorporate innovative learning that are practised in many other countries. I also feel that there is a shortage of financial support from the government. Due to this, it is not easy to implement new teaching-learning methodology in the real classroom settings.

To address these issues, the curriculum should be redesigned to promote active learning methodologies. Proper teacher training by competent educators has to be prioritized. With consistent support from the state technology, intervention can be facilitated to yield better learning outcomes in English.

The lack of access to English education affects a large section of women in our country leading to their exclusion from many fields. Girls often do not access tertiary levels of education. In Tamil Nadu, in 2012, at the Undergraduate level, 45670 more males were enrolled compared to females. At the postgraduate level too, the differences in enrolment rates continue with a difference of 14653 more males compared to females (Government of India, 2013; p. 134). We have to work on setting right the imbalances and improve the quality of English education to democratize it.

## Conclusion

Knowledge of English is undeniably an instrument of progress that widens our horizons of interaction at all levels. The globalized period needs a more comprehensive and coherent approach with better coordination between the State action and outcomes. Redesigning

the curriculum to use learner-centred teaching methods, conducting teacher training programmes and appointing qualified English teachers will help to address the quality issues. Increasing

access and improving quality will go a long way to democratize English language education. This requires the joint effort of the state and society.

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# Space for Home Language in the Ongoing National Dialogue for Educational Reforms in Multilingual Suriname

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**Key Words:** Multilingualism, Ethnic diversity, the Surinamese Educational Plan (SEP), Mother tongue, Home language, National dialogue

## Abstract

After a series of conquests, slavery, independence, revolution and the civil war, Suriname is currently in the building phase of development and democratic recovery. In line with this development, in April 2019, there began a national dialogue on the future of education in Suriname. Although Suriname is linguistically and ethnically diverse, Dutch is the only official language. It is also the language of instruction, textbooks and reading materials in school. The socio-cultural history and migration and settlement of indentured labourers of various ethnic and social groups at various timelines in the history of Suriname pose a challenge for the implementation of the European model of education and training. This paper provides a brief description of the multilingual and multi-ethnic context of Suriname, and much needed structural reforms in its education system. It also underlines the significance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity and multilingualism as one of the starting points for reforms.



## Introduction

Make the citizen good by training and everything else will follow.

–Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Doyle and Smith (2007-2013)]

The essence of the above quote from Rousseau sets the tone of the national dialogue for reforms in education in Suriname to ensure education for all. After a series of conquests, slavery, independence, revolution, civil war and the period of democratic recovery, the Republic of Suriname acquired its political independence on 25 November 1975. Although Suriname is characterized by ethnic and linguistic diversity, Dutch is its only official language; it is the language of instruction, textbooks, and all reading materials in schools. The Surinamese government attributes the poor learning performance of the schools, especially in the interior parts of the country to language barriers and the fact that the curriculum does not fit the local context (MOESC, 2010). The starting point of the new curriculum for primary education is the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity and multilingualism. Furthermore, teachers have to increase their competence to offer all pupils a promising learning environment. This paper provides a brief description of the multilingual and multi-ethnic context of Suriname and makes a plea for structural reforms in education.

## Multilingual and Multi-Ethnic Society

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Suriname is one of the smallest countries in South America, with a population of over 558,368 citizens (2017). During the colonial period, the

Amerindians, its original inhabitants were pushed over, paving the way for slaves from Africa to do the plantation work. With the abolition of slavery came the Chinese, the Indians and the Javanese indentured labourers. The country has three distinct regions (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Three Distinct Regions of Suriname*

Region	Surrounding areas	More information
the urban coast	densely populated and widely spread capital city of Paramaribo	A majority of the population lives on the urban and the rural coasts
the rural coast	the areas surrounding Paramaribo	
the interior	Amazonian	

Suriname has more than 19 languages and their varieties, such as Sarnami Hindustani, Javanese, Chinese, Portuguese and the famous lingua franca, namely Sranan Tongo (which means the tongue of Suriname). According to the latest statistics from 2017, the Hindustanis form the largest population group (27.4 per cent). Different ethnic and linguistic groups have their customs, traditions, rituals, music, dance and different cuisines, and live harmoniously. The status of language in Suriname is given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Status of Languages in Suriname*

Language Status	Language	Other details
Official Language	Suriname Dutch	60 per cent population; The use and standardization of the language is regulated by the Dutch Language Union, an institution jointly established by the Dutch, the Belgians and the Surinamese, as the language is intelligible with other forms of the Dutch language (Kroon & Yagmur, 2012).
Vernacular language / Lingua franca	Sranan Tongo	English-based Creole; lingua franca of the Surinamese Dutch, Javanese Surinamese and Hindustani speakers. In July 1981, the Surinamese government established an official spelling for the language to aid in its written format (Yagmur & Kroon, 2011).
Officially recognized languages	Javanese Surinamese Sarnami Hindustani	Used by Surinamese residents of Javanese descent. Used by immigrant workers from India

It is important to note that the languages are constantly evolving just like their speakers. Individuals seek and create the means to make themselves understood, exchange experiences, build cultural identity and shape it through language.

## Education System in Suriname

The education system in Suriname is administered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and is modelled on the pre-independence Dutch system; it played a crucial role in the "Dutchization" of the society. At the end of the 20th century, the government took initiatives to align the education system to the needs of the Surinamese people. The Constitution of Suriname (Constitution of Suriname 1987 Reforms of 1992) under the Thirteenth section of Article 39) asserts that "the State shall recognize and guarantee the right of all citizens to education and shall offer them equal opportunity for schooling. In the execution of its education policy the State shall be under the obligation

- a. To assure obligatory and free general primary education
- b. To assure durable education and to end analphabetism;
- c. To enable all citizens to attain the highest levels of education, scientific research and artistic creation, in accordance with their capacities;
- d. To provide, in phases, free education on all levels;
- e. To tune education to the productive and social needs of the society."

Though primary education is the State's responsibility, private players also provide education. Education is compulsory from the age of seven to twelve years. (See Table 3 for the structure of the education system). In the context of the extension of primary education to the age of twelve,

the Suriname government has started to change compulsory education in which Dutch is the official language. The process of Surinamization (of teaching methods in particular) is an ongoing initiative under the National Dialogue for reforms in Education.

**Table 3**  
*The Structure of Suriname Education System*

Education	Level	Related information
Primary	Primary school	7-12 years Public schools (51%) and private schools (religious 48%; private 1%). Public schools fall under the management and authority of the government.
Secondary	For juniors (VOJ)	Secondary education for juniors consists of a general educational field which includes a general education program (MULO) and vocational programs. The vocational courses for juniors such as primary vocational education, primary technical education, primary industrial education, simple technical education, simple vocational education, train the students for further specific education.
	For seniors (VOS)	The secondary education for seniors consists of general training courses and vocational training courses such as preparatory scientific education (VVO) and higher general education (HAVO), which prepares the students for admission to university education, which in turn prepares the students for higher professional education.
Tertiary	All courses	All courses at the post-secondary level for which at least a diploma at VOS level or equivalent is required for admission (UNICEF, n.d.)  The Anton de Kom University is the only university in Suriname. It was established in 1966 and opened its doors on 1st November 1968

More than 80 per cent of all children attend primary school, but the number of dropouts is very high. Most of the teachers in the coastal area are competent, but there is a huge shortage of competent teachers in the interior region.

## The Surinamese Educational Plan (SEP)

According to the Ministry of Education and Community Development (MOECD), the Surinamese Educational Plan (SEP) (2004) was established through a participatory process with stakeholders and was adopted at an Education Congress on 29th November 2002. It describes five sub-sectors— (a) pre-primary and primary education; (b) secondary education; (c) higher education;

(d) physical infrastructure, and (e) education administration. The most important radical change concerned the new educational structure and reforms of the educational administration – the decentralization of decision-making and the autonomy of schools. Programmes and activities needed for this transformation and institutional strengthening were included in this plan. This plan guided other reforms in education.

## National Dialogue for Education Reform, April 2019

The national dialogue for educational reforms was started in April 2019 as a series of intensive meetings between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for three days. The stakeholders involved discussed the aspirations of Suriname and ways to develop young people to function optimally with attention to basic life skills aimed at active social participation, professional practice, economic independence and optimal social responsibility. The aim was to produce an internationally competitive workforce. The strategy adopted to achieve this aim involved reducing the knowledge gap between Suriname and other countries, improving educational financing and management, focusing on schools and classes, addressing inequalities and strengthening regional cooperation.

Several initiatives have been taken and a great deal of money has been invested in the education system of Suriname under the Surinamese Educational Plan (SEP) and the Basic Education Improvement Program (BEIP). This national dialogue for reforms in education focuses on the policy formulation and implementation of

plans for qualitative developments in education and human resource of Suriname (MINOV, 2004)

## Critical Review of the Dialogue

It is interesting to note that this dialogue does not consider the issue of mother tongue education and the role of language in early education, the structural changes required for the development of language-specific teaching materials and textbooks along with the trained teachers, and a roadmap for their training. The multilingual context requires an enquiry into the patterns of language choices, language proficiencies, and linguistic attitudes to Dutch, native languages, Sranan Tongo and foreign languages, (English and Portuguese). This understanding is important to formulate an inclusive school language policy. Several reports reveal that the students in the interior regions are disadvantaged. Gardiner and Stampini (2013) discuss the reasons for the disadvantages as follows:

“The structural causes of the particularly low enrolment of students in the Interior include poor infrastructure, limited school oversight, long travel time, high prevalence of costly private schools, and high rates of migration, child labour, pregnancies and marriages. The regional gap is also due to the system's cultural bias towards those on the coast. All classes are taught in Dutch, despite the fact that the majority of students in the Interior are first exposed to the Dutch language when entering school. In addition, few teachers are local, and teachers working in the Interior are generally less qualified.” (p.3)

Agnihotri (2014, p.2) critiques the

constrained multilingual approach. He observes:

"Those who look at language merely as a means of communication or, more professionally, as an object of enquiry out there or in the human mind, fail to appreciate its fluid nature and its symbolic and iconic value. That children speaking different 'languages' effortlessly play common games together in the playground should have several lessons for the formal classroom. Any child whose languages are slighted in the classroom becomes reduced as a human being; she is very often silenced for years to come and simply drops out of the education system."

The valorization of the Dutch as the primary medium of instruction, to date, makes early education a challenge for children. Its colonial legacy and availability of instructional materials and textbooks allow the Dutch to have primacy over other local and native languages. A thorough revamping of the education system from primary to higher education is needed. The government is working on a policy paper indicting the changes for improving basic education (Asin, Gobardhan & Krishnadath, 2005). The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down this dialogue. Hopefully, with normalcy

restored, the issue of home language use in classrooms will find a central focus in the deliberations.

## Conclusions

The centrality of a language policy with a thrust on the home language of the children as the medium of instruction to achieve quality education cannot be overstated. The low literacy rate, the significant number of school dropouts, and high training costs and academic expenses keep a sizeable population away from higher education. The socio-cultural history, with the migration and settlement of indentured labourers of ethnic and social groups, poses a challenge to implementing the European model of education and training. Suriname requires an organically rooted policy and planning that connects the students to their roots and strengthens the multilingual and multi-ethnic fabric of the society. A multilingual and multi-ethnic context of Suriname requires meticulous and inclusive planning to promote the native/local languages and democratic values and to give prestige to the home language. Furthermore, it needs a structured initiative to produce textbooks and training materials in local languages for primary education. The presence of skilled and trained teachers remains central to these implementations.

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# Notes and Comments

## Reflecting on my Experiences of Learning and Teaching

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Maithreyi Krishnaraj holds a Doctoral degree in Sociology with a specialisation in Women's studies. She served as a Director of the Research Centre for Women's Studies at SNDT, Mumbai, and as Chair and Professor of Women and Development Centre at the Institute of Social Studies, Hague. Presently, she is a Hon. Visiting Professor at the Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore. She has authored several articles and books. She has won citations and awards as a distinguished scholar.

**Key Words:** Learning, Teaching, Inclusiveness, Teaching method, Empathy

### Abstract

This reflective note takes the reader through the rich and varied experiences of the author as a learner as well as a teacher. The journey illustrates the importance of using creative methods of teaching. It also brings out the characteristics of a good teacher. A good teacher is inclusive, gives students opportunities to explore, supports them, helps them to learn the values of social responsibility and is empathetic.

## My School Life

My earliest memory of school is of being admitted to a municipal school in Class 2. In those days, there were no admission tests. The school had mats instead of desks and chairs, and we carried a "slate" and wrote on it with a piece of white chalk. Our day began with prayers and national songs. We were taught various crafts using corn stalks. We learnt folk dances. We had to recite the multiplication tables till 16. I think memorization is valuable because, at that age, children cannot grasp concepts. Let me narrate a story to make my point. Isaac Asimov, a science fiction writer, tells the story of a spaceship that ran off course and because its equipment was defective, it could not retrace its course. An Indian on the team who had memorized the coordinates could steer the ship. So, memorization is not bad.

During the recess, while we shared our home lunch, we would also share stories of movies. I feel online learning misses out on this association with classmates. Some classmates would imitate the teacher, adding to the fun. It was just harmless fun for us. Once, when I was imitating the teacher in the classroom, he walked in unexpectedly. I saw the pain on his face, as he regarded me as a good pupil. I felt ashamed of myself and never did it again. This experience made me sensitive to the feelings of others. A school fosters a spirit of comradeship with others.

## The Curriculum

The curriculum emphasized book learning; arts and craft, and dance and music. In the mornings as well as the evenings, the pupils assembled to greet the sun, or to see the setting sun. Teaching, I think, is not about the textbook; it is primarily about teaching ethical values and responsible actions.

## Textbooks

The lessons in our textbooks gave us scope for imagination. A few lessons in the name of promoting patriotism were based on leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. In the senior classes, most of the lessons in our textbooks were about saints, miracles and faith in God. I feel faith plays an important role in the emotional health of an individual. It provides us with the crutches we need to cope with the mystery of our existence. Whether these Hindu mythological stories are true or not, they do help to overcome the feeling of being alone.

## Teaching

During my schooling, I experienced both inspiring and mundane ways of teaching. I remember how we were taught to read. The teacher would make us stand in a line and read from the textbook in turns. Each child would read one paragraph and hand over the book to the next in line until we finished the chapter. The teacher, who had dozed off, would wake up when we finished reading and we were dismissed. Perhaps teachers who followed such practices were not paid well, or it could be a lack of interest in teaching, or perhaps they did not attend any teacher training course. Such teachers kill the joy of learning.

But not all learning experiences were so dull. Some teachers gave freedom to students in their learning. For instance in the art class, since I could not sketch models of human beings, my teacher allowed me to sketch a creeper. My art teacher liked my sketch and hung it on the wall. Our geography teacher also made us learn in creative ways. She made us draw pictures of the rotation of the earth on its axis and its revolution around the sun. We drew and coloured pictures of the planets; we also drew maps of the continents and filled in the countries. The

geography teacher organized an interesting game. In one row stood a line of girls with the names of countries marked on a sheet of paper pinned to their blouses; in the other line stood the girls with the names of the capital cities marked on a sheet of paper and pinned to their blouses. The teacher called out the name of a capital city; the girl who had the name of that capital city pinned to her blouse had to run to the girl with the name of the corresponding country pinned on her. For example; when the teacher said Lima, the girl who had Lima pinned to her blouse had to run to the girl who had Peru pinned to her blouse. Similarly, Nairobi had to run to Kenya. If we failed, we were out. We enjoyed learning geography through such creative methods.

Our physical education teacher would play the piano and one of the students would call out the name of a bird or an animal, for instance, "butterfly". The students had to imitate a butterfly, or fly like a bird when the name of a bird was called. It was more fun than the usual PT drill. Our English teacher taught us how to use a dictionary. We pasted a blank sheet after every lesson in our textbook; we would look up the meanings of the difficult words from the lesson and write their meanings on the blank sheet. We also wrote short summaries of each lesson in our own words along with a title.

Teaching methods should be such that they promote critical thinking. I once had to write a term paper on Marx when I was at university. I went to the Gadgil library and took notes and prepared my term paper with lots of references. I got a zero for my paper and was grief-stricken. Then I met the professor to seek an explanation for the zero. He told me "you have quoted a lot of various [sic] authors. But where is YOUR opinion, YOUR understanding?" I asked him if he would permit me to redo the paper. He agreed. I read the question carefully and then rewrote my paper. He gave me an A+. I never forgot the

importance of critical thinking and how it should be included in the curriculum. When I was doing my Masters in Economics, we were introduced to great thinkers like Adam Smith, Keynes, V.K.R.V. Rao and Amartya Sen which was again a different way of learning economics.

I realized that there were many ways through which learning could become a joyful experience. It was up to the teachers to find these ways.

## Teachers

Our teachers took a keen interest in teaching. They made the students who did well help those who did not do so well. The headmaster took his job seriously. The day Rabindranath Tagore passed away, my school gave the afternoon off to the students. I spent the afternoon playing with friends. My mother became anxious when she found out I was not in the school. The next day, the headmaster scolded us, saying that we should be ashamed of ourselves for creating worries for our mothers. I never forgot that incident. In my view, the Headmaster is responsible for educating the students about their responsibility towards their parents and society. The Principal of the Shimla School usually led the morning assembly. When she learnt that my father was hospitalized with typhoid, she led the morning assemblies with prayers for his recovery. I recognized the importance of empathy in a teacher—a genuine feeling for another person's pain.

A teacher must also be inclusive. Our school staged a play for the annual day. I confided to my teacher that I could neither act nor sing. She accepted this and gave me the role of a guard where I had to stand with a staff beside the princess. My teacher made sure that everyone had a part and no one felt left out. It was just a wonderful way of making me feel included!



## Learning From Being a Teacher

My learning continued when I became a teacher. Once I had to teach Class III boys in a school in Mumbai for three months, as their regular teacher was on leave. These students were from different backgrounds. The boys did not like my appearance; I wore handloom cotton sarees and did not wear much jewellery. The boys said "Miss, our teacher always wore such good silk and zari clothes, and nice ornaments." But they accepted me in due course of time, as I introduced them to activity-based classes. They loved story-time and acting in plays. They would all shout: "Miss, drama, please." A teacher's self-esteem depends on the response of the pupils. My self-esteem increased because I was able to engage the students through new teaching methods.

When I had to teach Economics, I tried different ways of teaching. I used films; took students on field trips to see a working factory and to a science laboratory. We went on hikes; ate together; stayed together. The principal appreciated my efforts and gave me a lot of support. Teaching with creative methodologies is not just the responsibility of the teacher, but the principal as well. I had to teach economics to students who had never learnt the subject and thought that it would be very tough. I taught them the basic concepts by linking economics to their everyday life—cumulative income of the household, its management, apportion for different uses, prioritization of expenditure, dealing with shortage through loans and microcredits and saving. Students were excited that they could relate to these concepts and that they were practising economics.

When I was teaching economics to Class IX and Class X students in the Kendriya Vidyalaya, one student felt that I was showing favouritism. I spoke to the

student and realized the truthfulness of the accusation. I invited him to put up a poster display on the evolution of money and banking and acknowledged him as the artist on the posters. His efforts were appreciated by other teachers and students and he no longer felt neglected. I took this as an opportunity to recognize the strength of every student and create situations where these could be used. I always ensured that the teacher-student relationship extended beyond school to encompass the lives of the students. I stayed in touch with some of my teachers just as some of my students were in touch with me.

When I was writing the School Leaving Certificate Examination [SSLC], one of my teachers held my hand, and said: "I was aware of the sadness in your life". Years later, when I was in Chennai, I went to meet her. She was now retired. She was pleased and welcomed me with genuine affection. "My faith in your courage is fully rewarded, knowing you have achieved much." Those were the teachers who were proud when their pupils did well.

## Conclusion

Teaching-learning is a reciprocal adventure; an experience of the joy of learning. The teacher feels a sense of fulfilment if the pupil does well, and concern if a pupil has problems. It is a harmony between the head and the heart. Mere intellectual excellence in teaching produces arrogance. Empathy, to me, is the mark of a great teacher. The four cannons of Buddha's teaching resonate with my notion of a teacher: *maître* (friendliness); *karuna* (compassion); *medhithi* (joy in another's happiness); *upeksha* (empathy for another's suffering). A teacher should be a guide, to hold your hand, rather than just be an instructor. In holding your hand, however, they must not hold students back from exploring new territories. Instead, teachers must share in the student's discovery of alternate paths.

## Call for Papers for LLT 21 (January 2022)

*Language and Language Teaching (LLT)* is a peer-reviewed periodical. It focuses on the theory and practice of language learning and teaching, particularly in multilingual situations. Papers are invited for the forthcoming issues of *LLT* (*LLT* 21 onwards). Papers in Hindi are also welcome. The references must be complete in ALL respects, and must follow the APA style sheet. All papers must include an abstract (100-150 words) and a set of key words (maximum 6 keywords). Papers MUST be written in a style that is easily accessible to school teachers, who are the primary target audience of this periodical. The articles may focus on the learner, teacher, materials, teacher training, learning environment, evaluation, or policy issues. Activities focusing on different languages are also invited. The article must be original and should not have been submitted for publication anywhere else. **A statement to this effect must be sent along with the article.**

*The upper word limit (including the abstract, key words, references and a short bio-note) for each contribution in different sections of LLT is:*

**Article: 2000-2200 (it could be extended to 3000 words if it has some theoretical significance);**

**Interview: 2500-3000; Landmark: 2500-3000**

**Book Review: 1000-1500; Classroom Activity: 750; Report: 1000**

**The bio-note should not exceed 30 words.**

**Papers must be submitted as a word document in MS Office 7. Please send the fonts along with the paper if any special fonts are used. For images, please send jpeg files.**

**Last date for the submission of articles:**

**January Issue: August 15; July Issue: February 15**

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

agniirk@yahoo.com; amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com; jourllt@gmail.com

# Interview

# Rajesh Sachdeva (RS) Talks to Hans Raj Dua (HRD)

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Professor Hans Raj Dua is a prolific writer in the field of language studies. After getting his doctorate from York University and having taught for a few years in the linguistics department at Aligarh Muslim University, he joined CIIL, Mysore in 1974. As a member of the Sociolinguistics Unit, where he led and guided research, he produced some outstanding work which brought him worldwide recognition. Some of his significant works are *Language Planning in India*, *Hegemony of English: Future of Developing Languages in the World* (1994), *Science Policy, Education and Language Planning* (2001), *Language Education: The Mind of Society* (2008), *Ecology of Multilingualism: Language, Culture and Society* (2008); *Language Mind and Cognition* (2010) and *Cognitive Foundation of Mother Tongue* (2017). He was invited to be the editor of a special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language IJSL*, on language politics and policy.

Rajesh Sachdeva retired as Director of Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. His professional trajectory includes serving CIIL as a Professor for nine years and as an Associate Professor at North-Eastern Hill University, for fifteen years. His research interests include sociolinguistics, literacy, adult education, language policy and multilingualism. He has worked for the promotion of mother tongue, development of the languages of the Northeast, and has created a data bank on the Naga Languages. He has several publications to his credit.

The following dialogue captures very briefly some of the recurrent themes that have engaged Dr Dua's attention over the years, arousing his passion, even now. That is why he has been regarded as one of India's most relevant voices in critical socio linguistics.

**RS:** Professor Dua, right at the outset, we would like to thank you for your agreeing to have a dialogue even in these very difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know health issues are now of prime importance as our collective survival is at stake, but we do want to talk about education, for that has been affected adversely as well, and we want to place on public record your views on language education, which is of interest to educationists at all times.

**HRD:** These are indeed very difficult times and I can't even sit too long to discuss the issues. I have already written on most subjects and I would like you to keep those in mind. While some ideas may sound dated now, the same have been modified in my later writings, though there is continuity too. The present situation is very saddening and has affected education badly. Many children have no access to any education; the school opposite our house is closed for over one year. Our social divide compounded with [the] digital divide has only grown further and despair is evident in all circles.

**RS:** We could commence the dialogue with your pioneering work on [sic] Language Planning in India, where language planning is a problem-solving interdisciplinary field [sic]. Looking back, how do you see the relevance of this work to the present society?

**HRD:** Looking back can be useful, but in the process, you are digging up corpses, I feel. The problem is different now. After decades of observations, I regret that the country has no language policy in place, no language planning has been done or is being done. All our efforts have remained at an academic level, no one has paid heed. Even the Institute (CIIL), where you and I served for years, and where stalwarts like Drs Pattanayak and Annamalai reaffirmed faith in mother tongue education, we have all failed to raise our voice. The entire discourses [sic] on language planning have [sic] been buried somewhere under the pressure of [the] elite and upper classes. English hegemony has made all planning redundant. I see no resistance to this from any quarters [sic]. Our institute too has lost its relevance, its presence is ignored, and there is no leadership of ideas.

**RS:** Sir, your concern is understandable and the despair natural, but the academic community should be reminded of the effort you continue to make through your writings. The New Education Policy has [a] special mention on mother tongue and multilingualism. Could you reiterate your views on mother tongue education?

**HRD:** I have not studied the New Education Policy. I also don't think we can reverse the shift of choices, but let us acknowledge that we have sabotaged [the] mother tongue education ideology. Mother tongue is the voice of humanity and the expression of the visible and the invisible dimensions of human thought and creativity of mind. Any constraint on the "use-value" of mother tongues on the grounds of planning is the death-knell of language identity, the existence of communities and their cultures.

The realization of the conceptual potential of mother tongues demands engagement and commitment from all of us and space of reciprocity and action. The cultural vitality and creativity of mother tongues are essential for protecting the ecology of language diversity and the semiosphere (to use Yuri Lotman's concept) of humanity. Our discourse is about language right, about the egalitarian order that we had envisioned and striven for; but the social order is perpetuating inequality.

**RS:** But, what about our Constitution? Isn't there a case for all mother tongues as medium implicit in all that is articulated, isn't there a directive to safeguard our cultural and linguistic collective heritage?

**HRD:** Even the constitution has now become a party to the perpetuation of inequality. English and Hindi are given more importance than other Indian languages. Yes, there is a mention about [the] rights of minorities and one can ask the states to initiate some measures, but the policy is of inequality. Even major languages listed in the eighth schedule are reduced to minority status as a result. Hindi too is playing second fiddle to English; no one is resisting; also, the rivalry is sometimes between Indian languages when they need to work together [sic]. I have critically examined what we have done; what errors of decision and action we have made even in our Three Language Formula. Setting aside cynicism, I have suggested how we can move forward to link our present with the future in search of truth and identity at [a] global level, but I am not sure if what I have written and published will ever influence the decision-makers. For instance, I have reasoned that the distinctions between corpus planning and status planning, or between nationalism

and nationalism (to use Fishman's distinction) and even the idea of a language of wider communication have all supported the policy of English-medium education that has resulted in the erosion of multilingualism. It has hampered [the] development of Indian languages through mutual enrichment. We need new conceptual tools and [a] new commitment to charter a new destiny.

**RS:** In a seminal work of yours in 1994 on Hegemony of English, you discuss at length how the education system has reproduced inequality, legitimized hegemony of English, lead to brain drain, and marginalization of Indian languages. Could you elaborate on the English hegemony?

**HRD:** Maybe, one could foreshadow even then . . . I stated, "The English education both in historical perspective and in the contemporary context is found to be enmeshed with cultural politics and ideological control. Despite [its] spread and its dominance in education, publication and media, it has failed in [the] cultivation of creative intellectual life. . . ". And as a language planning measure I had suggested that, and this is important even now for it remains undone: "There is an urgent need to restrict the use of English as a complementary language in education for the development of indigenous and cultural resources. . . ." But what one sees instead is a proliferation of [the] so-called English medium schools, none of which strengthen the children in English, and of course, do incalculable harm to mother tongue. . . . Who will change our mindset?

**RS:** Your views on English hegemony remind me of the views of the Ghanaian

sociolinguist, Gilbert Ansre, on linguistic imperialism (who coined the term)(Ansre, 1979, p.12 quoted in Skutnabb-Kangas and Philipson, 1994).

... "the phenomenon in which the minds and lives of the speakers of a language are dominated by another language to the point where they believe that they can and should use only that foreign language when it comes to transactions dealing with the more advanced aspects of life [emphasis added] such as education, philosophy, literature, governments, the administration of justice, etc... Linguistic imperialism has a subtle way of warping the minds [emphasis added] attitudes and aspirations of even the most noble in a society and of preventing him from appreciating and realising the full potentialities of the indigenous languages".

**HRD:** Yes, many have raised issues over the hegemony of English, but the warped thinking continues to date and that disturbs me. I hope the elite or a counter elite will have a realization and turn things around and instead constructively engage with [the] promotion of our languages and promote new forms of multilingualism.

**RS:** In 2008, you published two more works in which your concern for other tongues, Indian languages, linguistic minorities and the responses of the state are noted in detail. The first, on the all-engaging field of Language Education, *The Mind of Society* and the other on Ecology of Multilingualism, *Language Culture and Society*. You have an interdisciplinary approach in both, and you note the influence of several scholars in your thought process. Would you like to dwell on that just briefly?

**HRD:** I am an avid reader and have been working on all sorts of issues that have cropped up in literature. To that extent, all the literature available in English to the global community is a resource. My idea is to further this understanding and to explore solutions for unresolved issues. I look upon our entire multilingual society and assess the linguistic health of diverse communities in different contexts. Linguistic minorities and endangered languages engage my equal attention . . . there is so much potential of exchange and growth between our languages, but the institutions are working against [the] realization of that potential. We are promoting multilingualism in the official languages, not between and across other languages. We are squandering opportunities even in practical areas like translation involving our own languages and not building on what we have. . . . We present English as the language of knowledge-based texts and so on. Our writers are not generating original texts in our languages.

I feel drawn to all disciplines. I openly acknowledge many great minds that are around and have left the seeds of their thinking for us to utilize. Collectively we have to promote critical awareness.

I was fascinated by the idea of social order and came across the work of Bohm and Peat, and my book (*Ecology of Multilingualism: Language Culture and Society*), begins with the chapter on "Multilingualism as an Implicate Order". Bohm is a physicist interested in the idea of order and chaos. They consider an implicate order "to have a broader significance not only in physics but also in biology, consciousness and the overall order of society and each human being."

The attempt in the ecology of multilingualism is to lay grounds [sic] for the development of a new order for [the] cultivation of multilingualism. I reason,

language is an implicate order in the sense that meaning is enfolded in the structure of language, which unfolds into thought, feeling[s] and other forms of expression and communication. I have tried to show how language ecology and [the] vitality of cultural ecosystems constitute the foundations of multilingualism. I have dwelt on multilingualism as a resource, economics of language and [the] value of linguistic diversity, language equality and linguistic human rights with [a] special focus on [the] ecology of minorities; and a special discussion on endangered languages is included.

The lesson for us is: only we have to decide whether we want to live with the present as it has been historically constituted, or whether history would teach how we link it with the future in terms of perpetual conversation, engagement with our languages, cultures and history.

**RS:** I was fascinated with that and hope to read [it] in greater detail. What about your second work around the same time *Language Education, The Mind of Society?* Can you talk about this work?

**HRD:** In that work, along with practical matters of concern, I have ventured to explore uncharted areas—the relationship of language to consciousness, conceptualization and creativity on the one hand, and to mind, society and culture, seen as dynamic and constitutive of one another.

The internalization of the language system takes place in interaction with cognitive and other innate abilities. Both language and consciousness arise basically in communication and interaction in a social context. I felt the work of Bakhtin (1984) offers new insights

in his statement: "No Nirvana is possible for a single consciousness. A single consciousness is a contradiction in terms. Consciousness is essentially multiple. I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. . . ." (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 288) One begins to understand inner speech, the semiotic material for the inner life. Our consciousness appears to be dynamic, not a static witness. In this perspective, engagement with different languages becomes an intriguing area of work.

I also draw on other thinkers like Fauconnier (1997), who asserts that "understanding is creating. To communicate is to trigger dynamic creative processes in other minds and in our own (p. 182)"

I suggest the effectiveness and success of language education depend on how it makes a constructive contribution to dialogic interactions between languages and cultures, human minds and social perspectives and the extent to which it supports enrichment, vitality and dynamics of multilingualism.

**RS:** In your work *Language, Mind and Cognition*, you deal with issues like brain, mind, attention, memory and cognition in language acquisition and how teachers can gain from understanding them. Since the issues are so many, how do you think one can work out the connections between them and how they fit into language acquisition?

**HRD:** I have viewed language holistically and besides the biological foundations for language, the sociocultural factors, and the cognitive aspects engage my attention. The rapidly growing fields of cognitive linguistics, cognitive



neuroscience and neurobiology of language represent current trends in research on language, brain and mind. One is intrigued by the complex relationship between the inner architecture of the mind and brain. I tabled some theoretical and empirical research and dwelt on the interaction of emotions on [the] brain, cognition and reasoning; the highly distributed cognition in the context of language use.

I have tried to argue that the fundamental issues in language acquisition research serve as the testing ground for the adequacy of linguistic theories. I am exploring the nature of our language faculty, the dynamic relation between language, and between [the] brain and [the] mind. Let me read out some viewpoints of researchers that have informed my thinking. Ellis (1998, p. 655) makes a pertinent remark about the interaction between language and other cognitive abilities: "One cannot understand language acquisition by understanding phonological memory alone. All the systems of working memory, all perceptual generation systems are involved in collating the regularities of cross-model assumptions under-pinning language use."

We are reminded that a complete understanding of language or language acquisition cannot come from any single discipline. Take Cook and Seidlhofer (1996, p. 4) who say that: "Language can be viewed as a genetic inheritance, a mathematical system, a social fact, the expression of individual identity, the expression of cultural identity, the outcome of dialogic interaction, a social semiotic, the intuition of native speakers, the sum of attested data, a collection of memorized chunks, a rule-governed discrete combinatorial system, or electrical activation in a distributed network. We do not have to choose. Language can be all

these things at once."

Thus, anyone engaged with language at any level must have a feel of the complexity of issues involved, for there is no trivial work in the language.

**RS:** It calls for increased awareness and enhanced commitment to deal with language!

**HRD:** I have examined both inside-out and outside-in theories of language acquisition and shared significant research.

To sum up, after having reflected on various issues, I have tried to show how the cognitive-functional usage-based model provides an explanatory account of the complex process of language acquisition, a broader view of language faculty, and interaction between linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

**RS:** That sounds like a fascinating piece of work . . . [a] testimony to your growth as a researcher; and you have ploughed all your thinking back into your work on Cognitive Foundation of Mother Tongue, from where we began our dialogue. What are your last remarks for us?

**HRD:** Our commitment is motivated neither by some abstract ideal of future state nor by a set of principles justified outside history without understanding how we are particularly situated concerning our language, culture and history. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2004), "we take our fate in our hands, we become responsible for our history through reflection, but equally by a decision on which we stake our life, and in both cases, what is involved is a violent act which is validated by being performed" (p.98). This implies, we arrive at meaning through a historical account and give

meaning to it through our engagement with history and commitment in action. We in India have seen how English medium education has attained [an] unassailable position; whereas the status of mother tongue education is deplorable. Further, we also do not have adequate information on reality.

How should we turn things around? We may not be able to reverse societal patterns easily, but we can create new pathways; still, we need to work out ways of enriching our multilingualism and create counter elites—new pressure groups—who situate mother tongue in the centre of their thought processes and work with other Indian languages in a supportive ecology, propelling their use outside comfort zones. This calls for creative and intensive labour; we need the

joining of hands and raising of voices; new pedagogies that awakens [sic] a new social order; a critical consciousness that provides multiple perspectives on the teaching of all subjects including science in multiple languages; a new idea of culture formation; liberation of voices to participate in nation-building. No language or speaker should feel left out; no one's woes unattended. We can go down fighting but battle we must. There is too much at stake for the generations that follow and we can't afford to squander away our linguistic resources. The language teaching community must challenge itself to take a lead in the matter and not be dissuaded by difficulties or failures. The destiny of our languages awaits our endeavour!

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# Landmark

# Language Teacher as a Language Planner: Some Lessons from Northeast India

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**Key Words:** Language teachers as planners, Northeast India, Micro level planning, Orthography, Script.

## Abstract

Northeast India is a treasure house of diversity. Teachers have a vital role to play in exploring the nature of linguistic resources in the community, understanding the choices that the community makes and being sensitive to the dynamics that underlie these choices. In this sense, teachers are language planners, because their understanding and awareness underpin their teaching. This paper elaborates on the argument of language teachers being language planners by discussing a few cases in the states of Northeast India.

To plan language is to plan society.

—Cooper, R.L. 1989

## Ideological Moorings

Cooper, in his illustrious book, *Language Planning and Social Change*, after presenting case studies from four different social contexts as instances of language planning, and after examining and drawing from a dozen definitions of stalwarts in the field, offers his definition: "Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper, 1989, p. 45). Cooper further asserts:

"Language planning is typically carried out for the attainment of non-linguistic ends such as consumer protection, scientific exchange, national integration, political control, economic development, the creation of new elites or the maintenance of old ones, the pacification or cooption of minority groups, and mass mobilization of national or political movements." (Cooper, 1989, p. 35)

To this, we could add educational advancement as another goal. However, while accepting that the relationship between language planning and social change was not fully worked out even in theory, Cooper concedes that applied linguistics with its focus on language teaching, and sociolinguistics that seeks to understand language use in society, are the two branches that have contributed most to the formulation of language planning studies.

Language teaching is a multidimensional activity involving three areas, acquisition planning, corpus planning and status planning; codes are not only exchanged but co-created, redistributed, evaluated and corrected too. The social context plays a key role in the design of things, and classrooms become sites for debates on alternatives; and the teacher, an agency of change.

## Language Teacher as a Planner

In my view, a language teacher is a language planner, who is expected to influence the language behaviour of the school community and beyond. The decisions on language policy taken up at a macro level impinge on the linguistic performance of the learner. Yet, there are opportunities at the micro level to explore the nature of linguistic resources and to do justice to the learners' linguistic makeup. This serves to further the overall constitutional vision of a harmonious multilingual nation that seeks to safeguard its composite culture and linguistic heritage. All mother tongues are an intrinsic and most valuable part of that quest. According to Haugen (1972), acts of performance will alter the competence slightly.

The teacher seeks to enhance the communicative competence in multilingual classrooms by changing the nature of texts from written to oral and vice versa between languages. These opportunities help children to acquire a variety of codes. When students use a word in their language, it influences the performance of other students. Using multiple languages in the classroom enhances the status of language and the self-esteem of speakers.

## Northeast India

Northeast India is a treasure house of linguistic diversity. According to the 2011 Census (2018), of the 22 Scheduled languages, about 5 are spoken in this region and out of 99 non-scheduled languages, about 55 are spoken here. These languages also belong to different language families, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, Tai-Kadai, to mention a few (Bareh, 2013). This region offers many challenges for maintaining linguistic and cultural diversities.

While there are commonalities across these states, there are also important differences. Four of the seven states—Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya—are predominantly tribal and were not formed on a linguistic basis, for no language is in the majority in these states; English is their chosen official language. In Mizoram, the Mizo language is an equal partner and it enjoys almost 100 per cent literacy. In Meghalaya, Khasi and Garo have official status, but in official work, one may be used more than the other, and their literacy rate is low. The remaining three States, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, are more like the rest of India's linguistic states, with few major languages. In Assam, Assamese, Bengali and Bodo (the largest tribal language) are the official languages. Manipur has Meitei or Manipuri, and in Tripura Bengali and Kok Borok (the largest tribal language) are the official languages. Besides these languages, the states have other tribal languages with varying status in schools. One way to understand the scenario in the Northeast is to proceed state by state, and then case by case, and not be rushed into generalities.

Teachers have a vital role to play in managing diversities in the classrooms. They have to be aware of the demographic makeup of the state in terms of the tribes, their languages and variants and be sensitive to the socio-political context. In addition, they need to be aware of the decisions on language (s) taken by the state, the institutional arrangements on the ground, as well as resource allocations, to plan their lessons. The forthcoming section illustrates instances of the subtle awareness and understanding teachers must take into account in their teaching.

## Two Lessons from Arunachal

Arunachal Pradesh is home to 26 tribal

languages and various dialects. Most languages are still to acquire a foothold in the educational domain. The central government supports the two official languages Hindi and English to create a sense of connectedness to Indian identity. Hindi has become a lingua franca in Arunachal Pradesh. Given the diversity in languages and the need to communicate across them, Hindi has gained both in usage and popularity, even as it has acquired a form of its own. It has spread rapidly in formal and informal domains; many children acquire it as their second mother tongue and some as their first. English enjoys official status, but its usage is restricted to formal institutional setups and the more educated elite classes, as is the case in other states. The concern for the mother tongues, many of which are now vulnerable or endangered, has grown in informed circles, but the actual effort required for their inclusion in schools is still to be realized. As part of the CIIL team and with support from NCERT, I organized a community consultation meeting where all tribal groups and state machinery promised to move forward on the decision of using their mother tongues in education. However, concerted action is still awaited. In our subsequent visits, we went to the schools to talk about the implementation of mother tongue education. I recall two incidents that stir hope for language planners.

The first incident is from a school in Ziro town, where the Apatani tribe form the majority, but where other tribes are also present. In this school, Class 10 students were asked to write a small paragraph in their own language about themselves in any script they were familiar with. They had never done something like this before, yet they managed to accomplish the task. Most of the students chose to write in the Roman script, while some wrote in Devnagari. They read aloud their piece(s), translating them for our benefit. When they were asked to exchange notes with other students, they read those too, with a

bit of difficulty.

When we were leaving the school, one of the students walked up to us and said:

*"Sir, everyone comes to Arunachal Pradesh to convert us. Hindus want to convert us, Buddhists and Christian[s] also want to convert us; they all say we are inferior. You are the only one who told us to be tribal is fine, our language is good, our culture is rich. We feel pride in our identity now. We are not inferior. We are equal."*

The lesson was clear—introducing mother tongues is both feasible and desirable.

The second incident took place in a very well-managed school in Daporijo, where the majority of the learners were from the Galo tribe.

We entered Class two and faced nearly forty children, all of who had smiles and mischief on their faces. To get a feel of their literacy skills, we asked them to write their names on the blackboard and also the names of their classmates, first in English and then in Hindi. Most of the children knew how to spell simple words. Then, we asked them to translate simple words like "cat" or "rat" from English to Hindi. To our surprise, we found that they had bilingual literacy. We asked them to give equivalent words in their own language(s). They happily began to do so, orally. We could see several similarities and dissimilarities in the words used for cat, rat and so on among languages. Then we asked the students to write anything they wanted in their language. A girl stood up to ask, "Hindi se likhega ki English se likhega?" (Should we write in Hindi or English?). I was thrilled and asked them to write in any script they liked.

What followed over the next hour or so cannot be described easily. They rushed to write the words for body parts—eyes, nose, teeth, lips, etc., and other basic words. Of course, there were some variations in their spellings, and they kept correcting each other as they began to laugh and play. Their joy was evident. The

class teacher was also totally surprised as he had never attempted anything like this. The "multilinguality" that was already present in the classroom came alive and various forms of speech, their relations and equivalences as well as the differences between them heightened the multidimensional nature of collective learning. It stirred the cognitive apparatus of the children, awakened within them a sense of pride, and made them take the lead in their learning. The act of writing became a creative act.

The lessons were clear: Firstly, mother tongues could be taught early alongside school languages, and secondly, scripts were a cognitive resource that could be acquired through different languages. The children had become literate in two scripts and crossed what one calls the threshold of literacy—a point from which they cannot relapse into illiteracy, like learning to swim or ride a bicycle, which one cannot forget (Sachdeva,1992). They could mobilize that competence for writing languages not yet taught. It is our submission that the introduction of mother tongue learning will strengthen the performance of the students in school languages too, as languages work together to harmonize cognitive resources. This is because we discover lexical gaps through comparison and strive to bridge them, or discover alternate ways of coding.

## Nagaland

Nagaland was the first tribal state to get statehood (in 1963), largely to quell people's demand for sovereignty after a bloody ethnic conflict. It was also the first to legislate English as the sole official language as none of the tribal tongues was in the majority, and any attempt to promote one over the other would have been seen as promoting tribalism or ethnic rivalry. The lingua franca, Nagamese, was rejected as an unworthy marker of collective Naga identity, especially by the elite, for it was a Pidgin

language born in out group situations, even though it had gained usage in interlingual communication and may even have fostered an underlying Naga unity (Sachdeva, 2001). On that count of acceptability, Nagamese is unlike Hindi in Arunachal.

Nagaland was a leader not only in championing the cause of the Naga identity at a macro level; it also strove to create an egalitarian order for all tribal communities at a micro level by promoting 17 languages at the primary school level, and some even up to high school. The church introduced the literacy in mother tongues as part of their plan to spread Christianity through local languages and as a result, the children became literate in their mother tongue.

However, this effort has now taken a step back as the demand for the early introduction of English has gained ground. A substantial number of the Naga students opted for alternative English in place of their mother tongue. To replace the alternative English subject, the State Council of Educational Research and Training in collaboration with the textbook branch of the Directorate of School Education conceptualized and introduced the Nagaland Heritage Studies (NHS) as a subject area. To ensure uniformity and comparable standards, the prototype textbooks are developed in English and translated into local languages. The older Naga belief systems and cultural values are excluded from the textbooks even though many of the traditional festivals are still celebrated with fervour. This has reduced the scope for creative expression in education.

In urban settings in places such as Kohima or Dimapur where mixed groups are present, Nagamese is used occasionally, but it is not viewed favourably. The challenges for education are manifold and many forms of multilingual education emerge in practice. The language teacher has to therefore be sensitive to the socio-

political context and strive to usher in a more harmonious order.

There are lessons in store in existing institutional arrangements as well. For instance, there are literature committees for each language, which include well-educated members of the speech community and language officers appointed by the education department. They make suggestions for orthographic reforms and even play a role in developing a corpus or body of texts. While the church has created hymn books and translations of the Bible in many of these tribal languages such as Ao, Angami, Lotha, Konyak, Sema, and so on; and the Sunday school gatherings allow children to learn hymns in these languages, the development of the tribal languages remains lopsided. It is therefore important that the language teacher allows the community to guide their choices on forms of expression, orthography and cultural matters

As an example, elaborating on the marking of tones in the Naga languages, the Zeme language officer Pauning Kaikamsays:

In the old spellings the word "tei" was used for three different meanings, pain, eat and do. In the new spellings, the first word . . . with a low tone is now written as "teii", the second is re-spelt as "tyei", and the last one left unchanged as "tei". (Sachdeva, 2001, p. 187)

Instead of using superscripts, the orthography has been revised to acknowledge tones that are common in the Naga languages. Similar changes have been made in other languages too. Writing systems do not have to be over-specified and can function without ensuring the exact fit of sound and written form. Furthermore, the knowledge of language allows native speakers to disambiguate, especially in context. The language teacher can therefore work with the community to provide feedback on such matters rather than lead the change.



## Other Lessons

In Manipur, the Meitei language, even after being included in the eighth schedule, has undergone a movement for identity. This has resulted in the community being asked by the new counter elite to give up the Bengali based script which has been in use for two centuries in favour of the Meitei Mayek script. The proponents of the Meitei script believe that Meitei is older than Bengali although most people are not literate in it. This anti-Bengali feeling is widespread among many communities in the adjoining areas of Assam and Tripura as well. The language teachers, therefore, have to teach both scripts to the children in this interim phase.

In certain Kuki groups, children are introduced to English as a medium of instruction with Manipuri and Hindi as their second and third language at the primary level of schooling. In Class ten, children are introduced to their mother tongues in place of Manipuri to avoid competition with the native speakers who will outscore them. They become literate in their language as a result of church-based schooling and use their language as an escape route, but still follows the three-language formula.

The Tangkhuls in Manipur learn a common language based on the Ukhrul variety, whereas many other villagers speak varieties that are not mutually unintelligible, but there are no literacy practices in place for safeguarding their spoken forms. This is also the case with many Naga languages. The tribal identity and its concern for homogeneity can work against the diversity of mother tongues. However, there are counterexamples too. "Chakhesang" a tribe in Nagaland was created as an acronym from the names of three tribes—the Chokri, Khezha and Sangtam—to bring them together. In addition, there are two Sangtam tribes, one living in the northern part and the other in the southern part of Nagaland

and they are brought together under "United Sangtam".

In Meghalaya, the Khasi language, which was written many decades ago in Bengali script is now written in the Roman script and the language is taught up to the postgraduate level. Pnar speakers who are recognized as a separate Jaintia tribe are linguistically clubbed under the Khasi tribe and attempts to introduce the Pnar language are seen as a move to weaken their common language ties with Khasi, and resented.

Dimasa tribe in the Cachar district of Assam, where Bengali is recognized as the official language has found ways to introduce the language in Roman script in English medium schools and may push for the same in Bengali medium schools too.

The Bodos of Assam are a most important case study for they rejected both Assamese and Roman script in favour of a modified Devnagari script to affirm their non-Christian tribal culture. This was also done to assert their connectedness with an Indian identity that is not separatist, as some tribal groups often emphasize is the case with Christian tribes.

## Conclusion

Language teachers have much to learn from the analysis of case studies in Northeast India as also researchers and teacher-researchers. They have to be aware that the mother tongue can be used along with the school language and that too any level of schooling. Furthermore, the scripts children know can be used for introducing mother tongues. A teacher also needs to be sensitive to the conflicting pushes and pulls that influence the choice of language. Without taking sides, the choices that teachers make on forms of expression, orthography and cultural matters must be guided by the community. Where orthography reforms are underway, a teacher can work with the community to provide feedback on such

matters rather than lead the change. In the classroom, teachers plan the teaching of language as much as they plan the

teaching of the content. Language teachers are language planners.

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# Classroom Activities

# Treasure Hunt

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## Activity 1: Treasure Hunt with a Map

**Objectives of Treasure Hunt:** (i) To increase reading comprehension, (ii) To increase map reading skills

**Level:** Grade 1

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes

**Materials:** A few copies of a hand-drawn map of the school compound, classroom block, house, or any place where you would like to organize the hunt. (Figure 1)

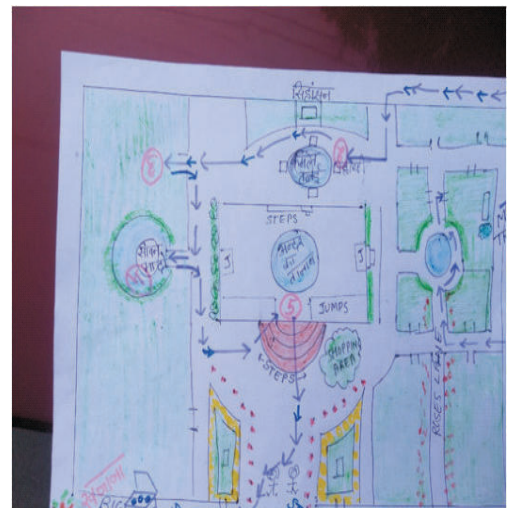
**Procedure:**

Divide the entire class into groups of two. Give each pair of students a map to look at and help them identify their current position on the map. Tell them to read and comprehend the map jointly, follow the arrows, and after every few minutes check their position to be sure that they are following the correct path.

Do not forget to hide many small treasures equal to the number of pairs of students in the class.

**Figure 1**

*Map of a School*



Map credit: Parul Choudhary, mother of a six-year-old.

**Adaptation:**

If the premises allow, make small changes in each map (either in the starting place, or the track to be followed, or the endpoint) so that every pair has to find their route.

## Activity 2: Treasure Hunt with Instructions

Materials: Clue cards for each milestone (equal to the number of pairs of students)

Preparation: Map out your area and identify five to seven milestones. For each milestone, write a clue. You will need as many clue cards as the number of pairs taking part in the treasure hunt. Decide on one such milestone as your last spot; where the treasure will be buried (or kept).

Sequence the clues differently for each pair; except for clue number one, hide all the others in their places. A sample clue card showing the route is in Table 1.

Hand out the first clue card to each pair of students to start their treasure hunt. Each pair will take different route and spend different amount of time. In the end, each pair will reach the last spot, where you meet them to hand out their prizes, or you can hide the prizes at this spot.

Have fun!

**Table 1**

*Sample Clue Card Showing the Route for Two Pairs of Students*

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
1. Floating in the garden, I wait for you Together we go high and low (swing) (Clue card 2 will be hidden here)	1. Not very high, not very small A Red flower, with a sweet smell Because of the thorns, My name you can tell. (Rosebush)
2. Big tree with small fruits Weighing the tree down; Tiny leaves, but oh so many I am sure you can't count (Amla/Gooseberry tree)	2. Floating in the garden, I wait for you Together we go high and low (swing)
3. Not very high, not very small A red flower, with a sweet smell Because of the thorns, My name you can tell. (Rosebush)	3. Full of water, some fish too, an occasional frog and covered with leaves. If you are lucky, a blooming flower will greet you here. (Lilypond)
4. Full of water, some fish too, an occasional frog and covered with leaves. If you are lucky, a blooming flower will greet you here. (Lilypond)	4. Big tree with small fruits Weighing the tree down; Tiny leaves, but oh so many I am sure you can't count (Amla/Gooseberry tree)
5. I am made of wood. You can jump on me, over me and sit or stand on me. What am I? (wooden bench)	5. I am made of wood. You can jump on me, over me and sit or stand on me. What am I? (wooden bench)

# Developing a Sense of Social Responsibility

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## Learning Objectives:

- To contribute towards becoming socially responsible by making and following rules.
- To develop writing skills associated with the language of rules (unambiguous, clear and with positive words).

**Level:** Class 5

**Activity:** Whole class activity

**Duration:** 15 minutes

## Procedure:

### *Introductory Activity*

- Teacher: "What are rules? Why do we make rules? What would happen if there were no rules? Let us discuss the answers to these questions."
- Teacher: "Can you tell me some rules that we have to follow in the classroom?"  
(Waits for students to answer). If they do not answer, the teacher prompts them:
- Teacher: "Imagine all of you are screaming in the class. Is that right

or not? Why?" (waits for students to answer)

- Teacher: "What will happen if we do not have a rule for screaming in the class?" (Gets answers)
- Teacher: "If we all have agreed that not screaming in the class is a rule, how do we write it?"
- The teacher invites answers from students. One child may say "do not scream in the class"; another may say "let us not scream in the class".
- The teacher lists these and critiques the language of rules for its negative vocabulary and then words the rule positively.
- Teacher: Can we reframe the rule as: "We use a soft voice in the class." "We do not speak when another student is speaking."
- The teacher draws attention to the positive language of the rule and contrasts this with the negative language.
- The teacher writes the following list of rules on the board. (Table 1)

**Table 1**  
*List of Rules*

Negatively-worded rules	Positively-worded rules
Do not be late for the class.	Be on time for the class.
Keep quiet.	Talk softly.
Do not throw rubbish in the class.	Throw rubbish in the waste basket
Do not write on the benches.	Respect school property.

The teacher discusses the differences between the two sets of rules.

Teacher: "We have learnt how to make rules and write them. Rules can be made for anything we use."

#### **Main Activity**

Teacher: "Let us make rules for a playground, library, school toilet, mid-day meals, school assembly, Science lab, and Math lab"

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Activity:** Group Activity

**Class:** 35 students

#### **Procedure**

- Students are divided into 7 groups, with each group comprising 5 students.
- Group 1 is given the responsibility of making rules for use of the school playground; group 2 for use of the school library, group 3 for use of the school toilet, and so on.
- Students discuss the rules: why are rules important, what will happen in the absence of rules, or if they do not

follow the rules. They then discuss how the rules should be written.

- The rules are written in the classroom and discussed. Rules about which there is disagreement either in terms of its language or in the rule itself are discussed in-depth to find out the reasons for the disagreement.
- The rules are refined.
- The entire class goes through the refined list

#### **Extension Activity**

**Duration:** Day 1: Spent in observation of the assigned activity.

Day 2: 15 minutes for discussion.

**Activity:** Whole class activity

#### **Procedure**

- Students are invited to follow the rules that they had discussed earlier in the classroom.
- For example, during the games period, rules for the playground are followed, during the mid-day meals the corresponding rules are followed, and so on.
- The next day, students discuss the extent to which they were able to follow the rules, the challenges they faced in following them and the consequences of not following them for other students and themselves.
- The activity is concluded by touching on the importance of rules in life and following them.

# Book Review



# Dialogues: English Studies in India

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*Dialogues: English Studies in India*, edited by Sethi and Khanna, highlights important concerns about the changing paradigms of English language teaching in India and how it has affected its curricula and pedagogy. Interestingly, the book is in the form of interviews, in which both the interviewer and interviewee are teachers of the English language and literature. As both of them attempt to negotiate their thoughts and ideas, gently sparring with each other, the reader is given an entry into the private, interactive space of an interview. Through conversational

interactions, they explore the "policy and practice of English studies".

The interview/dialogue, as a literary format, if tapped with finesse, has within it the potential for exploring, opening up, and debating complex ideas and issues, "speaking directly to the reader", while consciously refraining "from giving a guided tour to the reader". This genre is ideal for presenting multiple perspectives on a topic, leaving the readers to draw their conclusions. In the introductory chapter of the book, Sethi and Khanna, the editors, deliberate on the Socratic

method of the dialogue and its essence—presenting the dialectic rather than a singularity of view. The present volume does not completely follow in the footsteps of the “Socratic method”, but discussions and concerns around the English language and literature form its crux. The book is divided into four sections—(Re)defining English studies; Pedagogical challenges; Professional development of teachers; and Future directions.

“English is not just a language in India; it is a dream that we sell to many people in this country”, states Professor Trivedi at the outset of the first chapter in the first section, setting the tone for the section and the entire book. The statement holds within it the duality of the English language—its aspirational value and also its major role in India's ongoing language debate. The teacher takes on the role of a pedlar of dreams, while the student is the dreamer. In this context, Trivedi with his “revolutionary syllabus”, brought a major paradigm shift in the teaching of English, opening up a plethora of options and possibilities. The syllabus changed its path—from teaching English literature to teaching literature in English. Through questioning, the interviewer and interviewee explore the changing mandate for English departments in India and how the inclusion of diverse, translated literature from within and outside India, from folk traditions and cultural studies, can at the same time be engaging but with a downside to it. Paranjpe and Prasad focus their attention on the position of English in the globalized world today, and argue that courses in English should be taught through modules such as “Communication English” and “English for Special Purposes”, and not just using “hoary literature”. Travelling from discussions on revisions of the

syllabus and fluid space of the discipline, Devadawson, brings the focus back to the student in the classroom— “the keystone in the academic arch will be and always has been the student in the classroom”.

“*Pedagogical Challenges*”, the second section, transports the reader into the Indian second language classroom and its pedagogical concerns and challenges. Agnihotri's interview serves as a platform for the reader to understand the intricacies of the Indian language classroom and the challenges posed by its inherent multilingualism. He focuses on the natural fluidity of languages that forms the basis of multilingualism, further adding that it is essential that multilingualism as a concept and as a resource become an integral part of teacher training programmes so that teachers become equipped to tap this rich resource. The interviews of Rimli Bhattacharya, Gil Harris, and Dee Broughton focus on pedagogical concerns related to textbooks and their compilation, the need to incorporate diversity and creativity in writing assignments and training students in writing, and the lack of space in our educational system for these. Van Tilburg highlights how students prefer being tested on their reading and writing skills, rather than on their speaking skills. She further observes that even in writing, the focus is not on writing as a process, but as a product that needs to be submitted.

The third section, “*Professional Development of Teachers*” concentrates on how continuous professional development is at the heart of not only enhancing teacher competency but creating a teaching-learning ethos that is at once dynamic, invigorating and effective. The views of N. S. Prabhu, Rod Bolitho,

Rama Mathew and Shobha Sinha coalesce to provide a road map for fostering the teacher's professional growth. Each of the interviews addresses diverse aspects of language teaching—reflection, teaching outcomes, assessment and interaction amongst peers—all essential for effective teaching and development. Prabhu's focus is on the role of the teacher and how it can be supported by trainers/professionals to ensure professional growth. Bolitho, with his vast experience of teacher training, discusses Continuing Professional Development (CPD) within a particular framework of viewpoint, perception gap, the impact of observers' presence and feedback. Rama Mathew's interview centres on the different facets of assessment and its importance in teacher training. Shobha Sinha emphasizes that an enabling context and dialogue are essential for effective CPD.

The fourth and final section of the book, "*Future Directions*", reflects and takes us back to the first section, where the definition of English studies in India had been redefined and expanded. This section suggests potential areas for inclusion after the "de-canonization" was started in the 1980s. Raj Kumar suggests that Dalit studies and Disability studies need to be included within the ambit of English studies. Bhaduri discusses the de-canonization of English Studies in JNU, and how thirty years later the radical syllabus is now perceived as humble and humdrum. He visualizes learning that includes "the disruptive, subversive inclusion of the profane and the popular in the classroom", and how media studies need to become an integral part of that space.

The discussions of the future will be incomplete if while living in a technology-driven world, we do not

discuss its impact on pedagogy. The present volume pays a tribute to the impact of technology on the English language classroom. Syal discusses the pervasive presence of technology in the classroom, and how it transforms the role of the teacher from that of a director of activities to one of a facilitator. The teacher needs to feel an ease and facility in using web tools, while also being able to critique their fundamental premise. Sharma discusses the creation of optimum conditions for student learning in a blended classroom, where there has been a significant change in the teacher's role—from "the sage on the stage to guide on the side." The book concludes with Richard Allen's interview that takes the reader from the confines of the Indian language classroom to include larger global concerns of blended learning as off-campus learning. His examples of technology-assisted learning in English studies include those that have been carried out in the Open University of the United Kingdom, computer-based assistants for language learning and online conferences for creative writing.

The conversations in the entire volume are enlightening, never losing pace and impact. One reason is that the interviewee is a seasoned academician, but the interviewer is also no novice but an academic in their own right. The questions asked and the way the dialogue is steered shows an erudite mind that questions, reflects and deliberates on what is being said, tempering it with their experience. Each section combines to create a rich reading experience for the academician, the scholar and the student.

The style of the dialogue used in the present volume takes the reader back to another book, written at a different

time and with different objectives. The book is titled *Reconsidering English Studies in Indian Higher Education*, by Gupta, Allen, Chatterji, and Chaudhari. Published in 2015, it examines the past, present and future of English Studies in India. The second section of this book also effectively employs the dialogic mode rather than the monovocal commentary.

The exploration of diverse perspectives of English studies makes the present volume valuable for academics, students and researchers. The book covers a vast range of English studies, analysing the discipline in the classrooms in the light of social imperatives of globalization, multilingualism, digital literacy and pedagogical concerns.

# Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces

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## **Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces.**

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In the reading hierarchies, the "highbrow" literary needs the "lowbrow" pulp or the popular to make its salutations to the highbrow. The collection of essays, in *Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces* edited by Prem Kumari Srivastava and Mona Sinha, seeks to break this hierarchy. The popular, though rarely acknowledged in the annals of literary history had a parallel existence to the highbrow. Yet, it had a tremendous impact in driving thought, culture and aspirations. The advent of new media in the 20th century set the popular on the road to challenge the canon. Furthermore, the communication revolution brought

about by the internet, and over-the-top media service platforms (OTT), Kindle and audio books in the first two decades of the 21st century have turned the tables in favour of the popular. With this backdrop, the editors' choice of the subject itself is part of the radical shifts and reclamations happening in the Indian literary landscape with a plethora of literary festivals now paving the way for online book launches and aggressive digital marketing by authors.

This collection of essays found its origins in a seminar that "celebrated the kitsch and the marketplace", setting the tone for the volume that emanated from it. The

volume is certainly disruptive, as is evident from Tabish Khair's Foreward titled "Popular, Pulp, Proustian", where he calls for a rejection of the traditional "glib binaries" between the literary and the popular to bring all fiction unto the same critical standards. In their introduction, Prem Kumari Srivastava and Mona Sinha, the editors, echo Khair's call to "decentre the relationship" between the popular and canonical, enabling the celebration of storytelling that gets lost in the search for higher literary meaning. In this context, Srivastava and Sinha provide a rich context for looking at Indian popular commercial fiction as a category in its own right, with its legacy of Indian storytelling traditions. This especially pertinent at a time when Indian readership boasts of daunting numbers, and the onset of democratization of the literary space in the digital age.

The volume is divided into four parts—"Dismantling Hierarchies", "Romancing the Celluloid", "(Discoursing) Politics of the Popular", and "Moving Beyond: Social Media and New Spaces". It provides exhaustive coverage of the Indian Popular Fiction's critical terrain through twelve essays featuring seminal research and making the volume a must-have on the shelf on Indian literature of any library.

As a part of "*Dismantling Hierarchies*", Ruchi Nagpal in the essay "Popular and Classis: Deconstructing the Categories" provides an expansive theoretical window into the arena, while also looking at how the two no longer remain at the opposite ends of an axis because of an inherent decentering in the postmodern era. Similarly, Deblina Rout in her essay, "Literary Fiction as Popular Fiction: Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies" makes a strong case for blurring boundaries in the postmodern

world. The breaking of the boundaries resulted in the ground-breaking success of a collection of stories penned by a diasporic writer who was hallmarked literary, yet found the popularity that the former rarely does. Ojasvi Kala in "Betwixt and Between: Giving the Middle it's Due" has a different take in using a sibling metaphor for literary hierarchies. The canonical literature is seen as the eldest child, who takes the limelight but also shoulders the burden of transmitting literary heritage over, while the youngest sibling—the experimental writers—get to be the trendsetters. Popular fiction is forever straddling as the middle child, playing the role of the mediator and the peacekeeper that Kala wishes to now be given its just due.

The second section of the collection "*Romancing the Celluloid*" further problematizes the impending challenges that the popular in its cinematic avatars faces as it seeks to use the postmodern democratizing visibility to get the acknowledgement it deserves. Here, Gautam Chaubey's essay "Bhojpuri Leisure: Popularity, Profanity and Piracy" makes a case for the ignominy suffered by an entire language and its literature (because of its association with the lower classes of society, namely lower castes, women, and people of lower-income groups). The next chapter on "Feluda's Serialised and Celluloid Selves: A Tale of Literariness and Patrilineal Legacies" by Arunabha Bose traces the antecedents of Satyajit Ray's mirror image in the detective character created by him—Feluda. His literary lineage goes back to Sherlock Holmes, establishing the influences and dialogues across cultures through detective fiction, a category never opened in the high literary ranks. Bose's study opens up linkages and influences that so far was a domain occupied by

literary cultures, with detective fiction assumed merely to be satisfying topical interests. Bose's work is complemented by Neha Singh's essay on the OTT series "Dexter" (a serial killer), which gives a peek into the serial killer's mind and their motivations and feelings.

In section three, "*(Discoursing) Politics of the Popular*", the collection moves to the more conflicting zone of discussing the underlying politics beneath the constant subjugation of the popular. Sangeeta Mittal's chapter "Graphic Novels and Delhi: Contested Spaces" looks at the emergent genre of the graphic novel as an appropriate tool to enable the surfacing of the underbelly of a city and its traumatic moments. This genre, which hitherto never found its voice in literary works on Delhi, obsessed as it was with the city's shabby architecture and ruling dynasties, and finally, it being the powerhouse of politics, the seat of the rich and the powerful. In a similar vein, Anupama Jaidev Karir's "Political Exceptional the Imperatives of Popular Dissent: A Reading of I.S.Jauhar's 1978 Emergency Spoof *Nasbandi*", bats for a re-look at the popular cinema, especially those masquerading as comedy to identify threads of public dissent and memory, in a literary as much as a historical sense. Here, Indrani Das Gupta and Shashi Tigga's essay "Woman and Statecraft: Reading Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan's Novels" in the Series "Girls of the Mahabharata" bring to fore the reworking of mythology and mythological characters to extricate extant power relations and modes of dominance. Choosing to examine the retelling of the stories of two women characters from the Mahabharata—Satyavati and Amba—the authors bring to fore the multitudes of voices, opinions and engagements that popular fiction has provided in recent years.

The culminating section, "*Moving Beyond: Social Media and New Spaces*", aptly named, brings the vital role played by social media and newer spaces in redeeming popular fiction for striking its claim in the annals of literary history. Here, Aisha Qadry sets the ball rolling with "Interrogating Social Media and Romance: The Case of Durjoy Datta" by bringing in the genre of romance fiction, with its modern proponents riding on social media to instant fame and fan following. The 2.0 version undercuts the traditional romance version by highlighting the changing gender relations underscored by the needs and challenges of an economically independent and professional city-dwelling young readership. The last two chapters are titled "India's Tryst with Flash Fiction: A Terribly Tiny Tale" by Rachit Raj and Pranjal Gupta, and Prachi Sharma's "Online Writer and the New Age Popular". Both these chapters take an incisive look at literary products such as flash fiction and instapoetry, and the language deployed in them respectively, to create the traditional in the digital age with social media being the preferred mode of consumption.

While concluding their introduction to the collection, the editors give a fitting close and context to not just the volume but also to the arena of Indian popular commercial fiction as it is poised to take on its new avatar. This avatar is essentially mutative and its "rhizomatic trajectories" will continue to multiply in myriad ways, calling even the custodians of high literary culture to yearn to be a part of the popular. This is evident with creations of Booker Prize winners, which are consumed on OTT platforms within hours, and Oscar winners who vie for IMDb (Internet Movie Database) record-breaking OTT series.

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# Report

## English Online Capacity Building for Field Personnel

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Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (VBERC) responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by organizing online programmes for its projects. The English language online capacity building programme of the field personnel (FP) in the “Siksha Sambal Programme” (SSP) was one such example of an online programme. The SSP aims to provide quality education to underprivileged children at the secondary school level. The project is a collaboration between Educational Resource Centre (ERC) and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. It was started in 2016 and is currently in its fifth year.

### Background

The FPs are responsible for facilitating English language studies of students of classes IX and X as per the school syllabus. They provide additional support through extra sessions and materials, help students achieve higher grades in the Board examination and assist the overall academic and intellectual growth of the students. Regular capacity building sessions are essential for the FPs to update their knowledge of the English language as well as to enable them to deal with issues they face in the classroom while facilitating students.

### Structure

Residential workshops were held in the ERC office as part of the offline mode. They were extended to the field when the ERC members visited schools. The offline sessions were conducted in each location separately. The FP as well as the ERC team felt the need for prolonged and continuous academic engagement and the online sessions were used to fulfil this requirement. The online sessions were mentored and led by senior faculty and the English language team from the ERC. Between 31 July 2020 and 30 December 2020, around 15 sessions and 2 refresher



sessions were conducted every Friday for one hour. Where the participants felt the need for more discussion, the sessions were extended beyond one hour. The online sessions ensured a rich and healthy engagement between the ERC and FP.

## Content and Method

The sessions were designed to deepen the participants' understanding of the English language and to equip them to apply their knowledge in the classroom. The topics for the sessions were selected after a discussion with the FPs on the areas in which they needed help, and these were sequenced from elementary to advanced level.

The initial sessions concentrated on identifying and describing English word categories—noun, verb, adjective and adverb. The properties of these words and their usage were highlighted. The FPs were guided to break away from conventional definitions of parts of speech by comparing and contrasting their functions under various linguistic conditions. This was followed by a discussion on tenses and aspect of verbs. The concept of time was introduced to show how tense indicates the location of an event in time; aspect is internal to the event. It tells how an event occurs or how it is viewed by the speaker along dimensions like frequency, duration and completeness of action. The differences were discussed through various examples. The other three major elements of grammar in the online sessions were direct-indirect speech, active-passive voice and clauses. Their underlying principles were discussed before going into their complexities. Noun phrases and verb phrases in different types of

sentences were also detailed. The importance of punctuation marks and the transformation of phrases in changing voice was clarified.

The grammar sessions strengthened the foundations of English, but reading comprehension skills still required attention. More than five sessions were dedicated to reading comprehension. This was done through different activities such as a graphical representation of the storyline, tracing character sketches diagrammatically, summary writing and so on.

To prepare the participants for the upcoming session, they were given worksheets to complete and submit before the next session. The ERC team went through the responses and selected the items that needed to be addressed in the sessions. Most of the texts and examples used for the worksheets and discussions were either taken from the school textbooks or other texts of the same level. The majority of tasks/questions were modelled on Class IX and X exam patterns. The FPs were encouraged to read the texts out aloud during the session. This helped to improve their reading skills. The multilingual background of the participants provided helpful inputs in these sessions. Authentic texts from different languages were used as examples for making comparisons.

## Afterword

The online capacity building sessions provided a very valuable learning experience for the FPs. The weekly online session kept the discussions alive and assured academic growth. It must be admitted that face-to-face interactive sessions could not be completely replaced with online sessions; physical presence, longer attention span, use of

blackboard, etc., are challenges that online mode faces. On the other hand, the virtual nature of the online mode made it possible for all the participants to attend the session regularly. This rigour is more

difficult to achieve in offline mode. The scope of online media has to be exploited further for capacity building sessions along with offline support.

### ***Thank you, Azim Premji University***

Thanks are due to Azim Premji University, which has provided full financial support and inspiration for bringing out twenty issues of Language and Language Teaching (LLT) journal spread over one decade (from January 2012 to July 2021). We are also thankful to the University for providing financial support and encouragement for bringing out four exclusive issues in Hindi, based on the selection of articles published in various issues of LLT. There were four special LLT issues with the following themes: “Literature and Language Teaching”, “Disability and Language”, “Literacy” and “Language Acquisition in Informal Settings”. Through LLT, we had the opportunity to reach out to a large number of language teachers, researchers and teacher educators on issues and practices relevant to language and language teaching. We are thankful to the members of the Executive Committee for their observations, suggestions and guidance. Our special thanks to Mr S. Giridhar and Mr Ramgopal Vallath, among others.

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

Tagore

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