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Dear Reader,

During the course of an interview for *The Teacher Trainer*, when Alan Maley asked NS Prabhu to talk about the latter's most significant events in his teaching life, Prabhu's answer to the question had these opening sentences: "Early in my ELT career, I stumbled on Harold Palmer's *Principles of Language Study*. It's a very small book. I really was greatly moved by what I thought was a pedagogic sense of intuition and excitement in that book. It's a book I've read again and again since then." Palmer's books *Principles of Language Teaching* (1921) and *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (1917), which have had a great impact on many ELT professionals across the globe, have been read by them again and again. This year, when we celebrate the centenary of the publication of *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*, it is worth recalling the contributions of Harold E. Palmer in the field of English language teaching and learning (ELTL). I thought it was important to include an article on Palmer, a pioneer in the field. Richard Smith, a Reader in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, in the article "Scientific' language teaching" says that Palmer's *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* can be seen to have heralded a 'Scientific Period' of language teaching discourse. The quote by Palmer (1917) "it is not 'method' that we lack; what we lack is a *basis* for method" (translated from French into English by Richard Smith) provides food for thought for those involved in language teaching and realize the importance of scientific approach to language teaching.

Recently, NS Prabhu delivered a keynote address at an international conference organized by SSN College of Engineering, Chennai. The key points (known as "The Five Points") he explained during his keynote address are presented in the article "Re-thinking language pedagogy". It is a very useful piece of writing which, I am sure, English language teachers will enjoy chewing and digesting.

Besides regular features such as book reviews, reports and activities, this issue of JELT also features articles that focus on various language skills. Dishari Chattaraj in her paper "Mixed-Ability Classroom: A Look into a Typical Indian ESL Class" presents her study on a mixed-ability ESL class and pedagogical implications of the findings. In the paper "Reinventing the Mode of Teaching: Questioning as a way of learning (QWL)" Ritu R Agarwal shares her thoughts on questioning as a mode of learning and how questioning encourages learners' creativity. S Thiruvenkataswami in his paper "Process Writing Framework as a pedagogic tool in the context of ESL/EFL" proposes a Process Writing Framework (PWF) and discusses how it helps learners improve their writing and also serves as an effective pedagogic tool for teaching writing skills in English Language. R Jaya's paper "A Qualitative Study on Using Interactive Fiction for Enhancing Employability Skills" discusses how online interactive fiction can be used to enhance the employability skills of students. The article "Teaching Vocabulary Using Task-based Approach" by M Srilakshmi and M Kiranmai focuses on the effectiveness teaching vocabulary to ESL students within the framework of task-based language teaching.

Happy reading!

**Dr Albert P'Rayan**

# Mixed-Ability Classrooms: A look into a typical Indian ESL Undergraduate Classroom



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## **ABSTRACT**

***The present study, which is based on 50 first year undergraduate students, aims to study the diversity that exists in a typical Indian ESL Undergraduate classroom. And, in doing so it studies the variation in learners' perceptions, their attitude towards English Language Learning and the program they are studying, their language learning strategies, and their perception of errors. The study also tests the performance of the students by means of a LAT and Free Composition test. It applies certain statistical tools and also uses Error Analysis as a tool to decipher the level of the students. The study ends by providing pedagogical implications of the findings.***

**Keywords: *Mixed-Ability Classroom, English as Second Language (ESL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Error Analysis (EA).***

## **1. Introduction**

Jones (2007) in the book *Student-centered Classroom* notes "In many ways, every class is a mixed ability class. Even students who have studied together all the time will have varied mastery of the language or remember different things. Some will be better at different skills: reading, writing, listening or speaking. They bring their own personalities, strengths, weaknesses, and learning style to the class." The situation Jones talks about is, however, much less problematic than the situation faced in countries like India where the undergraduate language classrooms are

distinctly large in terms of the number of students as a result of which the diversity among the students in terms of their linguistic skills, motivation and perceptions are highly varied; also there is limitation of resources as well as time and the teacher-student ratio is quite alarming (Chattaraj, 2015). So, it can be said the English language classrooms are highly diversified and the resources to meet the needs of these mixed-ability classrooms are nil. A much better picture of mixed-ability classroom is painted by Narang et al. (2016:vii) for our Indian context when they define a mixed ability classroom; they put it thus "Mixed Ability classroom refers to the difference in

language level among the students in terms of learning style, students' background knowledge, knowledge of the world, their skills and talents in other areas and finally in the levels of motivation". Though there has been a range of studies stating ways in which the mixed-ability classes can be tackled in Indian Contexts (Shrivastava, 2010; Mirani and Chunawala, 2015), studies dealing with the demography of an in-house English classroom-diversity are rare.

The present study deals with Bengali speakers learning English as Second Language (SL) in the undergraduate courses in Calcutta University. The participants of this study are 50 odd first-year students. These students were part of a larger class which comprised of nearly a 100 students. These students belonged to History, Economics, and Hindi honors (major) courses and they were clubbed together and taught a literature centric syllabus for their 'Compulsory English' course. Also, among these 50 students, 22 belonged to English medium backgrounds and 28 to Bengali medium backgrounds. The description of the students itself unravels the diversity that can be located in them.

## **2. Literature Review**

Mixed-ability class is one of the major challenges faced by the Indian English teacher. Kundu (2014) wonderfully describes the concept of mixed ability classes in the Indian scenario. She presents a hypothetical picture of a class XII classroom consisting of 100 students and says that only 10% of the students have the

desired proficiency and in the rest of the 90%, 15% are of class VI standard, 20% are of class XI standard, 10% of class VII, 12% of class VIII, 10% of class IX and a few of them are above XII standard as a result of which a teacher teaches students from classes VI-XIV in the same class.

Shrivastava (2010) very briefly discusses the causes that lead to the diversity in Indian classrooms. After sparing a line each on cultural differences and personality traits which might be influenced by the place of residence or the schooling of the learners, she goes on to give some very general recommendations for overcoming the diversity like caring for the students, group presentations, stimulation and role-play etc. Mirani and Chunawala (2015) conducted a qualitative study to see how the teachers perceive the mixed ability classrooms and what measures they take to deal with it. It is noted that mixed-groups, nominal separation, interaction/activity based practices are found to be the effective ways of handling heterogeneous classes. However, the negative psychological effects of such practices on the relatively weak students are acknowledged by the participant teachers. Shoerey (1999) conducted a study with Indian college students to study the pattern of language learning strategy use among the students. He also conducted interviews with teachers in which he found that the most challenging problem that the teachers face in the classroom is the varied level of English proficiency.

Biber (2006) points out that the transition from school to college is a difficult one for

all the students as they are exposed to complex academic discourse and the lack of 'register' specific language course further puts them into greater trouble. Pandey (2011) also talks about the need for Need-Analysis models to provide the students language inputs matching their needs. However, as Chattaraj (2015) points out, amidst the greater problems of large-classrooms, mixed-background and mixed-ability classrooms, the plight of the learners is often lost.

### 3. The Present Study

The present study is a cross-sectional primary research based on empirical data. The aim of the study is to find out the diversity that exists within an ESL undergraduate classroom. The participants of this study are 50 first-year ESL undergraduate students enrolled in a college affiliated to Calcutta University for History (BA) and Economics (B.Sc) Honors (Major) courses. The students were given a combined 'Compulsory English' course together in one big classroom. Among these 50 students, 22 (10 female and 12 male) had studied in English medium schools and 28 (12 female and 16 male) in Bengali medium schools. The data for this study was elicited through three main components, they are: a) Questionnaire b) LAT and c) Free composition. The questionnaire comprised of 28 questions, the LAT had 16 questions and 24 blanks and in the free-composition test the learners were asked to write an essay of 150-200 on any one of the three topics given. The learners were given one hour to complete the test.

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## 4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

While analyzing the responses and test results of the learners it was found that the medium of instruction in school had a major impact on both the responses and the test results of the learners. As it was not possible to address each of the 50 learners separately, they are divided into two broad groups based on the medium of instruction they had in school and their responses and performances are studied accordingly.

### 4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire had 26 questions the responses to which had to be given on a Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* (1) to *Strongly Disagree* (5). The responses to this questionnaire were collected from 95 students for testing the reliability and the questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test. The first part dealing with the attitude of the learners towards speaking and writing in English noted an alpha reading of 0.87. The second section dealing with learners' perception of the current English program has an alpha value of 0.78. The third section dealing with strategies had an alpha reading of 0.5 and last section which deals with learners' perception of errors has an alpha value of 0.85. The responses of the 50 learners who participated in this study are discussed below.

The first section of the questionnaire had five questions about the learners' perception of writing/speaking in English. The T-test result shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the responses made by the two groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). Whereas the learners

from English medium backgrounds are positive about their English writing and speaking skills ( $M=2$ ), the learners from Bengali medium backgrounds are unsure ( $M=3.42$ ) about it. The second section had five questions about learners' perception of the present English program. The T-test result shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the responses made by the two groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). It is noted that none of the students are satisfied with the literature centric program; however, the English medium students had a comparatively positive perception of the program ( $M=3$ ) than the Bengali medium students ( $M=3.65$ ). The third section had eight questions about the language learning strategies applied by the learners. Among these 8 strategies, four were metacognitive and four cognitive strategies. No statistically significant differences are noted in the use of either cognitive or metacognitive strategies among the two groups. However, one noticeable fact in the use of strategies is whereas the Bengali medium students responded positively about the use of translations strategies, the English medium students are extremely negative about the same. The last section dealt with the perception of the students about the errors since the study uses Error Analysis as a tool to find out the differences in the proficiency levels of the students studying in the same class. The T-test result shows that there is a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) with the Bengali medium students having more concern and awareness for the errors they made ( $M=2.03$ ) than the English medium students ( $M=3.22$ ). (See Appendices for tables).

#### **4.2 Language Ability Test (LAT)**

A test of any kind is conducted to measure a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain. There were total 24 items to assess the participants' ability to make proper use of prepositions, articles, tenses, voice, direct/indirect sentences, adjectives, and adverbs. The responses to the LAT were collected from 95 students for testing the reliability and the questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test. The alpha reading for the LAT was 0.73. The T-test result shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of both the groups ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The LAT score shows that the English medium students performed much better than their co-learners from Bengali medium backgrounds. Whereas the average percentage of the English medium students is as high as 74.79% (Score 17.95/24), that of the Bengali medium students is only 45.54% (Score 10.93/24). According to the scores, whereas the English medium students can be termed as highly proficient, the Bengali medium students can only be termed as low proficient learners. The Bengali medium male students (11.6/24) performed slightly better than the female students (10/24) whereas, the English medium female students (19.3/24) outperformed the English medium male students (16.83/24).

#### **4.3 Free Composition Test**

**Nature of Composition:** The English medium students wrote on an average 105 words per compositions more than the

Bengali medium students. The learners from English medium background produced as many as 111 error free sentences while the learners from Bengali medium background produced only 17 error free sentences. The English medium students produced on an average 5 more sentences per composition than the Bengali medium students and the former also wrote lengthy and more complex sentences compared to the latter. The English medium students produced 42.13% error free sentences while the Bengali medium students produced only 8.54% error free sentences. Whereas the English medium students produced only 7% errors, the Bengali medium students produced 30.41% errors. Thus the nature of composition, its length, and the error percentages, show that in spite being learners in the same class, there exists a strong dichotomy between these two groups of learners. The gender of the students had some impact on the nature of compositions they produced with the male learners of both the groups performing better than the female learners in respect to the number of sentences produced. Though, there is not much of a difference in the number of errors made by the male and female English

medium learners, the Bengali medium male students made more number of errors as compared to their female counterparts.

**Distribution of Errors:** In the face of the dichotomy that exists between the performances of the two groups of learners the present study is dealing with, it will be interesting to see what the nature of the errors reveal about the learners; whether there is a pattern in the distribution of error categories and whether there is a difference in the distribution. An exhaustive study of the error categories shows that though there is a huge difference in the number of errors being made in the compositions, as discussed in the previous paragraph, there is no difference in the distribution of errors. Both the groups made the maximum number of morpho-syntactic<sup>1</sup> errors followed by spelling and punctuation errors, lexico-semantic<sup>2</sup> errors and syntactic errors.

**Cause of Errors:** While analyzing the cause of errors, it is found that the Bengali medium students produced almost three times more number of interlingual<sup>3</sup> errors (19.12%) than the English medium students (7.28%). The learners from the English medium backgrounds on the other hand

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<sup>1</sup> Morphosyntactic errors: As Pandey (2011) points out, it arises from the erroneous use of morphological inflections and syntactic rules i.e. these are mainly grammatical errors. This category will comprise of a) Erroneous use of plural marking, possessive marking, degree of comparison marking etc. b) Erroneous use of tense marking c) Erroneous use of prepositions d) Errors in use of article e) Erroneous word order.

<sup>2</sup> Lexico-semantic errors: it arises from inappropriate use of words and can range from use of wrong words ( for example advise for advice etc.), collocation errors, translation errors, wrong word forms and duplication errors.

<sup>3</sup> Interlingual errors: these are errors which arise as a result of language transfer i.e. transfer of learner's L1(First Language) rules to L2 (Second Language).

made more number of intralingual<sup>4</sup> errors (89%) than the Bengali medium learners (71%). While interlingual errors are conceived to be errors occurring at elementary levels, intralingual or developmental errors as the name suggests occur at latter stages of learning (Brown, 2000). This points to the fact that the learners from the English medium backgrounds belong to a much higher level of learning as compared to their classmates who are from Bengali medium backgrounds.

## **5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications**

The study was conducted with an aim to unravel the diversity that exists among the perceptions and proficiency of the students in a typical undergraduate English classroom. The study shows that among the range of factors listed in literature leading to the diversity, the medium of instruction in school has the most significant impact on the perceptions and performance of the students. The analysis of the questionnaire shows that the learners coming from English medium backgrounds were much more confident than their fellow learners from Bengali medium backgrounds. The confidence, however, is not just limited to the perceptions but is well reflected in the performance of the English medium students. The LAT score, nature of composition, its length and the error percentages are all indicative of the high level of proficiency of the English medium students.

Evidently, there are two distinct levels of students in the same classroom, one with high proficiency level and the other with low proficiency level. This strong dichotomy leads to what Mukherjee (2009) termed as the formation of alternative hegemonies in the language classrooms. The formation of alternative hegemonies wreaks havoc on the low proficiency students hampering their confidence and motivation.

The various ways of handling a mixed-ability classroom as has been located in literature are designing group tasks, making mixed-groups, using electronic media and using language games. However, with the given composition of the classroom mentioned in this study and the nature of the program i.e. literature-centric program, it will be very difficult to conduct group tasks; and if there are no group tasks then there is no scope of creating mixed-ability groups. It is very difficult to suggest the ways of handling a class as diverse as this. If the focus is on the low proficiency students, the high proficiency students will not learn anything out of the course and vice-versa. There are only two ways of resolving this problem; either the low proficiency learners should be given special English classes to enhance their proficiency or the students should be taught in two separate classrooms based on their proficiency levels. This might not be an ideal way of dealing with mixed-ability classes, however, in face of such

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<sup>4</sup> Intralingual errors: also known as developmental errors. These errors occur once the learners begin to acquire parts of the new system. These errors occur when the learners form hypothesis based on their partial exposure to the Target Language. These errors correspond neither to the Mother Tongue nor to the Target Language.



magnanimity in terms of the strength of the proficiency, it's hard to suggest any other class and diversity in terms of the probable solution.

#### Appendix I

<b>Perceptions about writing/speaking in English</b>	<b>Bengali Medium</b>	<b>English medium</b>
Writing in English is an easy task.	3.10	1.77
Speaking in English is an easy task.	3.21	1.86
I always find English writing classes to be interesting.	3.46	2.4
I always find English speaking classes to be interesting.	3.57	2.22
I find it easy to express my thoughts and ideas in writing in English.	3.78	1.77
Average	3.42	2

#### Appendix II

<b>Perceptions about the current English programme</b>	<b>Bengali Medium</b>	<b>English medium</b>
The English programme offered to me is very useful.	3.5	2.63
The English programme encourages me to use English creatively.	3.57	2.5
The programme mainly focuses on writing skills.	3.4	2.9
The programme mainly focuses on oral skills.	3.5	3.09
Audio-visual aids are used in the class.	4.25	3.86
Average	3.65	3

#### Appendix III

<b>Language Learning Strategy Use</b>	<b>Bengali Medium</b>	<b>English medium</b>
I always make a plan before I start writing.	1.8	1.86
Whenever I write in English, I take notes in Bengali and translate it into English.	1.64	4.54
I seek help when I write a composition in English.	2.8	3.90
I re-read what I have written to get ideas about how to continue.	2.17	1.63
When I have written my paper I hand it after revising it.	2.28	2.13
I sometimes translate what I have written in my mind in Bangla to make sure I written all the points.	1.96	4
I believe that my written English skills are better than my spoken English skills.	2.82	2.54
I always use a dictionary.	3.89	2.13
Average	2.42	2.84

#### Appendix IV

Perception about errors	Bengali Medium	English medium
When speaking/ writing in English I am worried about the errors I make	1.57	2.36
My errors in writing are mostly in grammar.	1.64	2.81
My errors in writing are mostly in the appropriate use of vocabulary (words) in the context.	2.10	2.95
My errors in writing are mostly in spelling and punctuation.	2.21	3.59
My errors in speaking are mostly in grammar.	1.92	3.63
My errors in speaking are mostly in the appropriate use of vocabulary (words) in context.	1.27	2.95
My errors in speaking are mostly in pronunciation.	2.42	4.13
My errors in speaking are mostly in fluency and intonation.	2.21	3.36
Average	2.03	3.22

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# Reinventing the Mode of Teaching: Question as a way of learning



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## **ABSTRACT**

*In the present times, when teaching has become equivalent to mentoring and learning process has acquired a new approach, it is imperative that the learners are put at the centre and their potential is exploited to the maximum by making them actively involved in the classroom. It is time to reverse the trend (especially in a post-graduate class of students of literature), wherein instead of asking answers to questions, the emphasis should be on to encourage them to pose questions. The paper shares thoughts towards the concept that questioning is a mode of learning, questioning encourages learners' creativity and questioning is a way of sharing unanswered answers. It is based on the hypothesis that questions help to raise issues and given a proper learning environment, a person can improve his/her ability if he/she is allowed to express, think and articulate. The paper also focuses on the advantages such learning can provide in the days ahead.*

**Keywords:** learner, questioning, learning process

Classroom is a place of interaction and collaboration between learners and the teacher. Unfortunately, literary studies is losing its charm but if these studies can make the students more skill oriented, then the crisis which is facing the field of Arts can easily be tackled. As a practicing teacher the questions which generally crop up in mind are: Are our learners creative enough to prepare the future generations? Are we able to inspire the students to think out of the box? These questions embody

predicament of the present time but in the problem lies the solution. Only what we need to do is to just let go off the existing norms and make way for something new. There are five main things which can be done to make the learning process interesting and make inquiry a classroom strategy.

### **Incorporating questioning as a technique in the classroom**

- ❖ Reversing the trend by letting the learners ask questions

- ❖ Letting them discuss in pairs the main theme and brainstorm the ideas
- ❖ Encouraging the learners to list down important topic sentences from the text which garners attention and then turn it into a query
- ❖ Promoting a debate on the questions raised
- ❖ Inspiring them to focus on less discussed issues from the text or to chalk out events from the text which they think are important

It is based on the hypothesis that questions help to raise issues and given a proper learning environment, a person can improve his/her ability if he/she is allowed to express, think and articulate. Right from the school days the learners are only used to answer the questions but when they are made to perform a role opposite to their expectation, it is noticed that they start thinking with a desire.

### **Literature Review**

As we look into inquiry as a classroom strategy we find that there is a mention of three contemporary approaches to collaborative, inquiry-based teaching, namely Matthew Lipman's 'Community of Inquiry', Leonard Nelson's 'Socratic Dialogue', and David Bohm's 'Dialogue'. "With information becoming more accessible, what is required is the disposition and capacity to think reflectively in order to process the increasing amount of information available." (Chesters 4) Cam

has said that

"If only people were better at asking appropriate questions, articulating problems and issues...evaluating the alternatives open to them, engaging in discussion with one another, and thinking collaboratively, then we would all be so much better off." (Cam, 2006, p.2)

It was in 4th century BC that questioning was first used as an instructional tool, when Socrates used questions and answers to challenge assumptions.

Bartlett Giamatti (1976:194) says, "Teaching is an instinctual art, mindful of potential, craving of realization." According to Gardner (1995), it is the progress toward truth that "is vital to the practice of inquiry ... at least if such progress is possible" (p.38). Pardales and Girod (2006) refer to the process as people coming together to serve as a "jury to ideas and hypotheses" (p.301).

For Burgh, Field and Freakly, the purpose of democratic education is that of reconstruction (Burgh, 2003; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006). The substantive dimension is the "subject matter, the content, things worth inquiring about" (Burgh et al, 2006, p.138). The aim of inquiry according to Lipman is to help learners' "become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, more reasonable individuals" (1977, p.69- 70).

Gilbert Ryle (1971) argues that creativity is present when we ponder because we must act as the teacher, helping our ideas to form."It is also through the process of

actively “interrogating” the content using provocative questions that students strengthen and deepen their understanding.” (McTighe 5) Coming to know something requires learners to actively participate as they construct and progressively improve their understanding through the exploration of ideas (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

The power of QtA is that students do all the interpretive work: “They construct the meaning, wrestle with the ideas, and consider the ways information connects to construct meaning” (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kugan, 1977, p. 33) Rothstein and Santana have called their method of teaching the Question Formulation Technique. Learners’ questions may be triggered by unknown words which then engender cognitive dissonance (Festinger) The act of ‘composing questions’ focuses the attention of students on content, main ideas, and checking if content is understood (Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman 1996). In the book *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions* (2011), Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana propose six-step process for teaching students to formulate their own questions and take ownership of their learning.

### **Questioning as a Strategy**

Thus based on the review of the research and its findings, it is apt to say that questioning, inquiry on the part of the learner can contribute a lot towards their learning process and outcome. This technique can be adopted as a strategy and

it can be used:

- ❖ To encourage people to develop independent thinking
- ❖ To promote generative thinking, critical thinking & evaluative thinking thereby leading to connectivity.
- ❖ To stimulate not just thinking but reconstructing.
- ❖ To enable a better understanding of the text by letting the learners’ adopt ideas, conjectures and hypothesis.
- ❖ To develop in them a confidence to think creatively and innovatively.
- ❖ To increase student engagement and promote independent thinking.
- ❖ To make learners’ aware of the fact that content is important, but as a means to an end, not as an end in itself.
- ❖ To examine and assess what has been learned, and check that what has been learnt is understood.
- ❖ To generate views and opinions of learners.
- ❖ To develop the cognitive ability in the learners wherein they are able to analyze, speculate, put forth an argument and thereby negotiate.

In an age when students are trying to avoid reading the original text and rely more on ‘books about books’ or are hooked to the Spark Notes or e notes, this technique can work wonders. Post graduate students are well versed with basic subject knowledge so

after dealing with the text with content specific approach, the practice of reversing the trend can lead to discussion. Inquiry on the part of the learners' can help them to appreciate the deep underlying principles of thought.

**Steps to progress through questioning strategy**

The learner can be made to progress through questioning in the following manner:

1. Identify the text to be selected after the content has been explained.
2. Give them the areas / points where students can explore further and brainstorm ideas.
3. Ask them to inquire and pose questions.
4. The teacher can even cite a few examples of the way in which questions can be raised. Even specific words, quotes from

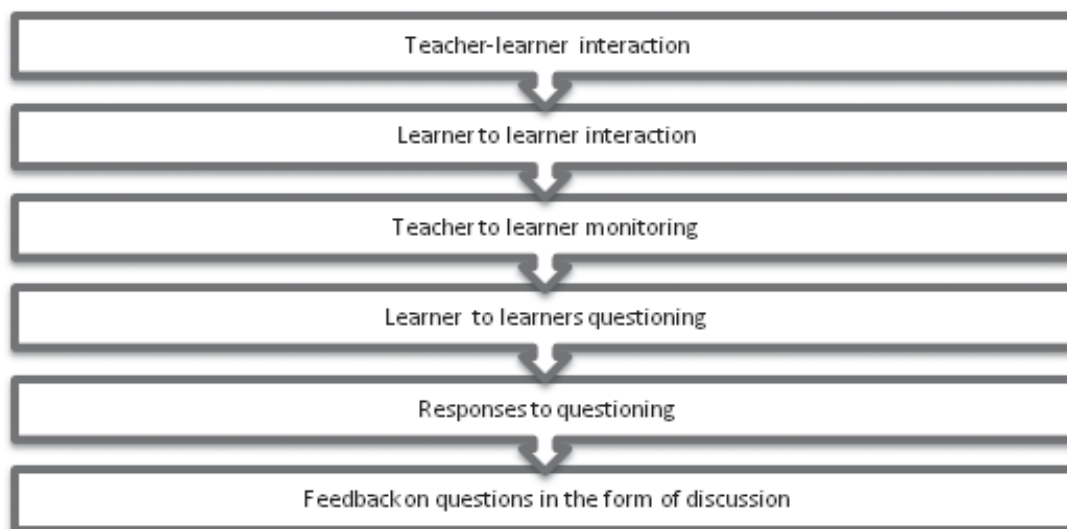
the text can be selected for further exploration.

5. Use “think- alouds” to model for students how to think through the questions. (Corley)
6. Award the best question

We can outline at least five facts which can help in creating stimulating environment:

- ❖ Content-catered plan
- ❖ Thought development and enhancement of knowledge
- ❖ Innovation towards dialogic approach in classroom
- ❖ Thorough home work in locating specific points to help learners collaborate and create
- ❖ Catering to multiple intelligences and diverse interests

**This questioning technique can be represented in the form of a diagram:**



However this cannot happen in the absence of motivation within and it also needs a stimulating environment. The aim is to challenge the average performers and mould them into bright performers and it also enhances the bright learners' innate capacity towards a higher level of understanding.

Because of the interactive nature of questions, the classroom can become a centre for exploration of ideas. Questioning by learners is on the part of the teacher a kind of feedback .They start thinking like a

teacher and not just the strategy but their role also gets reversed. Terry Heick in the article “7 strategies to help students ask great questions” states:

*“In education, we tend to value a student’s ability to answer our questions. But what might be more important is their ability to ask their own great questions—and more critically, their willingness to do so.”*

In the past three decades the teachers’ role has changed and so has the learning styles. The shift in paradigm could be seen as:

<b>Change From</b>	<b>Change To</b>
Learning from books	Learning more from media,books and online information
Learning passively	Learning actively
Learning as product	Learning as process
Learning as a set of rigid rules to be grasped	Learning as a flexible process to be enjoyed
Learning to learn	Learning to unlearn

This sort of learning promotes ‘community of inquiry’ and in a general sense ‘ risk-taking culture’. To be able to progress one does not just need a data in the form of memory but should also be able to develop analytical skills. For the post graduate students of English Literature this mode of questioning can lead to an in depth study of human relations. They can put to test their own experience and raise questions which can further lead to questions. For instance if one is teaching the essays of Emerson, the questions posed by the learners can in reality lead to a greater discussion on the problems, challenges of

life and the way to cope with it.

Reverse trend from asking questions to the learner to let the learner pose questions can go a long way in enhancing the learning process, knowledge and scholarship. It can:

- ❖ Lead to comprehensive possibility of interrogation to oneself leading to cross communication
- ❖ Increase the possibility of learners’ enhancement of summarizing skills
- ❖ Highlight the important concepts and facts of the text

- ❖ Stimulate the learning of vocabulary
- ❖ Encourage the reading habit
- ❖ Help understand the strengths and weaknesses by comparison and contrast

Since by its very nature, question seeks answers and it indirectly promotes a culture of communication. Starr Stackstein, a teacher, states:

*“Empowering learners with the control of the questions, puts them in the driver’s seat of their journey and progress. They follow their interests and we trust them to develop more questions as they go, unraveling the possibilities in their learning...”*

### **Conclusion**

Thus learning to question and questioning to learn almost go parallel. It is like we as teachers are giving them a chance to engage them with their feelings. Abelard Peter’s remark goes well with the significance of questioning: “The key to wisdom is this - constant and frequent questioning, for by doubting we are led to question and by questioning we arrive at the truth.” Let the young minds with their curiosity reverberate a creative environment .Instead of asserting our thinking it is time now to help them in reconstruction. In order to create a creative generation we have to let the learners invest in their thoughts today.

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## 'Scientific' language teaching

### Richard Smith

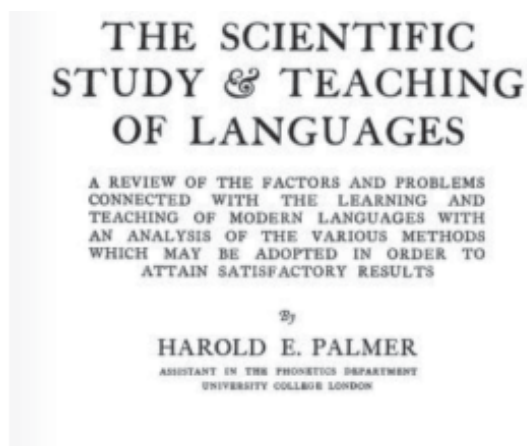
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A recent blog-post by Scott Thornbury on substitution tables (Thornbury 2017) which touches on contributions by Harold E. Palmer (1877–1949) to their theorisation and development, reminded me that there is still just about time this year to celebrate the centenary of Palmer's 'classic' (1917) work, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*. This book can be seen to have heralded what Tony Howatt and I have termed a 'Scientific Period' of language teaching discourse, a period of at least 50 years during which language teaching theorists tended to relate their proposals quite strongly to background scientific research of various kinds (Howatt and Smith 2014)

In 1923, Palmer himself set up an Institute for Research in English Teaching in Tokyo (IRET) in Tokyo which was a world-leader in the pre-war period (see Smith 2013). In fact it was really the *only* place where organised research into English as L2 teaching was going on until the University of Michigan English Language Institute was founded in the 1940s. *The Scientific Study* predated the generally acknowledged debut of 'applied linguistics' by 30 years, and the Tokyo research work itself prefigured and influenced that in the



USA and UK in the post-war era, though in generally unacknowledged forms. I've written elsewhere (Smith 2011) about the way Palmer's conception of (something like) applied linguistics as reflected in the work he and, from 1936 onwards, A.S. Hornby (1898–1978) were engaged in at IRET was a broader, more eclectic and practice-centred conception both than post-war 'linguistics applied' and the kind of new academic discipline Palmer seemed to be proposing in *The Scientific Study*.

I say 'seemed' because a close, contextual reading of the latter book (see Smith 2011) shows that the actual conclusions Palmer proposed are not derived from background sciences (linguistics, psychology etc.) so much as from his own experimentation as

a practitioner-researcher in Belgium, where he taught from 1902 to 1914). This is actually quite clear from his Dedicatory Preface to the book (Palmer 1917: 5-8).

Palmer mainly based his recommendations and conclusions in *The Scientific Study* on a series of experiments carried out into his own practice as a language teacher in Belgium – they were founded on a form of ‘practitioner research’, in other words. As his daughter later wrote, he “explored the possibilities of one method after another, both as teacher and student. He would devise, adopt, modify or reject one plan after another as the result of further research and experience in connexion with many languages – living and artificial.” (Anderson 1969: 136-7)



What was really new was the way, in his 1917 and later works, Palmer set out to provide a principled basis for all kinds of approach, to be selected according to needs and context, in accordance with the following realisation (expressed in the book’s Dedicatory Preface):

“cen’est pas la méthode qui nous manque; ce qui nous manque’est la base même de la méthode” (“it is not ‘method’ that we lack; what we lack is a *basis* for method” (my translation)) (Palmer 1917: 5-6).

And this was Palmer’s major contribution – to argue that a basis is needed for methods which goes beyond salesmanship, beyond fashion; and that there is no one method suited for all occasions but instead many possibilities, necessitating careful selection.

This is true of his ‘Substitution Method’ (which resembled, but of course predated by a long way audiolingualism) as much as it is of his ‘ostensive line of approach’ (which prefigured TPR) or the reader-centred approach he developed for Japanese schools. These all came out of theorised experience as a teacher or teacher educator, but none of them was elevated to the status of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ method.

When – or whether – the ‘scientific period’ heralded by Palmer’s contribution ended is open to question. On the one hand, some well-known ELT gurus have recently been seeming to claim that research has little to offer language teachers (e.g. Maley 2016; Medgyes 2017). On the other hand, they seem to be arguing against something they

see as still prevalent in the field – a tendency to venerate researchers ('science') at the expense of insights from experience and 'craft knowledge'.

What we can say is that 'science' is not accorded the automatic respect it once had – in the heyday of audiolingualism, for example, when behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics seemed to provide a solid, largely unquestioned underpinning to drills which treated learners rather like laboratory rats!



It seems to me that the ELT profession needs a new, rebalanced view of the relationship between ELT and research or 'science', one which acknowledges the need to base research on teachers' priorities, the desirability of teachers themselves being researchers of their own practice and the importance, also, of teachers being critical of 'academic' research. At the same time, we need to stop stereotyping research and see that there are many kinds, some with definite relevance for the classroom, some with none – and that we can usually only talk about possible *implications* of research, not direct applications.

A revised conception like this – which is consistent with Henry Widdowson's ongoing critique of the top-down nature of certain

forms of applied linguistics (including in his recent plenary for the British Association for Applied Linguistics: Widdowson2017) – would, in fact, constitute a return to Palmer's own lived conception of problem-oriented, practical research, though not to what he claimed – somewhat precociously and even, in some ways, pretentiously – to be setting up as an academic discipline in his 1917 work, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*.

#### **Note**

This article was first published in the form of a blog-post on 19 November 2017. For more information on Harold E. Palmer's life and work, the reader is invited to consult the relevant Warwick ELT Archive Hall of Fame web-page here: [warwick.ac.uk/elt\\_archive/halloffame/palmer](http://warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive/halloffame/palmer) and/or the book *The Writings of Harold E. Palmer: an Overview*, freely downloadable from the same website.

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# A Qualitative Study on Using Interactive Fiction for Enhancing Employability Skills



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## **ABSTRACT**

***The paper is an attempt to find out the use of online interactive fiction in enhancing the employability skills of the students. It is a qualitative study, in which feedback of students who played an online interactive fiction game was collected. The feedback revealed that the students had the scope of using and developing their critical, creative, lateral, logical, analytical, problem solving, decision making and inter personal skills.***

With the proliferation of engineering institutions particularly in South India, a large number of students pursue their education in these institutions for securing placement in multinational companies through campus interviews. Further the companies also look for candidates who are reasonably proficient in both language skills and soft skills. They expect the institutions to train their students on these skills so that they could focus more on technical aspects during the training they provide soon after the recruitment. Therefore, the teachers of English language are shouldered with the responsibility of training the students on soft skills in addition to language skills and make them industry ready.

The culture of young learners today differs from the culture of the previous generation who were only exposed to analogue technologies like broadcast radio, television

and print-based texts. For these young learners, computers are not considered to be technology but rather a natural part of life, the internet is better than TV, multitasking is a way of life and staying connected to others through the use of technologies is essential (Frاند 16). Prensky (2001) also points out that today's students are surrounded by a ubiquitous digital environment and as a result they "think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors" (1). The deployment of ICTs as learning tools is a useful way of providing a variety of learning paths for young learners with different learning abilities. Gardner sees the potential for individualized learning "to be enhanced significantly by technology" (179). He also states that, "It is not easy for teachers to provide individualized curricula and pedagogy...Happily, we have in our grasp today technology that should allow a

quantum leap in the delivery of individualized services for both students and teachers...that addresses the different intelligences (and) that allows students to exhibit their own understandings in diverse symbol systems (linguistic, numerical, musical, graphic, and more)” (179).

Considering the needs of the companies and attitude of the students an attempt was made to find out the use of online interactive fictions in enhancing the employability skills of the students. In this competitive era, the ability to think analytically, laterally and critically; make decisions and solve problems are being considered as the major requisites in the job market. Interactive fictions provide scope for using these skills and hence this paper attempts to show the possibility of using interactive fictions to enhance the employability skills of the students.

Interactive fiction, otherwise known as text adventures, is a software simulating environment where the reader acts as a protagonist and determines the progress and end of a story. In other words, it tells the reader the beginning of the story and lets the reader decide the actions of the main character of the story. The reader helps the main character overcome the obstacles to his progress. This requires readers to analyse the given situation, think critically, arrive at a solution to the given problem and make appropriate decisions. The reader uses text commands to control characters and influence the environment.

The game starts with an introduction,

usually consisting of one or a few printed text on the screen, giving some background on who the protagonist is, where he/she is, and perhaps even what are the objectives of the reader/player in the game. Whenever the game has printed text on the screen, it will wait until the player press ENTER or some other key, so that he/she get a chance to read everything before it scrolls off the top of the screen. When the introduction is over, the player will get a prompt, usually “>”, but it may be a little different from game to game. The prompt means that the game is now waiting for the player to tell it what he/she wants to do. This is done by typing imperative commands, as if commanding or instructing someone.

The study of the history of interactive fiction revealed that computer-based interactive fiction began in 1975 with Infocom’s *Adventure* which was followed by *Zork* and *Ultima Series*. In 190 the bestselling book *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* was adapted by Douglas Adams as interactive fiction. In 1990 text-based MUDs (multi-user dungeons) was introduced which enabled multiple players to join together in online virtual worlds. Since then efforts were taken by the game designers to create games by taking into consideration the personality traits and needs of the players. In other words, people play games for different reasons; some play to socialize, others to collect objects, and some others to compete and win and all these player types are considered while designing games in the virtual world.

The study of literature on the use of

interactive fiction for educational purposes revealed that a large number of researches have been done on the use of interactive fiction for language learning, problem solving and enhancing creative and critical thinking. According to Pereira IF can provide an extremely motivating and engaging reading experience which may provide opportunities for the improvement of reading skills, and potentially contribute to better reading fluency and at the same time enable building schema and scripts, and exercising important critical and lateral thinking skills. Desilets (2016) explained the thinking process involved in interactive fiction by applying Sternberg's (1984) componential theory of intelligence. According to him interactive fiction, like any kind of literature, involves all three kinds of components - metacomponent, performance component and knowledge acquisition component- but it offers an especially compelling approach to metacomponents in that it forces readers to think about how they control their thinking. In the study conducted by Grimley et.al., interactive fiction was used as a tool to bridge theory and practice in meaningful ways within online and face-to-face pre-service teacher education. The perceptions of the students and teachers towards using interactive fiction for educational purpose is positive that Desilets in his blog wrote "Many students find interactive fiction, also known as IF or adventure gaming, an enjoyable way to gain experience with all of the major elements of literature (though point of view takes an unusual twist or two), and teachers who are comfortable with it

soon find that it grows well in the classroom, even if there's only one computer available."

The present study aims to study the possibility of enhancing the employability skills through interactive fiction. Fifteen engineering students undergoing Communication and Soft Skills Course participated in the study. They were first time users of interactive fiction and therefore in addition to explaining to them how to play a game, list of verbs that are commonly understood by the interactive fiction were given to them. (See Appendix I). The students were asked to play online the interactive fiction "Lost Pig" and an hour later their experiences were collected as feedback. Lost Pig, is a story that was written by a person whose pen-name is Admiral Jota. In 2007, when it first appeared, Lost Pig won the fall IF Competition, and it later took prestigious XZZZY Awards for Best Game, Best Writing, Best Individual Non-Player Character, and Best Player/Character. It is a comedic work of interactive fiction about an orc retrieving a pig that escaped from a pig farm. The game's protagonist is Grunk, an orc who works at a farm. A pig under his care has escaped, and the game begins with Grunk looking for the pig. Chasing the pig, Grunk soon falls into an underground complex. To win the game, the player must get Grunk to capture the pig and find a way out of the complex.

Among the various interactive fictions available, Lost Pig was chosen for the study as kids appreciate Lost Pig as a tale for all ages. The students worked on it for nearly



**Appendix I:** An entire strategy guide on a single postcard- Written by Andrew Plotkin — design by Lea Albaugh

You just started up a game and now you're staring at text and a *blinking cursor* and you *don't know what to do!* (`> |`)

**Don't panic kids—**  
Crazy Uncle Zarf is here to help you get started...

**These commands are very common:**  
**EXAMINE it**      **PUSH it**  
**TAKE it**          **PULL it**  
**DROP it**          **TURN it**  
**OPEN it**          **FEEL it**  
**PUT it IN something**  
**PUT it ON something**  
*When in doubt, examine more.*

**Does the game intro suggest ABOUT, INFO, HELP? Try them first!**

**Try opening!**

You are standing in an open `field` west of a white `house` with a boarded front `door`. There is a small `mailbox` here.

**You can try all sorts of commands on the `things` you see.**  
**Try the commands that make sense!**  
 Doors are for opening; buttons are for pushing; pie is for eating. (*Movin', pie.*)  
 ♦♦♦♦

**If you meet a person, these should work:**  
**TALK TO name**  
**ASK name ABOUT something**  
**TELL name ABOUT something**  
**GIVE something TO name**  
**SHOW something TO name**

*Each game has slightly different commands, but they all look pretty much like these.*

**You could also try:**  
**EAT it**              **CLIMB it**  
**DRINK it**          **WAVE it**  
**FILL it**             **WEAR it**  
**SMELL it**          **TAKE it OFF**  
**LISTEN TO it**      **TURN it ON**  
**BREAK it**          **DIG IN it**  
**BURN it**            **ENTER it**  
**LOOK UNDER it**   **SEARCH it**  
**UNLOCK it WITH something**  
 Or even:  
**LISTEN**             **JUMP**  
**SLEEP**             **PRAY**  
**WAKE UP**          **CURSE**  
**UNDO<sup>†</sup>**             **SING**  
*<sup>†</sup>Take back one move — handy!*

**“What if I only want to type one or two letters?”**  
 ♦♦♦♦  
**N/E/S/W/NE/SE/NW/SW: GO**  
*in the indicated compass direction.*  
**L: LOOK**  
*around to see what is nearby.*  
**X: EXAMINE**  
*a thing in more detail.*  
**I: take INVENTORY**  
*of what you possess.*  
**Z: WAIT**  
*a turn without doing anything.*  
**G: do the same thing AGAIN**  
 ♦♦♦♦  
*A service of the People's Republic of Interactive Fiction: <http://pr-iff.org>*

**Also: Up, Down, IN, and OUT**

**Appendix II – Sample of Student Navigation through Interactive Fiction**

Statue Room      Score: 1

Pig here too.

>catch pig  
 Grunk run right at pig, and pig run right at Grunk! That seem like it perfect, but when Grunk grab at pig, pig run between Grunk leg!

>go right  
 That not thing that Grunk can get on.

>go e  
 Grunk only see way to go back south from here.

>catch pig  
 Grunk try sneaking behind pig. But somehow pig know Grunk there. Pig see Grunk, or maybe it hear Grunk. Or smell Grunk. Or maybe pig just really smart. When Grunk get too close, pig just squeal and run to where Grunk not at.

>catch pig  
 Pig see Grunk coming, and it run away to south.

>go S

**Fountain Room**  
 All wall in this room glow. It bright, just like day time. Except that instead of sun, it wall that glow. And instead of grass and tree, it square room with four wall. And instead of outside, it all under ground. But beside those thing, it just like it! Tunnel keep going out to east and west, but normal doorway go north and southeast and southwest.

In middle of room, there fountain. But fountain not have any water.

South wall have big curtain hanging on it.

one hour and the maximum point scored was 2 and the minimum was 1. Two students out of fifteen scored 2 points and the rest scored 1 point. (See Appendix II) Though the students were not able capture the pig, they enjoyed and considered the game challenging. Further they were able to think critically, logically, creatively and laterally to capture the pig. This is evident from the feedback provided by the students.

Describing the challenges faced and the learning outcomes achieved students wrote:

*“I had a very nice experience playing this game. I got a point when I asked Grunk to listen. My challenge was remembering all the rooms and its contents and adding it all up to find the solution. But I really had so much fun playing this game. This game helped me think creatively and logically. The game really pushes to think in all possible ways and also makes examine every detail.”*

*“Lost Pig is a well-crafted and a neat game. At every stage a problem is given describing the new scenario and surroundings. The player needs to use various verbs to interact with Grunk. This helps us in critical thinking of any problem and also tests our vocabulary skills whilst interacting with the software (typing commands/ verbs). Also it helps us in creative and critical thinking as it doesn't fully describe the surroundings. It just gives a vague description of it. For example, in one situation, the system mentioned about some stairs at west of a hole that are broken. We need to think out- of -the box and ponder what all can be done to broken stairs. The character Grunk can perform actions like*

*looking under the stairs, looking/observing the stairs to get some clue or object which in turn may help us find another clue. Overall this game is a fun and different game that can be played at leisure to give our brains some exercise that we all necessarily need every now and then”.*

*“There is no such entertaining game like Lost Pig. By the end of this game we improve our creative thinking skills. This game makes my mind relaxed.”*

Further this activity helped students to make a self-analysis of their strength and weakness and identify the areas to be improved. One student wrote:

*“When you seem to score up, the task becomes little tough to solve. Felt like there is a need for me to increase my thinking skills than creativity.”*

*“ We need parallel thinking for every part of it.”*

It was also clear from a feedback that this activity helped students to improve their problem solving skills and interpersonal skills. In the words of a student, *“Even though I couldn't find the pig at the end, I learnt how to approach a problem from scratch. Also, in the middle of the exercise, I learnt how to ask for help from stranger politely.”*

However, a few students expressed a feeling of frustration they experienced while playing the game. This may be due to difficulty in arriving at the right clue. A student wrote:

*“Initially the scenario was interesting but it*

*was difficult to find the answer. The scenario was running in a loop which made it uninteresting”.*

There were mixed views about the language used by Grunk. The writer of the story had deliberately made Grunk speak broken English to give comic effect. This acted as an obstacle for a few and for some it served as a learning opportunity.

One student wrote: *“The responses to each comments/ instructions given were difficult to understand due to bad English”*

On the contrary, another student wrote:

*“The person’s usage of English helps us understand why we have to use proper English; that way the idea is clearly delivered”.*

It is evident from the feedback given by the students that this activity provided them with a scope for improving their critical, creative, lateral, logical, analytical, problem solving, decision making and inter personal skills. In short, use of IF ensures that all the soft skills are enhanced thereby contributing to heightened employability skills.

To conclude, in this competitive and digital era, the use of technological platforms for teaching the requisite skills is highly

essential. Interactive fiction is one such platform through which employability skills of the digital learners can be augmented.

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# Process Writing Framework as a pedagogic tool in the context of ESL/EFL



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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper attempts to make a case for using a ‘Process Writing Framework’ (PWF) as an effective way to teach writing skills in the context of ESL. A lot of research in the past has shown us the efficacy of ‘rewriting’ as an inevitable activity to improve or even complete writing. There have been myriad ways in which writers have been ‘rewriting’ or writing ‘revised drafts’. The present study proposes a Process Writing Framework (PWF) that will not only be useful to refine a particular text but also serve as an effective pedagogic tool for teaching writing skills in English Language. The PWF can be used for improving one’s writing’ by the learners on their own at any time. PWF, which remains as an external tool in the classroom, gradually becomes an internalized ‘skill set’ that helps produce better ‘writing’.*

**Keywords: ESL, EFL, Process Writing Framework**

## **Introduction**

Conscious teaching of writing in the L2/ ESL/ EFL contexts has been a myth in our classrooms. Students are seldom taught ‘writing skills’ in the classroom. The commonly noticed ‘writing activities’ in the classroom are related to grammar, vocabulary and construction of isolated sentences. In the study conducted for this purpose, it is noticed that following are some of the activities conducted in the few writing classes that are held. The activities are, a. ‘gap filling for choosing the right grammar items such as an article, verb, adjective, coherence markers etc’, b. matching the

sentence halves to form grammatically acceptable sentences’, c. completion of sentences with the beginning or the end of a sentence given, d. constructing sentences given a word, e. transformation of sentences (active-passive / direct indirect ) etc., It is noticed that students, sometimes, write in class letters, paragraphs, dialogues, instructions, recommendations etc. for the purpose of examinations.

The input for these activities is mostly from a prescribed text book, reference to internet and other materials improvised by the teacher. If at all these writings are checked by the teacher, they are for format, grammar

and spelling. The teacher's feedback is limited to a few 'red marks' on paper. The post writing activity is unusual and the belief seems to be that the learners have learnt 'writing' from this experience. But samples of their writing subsequent to this classroom exercise do not really show acquisition of writing ability in the real sense of the term.

The study suggests revision of texts using PWF, a post-writing task. It is found that this activity helps the learner to reflect on his/her writing, make sense of the text and bring about a host of changes to improve the quality of transfer of meaning, the primary purpose of 'writing'. The focus is not only to enable writers write 'error-free sentences' and score marks in the examination but to produce 'most meaningful texts'. The shift is from a mechanical 'sentence level grammar' to that of a 'text level grammar' focusing on 'meaning'. The suggestion has been tested and found useful. This is not to suggest that this is the only way to teach writing but certainly one of the effective ways of teaching writing.

### **Background**

Writing remains an important skill for academic and career related purposes in the context of English as L2 in India. Though the TL for this study are drawn from students from an engineering college, the improvement of writing ability is crucial for students from arts and science colleges as well. Teaching 'writing' remains a grey area in the

context of the TL. Based on the perception of both the teachers and the students, it can be pointed out that the acquisition of 'writing' skills is either incidental or cultivated by the sheer motivation of a few individual learners. It is, by and large, not consciously taught or learnt.

When students attempt international language proficiency tests like the IELTS, 'Writing Test' poses a great difficulty to many. In addition, most of the scientific community in India find it very difficult to write papers for journals or even make presentations for lack of adequate ability in writing in spite of their adequate knowledge in the area. The state-based curriculum has given the TL the ability to score high marks in the university examination that tests only rote memory or a mechanical production of language. A major chunk of the TL is drawn from these schools and students from CBSE, ICSE, IGCSE, IB are an exception to this rule. But this second group comprises hardly 10% of the students at the tertiary level in India. Hence the present study assumes importance against this background of the need for good writing abilities on the one hand and the absence of appropriate teaching methodology on the other.

### **Research questions**

1. What would be an ideal methodology to teach Writing Skills in a short span of time?
2. Is this methodology pedagogically viable?

## **Writing as Rewriting**

It is well known that writing improves with successive drafts of writing or rewriting. Dissertations which form part of a post graduate or doctoral programme are not complete without rewriting. Précis Writing, a popular task in English Test in the bygone days followed rewriting as a procedure. Several writers and critics from the past to the present have agreed on the need for 'rewriting'. Ernest Hemingway points out in an interview

*Interviewer:* How much rewriting do you do?

*Hemingway:* It depends. I rewrote the ending of *Farewell to Arms*, the last page of it, 39 times before I was satisfied.

*Interviewer:* Was there some technical problem there? What was it that had stumped you?

*Hemingway:* Getting the words right. (1956)

Vladimir Nabokov points out, "I have rewritten—often several times—every word I have ever published. My pencils outlast their erasers." (1966). Helen Dunmore, the famous British poet and a novelist, in her famous 'quotes', points out, "Reread, rewrite, reread, rewrite. If it still doesn't work, throw it away. It's a nice feeling, and you don't want to be cluttered with the corpses of poems and stories which have everything in them except the life they need." (2012)

Though it is a well known fact that writing improves with successive revision or redrafting, it has not been thought of as a

pedagogic tool for improving writing. As redrafting helps self reflection on all the sub skills in one's own writing, it is conceived to be an effective way of 'improving writing' in the longer run. The present study is an attempt to prove the hypothesis that 'rewriting', if systematically conceived, can be an effective pedagogic tool to teach writing.

At present rewriting of successive drafts of writing is made on the basis of one's own intuition and awareness of what to correct. Generally grammatical errors, faulty punctuations, inappropriate vocabulary and related issues are corrected. The outcome of such 'rewriting' results in a mechanical improvement of the text and does not really improve the 'writing' to express meaning more effectively. Therefore, the focus of this study is to make this activity more meaningful and also uniform across different genres of writing. As a result, the concept of creating a checklist or a framework that can be used as an intervention to write the successive drafts of writing was conceived.

After going through several rounds of tests, the process writing framework (PWF) has been evolved as a tool to be applied for writing successive drafts of a text. The PWF has been found useful in many ways. For one thing, it provides a concrete framework ensuring uniformity in one's approach toward writing revised drafts. Secondly, the tool is helpful in moving away from mere mechanical changes in writing to a more dynamic process of improving the meaning potential of the text. This tool can be used

by the teacher in the classroom and it can also be used independently by the learners on their own, in course of time.

Students who have used PWF, given below, for improving their texts have admitted that it has helped them to improve the quality of their text better than the one they did on their own without any checklist. Students also felt that with regular use of this tool, their writing skills, in general, improved considerably. But this change takes its own time as writing is a complex process and the quality of one's writing cannot change

drastically within a very short span of time.

### **The checklist (PWF)**

The checklist or the PWF has been evolved with inputs from students who have used it. The checklist is designed to check the text paragraph by paragraph. The checklist (PWF) is a sign- post to the students to look at the text as a whole and assess it for its 'meaning potential'. In the process, the students are sensitized to various sub-skills of language. The Process Writing Framework (PWF) is given below:

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>1. Content</b>	Is there a central idea? Is it adequately developed? Can you identify the topic sentence? Is there any irrelevant or redundant data? Is the content lacking in something? Answer these questions and fill in gaps.
<b>2. Syntax and coherence</b>	Does the text flow logically and meaning emerge smoothly? Are the sentences well-connected through the use of linking devices? Supply appropriate connecting words (linking devices) wherever necessary. Study the order of words in a sentence. Reorder them appropriately. Examine the order of sentences in a paragraph. If there is a need, rearrange them in the right order.
<b>3. Lexis and sentence structures</b>	Are the words appropriate? Do they have a range / variety? Are collocations, idioms and phrases put to good use? Are the sentence structures appropriate, display a range ( complex sentences, passive voice etc) and contribute to meaning? Avoid repetition and irrelevance in lexis as well as structures
<b>4. Accuracy</b>	Check for spelling, grammar accuracy and punctuation.

## The Study

First of all, the TL (students from SSN College of Engineering) were assigned a task to write a paragraph based on a topic sentence. The TL read the paragraph written by them carefully with a view to improving it. The second draft was written rectifying the errors in the original text.

In the next stage, the students were given the PWF and told how to use this tool. They were asked to read their second draft and apply this framework to see if there were any other corrections. More than 80% of them found opportunities for further changes. Others found the framework challenging as they did not have the

proficiency in language to make the corrections.

Students who were not able to, independently, make any improvements to their writing were provided help by way of pairing them with others to help them self evaluate their writing. This experience was reported by the students as being highly productive.

The final drafts were submitted to the teacher for comments. The teacher provided comments both on a scale of 1 to 5 in addition to the specific notes on the scripts. Students found both kinds of assessments useful for self reflection and gradually overcame their drawbacks.

## Assessment on a scale of 1 to 5

	1	2	3	4	5
Theme (content)					
Syntax and Coherence					
Lexis and sentence structures					
Accuracy					

1. Can identify the problem areas satisfactorily.

2. Some ability to identify the glaringly evident problem areas with some difficulty, but unable to carry out any revision.

3. Ability to identify problem areas both evident and subtle to an extent and carry out certain corrections with some difficulty

4. Can identify all types of problems and

carry out revisions. The revision may have some errors.

5. Ability to identify all errors and improve on them satisfactorily.

### Teachers' Comments on scripts

In addition to the marking on the assessment scale given above, the teacher made comments on relevant portions of the script. Some of the comments are listed below category wise.



### **Theme (Content)**

Off topic / Needs Focus / Topic misunderstood

### **Syntax and Coherence**

Change the order of words in some sentences (when needed)

Delete the words marked in red as they are redundant

Introduce a few words to complete the sense.

Linking words are not appropriately used.

Introduce a connective word

Words are repetitive.

Ideas are repeated. The progression of ideas within the paragraph is not gradual.

### **Lexis and Sentence structures**

Irrelevant word, ambiguous meaning etc,

Good collocation, appropriate use of words.

### **Accuracy**

Grammatical error/ spelling error/ wrong punctuation/ punctuation missing

### **Student Feedback on teachers' assessment and comments**

Students said that the assessment score as well as the feedback was very helpful. It helped them become sensitive to the different sub-skills of writing and also focus on expressing meaning. They further pointed out that the revision of writing based on the PWF was helpful not only to improve the quality of writing in the text at that point

in time but also enabled them to enhance their writing ability in general. They pointed that they were able to gradually internalize the PWF and carry out improvements without the need for a PWF in hand. In other words, continuous use of this checklist helped them imbibe some of the skills of writing. This is evident from the fact that they recognized their mistakes instantaneously as they wrote. Most of them were happy with carrying out the revision work as an individual activity. However they felt that peer group interaction was also very useful. It was also seen that the students, whose proficiency levels were low, preferred this revision activity to be done as a collaborative activity. They felt that they learnt more from the peer group. This study has several pedagogical implications for teaching 'writing'.

First of all PWF is a good tool to use for teaching writing. But it needs to be applied appropriate to the learners' proficiency in language. Students whose writing skills are above the bench mark profit more from this exercise. Students whose writing skills are not up to the mark need additional help from the teacher. Peer Group support has also been very productive. In the longer run, this helps in improvement of writing. This is not suggested as the only means of improving or teaching writing. Students need adequate reading and listening before they start writing. Production of language certainly follows comprehension (NS Prabhu 2017)

### **Conclusion**

Introduction of PWF for rewriting successive

drafts using a checklist to help students improve their writing has several positive outcomes.

A shift in focus from teacher-centered 'writing' class to a learner centered 'writing experience' helped students internalize the process of improving their writing.

It challenged the teachers to be sensitive to every minute sub skill of writing in their students' performance and to provide positive feedback

Students realized the importance of collaborative learning in a 'writing' class'. Though this activity is ultimately an individual one, there was scope for pair or group work leading to mutual benefit.

It vastly helped the shift from a mere form (grammar) orientation to one of dynamic discourse orientation focusing on meaning in acquiring writing skills.

Writing several drafts has its own limitations. It is a slow process. One cannot look for changes overnight. If one practices it regularly, then there is a scope that the PWF is internalized and they are able to carry out the corrections effortlessly.

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# Task based language teaching of vocabulary - A case study

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper mainly focuses on teaching vocabulary to ESL students within the framework of task-based language teaching, focusing on engineering students in Andhra Pradesh. Two homogenous groups of students of III B. Tech. ECE-branch participated in the investigation as an experimental group and a control group. For assessment a teacher-made test was administered. For the control group, technical vocabulary was taught using the traditional approach, and for the experimental group, technical vocabulary was taught using the task-based approach. A post-test was administered to the students at the end of the session to find out the impact of the task-based approach on the experimental group. Result analyses evidenced that the task-based approach was more effective in teaching technical vocabulary compared to the traditional method.*

**Keywords:** *task, task-based language teaching, traditional approach, ESL*

### **Introduction**

India is one of the countries where one can find a large number of learners who learn English as their second language. Teaching English as a global language has become relevant and significant for such teaching gives a large number of global opportunities to ESL learners in India. In the state of Andhra Pradesh the mushrooming of

engineering colleges has posed a serious challenge to language teachers in improving the communicative ability of students. With more English as second language students entering the classroom of engineering colleges it has become inevitable for the teachers to implement special instructional practices so that they can be successful. Mastering of English primarily as a tool for communication like speaking appropriately

without fear in different contexts and writing for various purposes is the need of the hour. So changes in the teaching methodology are inevitable and preparation of materials that would equip the students to effectively cope with the changing trends to strengthen their ability is essential.

Appropriate use of language consists of appropriate grammatical structures and appropriate vocabulary. Particularly when it comes to communication, one can communicate with vocabulary more readily than with grammar. A good command of words and the competence to use the right word to express a specific idea is a prerequisite in the speech and writing process. Generically, vocabulary is defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings. More explicitly, we use vocabulary to refer to the kind of words that students must know to read increasingly demanding text with comprehension (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005). It is something that enhances and strengthens over time. A stock of good words enables us to paint a rich picture and equips us with instruments with which one can hone one's speaking skills. Also good vocabulary enables one to make fine distinctions between things so that one can exactly say what they mean and be clear while exchanging ideas and making a conversation.

### **Statement of problem**

To aid the learners learn vocabulary, various approaches, procedures and methods have been deployed over the years. Technical students are quite aware of the necessity to enhance their vocabulary as well as boost their competence in communication. Though new methods and approaches are

found, majority of the techniques used by teachers to teach vocabulary are still traditional where the teacher mainly concentrates on the translation of technical text without much focus on interaction among the students. Hence the focus has now shifted to task based teaching of vocabulary. Innovative tasks which promote interaction among the students will definitely enhance vocabulary skills in students.

### **Research question**

This study was particularly designed to find out the impact of task-based teaching of technical vocabulary on ESL learners in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The following research question was proposed with regard to the objectives of the study:

Q1. In an ESL setting will there be any differences in the performance between the students who are taught vocabulary by a task-based approach and the students who are taught vocabulary by a traditional method?

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Task-based Language Teaching**

Richards and Rodgers (2001), state that task-based language teaching is an approach which purely employs the use of tasks as the prime unit of instruction and planning in the teaching of language (p. 223). According to Nunan (2004) task is a prime element in designing syllabus, assessing learners and classroom teaching (p. 1). As per the view of Ellis (2003), task holds a principal place in present second language acquisition (SLA) research and language teaching (p. 1). Willis (1996) says

that tasks are always activities where an outcome is achieved by using the target language for a communication purpose (p. 23). Richards and Rodgers (2001) passed few assumptions which underlie TBLT. He says that language is primarily a means which makes meaning and this meaning is very important. This was referred by Skehan (1998), in his definition. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that TBLT focuses on interactional, functional and structural models (in some cases) of language. According to Skehan (1998) believes that Structural model should be considered when we deal with task complexity. When it comes to the theory of learning, Richards and Rodgers (2001), state that both input and output necessary for language acquisition are provided by tasks and adds that task, activity and achievement are motivational (p. 228). Language learning for sure needs motivation. Brown (2000) argues that with proper motivation it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful (p. 160).

### **Vocabulary**

For Engineering students technical associations are paramount which demand good language fluency and clarity of thought. In the present day scenario where majority of students are ESL in Engineering colleges, students find it difficult to gain access to a particular thought in the target language as they spend much of their time in their mother tongue which is their first language. One of the main reasons for this is poor vocabulary. It was found that students taking university courses identified vocabulary as a major hindrance in academic writing tasks (Leki &

Carson.1994).Wilkins (1972) said that without grammar very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (pp.111-112). Particularly when ESL learners try to acquire good expression and fluency in English, it is paramount for them to develop more productive vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is successful when it involves lively participation that goes beyond theoretical or definitional knowledge. As per Stahl and Kapinus (2001) when children 'know' a word, they not only know the word's definition and its logical relationship with other words, they also know how the word functions in different contexts. Stahl (2005) said that vocabulary knowledge is knowledge and the knowledge of a word not only entails a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world. According to Richards and Renandya (2002) vocabulary is a primary component of language proficiency and gives much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 255).

Enhancing vocabulary through Task-based learning:

"Tasks .....are activities which have meaning as their primary focus. Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real life language use. So, task-based instruction takes a fairly strong view of communicative language teaching."(Skehan 1996 b:20)

It is believed that vocabulary learning depends on involving students in different tasks that make them to understand the meanings of words and engage in realistic

and purposeful communication. Even research has proved that one remembers new words much more easily if one thinks about them in relation to ones' own experience and uses them in a context that is meaningful.

English vocabulary expansion is exciting but it also demands the attention and involvement of teachers and students alike. By using tasks teachers can retain a higher level of student engagement as the words are learnt from the context not from the lists.

This is an empirical study and is based on data collected from students from an engineering college named Devineni Venkata Ramana and Dr. Hima Sekhar MIC College of Technology in Kanchikacherla, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in an Engineering College in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. This is an experimental study hence the data collection and analysis is quantitative in nature. However, when students are involved – the study cannot be carried out wholly in a controlled environment. There are certain aspects that affect the results/ outcome of the study.

### **Procedure**

The study was carried out at the beginning of the semester. The participants were divided into two groups as control group and experimental group after being homogenized as per their competence in general vocabulary. After grouping a teacher-made pre-test regarding their technical vocabulary knowledge was conducted. Two different approaches were applied to teach technical

vocabularies to the participants. The participants in the control group were taught technical vocabulary in a traditional manner i.e., study the text, translate and answer some non-task-based comprehension questions at the end. For the experimental group the same text with some task-based exercises were used. Finally a post-test was conducted to find out the probable differences between the performances of the two groups.

### **Sample**

Two tasks were designed to make students involve

**Participants:** III B. Tech. students of Electronics and Communications Engineering Branch

**Sample Size:** Two sets of students are chosen with 30 students in each set. All the students belong to the same branch and section to avoid the differences in the levels of understanding.

### **Vocabulary**

25 vocabulary words highlighted in a passage are picked and the same passage is used for both the sets of students.

### **Execution**

#### **Stage-1:**

For both the groups

The selected passage is given to the students with the vocabulary words highlighted. The meanings of the vocabulary words are given at the end of the passage. Students are asked to read the passage and based on the meanings given at the end are asked to

comprehend. Now a pre-test is conducted.

### **Stage-2:**

For the control group

Teacher explains the meanings of the words to the control group in the traditional manner explaining the meaning with examples and asking the students to note down.

For the experimental group

### **Task -1:**

The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board and then describes the meaning of one of them. Referring to the passage given students in group should guess which word is described and say aloud the correct one.

### **Task-2:**

Fill in the blanks

Two students are formed as a team and the teacher gives list of words followed by blanks. Discussing with each other students complete the task.

### **Task-3:**

Re-Writing sentences

The group is divided into teams with 4 members in each. A sheet is given which consists of sentences with the meanings of the target vocabulary. Now student 1 takes the sheet and reads a sentence which has meaning of one of the target vocabulary word. The remaining students should rewrite the same sentence using the target word directly. The sheet is rotated until all the sentences are done. At the end students

check the answers.

For Ex:

Sentence given in the sheet which the student reads aloud:

The worker escaped without intimation with a weeks' pay.

What the others have to write:

The worker absconded with a weeks' pay.

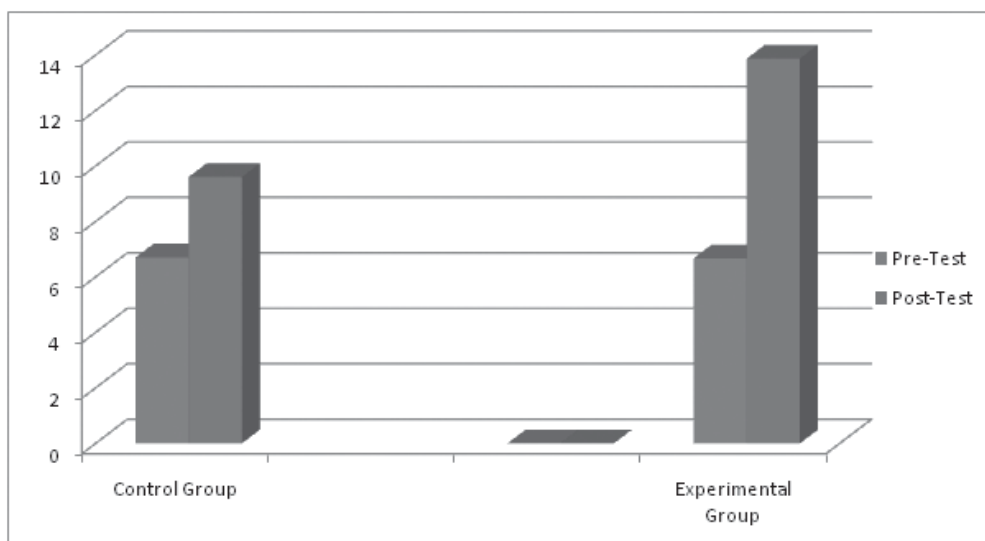
### **Task-4:**

Students are divided into teams with four members in each. Now they have to develop any theme of their choice using all the words. After the theme is ready, one after the other each team has to come forward and read what they have written. It can be a story, a concept, a paragraph etc. The remaining teams will listen to the various usages of vocabulary contextually. The teacher and the remaining teams can interfere and correct mistakes if any during presentation.

### **Stage 3:**

Now a post test is conducted to both the groups. The question paper is the same for both the groups. The average percentage of the pre test and post test marks of both the control group and experiment group are compared.

From the comparative chart shown above it is revealed that learners in the experimental group who have been taught vocabulary through task-based language teaching outperformed the learners in the control group who have been taught vocabulary through traditional approach.



For the control group the difference of average percentage of marks between the pre test and post test was 2.9%. For the experimental group the difference of average percentage of marks between the pre test and post test was 7.2%. In the experimental group the learners acquired a good command of vocabulary taught and the competence to use the right word according to the situation. Also it was found that while performing tasks, learners' interaction improved as language use and language learning took place simultaneously. Besides feedback from the teacher, learners receive feedback from the team members. The existence of such a feedback provided a more relaxing and less threatening condition for learning foreign language.

### Conclusion

From the above study it is revealed that changes in the teaching methodology are inevitable and preparation of materials that would equip the learners to effectively cope with the changing trends to strengthen their ability is essential. Vocabulary learning

enhances by involving students in different tasks that make them understand the meanings of words and engage in realistic and purposeful communication. Especially by using tasks teachers can retain a higher level of student engagement as the words are learnt from the context not from the lists.

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# Re-thinking Language Pedagogy

**N.S. Prabhu**

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(The following are the key points Dr N.S.Prabhu discussed in his keynote address at the International Conference on “Language and Literature: Dynamic Resources in the ELT Classroom” organized by SSN College of Engineering, Chennai, on 10-11 November 2017).

## **The five points:**

1. L1 is acquired in the process of the child making sense of the world around it. The language acts as a medium of that knowledge - a means to making sense and storing it. Something similar happens in L2-medium education, or when immigrants have to cope in a new language environment, or when children enjoy listening to/reading stories in an L2, or when adults with little L2 proficiency engage seriously in an activity involving the L2., etc, — no doubt with varying degrees of success but notably higher success than from classroom L2 instruction.

2. It is therefore better for classroom L2 instruction to engage learners in efforts to understand, think and work things out by coping with the second language, using a problem-solving format. The teacher would set problems (‘tasks’) which are likely to engage learners and elicit maximum effort. The aim is to set a challenge that looks

manageable to learners, though their actual success is likely to be varied.. The teacher can learn to judge the challenge level of tasks through trial and error over a period of time, while the learners too learn by repeated engagement to do successively higher levels of problem- solving while coping with higher levels of the language. The syllabus for the class, that is to say, can emerge in the process of teaching and learning.

3. When learners are literate enough for the purpose, reading comprehension can be a fruitful form of problem-solving, since a piece of text is much more structured and condensed in meaning that a set of sentences, inviting comprehension at different levels. Task-based reading comprehension involves a more sustained pre-occupation with meaning than oral exchange (with a more intense contact with the language). It also fits well into what may be called the ethos of formal education, with high respect accorded to texts and their interpretation.

4. Though it is true that language ability consists of both comprehension and production, it is not true that the two need to be taught separately or in tandem. It is indeed not true that comprehension and production are separate ‘skills’. Notice the following:

(a) The ability to comprehend always precedes the ability to produce, never the reverse. This is true of both L1 and L2 and, though not very noticeable in L2, production appears a considerable time after comprehension.

(b) Comprehension stays well ahead of production, both in L1 and L2, throughout one's life, as can be inferred from the difference between the range of language one can read and the range one can employ in one's writing. This is captured in the notions of 'passive' and 'active' vocabulary, with the former being always larger than the latter.

(c) When one's memory begins to fade in old age, one struggles to recall words much earlier and much more often than struggling to recall the meanings of words.

Is it not clear that comprehension and production are simply different levels of the same ability rather than separate abilities?

Is it therefore not best to go on enhancing

learners' comprehension, leaving production to emerge when its time arrives?

5. While in L1 acquisition comprehension always gets to the level of production, in L2 instruction it is unfeasible to wait for that stage, especially when we are unable to predict even its approach. Learners, therefore, find themselves producing the language before they are ready for it, and make errors by over-generalising, resorting to the L1 etc. This leads to the teaching of grammar as a way of remedying the deficiency. Grammar teaching is thus remedial in nature, not developmental, just as medication is remedial in contrast to nutrition. Though it is right to teach grammar as a remedial measure, it is not right to do so while it is still possible to develop comprehension further – it will be like resorting to medication in preference to nutrition. It is best to leave grammar-teaching until about the end of formal education.

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## Report on Webinar on ESP

The 75- minute lively and interactive webinar on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the first of its kind organized by the ELT@I Besig ChairMs. Lalitha Murthy and her dedicated team, was a unique and edifying experience for ELT professionals like me, who had the privilege of attending it.

The choice of the presenter, Evan Frenedo, was a master stroke I would say. In many conferences and seminars we have 'experts' who have very little direct and current contact with the classroom/training room realities. In Evan we had an ESP specialist with enviable multidimensional qualities and skills, being a teacher, presenter, corporatetrainer and a writer/publisher of several books in the field.

As the seminar progressed, the presenter established his credentials and revealed his close and authentic familiarity with all key spheres of the ESP, making for a truly educative and enlivening session. The topic too was of great practical relevance to the functional communication needs of the workplace.

The presentation was well structured and right in the beginning, the participants were given a clear idea of what was to be expected.

It tackled, head- on, the basic concept of ESP, and the potential challenges in the successful implementation in any given

training context. He termed this the critical success factors. He outlined the qualities expected of a successful ESP trainer. His focus was on the corporate training aspect of ESP, the most challenging scenario perhaps, and shared valuable insights. He also dwelt on the need for a proper '*needs analysis*' in ESP training, more than in any conventional teaching context.

The fine blend of pedagogic / linguistic principles with practical illustrations and anecdotes made it easy and interesting for the participants to keep pace with the proceedings. The delivery was marked by assurance, clarity and smoothness.

The illustrative ppt. slides had a very professional touch and contributed to the general impact of the presentation. They carried just enough info and the apt use font and images served to capture our attention. It was an object lesson for us when we attempt to prepare slides for our presentations.

The presenter also ensured periodic active involvement of the participants through survey questions and by calling for comments and questions, and handled them at the end, without hindering the smooth flow of the presentation.

A slide that particular caught my attention

was about the role of 'small talk', including office gossip as an inevitable aspect of oral business communication. The discussion on the degree of formality/informality in even written communication and the need to have an open and flexible stance was an eye opener. The conventional approach of imposing 'native speaker' norms on learners in such diverse environments may not be feasible or desirable. Evan also made a clear distinction between 'language about business' and 'language for doing business'.

We were provided with an effective summing up of the salient features before Evan took up a few of the questions we had typed in, and answered them in a precise and assured manner.

As someone who had spent the past year or so at a couple of Oil and Gas Industry camps

for on-site training of staff in Technical English, I could easily identify with different aspects of the discussion that broadened my understanding.

Overall, it was a valuable learning experience. I would eagerly look forward to more such sessions. Those who failed to show up after registering for the webinar may not realize what they missed. I do hope when the next such session comes up, a good number of our SIG members would attend and derive the same benefit as attending a regular conference session, but in the comfort of their home, anywhere in the world. That will also be a well-deserved appreciation of the special efforts put in by the organizers.

Rajan Philips

## **STARTING A CHAPTER —GUIDELINES**

1. For starting a new chapter one is required to collect subscriptions from at least 25 teachers and send the total amount collected by a bank Demand Draft taken in favour of ELTAI and send it to our office at Chennai (Address found in our websites [www.eltai.in](http://www.eltai.in)) only by Speed post or courier service.
2. In his capacity as the Convenor of the chapter, the one who collects the subscriptions may issue a temporary receipt, if required. And the ELTAI office will send individually to all the members enrolled the formal official receipt with the Membership ID after the receipt of the total subscription amount.
3. It is suggested that the following benefits of membership of ELTAI may first be made known to teachers.
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  - ii. Reduced Registration fees for attending all our programmes including our Annual conferences.
  - iii. Preference given to our members in the publication of their articles in our Journals.
  - iv. Eligibility for getting subsidized membership of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. (IATEFL).
  - v. Opportunities for interaction with ELT professionals in India and abroad.
  - vi. Access to our E-Journals—The ELT Practitioner, Journal of Technology for ELT and Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature.
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5. For any clarification [eltai-india@yahoo.co.in](mailto:eltai-india@yahoo.co.in) may be contacted.
6. Guidelines for Our Contributors
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8. REQUIREMENTS
9. A4, Font size: Times New Roman 12, Double Spaced, Margin of 1 inch on all four sides. Title of the article should be in Caps, bold, centered.
10. Abstract in about 150 words
11. Full paper should not be in more than 2000 words.
12. Articles should be sent only as AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT – AS A WORD DOCUMENT to [eltai\\_india@yahoo.co.in](mailto:eltai_india@yahoo.co.in) with a copy to [rayanal@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rayanal@yahoo.co.uk) (CDs and Hard copies will not be accepted.)
13. A photo of the author should also be sent in the .jpg file format as an email attachment along with the article.
14. Preference will be given to the publication of articles submitted by our members.

## Report on International Conference on Language and Literature: Dynamic Resources in the ELT Classroom

A Two-Day International Conference on “Language and Literature: Dynamic Resources in the ELT Classroom” was successfully conducted by the English department of SSN College of Engineering, Chennai, during 10-11 November 2017.

Dr. NS Prabhu’s session was a ‘masterpiece’. He shared his current thoughts and critical insights into several pedagogical issues in ELT. It was webcast through Facebook. It was an enthralling experience for the participants listening to such an eminent scholar.

Prof. Geetha Durairajan from EFLU, Hyderabad, and Prof. Shrimathi V, HoD-English, Anna University delivered very insightful lectures followed by question-and-answer sessions.

The participants were from many government and affiliated colleges in India. Noteworthy among them is the participation from EFLU (Hyderabad) premier institute for language studies, NIT Andhra Pradesh, NIT Trichy (research scholars), IIT Kanpur (research scholars), IIT Dhanbad, IIT Madras and private universities such as SRM, VIT, Symbiosis

University, Pune and others. The international participants who attended the conference included I.A. University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Another highlight of the conference is that select papers are to be published in Vol 4, Special Issue 2, 2017 of Veda’s JOELL, a UGC-approved journal. This was launched at the conference venue. A few other papers will be published as a book with ISBN subsequently.

Yet another interesting outcome is that the Head, department of English, Anna University has proposed a joint conference by AU and SSN. This collaborative effort would be a unique event next year.

The sponsors of the conference include Cambridge University Press, Orient BlackSwan, Karadi Path, and Entrayan.

The participants left the conference with much intellectual enrichment and learning.

Dr Deepesh and Dr Martha were the coordinators and Dr. Thiruvankataswami, Professor and Head, Department of English, was the convener.

## Book Review

### ***Kavya Manjari: A Collection of Poems by R. V. Ram***

Ram may be termed a contradiction in terms, for he is a rare combination of creative writing and ELT expertise, in a world which considers ELT practitioners as creatures incapable of appreciating literature. *Kavya Manjari* is a delightful, scintillating, thought-provoking collection of 82 poems. Once you open the book, you find it impossible to put it down, until you have run through the whole galaxy of poems. The interest never wanes from the first to the last page as absorbing as a thriller fiction. Of the very first poem, **Butterfly Effect**, on Gandhiji, John Leong says, “.....that gave me a brief history lesson on India; really eye-opening!” Ram’s amazing familiarity with religion, mythology and literature is evident all over the book. Look at his courage, to write on, of all themes, Absurdity! The poem begins thus:

Is it a new phenomenon?  
Known to the world  
Through Becket and Camus?

The last line reads:

Christ had known.

The poem, **Identity and Difference**, a winner in Premiere poetry contest, is commended for great story telling. It narrates the story of two rival kings who shared the same language, but different dialects, when the neighbouring king offered to mediate, like the proverbial monkey,

There was no triangle  
Only a big red circle.

Marvellous symbolism loaded with irony!

The poem, **I like Muslims**, describes, with a touch of humour, Ram’s friendship with Muslims in Yemen.

Pakistani Gazals are  
Always popular in India  
And Indian films—nowadays secretly  
watched—  
Are a craze in Pakistan.

Ram has experimented with different forms of poems like Haiku, Sonnet, etc. Here is his haiku on haiku!

Haiku I tried....tried...  
A miserable attempt ‘twas  
I admit....I failed.

Ram’s ability to laugh at himself, a mark of best humour, is evident in his **Ugly Duckling**, which is autobiographical.

My friends pitied me  
For my sphinx like face  
I don’t approve of my looks either  
I would, however, look in the mirror on the sly,  
And flatter myself on my charms.

Ram’s keen insight into human nature is evident in poem after poem. His poem **Catch-22** gives a poignant account of his betrayal by a friend, of whom he says,

You are a round character, after all,  
An Iago at that.

I appreciate your motiveless malignity.

One can go on and on, but I must stop here, and allow you the pleasure. This book is a must for all lovers of poetry. Go ahead and buy a copy at Notion Press, 38/6Mc Nichols Rd.Chetpet, Chennai 31. It is also available on Amazon, Flipkart and Infibeam.

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## READING ACTIVITY

### READING POPULAR TEXTS\* (SQ3R\* Strategy)

**Dr. K. Elango**, National Secretary, ELTAI &  
(Formerly) Professor of English, Anna University, [elangoela@rediffmail.com](mailto:elangoela@rediffmail.com)

- Objective** : Facilitating learners to read any text intensively from a prescribed textbook to comprehend, retain, retrieve and apply
- Participation** : Individual
- Material** : Any text from any of the prescribed textbooks (Example: “How Pertinent is the Nuclear Option?” from **Mindscape** prescribed in Anna University in 2015)
- Preparation** : Attempting to read all the texts intensively as against the practice of casual reading

#### **Procedure:**

Choose any lesson from a textbook and **survey** it first. Surveying begins from the title of the lesson and includes all the sub-titles, visual materials such as pictures, graphs, and tables and anything that is highlighted. But, often textbooks don't have many of these features, in which case one should start with reading the entire first paragraph and following it up with reading first sentences of some of the paragraphs and ending with reading the last paragraph and by then a reader would have gained fairly a clear idea of what the text is about. This has to be carried out as quickly as possible.

**Questioning** should also begin with surveying the title and continues with throughout the reading process. However, raising questions before reading is quite significant for two main reasons: a) reading becomes a focused activity, and b) reading turns out to be highly critical. Looking at the title one could ask questions such as why nuclear energy has become a controversial issue globally, what are the options available to meet the growing demands, how much of nuclear energy is generated now, what is the stand of the scientists, why there are so many anti-nuclear activists and so on. These questions elicit one's own viewpoints even before reading the text.

One should begin **reading** the text only after surveying and initial questioning. As the text is somewhat familiar by now reading can be done much faster. Surveying and questioning also enable readers to understand all the aspects of the text in detail.

While reading, a reader should stop at regular intervals or whenever some important ideas are mentioned in the text to **recall** them or even **recite** them aloud to oneself so that those ideas can be internalized and remembered for long. For instance, in the middle of the text a reference has been made to the **Three Mile Island**. A reader has to pause here to recall the ideas relevant to the reference and recalling can also happen in the form questions and answers as well.

**Reviewing** at the end has to be an integral part but unfortunately not many readers engage with this sort of activity. Reviewing is not merely to glean all the vital ideas of the text but also to critique the text, considering the perspective of the writer and style of the writing and formulating one's own standpoints on the nuclear issue. In case, a reader is an anti-nuclear activist he would oppose the writer's neutral stand and form opinions against the nuclear option.

#### **Learning outcomes:**

- 1) Learners realize that textbooks have to be read differently from other kinds of materials as the in-depth knowledge is expected of them not only for examination but for all purposes.
- 2) Learners recognize that the SQ3R is a very effective study strategy if they were to move away from mere memorizing contents as it poses severe limitations.

**Further activity:** Reading all the lessons in any prescribed textbook following the SQ3R strategy consciously, till it becomes an unconscious process.

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\***Textbooks:** They demand a different kind of reading, which is described as intensive reading. Unlike other kinds of texts, textbooks have to be read and understood thoroughly as one's academic performance depends on them.

\***SQ3R:** This is an acronym that stands for 5 steps of effective reading: S – Survey, Q – Question, (3Rs) R – Read, R – Recall/Recite, and R – Review.