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Dear reader,

I am happy to state that our journal (*The Journal of English Language Teaching – India*) is a UGC-approved journal. It implies that the papers published in JELT are “considered for the purpose of Career Advancement Scheme (CAS)”. The papers submitted to the journal are reviewed by experts and the authors are asked to revise their papers based on the review reports. It is our ongoing mission to further improve the quality of the journal.

This issue carries a variety of articles and also regular features such as One-on-One, book reviews and activities.

In her article titled “Effective learning of the basics of second language: exposure of rural students to types of errors through listening skills” Devika discusses how the knowledge about the basics of language can be acquired through listening. The paper is part of the UGC granted project entitled *Development of Listening and Speaking Modules of English Language through Multimedia Lab for Rural Students of Class XI-XII*.

The regular feature **One-on-One** presents an interview with Alan Maley, a well-known ELT consultant and Series Editor for the OUP Resource Books for Teachers. Mr Maley recalls his experience as Regional Representative in South India (Madras) and talks about the importance of creativity for English language teachers and shares his views on methods, materials, professional development, etc. In his response to a question on methods, Mr Maley says, “*I would prefer us to speak of principles rather than methods.*” He lists a few key things that a teacher needs to do and concludes that “*if that is the post-method condition, then I am in it.*”

Alpana Gupta in her paper “Teaching English to Rural and Semi Urban Students through Jokes” gives an account of what she did to teach the English language to rural and semi-urban college students through jokes. She concludes that the students were able to construct very interesting and instructive English language jokes.

In the paper “Vocabulary Instruction: Models Based on Classroom Experiments”, S. Bhavani focuses on teacher innovation in teaching vocabulary. She discusses the experiments she carried out in the classroom to facilitate vocabulary instruction at the undergraduate level.

Kuncham Venkanna in his article titled “A Critical Evaluation of the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum of Telangana State” attempts to apprise and evaluate the curriculum and its various components such as objectives, course book and materials, methodology, need for training and assessment procedures.

K Elango, in his regular feature **Activity**, presents an interesting reading activity *Reading Popular Texts* in order to “enable readers to personalize the practice of predicting before, during and after reading a text to make reading an exciting exercise”.

I thank Dr John Sekar, Dr C. Lal and Dr Xavier Pradeep Singh for reviewing the papers published in this issue. Their review reports and constructive criticism did help the authors revise their papers.

Dear readers, it is your journal. As always, I welcome your feedback and comments. You can contact me at [editorjelt@gmail.com](mailto:editorjelt@gmail.com)

**Dr Albert P’Rayan**

# Effective learning of the basics of second language: exposure of rural students to types of errors through listening skills



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## ABSTRACT

*Second language acquisition for rural students is not without challenges; related theories and proposed solutions work partially unless the students are exposed to the specific problem areas where they understand, grasp and use L2 for communicative expression in daily life. Exquisiteness of language always begins with the basics which remain the main problem areas; the knowledge about the problem areas with specific focus helps the students to know and work for these challenges. For a second language learner, errors related to the basics of the language seem prominent enough to seek their immediate attention. The learners can make out the gap but need special exposure to specific errors to learn the language and communicate with ease and confidence. Even while listening, the students seem to be keenly observant. Hence, the paper focuses on the awareness about the types and frequencies of the errors committed and how the knowledge about the basics of language can be acquired through listening.*

**Keywords:** *second language acquisition, rural students, basics of language, errors, listening*

## Literature review

The bilinguals' use of English as an international language brings forth variations in their pragmatic and discourse competencies (Mckay, 2002, 2003~ Nunn, 2005). Though English is not the native language of all people across the globe yet whichever nation uses it, changes unconsciously creep in the used language in terms of sounds, usage of words, grammar, stress pattern, syntax and what not. Why the linguists, scholars, pedagogues

get so concerned about the changes is not that much a matter of concern what concerns all these people is the irregularities that mark English language and how native speakers of other languages find it difficult to learn it. Nelson (1992, p.327) argues that "when approaching a language transplanted to a new cultural and linguistic context - as, for example, English in India is brought to various realizations about the notion of language and the varieties that a language may develop."

Ellis (2003), in the process of learning English as a language focuses on “activities that call for primarily meaning focused language use” and activities “that call for primarily form focused language use”(p.3). Another area that has got the attention is the grammatical competence which is another essentiality to master a language. According to Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) grammatical competence encompasses vocabulary, syntax morphology and phonemes/ graphemes. Grammatical competence seems to lessen the hurdles but it remains an extremely difficult task to absorb it like natives. Linguistic competence differs from communicative competency; different approaches and strategies have been used for maximizing the learning. The moment a problem is noticed, an alternate is suggested. To replace the problematic Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Bax (2003) proposes alternative teaching methods such as the Context Approach.

Words being the fundamental units help a lot in the acquisition of language. Brown (2010) in his article “Vocabulary Knowledge and Comprehension in Second Language Text Processing: A Reciprocal Relationship?” agrees that language acquisition is more fruitful when learners can rightly decide the precise meaning of a word based on the context of its use. Acquisition of words broadens the base of understanding, the more the words, the better the learning, of course with other elements also. Words don't work in isolation, they affect the other aspects of language also. Mehrpour (2008) in his

paper on vocabulary entitled “A Comparison of the Effects of Two Vocabulary Teaching Techniques” feels that a good knowledge of vocabulary has a great effect on the learners' improvement of other aspects of language.

### **Need for the study**

Exposure to language adds to the knowledge but when it comes to the basic learning and its implementation for day to day or conversational purposes, the problems keep on staring blanking at the learners. When the focus becomes narrower the focus gets shifted to linguistic competence and/or communicative competence; other times, the focus is on grammatical competence or syntactical expertise, so on and so forth. Focus remains more on scholastic subtleties. The ultimate reason for reading or listening to verbal language is to get meaning, to comprehend, to interpret, to reason (“The Relationship between Spelling”, n.d)

What the learners, especially rural students, really need is the problem area where the faults are traced, shared and discussed to make it a real learning experience. Rural students need the specific errors or problem areas where they can work to overcome that problem. On the other hand, if they do not get exposed to specific errors, they find it difficult to rectify their errors. When they get to know the specific errors, they understand and learn about the basics of language in a better way. Nemati (2010) in his paper “Active and Passive Vocabulary Knowledge: The Effect of Years of Instruction” finds that a learner's active

vocabulary includes words which are used in speech and writing. Contrarily, one's passive vocabulary embodies those which are understood as they occur in reading materials or while hearing something. That justifies the inappropriate selection of words while learning L2. Students never learn from the errors, they just learn the errors; hence the idea to expose them to specific errors so that learning can be strengthened. Thus the objectives of the study are

- To expose the rural students to the basics of language through listening
- To trace the specific errors of basics of language through the written account

### **Methodology**

The consecutive sampling method was used for data collection. Students registered in class eleventh and twelfth are exposed to an overview of communication skills, essentialities of introducing oneself, conversation, formal speeches, subject verb agreement, tenses, vocabulary, letters, emails, paragraph and picture interpretation. The course package was compact. The students from rural areas who study either in Pilani or nearby villages were taken for the present study. There were 25 eleventh class students and 33 twelfth class students. In total, there were 58 students.

First, they were told about the four basic skills of the language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They were asked to work on all the listening and speaking skills specifically and different exercises were accordingly prepared. In open discussion

with the students for the type of exercise to be picked up for listening, they suggested that a letter should be read out aloud two times. In the first attempt, all should just listen and then note down the problem areas where they think basic language errors are committed. Then the letter should be read aloud again. This time also they should not be allowed to note down anything while listening. Once the reading of the letter was over, they could note down more details or rectify some of the details noted down earlier. Accordingly, they were asked to write a condolence letter to share the grief of one of their childhood friends whose father has recently died; all the friends knew his father well but could not reach the place at that moment. The letter was to be written in about 12-15 sentences. On the basis of the 58 answer sheets, data was collected and compiled to trace the problem areas according to the priority of errors. Content analysis was used to identify the categories of the errors. An analysis of the data has given the following findings. The errors were arranged in five different ranges: more than 15, 13-15, 10-12, 7-9 and less than 7.

### **Results and Discussion**

When the answer sheets of the students were corrected, different problem areas were traced and the findings buttressed the hypothesis that despite being talked about the subtle areas and nuances of English language the grasp over the basics strengthens the acquisition of language in the most effective way. After going through the written account of their observations, the errors were categorized in the seven

areas: word selection, sentence construction, spellings, prepositions, word categories, verb tenses, and subject verb

agreement. The following areas are arranged according to the errors committed (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Results showing the types and frequency of errors**

Types of errors →	Word selection	Sentence Construction	Spellings	Prepositions	Word categories	Verb tenses	Subject verb agreement
Frequency of errors ↓							
More than 15	-	-	-	<b>2</b>	-	-	-
13-15	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
10-12	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
7-9	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>
Less than 7	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>3</b>

### Word selection

Selection of the word is the poorest among all the errors. The maximum numbers of errors are committed in the area of word selection. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 5, 42 and 11 students respectively.

The following excerpts from the letters can help the teachers and students trace the problem area and work on it. Expressions like ‘if I can do anything for you, don’t exist’, ‘his jokes are still present in my head’, ‘I was informed about the sudden disposition of your father’, ‘follow the death of your father’, ‘all my family wishes you our condolences’, ‘don’t remember that god is everywhere’, ‘I address you my sincere condolences’, ‘confirm me a delicate mission’, ‘the bad novel of the death of your father’, ‘help you crossing this painful period’, ‘I give you this letter’, ‘I have forget you’, ‘sick of head’, ‘cry some’, etc. are used.

If students do not know the meaning of many of the words that they will encounter in a text, their comprehension of that selection is likely to be compromised. (Pikulski&Templeton, n.d.). Students are confused about the appropriate selection of the words that helps them say exactly what they intend to. Our ability to function in today’s complex social and economic worlds is mightily affected by our language skills and word knowledge. (Pikulski&Templeton, n.d.).

### Sentence construction

Poor selection of words is followed by improper grammatical construction of the sentences. The students get confused about the proper grammatical constructions where all the elements of the sentence follow a specific order and form of words which coordinate the sense as per their combinations. The gap between poor

selection of words and improper grammatical construction of the sentences is very less, in fact almost negligible. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 8, 40 and 10 students respectively.

Errors like 'when I hear the message', 'how you are feel', 'all good suggestion he was given us', 'since one months', 'when I back, I will come to see you', 'received my sincere condolences', 'full courage and take care of yourself', 'I cannot do something', 'to work same your father', etc. serve as a good example to be familiar with the problems areas.

Studies by Bates & Goodman (1999); and Rode (1976) have shown that children are sensitive to linguistic constrains in oral language as well as written language. Studies have further proven that limitations with oral vocabulary (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Dockrell, Lindsay, Connelly, & Mackie, 2007) and oral narrative performance (Cragg & Nation, 2006) are related to poor written text production. In the above quoted examples, the errors seem very silly or easy or unthought-of but a serious scrutiny brings the need to work on the basic errors to make the language error free which can help the learner learn the language properly. Dockrell & Connelly (2009) also feel that it is also necessary to investigate how oral language may be mediated by other skills which are prerequisites for the production of written text. Increased oral language facility is associated with increased written language proficiency (McCutchen, 1986).

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## **Spellings**

The third error that should be focused on is the poor spelling; the students seem to write the spellings only on the basis of sounds they catch when they speak the word. They seem to bank on their aural sense more than the visual one; this habit, however, allows one more type to error to spoil their language acquisition effort. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 8, 35 and 15 students respectively. Though the gap between the second and third type of error is more, still it needs to be properly addressed to.

The spellings like 'mum' for mother, 'dady' for daddy, 'kidly' for kindly, 'decess' for decease, 'adres' for address, 'find' for fine, 'futur' for future, etc. are more than enough to make learners and teachers focus on this area also.

Surprisingly, the long and difficult spellings are correct; the intensity of the errors of spellings of short words is much higher. The reason could be probably that frequency of such words is very less where as short words are used more. Once students understand the spelling-meaning relationships among words, they can learn how the spelling or structure of familiar words can be clues to the spelling and the meaning of unknown words, and vice-versa. (Pikulski & Templeton, n.d.). Though the students have used very simple words in their letters, somehow the spellings are still wrong. The poor spelling skills of the participants were evident both in their written text productions and in the assessment of their single word

spellings(Dockrell& Connelly, 2009). Adelstein&Pival (1984) further argue that spelling started to become conventionalized over the years. Since then all languages undergo changes, especially in pronunciation, these conventions do not always reflect in present-day pronunciation (p.105).

### **Prepositions**

The fourth major error that these students have made is in the use of prepositions. This error follows the third error very closely. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 5, 34 and 17 students respectively. 2 letters had more than 15 errors.

Inappropriate use of prepositions in the following expressions is a matter of serious concern for teachers and learners alike. Wrong usage like 'difficult to me to know about your father', 'you must to be strong', 'if I can be for help', 'inform me for your father' 'inform to the death of your father', 'go front of', etc. sometimes create a serious problem in understanding the relationship among the points in the sentence.

These types of error not only cause unintelligibility but also give others a chance to question the integrity of the message. Sometimes a wrong preposition can altogether change the meaning of the message. For example, though the students have not used it in their letters, the difference in the sense of the sentences 'I am jealous of you' and 'I am jealous for you' is diametrically opposed which may change the complete context. Since students use

English which is their second language, the preposition pattern of native language and the equivalent English words may mean something else in the usage.

### **Word categories**

The next category of errors is confusion among the categories of the words which ends in intermixing them. The four basic categories of words verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs are not distinctly maintained but confused and blurred; word is right but the category is not proper. The error of mixing the categories of the words is slightly less than the previous one. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 6, 32 and 20 students respectively.

Expressions like 'sorry about your father's die', 'I was torn by the die of your father', 'it is not easy to loss somebody' 'my sincerely condolences', etc. substantiate the need to strengthen students knowledge and practice in this category also.

Though the error is there but in this error the sense of the message is rarely distorted; the meaning gets clear; the message gets conveyed properly without much hassles. The students while committing this error end up changing the order of the sentence also as they keep placing the words not according to established norms but according to their understanding. This error though not directly affecting the meaning, does affect the accuracy of the language, a point too strong to be overlooked. Dockrelland Connelly (2009) feel that their observation on the current data add further



weight to the view that vocabulary continues to provide a building block for written language for these young people. Spelling knowledge applies not only to the ability to encode words during writing; importantly, it also underlies individuals' ability to *decode* words during the process of reading (Templeton, 2003a, 2003b). Pikulski and Templeton(n.d.) seem to be so right in their observation when they state that fostering improvement in one aspect has the potential for fostering improvement in another.

### **Verb tenses**

Closely following the error of exchanging the categories of the words is the error of exchanging the forms of verbs or using the wrong or undesirable form of verb. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 5, 30 and 23 students respectively.

When the verb used is right, then the scope for confusion is extremely less but still it fails to justify the wrong usage of the forms of verbs. The stigma of being wrong takes away the credit of right selection of the word in a wrong form. Inaccuracy hints at inefficiency, a term too dangerous to comply with. The ensuing examples like 'Please let me known', 'I has been inform', 'has learn', etc. make it clear but the flow of reading the message gets hindered by even the wrong forms of verbs.

An error which even does not affect the meaning does affect the psyche of the reader, the focus being shifted to the errors which considerably lessens the credibility of the speaker or writer. Another

consideration is the use of the language at school and at home will help students to brush up on their vocabulary words and make them conscious of their grammatical lapses. Teachers, parents and even peers may correct them on their mistakes. This maybe observed on the few mistakes that the highly exposed students made on verb tenses(Masangya&Lozada, 2009).

### **Subject verb agreement**

The last error that has been committed least number of times per letter is the disproportionate subject verb agreement. Subject verb agreement got affected on the scale of subject verb number and picking up the wrong auxiliary verb to complete the combination. 13-15, 10-12 and 7-9 errors were found in the letters of 3, 26 and 26 students respectively. 3 letters have less than 7 errors.

Expressions like 'it was everythings for you', 'he will is together with you', etc. are still strong enough to accommodate the need for improvement.

If the users belong to the same nation or native language, then they may get to know the problem area and understand the meaning in the right context but no excuse can justify the use of error. Though the subject verb agreement is the area where minimum errors are made but it still remains an area of concern where improvement is needed. Poor or improper subject verb agreement is likely to confuse the other party related to either the number or the nature of the action.

## Conclusion

When students, especially rural ones, get exposed to the second language, basics of the language need to be mastered. To understand, learn and use a language, basics of language help a lot. It is only through the basics that the communication gets conveyed with clarity, understanding and confidence. The formal education of children should be centred on developing their ability to reason, to think for themselves and on inculcating a desire to learn. This ability along with the desire to read well written books that expand the student's horizons and knowledge of life is one, if not the major goal of language teaching. ("The Relationship between Spelling", n.d)

To help them get exposed to the basics listening, speaking, reading and writing contribute in their own ways. However, in the years during which children develop as readers and writers, there is an increasingly high relationship among all four aspects of vocabulary—listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Pikulski & Templeton, n.d.). For the study, writing and listening were used to gauge the level of basics. The errors were traced in the seven categories and frequency of errors was highest in 10-12 range. The rural students in their initial stages dabble with various doubts and confusions; the complexity tends to grow multifold. A comparatively easy way to learn a language is to grasp the basics and keep strengthening it, which will eventually lead to perfection. Improvement is possible only when the problem areas can be traced and worked on.

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## One-on-One: Interview with Alan Maley

### Albert P'Rayan

Professor of English & Head, Higher Education, KCG College of Technology, Chennai

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**Alan Maley**, known for his creativity in the ELT world, is a familiar name for those who have been in the field of English language teaching in India. He worked for the British Council as Regional Director and looked after the four southern states for four years from 1984 to 1988. Alan has the experience of serving as the President and Vice-President of the IATEFL, as an academic in the National University of Singapore and at Assumption University, Bangkok, and as a Series Editor for the Oxford University Press (OUP) Resource Books for Teachers series. Currently, he enjoys writing poetry and short stories and attending conferences as a resource person. In this interview with **Albert P'Rayan**, Alan Maley recalls his experience in Madras, talks about the importance of creativity for English language teachers and shares his views on methods, materials, professional development, etc.

**Alan, you have worked over a quarter of a century with the British Council in different countries and have spent over four years (1984-1988) in India. How great was your experience in Madras, now known as Chennai?**

I found my time in Madras both enjoyable and fascinating. The sheer range and variety of people I met and worked with was



enormously rewarding for me. And please do not forget that, as Director of the British Council in South India, I was also responsible for the Council's work, including its libraries, in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, as well as Tamil Nadu. We had a constant flow of distinguished visitors, which brought me into contact with their equally distinguished Indian counterparts – scientists like Francis Crick, politicians like Shirley Williams, artists like Stephen Cox, musicians like Patricia Rosario, writers like William Golding... And of course, many well-known figures from the ELT world, like Pit Corder, Gillian Brown, Charles Alderson and so on.

There was also always something interesting going on locally. There was Kalakshetra (Rukmini Devi was still alive at the

beginning of my stay). There was the annual Madras Music Festival. I also recall attending Krishnamurti's last talk at The Krishnamurti Foundation Gardens off Greenways Road. And, of course, there was all the colour and excitement of the many Hindu festivals – Deepavali, Holi, Pongal, Thaipusam, Navarathni and all the rest. Never a dull moment.

**The ELT community in India has gained a lot from your service in India. What have you gained personally from your stay in India?**

In personal terms, I came to appreciate Indian classical music and dance, both of which were entirely new to me. I also appreciated the opportunity to widen and deepen my enjoyment of Indian literature in English. I was fortunate to meet writers like Nissim Ezekiel, Vikram Seth, Arun Kolatkar and many others. This was also the exciting time Penguin India was establishing its list, headed by David Davidar – when new talents were being published for the first time.

In professional terms, India was quite different from anywhere else I had worked. I came to India from over 4 years in China, and the contrast could not have been sharper. I came to appreciate the complexity of the role and status of English in India in its relationship with the recent colonial past and with the Indian languages with which it co-habited, sometimes uncomfortably. If I learned anything, it was that there are no simple solutions to complex problems.

I was singularly fortunate to have had NS Prabhu as a colleague and to see his Bangalore Project at first hand. His departure from a linguistically-structured syllabus to a procedural syllabus based on a series of carefully staged tasks was a critical moment in the development of our current conceptions of ELT.

I was less fortunate with regard to David Horsburgh: he died a week or two after I arrived in Madras, so I never got to meet him. I did however subsequently visit Neel Bagh, his innovative school in rural Andhra more than once. This bold experiment, which flouted virtually every precept of institutional education was a real eye-opener. The school was open to all, irrespective of age. Classes were vertically structured as to age, not horizontally as in most systems of education, so in one class the ages could range from 5 to 50. There were no tests or exams and no punishments. There was a strong emphasis on the arts and on practical manual skills, with no gender bias – so girls learned motor mechanics and boys learned needlework... The school grew much of its own food. And Horsburgh would not employ trained teachers, claiming that he would have to un-train them before they were suited to work in Neel Bagh.

Subsequently, I was lucky to be able to recruit Robert Bellarmine from CIEFL (as was), and Shantakumari Rajan from Stella Maris College. Both were of inestimable value to me in making decisions about the British Council's possible contributions to the English teaching community.

**Can I say that your stay in India was a rewarding experience for you both professionally and personally?**

Yes, I think my stay in India gave me a number of invaluable things:

~ An enduring interest in the development of English as a language outside its metropolitan bases and implications for language teaching and education in general.

~ An interest in the rapidly evolving new literatures in English.

~ A commitment to finding appropriate ways to teach less privileged students.

~ A new confirmation of the value of literature as a language teaching resource.

~ Likewise for the importance of the arts, especially drama, in language teaching.

~ New insights into the value of creative writing as part of language learning.

**It is interesting to know that David Horsburgh was not for employing trained teachers as he would have to un-train them before they were suited to work in Neel Bagh. Does it imply that it would be difficult for English language teachers who were taught English in a particular way to teach in a different way?**

I suppose it does. But I think it goes beyond that. Most, if not all, formal teacher training aims to provide trainees with a toolkit of techniques and procedures which supposedly help them to operate as a teaching technician in the classroom. The emphasis is heavily weighted in favour of

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knowledge and skills for direct teaching. Horsburgh was less interested in these technicalities and more concerned that teachers should develop attitudes which would enable them to help facilitate the students' learning. This implies a much less direct teaching practice – an ability to observe learners as they learn and to intervene only minimally in the process. For this, it is easier to take sympathetically inclined novices than teachers whose attitudes have been hardened by traditional training.

**Very recently, at an ELTAI conference in Cochin, when I mentioned your name to a group of English language teachers, an enthusiastic teacher said that he liked your poem “Teacher” and quoted the last four lines of the poem:**

**“Maybe you should stick to language,  
forget about anguish.**

**You can't change the world.**

**But if I did that, I'd be a cheater, not a teacher.”**

**How important is it for a teacher of English to talk about global issues and human anguish in the English class?**

I am pleasantly surprised that anyone should have read this poem, which prefaces the book I co-edited with Nik Peachey, *Global Issues in the Creative English Classroom*.

I wrote it because I do indeed believe language teachers are not just teachers of language. I think the notion of the language

teacher as some kind of technician is an impoverished view. My view is of the teacher as educator, which involves far more than instilling the mechanics of the language. Students learn from their teachers not just what they happen to be teaching. I think therefore that teachers have a duty to enter into genuine interaction with their students, and not to hide behind a screen of expertise.

I think too that in our contemporary world, replete with life-or-death issues, we again have a duty to inform our students of the reality of the world they will inhabit as adults. There has been, and continues to be, all too much ostrich-like behavior. Students are people just like the rest of us and are perfectly capable, indeed eager, to come to grips with live issues which concern them, when given the opportunity. Too much education results in a kind of infantilisation of the young. There is an abundant literature on the need for educational reform in this respect. For example John Holt's *How Children Fail*, Ken Robinson's *Creative Schools* and John Taylor Gatto's (2010) *Weapons of Mass Instruction* all make an impassioned plea for change.

I should also say that global issues offers one solution to a perennial problem in language teaching. This is the fact that language teaching does not have a ready-made content, like physics or history. A language is not a subject. Global Issues offers a compelling and relevant content from which language acquisition can flow.

**Your recent book *Global Issues in the Creative English Classroom* which you**

**co-edited with Nik Peachey is in line with your thinking that global issues must be discussed in the English classroom. How is the response from the users of the book?**

It is perhaps premature to ask as the book only came out earlier this year. There is, of course, already a strong current of interest in integrating global issues in our classroom teaching: through the pioneering work of Kip Cates and the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) Special Interest Group (SIG) on Global Issues, the Global Issues SIG in the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) and the TESOL Social Responsibility Interest Section (SRIS).

We are hopeful, because our book is freely downloadable that many teachers will avail themselves of these resources.

**As a creative writer you have written poems and published many books. How did you get interested in creative writing?**

Interestingly enough, I think it was during my time in India that I began writing poetry and stories in earnest. India offered a favourable climate for literature, and an environment in which many people wrote poetry and stories. While in Madras I organized two short story competitions open to the public, both of which led to published collections of the winning entries. We also ran creative writing workshops from time to time – one very memorable one in collaboration with Alan Duff, my dear friend and co-writer, who is now sadly no more. All of this fueled my own interest in creative



writing. Indirectly it also led to the foundation of the *Asian Teacher-Writer Group*, which I set up in Bangkok with Tan Bee Tin (Burma) and Jayakaran Mukundan (Malaysia) and which ran for 12 years with workshops in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Nepal and Indonesia and which also led to published collections of teachers' work. So thank you Madras for getting me going on that.

**Alan, in the book *Creativity in English Language Teaching* which you co-edited with Nik Peachey, you state that “creativity is an endangered species in the current model of education, which is increasingly subject to institutional, curricular and assessment constraints”. Can't a teacher who is not creative be a successful teacher?**

Much depends on how you define 'creative', which turns out to be more complicated than it might seem. Many people still think of creativity as the preserve of a particularly gifted creative elite. The creativity displayed by geniuses is called H (Historical) creativity and refers to acts of creation which have never been done before. P (Personal creativity) refers to creative acts which a given individual has never done before (even if many others have done them previously). Personal creativity can take many different forms and may be exhibited in quite small ways – being more inventive in cooking a dish, finding a quicker way to get to work, making up a joke, etc. all would qualify. So teachers should not feel that they have to display the kind of creativity associated with genius. They can be more creative in quite small ways.

One way of making small changes in one's teaching is to 'do the opposite' from what you normally do. (This heuristic was proposed long ago by John Fanselow in his book *Breaking Rules*.) Doing the opposite of course presupposes that we know what we habitually do. So the first step is to become aware of our unconscious habits. In order to break a habit, we have to know what habits we have. Just a simple example, we may be in the habit of asking a question and expecting an immediate answer. Once we are aware of this, we can change by allowing more thinking time before an answer is given. This is a very small creative step but can have disproportionately large effects. Fanselow's latest book, *Small Changes in Teaching: Big Changes in Learning*, elaborates on this idea.

So part of my answer is that teachers can be creative in quite small ways. But let me also answer the question which I think may be lurking behind your question, which I think goes something like this: 'If teachers are properly trained and work hard to comply with what the system requires, why do they need to be creative?' or perhaps slightly unfairly, 'Surely it's OK to be boring as long as I'm doing my job?' In responding to this, we need to realise the key role which teachers play in their students' learning. Recent research by John Hattie in his 2008 book *Visible Learning* shows that the teacher's personality and the way they go about their work far outweighs any other factor in the teaching-learning equation. So it's not just what you do. It's the way that you do it. We can all, I am sure, think of

teachers who could turn the most interesting activity to dust, and others who could magically transform even the dullest material into gold. I would suggest that we need to devote a good deal more attention than we currently do in training programmes to fostering the teacher qualities which learners respond to. There are a couple of chapters in our forthcoming book (*Creativity in the Language Classroom: From inspiration to implementation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) which make some concrete suggestions about how this might be done.

**In an article on creativity which you co-authored with Rod Bolitho, you state that the “notion of creativity comprises core ideas such as ‘making something new’, ‘perceiving old things in new ways’, ‘finding new connections’, or ‘evoking pleasurable surprise’ (Maley 2003).” Are these ideas applicable to ELT?**

Absolutely. Take a look at the British Council collection you mentioned above, or Chaz Pugliese’s (2010) *Being Creative*. Or my forthcoming book: Alan Maley (2018) *50 Creative Ideas for Language Teachers*. CUP, and many others. These are not whimsical fantasies, they offer practical activities which teachers can use and adapt in their classrooms.

**You started the group called *The C group: Creativity for Change in Language Education*? Could you please share the objectives and activities of the group?**

If readers want to see these in detail, it is better to visit the C Group website. ([http://](http://www.thecreativitygroup.weebly.com)

[www.thecreativitygroup.weebly.com](http://www.thecreativitygroup.weebly.com) ) But in brief, here is what we aimed to do at the outset. We felt that teachers are increasingly under pressure to conform to externally-prescribed regulations in the service of a concept of education based on tightly prescribed curricula and syllabuses, course materials which leave little room for independent action by the teacher, and on high-stakes testing. We knew that there were many teachers whose creativity was being strait-jacketed by this. So our aim was to bring together like-minded teachers from across the world who would unite in offering an alternative view of what education can be like.

**You served as President and Vice-President of the prestigious teacher association IATEFL. What do you think is your major contribution to the IATEFL?**

I think the things I would remember most are two:

One would be the extension of IATEFL Associations in the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. We were able to set up English teacher associations linked to IATEFL in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia (as was) and Hungary. And this network of associations is still developing and expanding. I think this was a unique moment where political and pedagogical change crossed paths.

The other is the setting up of the Wider Membership Scheme in collaboration with

Ray Tongue. The idea was to offer membership of IATEFL to teachers overseas who would not otherwise have been able to afford it. We managed to raise a start-up fund with contributions from publishers and others, which made it possible to launch the scheme.

**In what ways can teacher associations contribute to the members' professional development?**

I believe that, in essence, professional development has to be personal to the teacher. However, Teacher Associations can provide valuable support to teachers, especially those working in remote areas or 'in difficult circumstances' (Michael West). They can serve as an information resource to help teachers keep up to date with what is going on in the profession. They can help bring teachers together either physically through conferences and workshops or virtually through webinars, or through newsletters, etc. for interaction on issues of mutual interest. (The Special Interest Groups – SIGs -which are now a feature of most teacher associations are particularly active in doing this.) Above all they can create a sense of professional solidarity, through the realization that we are not alone in facing problems and that we can deal with them through a shared sense of community.

**How important is continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of English?**

How can teachers *not* continue to develop? The world changes. We have to adapt to change – not necessarily always to welcome

it but to assess how it affects our own lives and practices.

**Alan, you have won many awards. In 2012 you were given the ELTons Lifetime Achievement Award. How significant is the award to you?**

It's always nice to get some kind of acknowledgement but I have never set much store by such outward trophies. The greatest reward is to see one's own students and colleagues taking off independently and developing in largely unanticipated ways. I love that.

**Stephen Krashen in his book *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* (2004) states that extensive reading helps learners develop their language competence. Do you share the same view?**

I absolutely do agree with Krashen on this. Reading is a powerful way of acquiring, recycling, maintaining and extending the language being learned. There is plenty of research evidence to support this view, some of it presented in Krashen's book above, and in Day and Bamford's (1998) *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*.

From a personal point of view I can confirm the beneficial effects of reading as a way of keeping one's foreign languages in good order. I read regularly in three other languages and find that this really helps me to keep them fresh in my mind. I should add that I rarely, if ever use a dictionary. Not because I know all the words but because it does not matter if I don't know them all...

**How does *The Extensive Reading Foundation* which you co-founded promote extensive reading among learners and teachers?**

I am no longer closely involved with the *Extensive Reading Foundation*, except as an advisor. However, the *Foundation* continues to provide up-to-date information on research and on projects involving ER. It offers scholarship awards. It co-sponsors the annual *Language Learner Literature Awards* for newly published graded readers. It offers advice to teachers on how to get started with ER in their classes. And it has just run its fourth World Congress on ER. You can find full details of all of these and more by googling ‘Extensive Reading Foundation’.

**Let us move on to methods. Some language researchers and ELT professionals say that methods are dead and we are in the post-method era. Kumaravadivelu (2006) talks about facilitating “the growth and development of teachers’ own theory to practice” and “postmethod pedagogy”. What is your view on “dissatisfaction with methods” which is being discussed in many conferences these days?**

I am suspicious of methods which appear to offer complete solutions to the business of learning a foreign language. The claim, stated or implied, that ‘If you follow our method, your students will learn...XYZ.’ is never truly sustainable. Such a conception of methodology rests on a supposed direct link between what is taught and what is

learned. It also pre-supposes that ‘we’ know what the learner needs to learn. I take a different view, which prioritises the learners’ own learning pathways towards greater proficiency in the language. This is not something with predictable outcomes, and requires of the teacher a state of preparedness for the unpredictable and a willingness and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Many teachers are not comfortable with this and prefer the spurious sense of security provided by a method. But we need to become comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I would prefer us to speak of principles rather than methods. What are the underlying, key things a teacher needs to do? In my reduced version, these are: to have a rough idea of where they want the learners to go and a flexible set of ways of getting there, to pay attention to what is really happening, to listen to what students say, to acknowledge the presence of the learners as individuals, to present achievable challenges, to offer support when needed – and otherwise to stay out of the learners’ way so they can get on with the business of learning. If that is the post-method condition, then I am in it.

**You have a very radical view on methods. Commenting on teachers who “prefer the spurious sense of security provided by a method” you said that “we need to become comfortable with being uncomfortable”. In the Indian context, is it possible for an ordinary teacher to become comfortable with being uncomfortable?**

If course, it is possible. But in any context, Indian or not, it is never easy. To develop the confidence needed to deal with any unpredictable situation, to shed the comfortable protection of a set of stock responses, is never going to be easy. I think we are only at the beginning of an understanding of how we might help teachers develop spontaneous reactions to an unfolding scenario, minute by minute. One interesting project, developed by Peter Lutzker with Steiner School teachers in Germany was to give them training as clowns. (Not circus clowns but theatre clowns in the tradition of Lecocq in France). Lutzker shows how clowns and

teachers have a lot in common, and how clowning training can have a profound effect on the personality and practice of teachers. His 2007 book, *The Art of Foreign Language Teaching*, describes this project in detail.

**Alan, thank you so much for taking the time to answer all my questions. I am sure the readers of the Journal of English Language Teaching (India) and others will find the interview very useful.**

Thank you for asking me all these questions. It is always good to re-examine one's past, which inevitably leads to re-considering one's present. So thank you.

***Dear member,***

Have you used any of the following digital platforms (or any other also), for promoting online discussions among your students?

Course Management systems

Moodle, Edmodo, Collaborize classroom

Social networking / Discussion sites

Ning, Facebook, Google+, Google groups and Yahoo groups.

Online Discussion Apps.

Collaborize classroom and Subtext

If yes, please send your paper, giving an account of your experiences in using them . and also with what effect, to <eltai\_india@yahoo.co.in> cc to

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# Teaching English to Rural and Semi Urban Students through Jokes



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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this paper is to teach English language to rural and semi-urban college students through jokes. The paper has been divided into three parts. The first part presents various theories of humour and it attempts to show four interpretations of comedy: violation of expectation, punches coming as a surprise, resolution of incongruity through interpretation and the violation of Grecian maxims. In the second part of the paper, an actual classroom experiment is discussed where the B.A first year students of a semi-urban college were introduced to the jokes and then on the basis of those jokes they were instructed to write jokes in their own English. To the satisfaction of both the students and the teacher they were able to construct very interesting and instructive English language jokes. The third part of the paper presents conclusions.*

**Keywords:** *jokes as ridicule, various theories of humour, construction of coherent English discourse)*

## **Teaching English to Rural and Semi-Urban College Students through Jokes**

### **Introduction**

Plato, Aristotle and many early philosophers were against laughter and jokes because the implied scorn, ridicule, hostility and railing. In Benedict's "Ladder of Humility", step ten is a restraint against laughter and step eleven a warning against joking (Gilhus 1997:65).

There are various theories about humour. Chief among these are superiority theory

and relief theory. The Relief Theory of Shaftesbury (1709) is based on hydraulic explanations. That is laughter provides relief to the nervous system just like a pressure relief valve in a steam boiler. Spencer (1911) states that laughter relieves pent up nervous energy. Sigmund Freud in his 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious' (1974: 1905) analyses those situations that lead to *der witz* (jokes), the comic and humour. According to him, in all the three forms, laughter releases nervous energy that was used for a psychological task but then became superfluous as that task was

abandoned. But these theories have become outdated now.

This theory was replaced by Incongruity Theory in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This theory was propounded by James Beathie, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer and Soren Kiekegaard. This theory is based on the perception of something incongruous-something that violates our mental patterns and expectations. Cicero in 'On the Orator' (chapter 63) says that 'the most common kind of joke is that in which we expect one thing and another is said here, here our own disappointed explanations make us laugh.' This approach to joking is similar to the techniques of stand-up comedies today. Greg Dean in his internet article 'How to write Jokes': Structure" in several parts. Below we discuss his main ideas that are based on Incongruity Themes.

### **Stand – Up Comedy**

This comedy has two constituents: the set up and the punch (line). The set-up is the first part of the joke which creates the expectation. The punch line is the last part that violates that expectation. The ending of a joke is congruous with the beginning of the joke.

In other words, the set up creates first story and the punch-line creates a second story that comes as a surprise in other words creates a reframe.

The second thing about a joke is timing. This means what you want to do is to catch your audience completely by surprise – so good timing means saying things when they

least expect it and to say in ways that that hadn't imagined."

### **Examples:**

1) Set up: I saw my grandmother the other day, probably for the last time.

Punch: Oh, she's not sick or anything, she just bores the hell out of me.

2) Set-up: Why are the grand parents and grand children so friendly?

Punch: Because their enemies are common.

In the first example, the expectation is that the grandmother is seriously ill but this expectation is violated in the punch-line when the speaker says that the reason why he does not want to see the grandmother in future because she is boring.

In the second joke, the set-up creates the expectation that the grand-parents and grand children have some common characteristic. They never imagined that it would be parents. So here the punch-line comes as a surprise.

There is a third view about jokes. It states that comedy or humour does not lie in incongruity but in resolution of incongruity through reinterpretation. Thus the target assumption and the punch line shatters it by reinterpretation. The set-up in every human remark has stated or underlying assumptions based on physical laws, societal biases, cultural and national presuppositions, accepted definitions, stereotypes and familiar environments.

Further, the set-up state states the target assumption and the punch line shatters it by reinterpretation of the punch.

Example 3: My grandfather died a peaceful death. He died in his sleep. Of course, the kids on the bus were screaming.

Here the key assumption is that he fell asleep and died in his bed. But to understand the joke we have to reinterpret the location of death. In this case, he fell asleep and died while driving a bus full of kids.

Example 4: "Marriage is a great institution. But I am not ready for an institution."

Here the word institution has two meanings: (a) a system (b) an organization. The humour lies in the shift of meaning of the word institution.

The fourth way of looking at humour is in terms of the violation of Gricean maxims (1975):

- a. Do not say what you believe is false
- b. Do not say for which there is no evidence
- c. Avoid obscurity of expression
- d. Avoid ambiguity
- e. Be brief

We break Rule (a) when we exaggerate or say the opposite of what we think; we break rule (b) if we present funny things as facts; we break rule (c) when we reply to an embarrassing question in a vague or confusing answer; we break rule (d) when we reply ambiguously as above in example (4).

Having discussed the theory of humour/ comedy, we shall now discuss the experiment and how jokes helped the students to communicate in English.

### **The Experiment**

Telling and listening to jokes is always enjoyable in all cultures and in all countries. There are different kinds of jokes; jokes about castes, class, colour; jokes about professions, animals and historical figures. Telling a joke is an art. A good teller holds the audience spell bound. Electronic media has made comedy very popular. A new crop of stand-up comedians such as Kapil Sharma, Raju Shrivastava etc. have become very popular.

It was decided to use this genre in the I BA Class of rural and semi-urban students of Vinayaka Arts and Commerce College, Alwar. They were asked to tell jokes in Hindi or their mother tongue or in English. They very enthusiastically participated in the joke-telling session. They found the class very interesting and at the end of the class, they were able to narrate jokes in English.

### **Student Profile**

The I BA class consisted of a mixed group of 30 students. Some of them received education in English medium schools but most of them studied in Hindi medium schools. They were 16 to 18 years old and most of them belonged to the middle and lower middle class. It was a co-educational class. The girls were also in the same category socially and economically. The knowledge of English of these students was



poor. They had a limited vocabulary and grammar. They could not construct even a simple composition without the guidance of the teacher or a bright class-mate. It was decided to improve their English and to enable them to communicate in English through jokes.

### **Methodology**

The class was divided into 5 groups with 6 students in each group. A group leader for each group was appointed. The student who was very vocal at the time of telling jokes earlier in the class was chosen the group leader. The students were provided some cuttings of jokes from Sunday editions of Rajasthan Patrika and Dainik Bhaskar in Hindi for jokes. They were also encouraged to reproduce jokes from their repertoire. Further, they were also encouraged to translate jokes in English form cuttings of Hindi jokes. Before, the students started their work of collecting jokes or translating jokes, the teacher told 5 jokes to the class to motivate them. There were also supplied with structures and vocabulary where and when needed. The teacher went round the class guiding and motivating them.

### **Teacher's Jokes**

1. Teacher: Five minutes minus five is equal to how much?

Student is quiet.

Teacher tries again.

Teacher: tumare pass 5 idli hain yadi ye 5 idli main le lu toh kya bachega?

Student: Sambhar aur Chatni

2. Some ladies used to sit in a park and gossip everyday. One man observed them daily as they were talking and laughing so loudly.

One day he observed that everybody was silent. He thought some serious thing might have happened. So he went to one lady and asked: 'How come everybody is silent today?'

The lady replied: 'All are present today.'

3. Teacher: Why are some people dark in complexion?

Student: Because they watch Sun TV, Surya TV and Uday TV without sun-screen lotion.

4. Mail from a rich student to his dad:

Dear Dad:

Sidney is a wonderful place. People are nice and I really like it here. But I am a bit ashamed to arrive at my college by pure gold Ferrari 599 GTV whereas all my teachers and fellow students travel by train.

Next day he gets the reply from his father:

My Dear Loving Son,

20 million US dollars has just been transferred to your account. Please stop embarrassing us. Go and get yourself a train too.

Your dad.

5. Some Definitions:

Bacteria: the back entrance to the

cafeteria

Dogma: the mother of puppies

Octopus: an eight sided cat

Here the teacher discussed the syllable structure and clipping formation of words through clipping such as brunch, motel etc.

### Students' Jokes

The students after much group interaction, guidance from the teacher and group translation came out with the following jokes as narrated by the group leaders:

(1) The first group concentrated on definitions through clipping and came out with very funny definitions.

(a) Headmaster: A master with a head.

(b) Green-horn: musical horn of green colour

(c) Grey-market: a market where grey color things are bought and sold.

(d) Open-house: A house which is open for anybody to enter

(e) Comedy: come any day

(f) Nimbooz: a drink which makes your limbs unconsciousness

(2) Press Reporter: You have done encroachment around Galib's tomb.

People: Galib didn't do anything. So we have done it.

(Comedy created by reinterpretation of

set-up)

(3) Man: I took my dog to the vet today because it bit my wife.

Friend: Did you have it put to sleep?

Man: No, of course not- I had its teeth sharpened. (Comedy lies in violation of expectation)

(4) Did you hear about a doctor who tried to be a kidnapper? He failed because no one could read his ransom letters. (comedy-violation of expectation) (the students were given two words, kidnapper and ransom)

(5) Beach inspector: Why have you supplied for the job of coast guard. You're just wasting my time! You can't even swim!"

Job Applicant: 'I know. But seven feet two inches in height. I can wade out quite a long way!' (Comedy based on wrong interpretation of the assumption in the set-up)

(6) I student: Why are you saving all these old magazines?

2<sup>nd</sup> Student: Because I qualify as a doctor in five years' time and I'll need something suitable for my waiting room." (Resolution of incongruity)

(7) Very rich (but old) husband: I'm going to fire my pilot. He nearly killed me again today with his dreadful flying.

Very young (but bored) wife: but, darling, can't you give him one last chance? (The students were given the

- word dreadful by the teacher)  
(Interpretation of the set up)
- (8) Where do you find mangoes?  
Where woman goes. (Word play)
- (9) What do you call a camel with three humps?  
Humphrey (word play)
- (10) Angry employer: You should have been here at nine o'clock.  
Employee: 'Why, What happened?'  
(Interpretation of set up)
- (11) Ram: Man Friday always comes before Thursday  
Mother: 'I'm sorry, dear, but you are wrong.'  
Ram: 'I'm not. Friday always comes before Thursday in the dictionary.'  
(Reinterpretation of set up)
- (12) Mother: Today you have a choice for dinner. You either eat it.... Or you leave it." (word play)
- (13) Priest: Now tell me Ram, how many times a day do you say your prayers?  
Four Year old Ram: Once, Sir. At night.  
Priest: 'But don't you say any prayers at all during the day?'  
Four year old Ram: 'No, Sir. I'm only frightened at night.'  
(Lies by contradicting the assumption, the speakers' springs a surprise)

(14) Buyer: Your lemons are very small.

Salesman: You are standing on the terrace, so they will only look small.  
(Reinterpretation of set-up)

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to present the various theories of humour. Finally we settled on four interpretations of comedy: violation of expectation, punch-lines coming as a surprise, resolution of incongruity through reinterpretation, and finally in the violation of Gricean four maxims. Having discussed the theory of comedy, we come to the actual class-room experiment where the students came out with as many as 14 jokes. These jokes were based on several principles: violation of expectation, springing of a surprise, reinterpretation of the set up, word-play and funny interpretation of the morphological division.

What was most satisfying both for the teacher and the students is that both enjoyed the class and the class was both interesting and instructive. The students were able to come out with some nice jokes which demonstrate that they can communicate in English and this goes to prove that jokes can be fruitfully used to teach and learn English.

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# Vocabulary Instruction: Models Based on Classroom Experiments

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper focuses on teacher innovation in teaching vocabulary. It discusses experiments carried out in the classroom to facilitate vocabulary instruction at the undergraduate level. Vocabulary instruction becomes a major challenge for all language teachers as it is a niche within the language teaching domain. Most often the gap exists when vocabulary instruction needs to be executed in a class where a specific course material or book is not provided. This paper identifies some of the suitable methods that can be used in the classroom for vocabulary instruction. The teacher is required to create contexts to help the learners organise lexical items into suitable contexts. Since vocabulary instruction in isolation may not help in sustaining lexical items for long term, the need to customise instructions for various learner groups are identified and presented here.*

**Keywords:** *Creative Pedagogy, Vocabulary Instruction, Lexical items*

## **Introduction**

With a generation of learners coming from a multitude of exposures, the teaching profession is increasingly becoming a challenge in this century. Various attempts to foster and sustain learning among students, sometimes seem a major challenge for teachers. Creative pedagogy might to a certain extent help facilitate better teaching and learning environments. While the idea of creative pedagogy has existed since the introduction of the Aleinikov's (1989) concept, the idea still has a long way to go in terms of implementation; the primary

bottleneck being the acceptance and use of this model in classrooms. Most often creative pedagogies seem to have a sense of disillusionment among teachers and learners. It leaves both parties wondering whether learning has taken place. With the inability to tackle disillusionment, there is often a compromise of classroom methods that teachers adopt. Also in countries where the number of students present in a class are more than fifty, it becomes cumbersome for a teacher to negotiate and implement a strategy to execute creative pedagogies. However, this is not to state that such

methods cannot be used in these classes. The monotony of classroom instruction and activities can see a change with the introduction of this practice.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are

- to identify suitable creative pedagogical practices that will enable vocabulary building among learners
- to enable teachers to creatively modify and adapt various pedagogical practices to suit heterogeneous classes
- to enable teachers to adapt to creative ways of teaching and help the learners benefit from them

### **Creative Pedagogy**

Creative Pedagogy is just another method adopted by teachers to allow the learners to become active participants in the process of learning. The engagement from both the teachers and the learners, here would be high. The teachers tailor make activities or instructional models to suit the learner groups that they meet with. In large classrooms, where learner involvement is difficult to monitor, this approach could offer some remedy. Creative pedagogy only involves reworking of existing pedagogical practices. It is not to state that a task is entirely novel. Creative pedagogy involves being able to teach creatively. This leaves us with a few important factors that a teacher must consider; generating new ideas to suit a class dynamic, ability of a teacher to shift perspectives in existing methods and

finding something different for the class which is entirely new or elaborate on existing ideas. Being original is highly essential in employing creative pedagogy.

While it is easy to argue that creativity is subjective and difficult to define, one may also want to look at variety and innovation in pedagogy as creative. Creative pedagogy fosters curiosity among learners (Lin, 2011). Whether it is an early level classroom instruction or an advanced level classroom instruction, there is a need to bring in a variety in instruction. Adaptability and novelty are the keys factors in creative pedagogy (Hackbert, 2010). Though there are books that provide models for classroom instructions, there is a need to bring a difference from class to class. What is very important here is the teacher's ability to improvise and innovate (Sawyer, 2006). Every class and its students pose a unique challenge to the teachers and hence it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to think creatively to build and nurture the learning atmosphere. The activities chosen for a class would also require a suitable classroom environment. Appropriate learning environment (Lin, 2011) is also required in order to enable creative learning and expression. Having thus established the concept of creative pedagogy, we would now take a look at some of the practices used in classroom contexts.

### **Classroom Practices**

#### **Vocabulary Instruction:**

Most teachers find teaching vocabulary to be a difficult process. The one simple reason

is that words when taught in isolation seem distant and remote and giving out meanings is not equal to teaching. Moreover, at undergraduate level when many students are likely to be familiar with the words but have difficulty in the usage, the methods need to be different. There could be courses at the undergraduate level that have mandatory English Language and Literature paper or may have a specific English Language paper. In either cases, some of the methods to practice could be as follows;

**Grouping words:** This is a common vocabulary instruction method but generally ignored in conventional classrooms. Grouping words generally involves grouping words of the same category, similar in meaning, similar in context, etc. When learners are directed to group words and label them, the affinity to the words increase, thereby resulting in its usage. Listed below are some of the tried and tested examples:

**a) Grouping words using colour code:** To teach complex words from a text 'The Black Cat' by Edgar Allen Poe, the researcher asked the students of first year Undergraduate course to come with a box of colour pencils/crayons. The instruction

given to the class was to listen to the reading of the text very carefully and underline all complex words in the text with a colour that they think is representative of its meaning. Example – yellow for the word 'docility', red for the word 'sagacious', orange for the word 'equivocal', etc. The text was read by the teacher in the class. Alternately, audio version of the text can also be played. The reading was done with careful voice modulation, tone, stress and pitch. The flow of the reading was also intended to help the learners to pick the right choice of colour for the words in the text. There was no limitation on the use of colours; the students had the liberty to use the colours they felt were suitable to represent a word. After this stage, all complex lexical items in the text were explained to the students with sufficient list of synonyms. The students were asked to see if the colour used by them was relatable to its meaning. In most cases, the students were able to use a relatable colour, though they were not aware of its meaning. This was possible as the students made contextual guesses about the meanings of the words. The students were then asked to group the words as per the colours they had given. The sample list is as follows

<b>red</b>	<b>black</b>	<b>green</b>	<b>blue</b>
sagacious	fiendish	succinctly	imperceptible
conflagration	vile	pertinacity	incumbent
malevolence	hideous	expedient	inscrutable
atrocious	loathsome	felicity	tranquillity

The above list is only a model and is not the entire list. The colour connotation is subjective but the grouping should have the logic of connotation. For example, in the list above, all words related to violence, misdeed, hatred are grouped under the colour black. Similar such notations may be done in class with the texts prescribed or texts that teachers choose to take to the class. The task does not end here. Students were then given smaller topics and were asked to write short paragraphs of 100 words using the words in the list. The students were given a choice of using either words under one group or one word from each group for each of the topics. The topics given were as follows-

- 1) Indian Judicial System
- 2) Mob Lynching
- 3) Water Scarcity

The students were able to use the words in context and now the meaning and its usage were clearly embedded in their minds. This practice maybe sustained regularly to reinforce better vocabulary usage.

**b) Grouping words based on topics:** If a course on English Language and Literature has a prescribed textbook, then this is a very useful activity. This particular activity was conducted with students in an undergraduate class for a common paper on English, where they were given various contexts, for example, 'demonetisation', 'bribery', 'women empowerment', etc and were asked to find at least 10 words from the entire book across various texts that can be grouped for each of the contexts. The

grouping was more like brainstorming words to be used for each of the topics. The students had a list like this based on the prescribed textbook used for the English course.

Demonetisation:

Penny-fights from the poem 'Gunga Din' by Rudyard Kipling

Irrevocable from the story 'The Black Cat' by Edgar Allan Poe

Jeopardize from the story 'The Black Cat' by Edgar Allan Poe

Succumbed from the story 'The Black Cat' by Edgar Allan Poe

Blight from the poem 'London' by William Blake

Scrutiny from the essay 'The Death Penalty as a Sign of the Times?' by Santosh Desai (Department of English, 2016).

Having grouped words for each of the topics, the students were then asked to write a short paragraph of 100 words using these words for the respective topics. This kind of activities helps learners understand not just the meanings of the complex words that they get exposed to but also help them in appropriate usage.

**Picture association:** This activity was conducted to teach new words in an Academic Writing paper for the first year BA students. The students were first given a list of 15 words such as abate, capricious, paucity, and disparage. They were then asked to find pictures to represent the



meanings of these words. Some students had newspaper clippings, while some had some images drawn, while some had cut out pictures from some magazines and so on. The words were written and pictures were stuck beside them. The students were then asked to use the words together in a single context. They were given the liberty to choose the topics of their choice. This approach helped the students expand their ideas from a familiar context established through the picture to a new context that they chose to write about. Though these activities seem simple, the result of these activities and their impact in learning are enormous. The meanings of words cannot be taught in isolation and they do not become part of the productive vocabulary of the students unless the students experiment with the words in a multitude of contexts.

**Narrating techniques:** Another helpful approach to help students to use words appropriately is the art of narrating. This model was used in a course called 'Strategic Storytelling' taught by the researcher. The participants were students of the undergraduate Media and Communication programme.

**a) Object and word association:** The students were asked to bring any little object of their choice to the class. The students were then taken to the garden space on the campus and were made to sit in a circle. Each student had to show their object and give one word reference to it. The entire class had done this with objects

like, keychain, badges, pen stands, little souvenirs, feathers, some antiques, etc. The class was asked to make the list of objects and the words they would want to use to represent or refer to for the particular object. This involves making a list of the objects and any corresponding referring term for the object. For example; Feather referred to as tender. Since this was a course on storytelling, the students were asked to create a narrative using all the objects and the words given as reference into one single narrative, there was no compulsion to use the object with the reference word given alone. They were allowed to mix objects and the reference words, but all the words in the list were to be used for a single narrative. An example of the list is as follows-

1. feather-tender
2. pen stand-anchor
3. keychain-auxiliary
4. badges-adhere
5. antiques-value

The students could use the words and the objects listed in any order or combination to create a narrative of their choice, either fictitious or personal. Since this activity involved restriction in the form of words and innovation in the form of a narrative, it allowed students to think creatively but maintain focus with the help of the words. For example; a story about a lost child trying to find her way and her encounters in her journey.

**b) Story board:** The students of the same course also had another vocabulary activity using storybird.com. The students were provided with a list of random words and then were asked to log into the website, storybird.com. They were asked to choose any of the story templates of their choice, and using the list of words given, make as many story panels as possible. The students were able to create a single story using 5 story panels or used a single panel to create a single story. They had a limitation of using only 30 words per panel but had to use all the words provided in the list. This activity again helps students think creatively. In addition, the ready-made story panels available on the website allow them to garner their thoughts and lead to a single focus write-up.

**Conclusion:**

Creative pedagogy provides both the learners and the teachers with a conducive environment to materialise learning. These pedagogical practices have a long term effect. The scope is also multiple as the learners do not merely get familiar with the words but are also trained to think creatively. These activities have a range of

contextual and contemporary relevance and hence keep the students interested and focussed in class. Their ability to be able to express ideas in a short duration, within class hours, and to be able to use the words suitably is sufficient premise to enable learners to improve their lexical development.

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# A Critical Evaluation of the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum of Telangana State



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## **ABSTRACT**

*One of the most prolific areas of research in teacher education is investigating the pre-service teacher education curriculum, finding its impact, and relevance on the school education curriculum. And this article attempts to apprise and evaluate the curriculum and its various components such as objectives, course book and materials, methodology, need for training and assessment procedures. The article, therefore, lists out implications of NCF (2005) and NCFTE (2010), current pedagogical processes and alternative models of Teacher Education in India. Further, types and models of curriculum evaluation, a review of related studies, and the criteria of the study are presented. It also tries to find out, if any, loopholes within the new B.Ed. (English) curriculum for its effective implementation. Later, based on the item-wise analysis, the interpretations of the study are analyzed and discussed. Finally, findings and implications are presented at the end.*

**Keywords:** *Critical evaluation, B.Ed. (English) Curriculum, perceptions, teacher-trainees & teacher-educators.*

## **Introduction:**

Curriculum evaluation as 'a means of course improvement' and 'observing effects in context' (Cunningworth, 1995) has been stressed to improve a course while it is still fluid. It usually looks at evaluating aims and objectives, course book(s), classroom methodology, teacher training, and evaluation procedures which are practiced in a course. Clark (1987) proposes *Curriculum Product Evaluation* which focuses on products such as courses of

study, syllabi, and textbooks and makes evaluation judgments about these products by employing specified external criteria. And on the other hand, *Curriculum Program Evaluation* is concerned with looking at how a particular curriculum works within its instructional setting.

Practices in Teacher Education in the global world are both learner and learning-centered and at the same time the relationship between theory and practice has been a subject of debate in the field of

teacher education in India (NCFTE, 2010). Further, the role of teacher in this context is more complex in nature who is a co-learner with students and s/he here has to facilitate learning and encourage learners to reflect, analyze, and interpret in the process of knowledge construction. And NCERT (2005) categorically highlighted that there is an urgent need to bring out systematic and pedagogical reforms in education system and particularly in teacher education programs by focusing on the child. Besides there is a need to change the pedagogical processes of the teacher education programs so that there will be a revolution in teaching, and teacher educators which will be reflected in teacher trainees in the colleges of teacher education.

#### **Rationale of the study:**

As a part of the curriculum renewal process in the State of Telengana, new curriculum and textbooks were introduced at all levels in 2008 to cater to the needs of both in-service and pre-teachers. And, it is believed that the present curriculum hardly addresses needs and expectations of teachers of English in the state. Further, there is no correlation between the school syllabus (textbooks) and the methodology that are practiced in teacher training colleges.

Though the B.Ed. (English) is in the form of English medium but, the classroom processes are rarely carried out in English in most of the teacher training colleges. There are presently a few universities and institutions in India (the EFL-University,

Hyderabad; RIE, Bangalore; & HM Patil Institute of English, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat) which have been providing a pre-service teacher education program at the B.Ed. level to the prospective teachers of English in India. And, it is a bold effort and challenge by the curriculum planners who supported and started for the first time English as method-1 from the academic year 2008-09. Further, lack of proficiency, lack of positive perceptions on the suggested methodology and classroom processes of in the colleges of teacher education prompted the researcher drawing attention to carry out the present study. Hence, the study aims to evaluate the revised B.Ed. (English) curriculum and its components.

#### **Literature Review:**

##### **Curriculum for Teacher Education - Major Changes:**

**Crandall** (2000) considers that language teacher education is a microcosm if teacher education and many of the trends in current language teacher education derive from theory and practice in general teacher education. These trends include:

1. a shift from Product-oriented theories to constructivist and process-oriented theories of teaching-learning, to focus on teacher cognition, reflection in teacher development (Crandall 1994, Freeman 1998)
2. focus on situated teacher cognition and practice
3. development of concrete and relevant linkages between theory and practice

4. teachers' prior learning experiences (Lortie 1975), practices, opportunities for practical experiences and conscious reflection that play a powerful role in shaping their views of effective teaching and learning
5. teaching that is viewed as a profession in developing theory and directing their professional development through collaborative activities.

**Hayes** (1997) suggests questionnaire as a means for the 'evaluation of a training course' where training sessions are summatively evaluated and explores that when teachers deal with large classes, the training "methodology should be primarily task-based and inductive'. **Richards J.C.** (2001) discusses advantages and limitations of a textbook and the criteria for the evaluation of a textbook. He considers program, teacher, learners, content and organization of material, pedagogical factors and design of materials including etc. become a basis for evaluating a textbook. Additionally, he includes *Cunningworth's* (1995) criteria for evaluating textbooks and materials in his study. According to the criteria materials should:

1. match aims and objectives of the language leaning program.
2. reflect present and future uses which learners will make the language.
3. to equip students to use language effectively for their own purposes.
4. consider students' needs to facilitate their

learning processes. and

5. support for learning and mediate between the target language and learners.

**Rod Ellis** (1997) distinguishes two types of material evaluation: one *predictive evaluation* where decisions are made about what materials are to be used in the classroom. One way of carrying out such as a study is to rely on some expert published reviewers suggestions where they identify some specific criteria materials for evaluating materials. And the other *Retrospective evaluation* examines materials retrospectively through an empirical evaluation through summative judgments of materials. Further, using students' journals and questionnaires are adopted to judge the effectiveness of teaching in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions of the present study:

- 1) What perceptions do the teacher-trainees have about the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum?
- 2) What perceptions do the teacher-trainers have about the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum?
- 3) What perceptions do the teacher trainers have about the Revised B.Ed. (English) course book?
- 4) What support do the teacher trainers/ educators need to facilitate effective teacher preparation?

## Objectives of the present study

The study here attempts

- to find out perceptions of the teacher-trainees about the new B.Ed. (English) curriculum
- to find out perceptions of the teacher-trainers about the new B.Ed. (English) curriculum
- to find out perceptions of the teacher-trainers about the new B.Ed. (English) course book
- to understand and suggest support to the teacher- trainers on the effective classroom transaction of the units of new B.Ed. (English) course book
- to appraise and evaluate the new B.Ed. (English) curriculum and its components,

and

- to provide objective solutions for proper implementation of the curriculum

## Methodology- Sample & Procedure for analysis

The sample for the study is sixteen teacher educators from sixteen B.Ed. colleges and hundred teacher-trainees studying in colleges of teacher education in the State of Telangana. To evaluate the curriculum, the tools employed are: questionnaire to the teacher-trainees and the teacher-educators, a checklist for course book evaluation, and informal interviews with the teacher-trainees and teacher educators. The main type of analysis used in the study is both statistical and descriptive analysis through item-wise analysis for each section of the data.

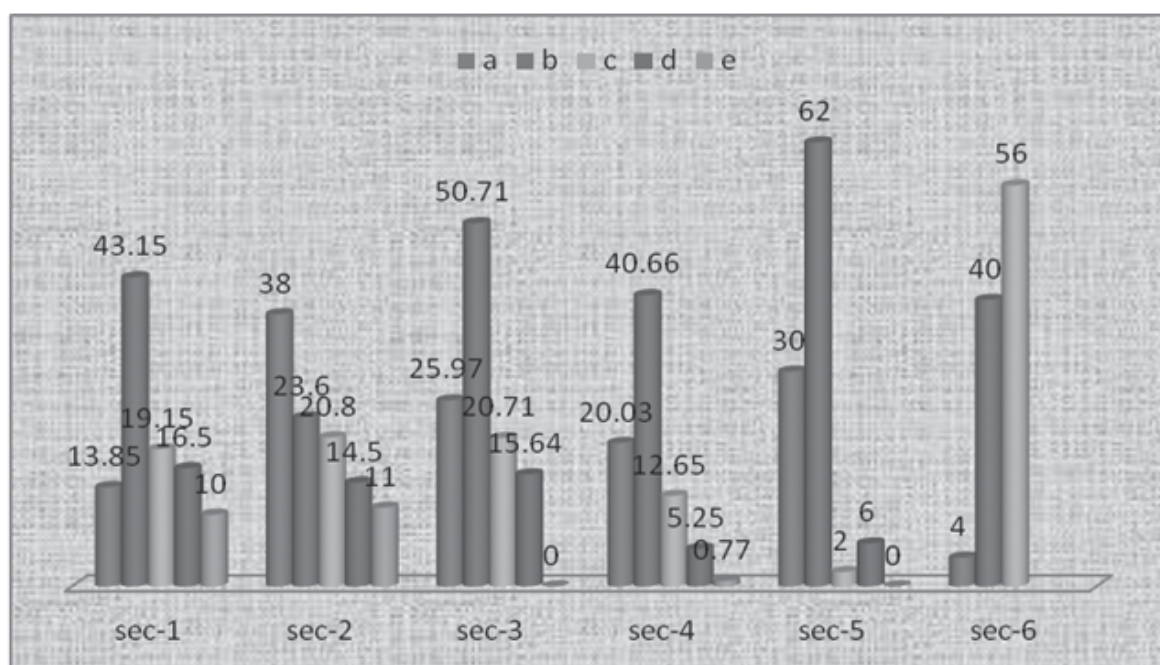


Table-I (a=objectives, b=methodology, c=content, d=course book, e= assessment procedures)

**Interpretation of the teacher-trainees' questionnaire:**

The questionnaire includes twenty two statements which were divided into six sections such as Aims and Objectives; Methodologies; Textbook and materials; Need for training; Assessment and evaluation and the Use of mother tongue (see appendix-I).

From the table-I: The perceptions of the teacher-trainees about the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum are as follows:

1. Only 56% of teacher-trainees agree that the aims and objectives of the revised curriculum are relevant to their practical field.
2. Sixty two percent of teacher-trainees felt

that they feel *more difficulty* in adopting the communicative language teaching and learner-centered approaches to English language teaching.

3. Seventy six percent of teacher-trainees felt that the new components and units of course book are useful and *practicable* for effective language teaching.
4. Large classroom (20%) and lack of proficiency in English (40%) were considered the factors which affect the teacher-trainees' Block-Teaching.
5. Ninety two percent of teacher-trainees felt that the use of continuous and comprehensive evaluation helps them through internal assessment and promotes effective learning.

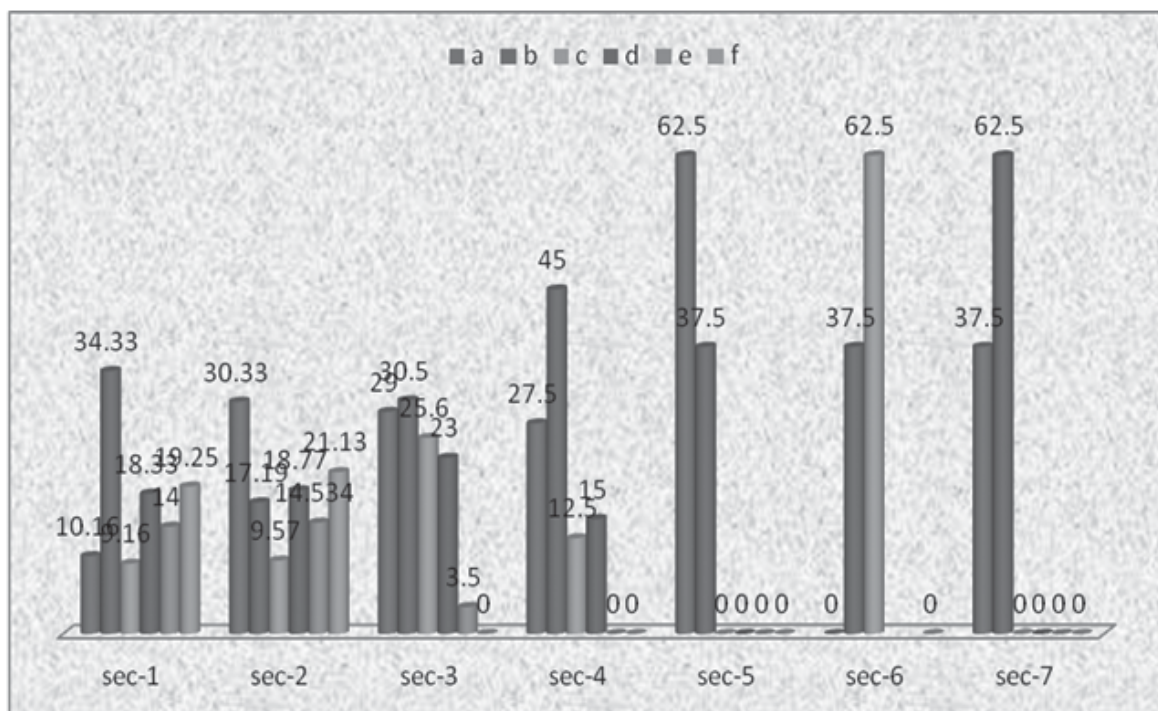


Table-II (a=objectives, b=methodology, c=content, d=course book, e=need for training, f= assessment procedures)

6. Forty percent of teacher-trainees felt that the use of mother-tongue while teaching English as a second language help them have effective classroom transaction of units. And 56% of teachers felt that they never use their mother-tongue during the classroom transaction.

#### **Interpretation of the Teacher-educators' questionnaire:**

The questionnaire has 22 statements which were divided into seven (7) sections such as Aims and Objectives; Methodologies; Textbook and materials; Need for training; Assessment and evaluation, the Use of Mother Tongue and Teacher's Manual (see appendix-II).

From the table-II: The perceptions of the teacher-trainers have about the Revised B.Ed. (English) Curriculum and materials are as follows:

1. Only 44 % of teacher-trainers agree that the aims and objectives of the revised curriculum are relevant to their practical field.
2. Forty seven percent of teacher-trainers felt that they feel *more difficulty* in adopting the communicative language teaching and learner-centered approaches to English language teaching.
3. Sixty percent of teacher-trainers felt that the new components and units of course book are useful and *practicable* for effective language teaching.
4. Large classroom (27%) and lack of

proficiency in English (45%) were considered the factors which affect the teacher-trainers' Block-Teaching.

5. All the teacher-trainers felt that the use of continuous and comprehensive evaluation helps the teacher-trainees through internal assessment and promotes effective learning.
6. Thirty seven percent of teacher-trainers felt that the use of mother-tongue while teaching English as a second language help them have effective classroom transaction of units. And 63% of teacher-trainers felt that they never use their mother-tongue during the classroom transaction.

#### **the overall interpretation of the data:**

A close comparison of the responses received from both teacher-trainers and teacher-trainees show that there is an agreement between the perceptions of two. The perceptions on the revised curriculum are as follows:

- Ø It has a balance of theory and practice and provides proper training for the prospective teacher-trainees.
- Ø It has no separate language proficiency test for the students who opt for English as method -1.
- Ø There are no particular criteria for the allotment of regional medium schools for the B.Ed. English.
- Ø It promotes global knowledge of teaching English among the teacher-trainees.



- Ø The training and assessment procedures are innovative and improve proper ways of teaching English.
- Ø The objectives suggested are adequate to cater to the present needs of the teacher-trainees.
- Ø It provides opportunities to the teacher-educators to treat every teacher-trainee as a *uniform child*.
- Ø With the help of the revised English as method-1, the real teacher-educators get a chance to construct the English language habits among the teacher-trainees.
- Ø The inclusion of two grammar components helps teacher-trainees become aware of teaching those components effectively.
- Ø All the teacher-trainers felt that they require a special orientation/ training should be conducted for effective pedagogical awareness among the teacher trainers.

#### **Conclusions:**

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the teacher-trainees were satisfied with the revised curriculum since pedagogical processes are learner and learning-friendly. Further, it had a balance of theory and practice and the inclusion of the grammar components fulfilled the needs of the teacher-trainees and provided opportunities for honing their skills. Besides, the course book, the training procedures and assessment processes were learner-friendly.

Further, the content and material suggested is based on the teacher-trainees' needs and helped them getting a global view of teaching English as a second language. Additionally, the classroom instruction and pedagogical training helped them be aware of the existing problems in teaching English. Besides, the inclusion of Unit 2 and 3 (introduction to grammar- II & III) in the revised syllabus is very useful to the prospective English language teachers for effective teaching of grammar components and it modifies the teacher-trainees' behavior and guides them to be effective English language teachers.

#### **Limitations:**

1. This study was based on the data collected from only sixteen (16) teacher-trainers and one hundred teacher-trainees from teacher education colleges from Telangana state.
2. It aims to find out the teacher-trainees studying English as method-I at the B.Ed. level.
3. It is confined to only studying the perceptions of teacher-trainees at the pre-service teacher education level and teacher-trainers who teach English as a method-I at the B.Ed. level.

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## Book Review

**Samantray, K (2015). *Academic and Research Writing*. Hyderabad. Orient Blackswan. ISBN 9788125060253 (pp 146: price Rs 115/-)**

Writing has been a topic of concern at all levels of language teaching. There has been adequate research to find reasons for inherent reluctance to take to writing readily. We spend less than 10% of our communication time for writing and this is abysmally low. Given this situation, the teacher's concern to help learners with good writing skills becomes a daunting one. A teacher not being proficient in writing needs as much help in writing as the learner.

The book under review has a focus on teaching writing at the tertiary level and is appropriately titled *Academic and Research Writing*. However, the subtitle declares that this is a course book for undergraduates and research students. When one reads through this book, one finds that it is better suited to research students than the undergraduates. Though undergraduates are involved in project work and creating reports, the actual research in all its seriousness happens only at the postgraduate level. At this level, what is discussed in the first few chapters may help the learners revise their knowledge and serve as a remedial course before launching on research writing?

The book is well organized in nine chapters. The first chapter which is an introduction provides a panoramic view of the book and helps the learner become familiar with different parts of the book and their uses. The next two chapters of the book are

devoted to mechanics of writing where the author discusses grammar and vocabulary. A chapter on mechanics could include some aspects of graphology which is unique to English, especially so when compared with Indian languages. For example, Indian languages do not use capital letters; most of the letters have a uniform size; Indian languages have different types of strokes, the spacing between words and compounding of words follow different conventions in Indian languages; traditionally Indian languages had only two punctuation marks the full stop and the comma represented by two vertical lines and a single vertical line respectively. The wide variety of punctuation marks we use have been adopted from the western literature more recently. A word about this would be well in place.

Chapters four to six focus on different aspects of academic writing. What needs to be appreciated here is that the author has paid more attention to aspects of discourse rather than form of writing. She discusses in detail the concept of 'text structure' and 'paragraphs'. The order could have been reversed from point of view of gradation and logic. Focus on discourse is a very happy departure in the days of the computer when templates are readily available for writing letters, reports etc. The form has less importance in comparison with the content. Therefore the author rightly devotes her attention to the content development without harping on the need for a fixed proforma.

The last three chapters are devoted to

research writing and cover a wide range of topics. In my considered opinion, this is an important part of the book and the author could have devoted more space for this. The topics covered include form of the research report (here form is essential), the writing style, different sections of writing a research article, formalities to be observed while submitting a paper for publication, reviewing research, quoting from other sources (primary, secondary and tertiary) and providing a bibliography. Each of these topics has been discussed properly with good examples and this needs to be commended.

More than the contents of the book, the manner in which the book is written and organized conveys more than what is intended. The author has put across her ideas in a very lucid style. The language is simple and direct and there are no hurdles in understanding the content. She advocates the advantages of using a simple language without preaching about it. The concepts about writing which are introduced are not simple. Concepts like use of appropriate sentence structure (formal language employed for academic writing as opposed to personal writing - see pp 28-29) in academic writing, paying attention to coherence while developing a paragraph (the basic unit of writing) (see chapter 6), referencing and citation (see pp 79 -84) are not only well explained but are adequately supported by good tasks. Throughout the book there are 47 task types with good rubrics and properly graded items. Each task type has a number of activities and

each one has been well thought of. This makes the book totally self-instructional and learner-friendly. With the help of a teacher the learners get better guidance.

Though the author has provided a number of tasks in the book, the author has chosen not to provide a key to these tasks. I consider this as a minor weakness. As one can see many of the tasks are open-ended and cannot have a definite answer. But there are tasks e.g. Activity 3.3 (pp24-25); Activity 4.4 (pp30-31); Activity 5.1 (pp39-40); Activity 7.2 (pp 70-71); Activity 7.7 (p 86); Activity 9.3 (pp114-115) (these are just a chosen few, there are more activities like these) which have specific answers. A key to such activities will help the learners and also the teachers in a big way. A key is an essential source of verification and has a right of place in any good course book.

The book carries two appendices. The first of the two appendices is highly relevant as it provides a blue print of a dissertation. A word of caution could have been provided here suggesting that the blue print is recommendatory and not mandatory. This is to avoid duplication of the same format dissertation after dissertation. The second of the appendices is a compendium of common errors and is generally helpful to students.

The book is a good addition to the student bookshelf.

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## Book Review

**Viswanathan, Revathi (2017). *Technology Enhanced Language Teaching and Training in the Digital Era*. Poland. Amazon Fulfillment. ISBN 9781521873755 (pp.111: Price Paperback \$14.37, Kindle \$4.61)**

When I was asked to review the book, *Technology Enhanced Language Teaching and training in the Digital Era*, I was pleasantly surprised to understand that the book is to hold a unique status of bearing a foreword from the author's guru and a review by the author's student.

The book is mainly about how the teachers of English can use different web resources and tools, while providing training on language skills, to address the challenges faced in traditional classrooms. However, it also provides inputs to other academic stakeholders that include administrators of institutions and curriculum developers to address the shortcomings. It caters to the needs of research scholars with English Language Teaching (ELT) using technology as specialisation and the autonomous teachers and learners of English as well.

In her foreword, Dr. V. Saraswathi, Retd. Professor of English, University of Madras has commended the author, Revathi Viswanathan, on her extensive knowledge of the latest tools available in the digital era. Commenting on the book she says, "The seven chapters beautifully integrate technology into the language curriculum". The book contains eight chapters and the eighth chapter is completely devoted to use of technology for professional development

of teachers.

The first chapter enumerates how various factors like infrastructure, curriculum, large classrooms, students' attitude and time allocated for teaching have a great bearing on English language teaching and stand as a barrier to handle skill based tasks. It explains to the readers the role of different academic stakeholders in modifying the infrastructure, curriculum and teaching-learning methods

The second chapter throws light on how electronic gadgets and internet tools have been used by English teachers across the globe to provide training on language skills. In the third chapter, the author elaborates on the underpinnings of language learning theories and thus prepares the readers to design tasks, with learner as central focus, using the tools she has planned to introduce in the forthcoming chapters.

The next three chapters introduce to the readers a variety of websites for resources and digital tools that can be used for teaching. The reader, if a teacher, will get familiarised with numerous websites that can be used as resources to teach grammar, pronunciation and language skills. A student reader with aspirations to take up standardised tests will get to know the sites that offer training and mock tests. The readers also get a hang of creating and delivering tasks using Hot Potatoes, WebQuests, Blogs, Wikis, YouTube, Podcast, Twitter, mobile devices, and Google Drive available for free in the World Wide Web. The readers are also introduced to two

Learning Management Systems (LMS), Nicenet and Moodle, using which the teachers can create virtual classroom and conduct courses beyond classroom. A step-by-step description of their features, pictorial representation of how they can be used, sample of language tasks the author had prepared using these tools for her students deserve a special mention. Though the usefulness one of these tools, Wikis, had been conveyed through students' feedback, the author could have done the same or registered her brief observations on learner achievement for all other tools taken up for discussion.

The seventh chapter creates familiarity on testing and evaluation tools and ways of using the teaching tools to create project based and flipped classrooms. The final chapter focuses on the continuing professional development of teachers and suggests readers to take up online courses on their areas of interest in Coursera, Edmodo and share their knowledge by making presentations online through Skype,

YouTube videos and WiziQ.

The language used by the author is simple and understandable. It would have been better if the author had considered introducing Edmodo, an LMS along with Nicenet and Moodle. Similarly, a list of questionnaire tools mentioned in the final chapter could have been dealt with in the seventh chapter. These would have helped to achieve better coherence.

The author has referred to numerous research articles on ELT methods and practices almost in all the chapters, making the book a rich source of information for research scholars. The research scholars can explore on some of the tools suggested by the author and study their effect on learner achievement. This is a useful book for practicing and aspiring teachers belonging to the digital era.

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## READING ACTIVITY

### READING POPULAR TEXTS\* (Predicting\*)

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

- Objective** : To enable readers to personalize the practice of predicting before, during and after reading a text to make reading an exciting exercise
- Participation** : Individual
- Material** : Any popular text (Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*)
- Preparation** : Employing the prediction strategy consciously while reading any popular writing

#### Procedure:

- **Before reading** - When you look at the cover page of the book which has the details such as author - Stephen R. Covey, the title - *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective people*, the sub-title – *Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* and the information – 15 million copies sold - even before reading the first page you could predict what the book is likely to be and you stand to get the most even if your predictions are different from that of the author. Looking at each detail further on the contents page enables one to continue to make predictions about what each of them would be.
- **While reading** - Prediction has to continue throughout the reading. For instance, Covey writes, “Basically, there are three kinds of assets: physical, financial, and human. Let’s look at each one in turn.” (p 54). Before he describes those assets you could think of what he would mention about each of them and even if your predictions are totally divergent you needn’t be worried as the author has different perspectives.
- **After reading**– After reading the entire text you could verify how far your predictions were correct or incorrect. If correct, what information were you making use of to get them and if incorrect, what went wrong? Such an analysis would enable you to make accurate predictions in the next attempt.

#### Learning outcomes:

- 1) Learners realize that the prediction strategy compels them to stay focused on their reading without any distraction – in today’s context concentration has become a major issue for majority of readers.
- 2) Learners recognize that setting predictions constantly while engaged in reading can enable them to become creative readers.

**Further activity:** While reading any text, especially popular texts, consciously employing the strategy of prediction.

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\***Popular Texts:** Popular texts are those written by professional writers for a general audience on varied subjects ranging from self-help, motivational, relationships to biographies and memoirs. Some of the well-known writers are Paulo Coelho, Stephen Hawking, Napoleon Hill, Rick Warren, John Gray... so on. Their books are sold in millions and translated into several languages.

\***Predicting:** Prediction is anticipating or thinking ahead of what one reads. It, in fact, begins with the moment a reader looks at the title of a book/article and continues with throughout the reading process and ends with only after reading it. This strategy engages readers actively with the text and makes the exercise interesting as they find their predictions turning out to be similar to that of the writer. Even if they are different they can draw satisfaction of their creativity.