

## ELTAI Webinars

The Vision Statement of ELTAI includes six crucial objectives and two of these relate to (a) providing a platform for teachers to meet periodically and (b) disseminating information in the field of ELT.

The pandemic brought in severe restrictions in meeting with these objectives, hence the office-bearers of the Association thought of strategies to keep the contacts alive. The result was the launching of webinars on a weekly basis, which would fulfil both the objectives stated above. As per our plans, we decided on the following:



- Webinars would be held on Sunday afternoons between 4.30 and 5.30 pm.
- Webinars would have a specific focus on each Sunday.
- If a month had more than four Sundays, the fifth Sunday would be a non-webinar day.

Based on these decisions, we made a list of resource persons available within and outside ELTAI. Some scholars from outside the country were also invited to give talks.

The first Sunday of every month focuses on school teachers teaching English. The resource persons would present topics based on classroom techniques, new materials, and help the teachers update their knowledge. Often pieces from textbooks were used for discussion in these sessions.



The second Sunday has a focus on teachers teaching at the tertiary level. The resource persons would provide theoretical inputs on recent developments in teaching, and also topics related to ICT, skills development, research design, and other related concepts.

The third Sunday is earmarked to address students across disciplines (both secondary and tertiary level). These sessions would be interactive with some students being the discussants posing questions to be answered by the resource persons.

The fourth Sunday of the month discusses topics related to literary studies and the targeted audience would be teachers from colleges, universities, and research scholars. The topics discussed would include various genres of literature and the ways of teaching them.

On an average, each Sunday the webinars are attended by nearly 400 participants. There have been occasions when the number crossed 1000. We started the webinars on 3rd May 2020 and we have had 75 webinars to date. The encouragement we have received in the form of positive comments from the participants and the response from the resource persons have given us the necessary impetus to continue the series.

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## ELTAI READING CLUBS

It is a matter of grave concern that the “visual” generation of today has strayed away from ‘the culture of reading’ – a skill recognized as the mother of all skills. Even when they happen to read, they seem to be mostly flipping through non-serious texts.

It is essential to equip our youth with the 21st century skills. The youth need to achieve a reasonable degree of competence in creative thinking, critical thinking, design thinking, emotional and social intelligences, and other related cognitive skills, which can effectively be developed through reading. If the reading habit is not developed during their school/college days, the possibility of cultivating it ever in their lifetime is very remote. Keeping these facts in mind, ELTAI started the Reading Movement through Reading Clubs in institutions with the following objectives:



- To create a love for reading in students and enable them to become better, lifelong readers;
- To familiarize them with different text types (genres) and enable them to engage in appropriate reading strategies;
- To enable them to reflect on what they read in order to lead them to become effective writers and speakers; and
- To employ synchronous (both virtual and physical meetings) as well as asynchronous modes – Web tools, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Blogs, Reading Logs, MOOCs (audios, videos, quotes, blurbs, reviews, etc.) to sustain their interest.

The institution willing to start a reading club becomes a long-term Member of ELTAI and signs an MOU with ELTAI. It builds a library with a token initial funding from ELTAI and students’ contributions. The Reading Club conducts reading and discussion activities and observes some of important events, such as the International Reading Day, the International Reading week, and the International Reading Month.



The reading club, to a large extent, is learner-driven and learner-managed under the guidance of mentors/faculty members. The students meet regularly to interact among themselves. Based on a reading framework, reading materials are provided by ELTAI incorporating audio/video materials, e-texts, printed texts of different kinds depending on the interests of students, the texts ranging from the canonical to contemporary literature, mass media and social media texts. So far, Reading Clubs have been started in a few colleges across India and a few more have expressed their interest. We would like members to encourage their institutions to become part of this huge movement.

## ELTAI VIZAG BLOG

ELTAI Visakhapatnam Chapter, following the footsteps of ELTAI, has been organizing practically useful activities for its members, other English teachers, and students. To further the benefits to its chapter members and to inform a wider range of teachers of its activities, it has recently started a blog called 'ELTAI VIZAG'.

It provides opportunities for quick sharing of the activities organized by ELTAI Visakhapatnam Chapter and it also shares information about the activities organized by national and international bodies. The Chapter, through this blog, gives an opportunity to its members to express their views on different aspects of ELT and English literature. Members including the office-bearers of the chapter voice their views on different issues related to language and literature.

It draws the attention of the English teachers and encourages them to share their practices related to the profession of teaching English: teaching experiences, teaching approaches and methods, supporting learning with technology, and teachers' self-development. For student members, it will be of great help to hone their creative writing skills. Thus, starting the blog has created a platform for voicing and sharing viewpoints.

It has been decided to use the blog creatively to reach out to every corner of Vizag and its surrounding areas. Besides this, it can be a model for the members to start their own individual blogs for better expression and exchange of information.

### The ELTAI Café: Podcasts for the English Teacher



ELTAI South Chennai Chapter proudly presents The ELTAI Café, a series of fortnightly podcasts as part of its professional development activities for teachers. The role of the English teacher in a country like India has been changing constantly and there is so much to learn, to explore and to share. Teachers from schools, colleges, and universities can leverage a

common platform regarding teaching, testing, and learning resources and strategies. The podcasts aim to bridge the gap by creating real time opportunities for teachers to learn and grow. The ELTAI Café podcasts plan to explore and investigate ideas about teaching English in Indian classrooms and everything related to it. According to the new-age idiom that listening is the new reading, the podcasts can be a very helpful resource for teachers across boundaries. Teachers are also welcome to participate and share their experiences with the podcasts team. The major focus areas of the podcasts include teacher narratives, interviews, book discussions, teaching activities, research practices, expert talks, panel discussions, students' corner, teaching resources, and tech tips.

ELTAI Café will soon be available on Spotify, Stitcher, and other social media spaces, and will have no financial commitments for users.



## INTERACTIONS WITH A CREATIVE TEACHER

*Mrs. Deepali More is an Assistant Teacher at Z. P. Lower Primary School, Ramwadi, Dist- Satara. She has successfully employed some techniques from Constructivism for teaching English.*

**Dnyandeo:** Good Morning, Mam! You have been a very creative teacher in the face-to-face classrooms. How are you dealing with teaching and learning in the pandemic situation?

**Deepali:** Good morning, sir! I felt rather depressed at the beginning. But later on I got adjusted with it. Initially, it was really difficult to cope with this online mode of teaching as most of my students did not have essentials like devices necessary for online learning. Most of them belong to economically weaker families. And many of the parents working in the larger cities like Mumbai and Pune have lost their jobs or are working on lower wages. So it was a challenge to deal with this situation. On the other hand, schools were closed during the pandemic. I went door-to-door canvassing and discussing problems of students. Parents came up with the idea of sharing of smartphone for online learning and sharing even the recharge costs. This was a great solution and parents helped me a lot. I also made the PCs in the school available to my students.



**Dnyandeo:** This was the basic problem. What problems did you face while teaching English online?

**Deepali:** It was a bigger challenge. As you have seen, we have been using constructivism for teaching all the subjects. For English also we have developed certain techniques like games, board work, wall work, floor work, etc. These have helped me a lot.



**Dnyandeo:** Yes. In the face-to-face classroom it is very effective. How did you manage it in the online mode?

**Deepali:** It was quite expensive. I visited my school regularly and conducted all the classes from there. I used my mobile phone for lectures and tried to deal with every element. Because of portability of mobile phone, it was easy to take it wherever I wanted. I kept on teaching everything. I followed the wall work and floor work mostly.

**Dnyandeo:** What differences did you notice?

**Deepali:** So many. First, it was very slow. Secondly, I had to move camera to the same object or painting or card again and again. Basically, I had difficulty in guessing who was doing what. This put me in an awkward position first. But then I had to search for a solution and luckily found one. I attached my laptop to the projector and used it for keeping watch on students as well as to display things on a larger screen. It was a kind of exercise but it helped me a lot. Now we have got it routinized.

**Dnyandeo:** Really a smart work. Let's hope that the situation will be better soon and you will be able to resume your face-to-face classrooms again. Thank you so much for your valuable contribution to the field and sharing your experience with us.

