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Achieving Academic Proficiency Standards in Higher Education
through Corpus-Based Language Teaching – English for Specific
Purposes: Perspectives and Pedagogic Implications – Against the
Experts – Action research through the Mentorship Model: A
Sustainable framework for professional development – Efficacious
Presentation Schemata – Enhancing Communication Skills in
English through Interactive materials

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The English Language Teachers' Association of India was founded on August 7, 1974 by the late Padmashri S. Natarajan, a noted educationist of our country.

Periodicity

Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT) is published six times a year: in February, April, June, August, October and December.

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Articles on ELT are welcome. Share your ideas, innovations, experiences, teaching tips, material reviews and resources on the net with your fellow professionals.

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- To provide a forum for teachers of English to meet periodically and discuss problems relating to the teaching of English in India.
- To help teachers interact with educational administrators on matters relating to the teaching of English.
- To disseminate information in the ELT field among teachers of English.
- To undertake innovative projects aimed at the improvement of learners' proficiency in English.
- To promote professional solidarity among teachers of English at primary, secondary and university levels and
- To promote professional excellence among its members in all possible ways.

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Padmasree S. Natarajan
 Founder Editor and Publisher

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Dear Reader

It is said that experience is the best teacher. Teachers and learners of English as a Second / Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) look forward to reading stories of how people who did not have adequate exposure to the English-speaking world during their school days managed to learn the language and mastered it. I read one such wonderful story of an ELT professional a month ago when Shreesh Chaudhary, former professor of English, IIT Madras, sent me the transcript of a talk given by Robert Bellarmine in 2013 at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras and asked me whether it could be published in the Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT). Like Chaudhary I found the story very motivating and decided to publish it in the current issue of the journal.

Bellarmino, a progressive thinker in ELT in India, is known almost to all the members of the ELTAI and to the subscribers of this journal. His interviews and book reviews have appeared in JELT in the recent past. Bellarmine retired as English Studies Officer of the British Council in India in 1997. Before taking up the position of ESO at the British Council, he taught at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad. Besides teaching “slum children” under his “Teaching English to the Disadvantaged” (TED) Project, he has conducted numerous communication seminars for executives in industries. The article titled ‘Against Experts’, I am sure, will make us reflect and raise many questions. Enjoy reading the story, reflect it and do try to find answers to your critical questions.

In the article titled ‘Achieving Academic Proficiency Standards in Higher Education through Corpus-Based Language Teaching’ Vijayakumar, who teaches at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, KSA, discusses the importance of corpus-based approach to language teaching. He discusses how corpora can assist ELT practitioners achieve high quality standards in higher education.

Jalson Jacob and Lal C.A. in their paper on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) state that though ESP has gained considerable prominence in the global scenario it is still in its infancy in India and stress the need for academics to broaden the knowledge of its perspectives and pedagogic implications.

In the article titled ‘Action Research through Mentorship Model: A Sustainable Framework for Professional Development of English Teachers’ Monishita H Pande and Ipshita H Sasmal question the effectiveness of CPD activities based on the cascade model and highlight the need for carrying out action research through the mentorship or network-based model.

Shravan Kumar and Harleen Kaur in their article ‘Efficacious Presentation Schemata’ discuss the importance of body language communication in presentations and state that “when presenting, a large part of the “visual you” is conveyed by the means of the body language”.

In their paper ‘Enhancing Communication Skills in English through Interactive Materials’ P Sathya and Catherin Edward present a research report on the effectiveness of interactive course materials to enhance the learners’ English language and referencing skills.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles. Do send in your feedback and comments. You can reach me at JELTIndia@gmail.com

Dr Albert P’Rayan

Achieving Academic Proficiency Standards in Higher Education through Corpus-Based Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Schools and colleges in India are now facing the challenge of preparing students for higher studies in countries like the USA and the UK, where English is the primary mode of study. It is argued that a large number of ESL and EFL learners fail to meet the expected academic proficiency standards of B2 of the CEFR due to their poor prior exposure to English. Mushrooming of institutions offering short-term training in English for TOEFL and IELTS sets the tone of the problem. However, corpus based approach, when embedded into our curriculum practices, can address a range of teaching issues, and help our students cope with the needs of higher education, in India as well as abroad. While corpus-based language teaching (CBLT) is not new to India, there are reasons why it has not received as much support as other approaches did. In this paper, I discuss the popular notions that withheld CBLT from its growth and present how corpora—general or specific—can assist ELT practitioners achieve high quality standards in higher education.

Keywords: *higher education, corpus based language teaching, curriculum design*

The importance of CALL technology in ELT has been strongly felt in the last twenty five years (Fotos & Browne, 2004). Higher education programs/courses offered by reputed universities in the developed countries through MOOCs and other online platforms have extensively utilized various computer-driven applications and modalities to organize their courses. While some CALL applications such as webcasts, emails, and mobile-based applications have provided course developers with appropriate

channels to organize and present the content, computer-based corpus tools have conveniently clubbed both the modality and language aspects of CALL (Sinclair, 2004). In fact, independent large-scale native speaker corpora such as Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2009) and British National Corpus (BNC) and specific-purpose home-grown academic corpora such as Cambridge English Corpus (CEC) and MICASE have made a significant impact on the language

teaching practices in the developed countries such as the UK and the USA (Davies, 2009). Increasingly, the researchers and language teaching practitioners are depending on corpus evidence to successfully achieve their teaching and testing objectives (Gavioli & Aston, 2001; Sinclair, 2004).

While this widespread use of corpus in LT is overwhelmingly optimistic about its potential in the Western world, countries like India are skeptical about embracing corpus tools in formal language teaching contexts. In this paper I discuss how corpus inclusion can promote high standards in higher education.

Corpora in Language Teaching and Testing

Reliance on *evidence* is not new to language studies. In fact, a probe into the history of dictionary making reveals the importance real-life language instances in describing language, especially vocabulary and grammar (Hanks, 2012). Recent developments in computer technology have remarkably facilitated the process of organizing and presenting idiosyncratic patterns in real-life instances, both syntagmatically and paradigmatically, in effective ways (Hanks, 2012). The ability to process large size corpus—a collection and organization of texts—for specific patterns of language use and the inherent patterning of language use showed the world a colorful picture that was hitherto unknown (Sinclair, 2004).

Large scale applications of corpus linguistics

in language pedagogy eventualized when linguists attempted to analyze corpora to describe language in use. Lexicographers collected and analyzed large amounts of real-life data for form, meaning, and use aspects. Subsequently, corpus analysis procedures influenced the research practices of other allied fields of language studies such as ESP and EAP that looked for discourse specific language features (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999).

The effects of corpora are mainly seen on three areas of ELT: learner dictionary making, classroom teaching, and learner corpora for SLA, ESP and EAP (Mukherjee, 2006). Although corpus studies have brought in radical reforms in dictionary making in terms of defining features, examples, collocations, pattern presentation among others (Hanks, 2012), their proposed classroom methods such as Data Driven Learning (DDL) (Johns, 1991) have not received as much support as the CLT and other methods of language teaching, especially in the third-world and developing countries. The following are some of the practicality related reasons for the disbelief among many ELT practitioners.

a. Corpus building and use are expensive.

Building an authentic database for teaching purposes requires the practitioners to collect a manageable size of a database, usually of a few hundred thousand instances. In developing countries the resources to build such large-scale databases are scarcely available. While building a database of

written texts is relatively cheaper, transcribing or coding the data into analyzable formats is both time consuming and expensive.

b. Corpus analysis requires specialist knowledge.

Data driven learning is a research process where the learner/teacher is required to deduce his answer by carefully analyzing raw instances. Often the instances make little sense to the observer because they are partial instances of real life experiences. Observers whose linguistic schemata are minimal could misrepresent their interpretations thereby forming wrong generalizations.

c. Corpus analysis is a time-consuming task.

In ESL countries learning English language is important; however, it is not mandatory that they use a native-speaker like English. Moreover, in formal or traditional classrooms teachers are under great pressure to cope with the institutional demands and the requirements of the ongoing and summative examinations. An intensive investigation of corpus for specific language aspects will consume a lot of time.

d. Corpus based language teaching needs access to computers.

Often corpus related demonstrations, in seminars or workshops, highlight the role of modern computers that can process texts in less than a few seconds. This explication has led teachers believe the inseparable role of computers within a language teaching

class. In fact, in many developing countries access to computers in the classroom is still a desire to be fulfilled.

e. Textbook based examinations

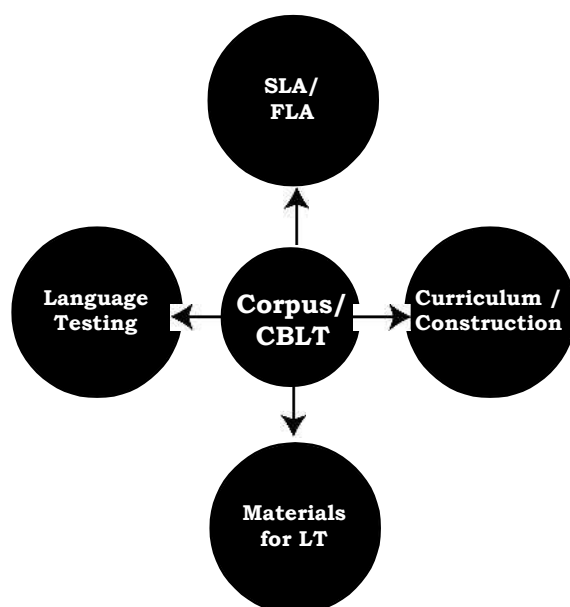
Most importantly, in developing countries the reforms introduced in ELT are mainly methodological. TBLT and CLT like approaches found their way into the language classrooms through the textbooks prescribed for study. Textbooks till-to-date are the primary sources of linguistic input for both teaching and testing practices. For instance, in countries like Saudi Arabia, many universities strictly follow pacing schedules in designing tests. Although innovative case studies that utilized recent research developments exist, classroom instruction is primarily textbook based.

The beliefs stated are pervasive and will influence the ELT practices some more time. To some extent, it is true that direct corpus use is an expensive intervention and requires a specialist's knowledge in building and organizing content. However, there are several ways we could utilize readymade and freely available corpus in achieving our objectives of language courses (Thurstun & Candlin, 1998; Davies, 2009). Indeed, in higher education institutions, online concordances are now fruitfully used to supplement and complement language instruction (Daskalovska, 2013), in many ways that facilitate the ongoing practices rather than interfere with them.

CBLT for Higher Education

Textbook writing, design of online platforms

for language study, design of large-scale evaluation procedures, study of learner language, discourse analysis are a few areas of ELT study that are currently relying on corpus evidence. Most importantly, in higher education contexts, where academic disciplines follow specific conventions of language use, the direct and indirect application of corpus tools and the effects of research findings is extensive (Gavioli & Aston, 2001). The following discusses how the current CBLT research can influence various stages of language curriculum implementation.



Learning Patterns and Language Teaching

A cross comparison between non-native learner language and large native speaker data enabled the SLA researchers identify the typical patterns and gaps in learner language use (MacWhinney, 2016). For instance, processing of a large learner corpus offered researchers (Gablasova, Brezina, & McEnery, 2017) with insights

about the development of collocation knowledge among the L1 and L2 users of English. The researchers found that the L2 users of English mostly preferred to use, for example, predictable and strongly associated words that frequently co-occur rather than low frequency words.

Similarly, in a longitudinal research study researchers attempted to form generalizations about L2 learners' language development patterns for tense and aspects by quantitatively analyzing a large database of learner language (Meunier & Litre, 2013). They concluded that advanced learners exhibited difficulty in using present progressive for planned events while they reported no issues with using the progressive to refer to 'ongoingness' of an activity (p: 72). The purpose of utilizing a corpus-informed investigation here, according to the researchers, was to inform the 'educational practices' of teaching tense with a high degree of certainty. Studies that relied on corpus methods in SLA are plenty. One of the main reasons to integrating corpus with SLA research is to provide reliable evidence that can inform pedagogy.

Institutional Registers and Curriculum Design

Since English ensures access to 'institutional registers' (Biber, 2006) and facilitate communication, the role of English is instrumental in higher education. The underlying assumption of academic English programs is that success of students on university level programs depends on their ability to handle discourse specific language features. Corpus based explorations could

help institutions define academic standards by identifying the idiosyncratic and frequent ‘linguistic characteristics’ (2006:2) of academic registers. These frequent ‘characteristic lexico-grammatical features’ are exploited by the discourse communities to achieve the intended communicative purposes (2006: 12). For example, a multi-dimensional analysis of the academic sub-corpus of Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (LGSWE) (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999) identified the idiosyncratic features that are ‘much more common in academic prose’ (2006: 14). Some most commonly exploited features in academic prose, according to Biber *et al* (1999) include: non-finite relative clauses, nominalization, attributive adjectives, and derived verbs (especially formed with *re-* and *-ize*) (for a detailed list please read Biber, 2006). EAP programs across the world attempt to equip students either with the general linguistic aspects that are pervasive across all academic disciplines or with the register specific features that are specific to the disciplines the students will study. Corpus studies can help institutions identify and organize such register specific features for curriculum design.

When sub-skills such as identifying and analyzing are combined with a certain textual features such as verbs, adjectives, articles students can decode and produce texts appropriate for the contexts. For instance, for a stated objectives/sub-skills of identifying an author, the reader will attempt to decipher the linguistic clues such

as the use of personal pronouns and referential vocabulary. Similarly, to distinguish a fact from opinion, the learner needs to understand the use of verbs, signaling words such as *in my opinion*, *in fact*, *believes* among others. To analyze a text in terms of its cohesion and coherence the reader can be directed to notice transition expressions such as *firstly*, *subsequently*, *while*, *on the other hand* among others. In other words, the existing curriculum/syllabus can judiciously make use of corpus instances (longer or shorter) to provide ample practice for a specific aspect.

Authentic Instances in Dictionaries and Textbooks

Identifying and using language instances that do not pose a threat to a student’s understanding of the text is important. It is here the practitioners have to apply caution. The effect of ‘genuine’ or ‘real life’ or ‘natural English’ (Sinclair, 2004) instances on language teaching was strongly felt in the last 20 years. Series of textbooks such as *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, Touchstone Series, 2005), free online corpus platforms such as MICASE and COCA (Davies, 2009), self-study materials (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2016), word-lists (Coxhead, 2000) are now available for use.

In the field of materials design two changes have been brought in: selection and identification of linguistic categories and design structure of materials. In identifying the authentic instances of specific linguistic categories researchers have used the

following criteria:

- a. Using of SLA research findings to identify learning objectives (Gablasova, Brezina, & McEnery, 2017)
- b. Frequency of occurrence (Nation, 2018)
- c. Contextual relevance/ registers (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999)
- d. Patterns of co-occurrence (Sinclair, 2004)
- e. Linguistic complexity of the text (choice of vocabulary, choice of grammatical structures and text length)
- f. Discourse specificity (reader specificity)

In designing materials they mainly use the strategy of reasoning: deducing the rule from multiple instances. Every target linguistic category to be taught is shown in multiple authentic instances, and the learners were expected to reason out the underlying rule(s) with the help of context, linguistic clues, repetition, and analysis. Subsequently, the learner can compare his/her answers with the textbook.

Language Assessment Practices

Free access to large databases and corpus analysis tools such as Range (Nation, 2018) simplified the process of compiling a corpus. Three types of corpora—reference, specialized, and learner—are now extensively built for various purposes (Cushing, 2017). Even though some corpora are primarily built to provide linguistic descriptions, a range of findings such as frequency studies, collocations, and context

specific grammar and vocabulary have significant effects on assessment.

While a reference corpus or a large learner corpus representing the target language or the target learner group can offer the curriculum designers and the test developers with the choice of linguistic aspects to be considered, a purposive specialized corpus identifies discourse specific typical features to be mastered and assessed. Moreover, the information obtained from corpus analysis is used to conceptualize “domain definition, construct definition, and the construction of tasks and test items that authentically reflect the target language use domain” (Cushing, 2017: 442). Statistical corpus based evidence is now helpful in determining the complexity of language use, distinguishing between B2/C1 levels of CEFR as the threshold proficiency for admission into higher education, and in ‘characterizing’ a specific level by providing ‘language specifications’ (Paquot, 2018).

If appropriate use of discourse specific linguistic features determines the success of students on academic programs, the institutions need to examine whether the students are capable of understanding and using them. Assessment of students’ performance needs to take into consideration the identification of learning goals, linguistic categories, content and appropriate scales and rubrics for assessment.

Constructs that insufficiently define their learning goals will not be able to provide

clear-cut guidelines for test development. Also, any random selection of linguistic categories that do not adequately represent the real life use of language will succumb to the dangers of being irrelevant. And fabricating hypothetical instances that are distantly related to the discourse in question skews content validity and test reliability. Finally, evaluation procedures that refer to vague interpretations of scales and rubrics will provide unreliable results. In other words, language teaching and testing is no way a straight forward process: Every decision presupposes a clear rationale with clearly stated end results. If the defined constructs do not represent the predefined goals; and if the presupposed objectives are not represented in the test-design practices, the end results of the course will be unreliable. Corpus based construct definitions, corpus-based syllabus design and corpus-based teaching and testing can help course developers and teachers address these concerns.

Conclusion

While promoting data-driven academic standards is a commendable choice, developing a far-removed standard of English that the students have a limited access to will affect the quality of educational intervention. However, corpus evidence when drawn especially from contexts of high relevance and when used with effective methodologies can revolutionize language teaching. Therefore, the ELT practitioners need to apply caution before embarking on a full-fledged use of corpus in language courses. In fact, novice

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users can use corpus, initially, only in specific stages of language course development—in selecting instances to teach collocations, in identifying examples for specific grammatical categories and to devise comprehension related cloze items—and develop specific sub-skills that influence the overall learning process of the students.

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English for Specific Purposes: Perspectives and Pedagogic Implications

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ABSTRACT

ESP which matches the teaching content to learner needs has gained considerable prominence in the global scenario. But in the Indian context it is still in its infancy and even the academic community is yet to broaden the knowledge about its perspectives and pedagogic implications. This paper attempts to draw together some of the many lines of ESP growth and looks at the basic considerations when ESP is implemented.

Introduction

The functionalist approach to education, in which language study has been viewed in terms of its practical benefits, has gained prominence over the past few decades and this has resulted in the increase in the study of specialized discourses. Socio-political reasons favoured the unprecedented growth of the English language and gradually it established its deep-rooted influence in almost all domains of human endeavour. Its emergence as the 'lingua franca' necessitated the need to study it on a global scale. English proficiency became one of the main criteria to get placed in the new generation jobs. Soon job seekers concentrated on mastering the 'specific skills' they would need to fare well in the workplace than acquiring broader knowledge in the basic skills of the language. Studying this language of

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opportunities came to mean largely a the path to a better life and the demand to study the specific language needed in the workplace triggered the growth of a new branch of ELT, i.e. 'English for Specific Purposes' (ESP).

The relevance and scope of ESP as a scholastic focus necessary for achievement in the workplace has scaled new dimensions, especially in the global context. The increase in the number of universities in major First World universities offering M.A programmes in ESP and the rise in the number of students pursuing courses are indicative of the global relevance and acceptance of ESP. Ministries of Education in a number of countries regard it as one of the keys to their country's future development and firms and business organizations frequently conduct in-service ESP crash courses for the employees (McDonough Jo, 1984). *English for Specific*

Purposes: An International Journal has gained wide popularity and it remains to be one of the most popular journals referred to in the language learning realm in the past few years. No other dominant alternative approach to teaching English as a language for the workplace has so far evolved.

But in the Indian context the position of ESP is yet to gain a level of visibility one might expect. Adequate significance or consideration is not seen given to including English language skills in the syllabi of technical education, whether it is in courses offered by Industrial Training Institutes or Colleges of Engineering. There even seems to be a general notion that such an aspect is of little significance "as the learners are likely to be successful in their workplace with the pre-existing knowledge of the language embellished by the bits picked up in the process of negotiating job situations". The current syllabi in these centres of technical education often have only negligent language learning components. Scrutiny of the curricula related to different Indian universities show that workplace language skills (ESP oriented courses) have not been implemented in full force in many of the courses offered. However, some new courses in the undergraduate level, incorporating the principles of ESP, are indicative of the gaining importance of ESP in the Indian context. But, it is generally seen that these courses help to equip the learners to understand academic genres related to workplace like writing daily reports, drafting emails for various purposes

etc., but they do not completely succeed in transferring the perceived skills in the real workplaces. These courses fail to attain their objectives as it is conceived and transacted in the conventional way, rarely being beneficial to the workplace needs. A realistic appreciation and a serious critique of the existing practices along with a thorough understanding and careful implementation of ESP would naturally bring in the desired effect.

Defining ESP

The general approach and working principles of any discipline can better be understood by looking at its definition. Some definitions of ESP briefed below help us to understand in detail the nature of ESP.

In fact, the term ESP has been in use for a quarter of a century now, and it was T. Hutchinson and A. Waters who gave a classic definition of ESP by showing what ESP is not:

a) 'ESP is not a matter of teaching' specialized varieties' of English'.

Many tend to see ESP as a branch of ELT which deals with special varieties of English different in kind from other branches. Though ESP deals with the special language forms used in particular fields, it is wrong to consider ESP as a separate domain. As Lorenzo (2005) reminds us, 'ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures'.

b) 'ESP is not just a matter of science words

and grammar for scientists, hotel words and grammar for hotel staff and so on'.

When we look at a tree, we see the leaves and branches, but there is much more to the tree than just these, much of which is hidden from view inside and beneath the tree. The leaves do not just hang in the air: they are supported by a complex underlying structure. A superfluous examination of ESP would prompt us to think that ESP is English used in a restricted sense; a branch of ELT which teaches some words, structures and functions of special occupations. ESP does not deal with restricted or specialized language alone, but enables learner to see language as a whole, in an extensive manner.

c) 'ESP is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching'

ESP does not have a separate methodology. Though the content of ESP may be different, the teaching methodologies and learning strategies are similar to any kind of English learning, that can be defined under the umbrella term Communicative Language Teaching (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). ESP predominantly focuses on language skills, structures, functions and vocabulary that will be needed by the members of a chosen target group in their professional and vocational environment. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, "but an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1994).

A few other apparent variations in the
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interpretation of ESP definitions can be summarised as follows. ESP is sometimes described as simply the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. There are more precise descriptions which claims ESP to be the teaching of varieties of English particular to specific academic studies or specific vocational or professional purposes (Anthony, 1997). Mackay and Mountford define ESP as being "generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose." Generally students study English "not because they are interested in the English Language or English culture as such, but because they need English for study or work purposes" (Robinson, 1991).

Emergence of ESP

The emergence of ESP was an evolutionary process, not directly related to any new pedagogic theory as such. The society demanded a particular knowledge of English which is mainly need-oriented, market demanded and purpose driven, and the genesis of ESP can be traced in these factors. Factors favourable for the rise of ESP lay embedded in the general global expansion in the domains of industry, business, computer science, and specialised academic research. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) the demands of a brave world, a revolution in linguistics and focus on the learner were the three common reasons for the birth of ESP. They further argue that the Second World War and the Oil Crisis of 1970s were the two historical events that were responsible for the emergence of ESP. Western countries focused their resources

and money on the oil rich countries and naturally the demand for workers skilled in a link occupational language became the need of the hour. As the language of the 'Knowledgeable,' English became more powerful pushing other languages behind. By this time ELT was forced to modify its approaches, methods and materials according to the needs of the learners and clients. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) aptly observe that, "English now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers".

Again there occurred a shift from the teacher or instructor driven curriculum to the learner-centred one. In the syllabus design learners was given prominence by fixing them as the centre and their styles of learning, thier needs and priorities were taken into consideration. Around this time, changes took place in the field of linguistics too. For instance, the traditional segmentation of language into its discrete elements like phonemes, morphemes and words was revised and the new linguistic approach of language as means of communication used in the context came into vogue. Communicative Language Teaching, in its myriad manifestations was fast gaining popularity, giving importance to the contextual use of English for various practical purposes.

ESP and its Classroom Implications

ESP teaching, just like any pedagogical activity is a multifaceted activity whose major transactions take place in the classrooms. For a successful

implementation of an ESP curriculum, focus has to be given to three basic considerations.

1) Learner-Centeredness

Learner centeredness in ESP goes beyond just the notion of learners being given prominence in the teaching- learning process. Here it is assessing the learners before the course takes shape, and formulating the course according to their needs and demands. The learners' pace of learning, the amount of target language already known, their professional knowledge, their motivation and interest all have to be seriously considered. If the teacher fails to analyse the present situation and subjective needs of the learner the effectiveness of the ESP course may not be attained. The content and methodology of ESP courses should be attuned to individual learning needs and priorities.

2) Material Selection

"Materials can be anything in linguistic, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic forms that are used to facilitate the teaching learning process" (Tomlinson, 1998). Material selection, adaptation and writing are important areas in ESP teaching.

ESP Practitioners often face a dilemma: choosing a textbook designed for a specific branch of ESP like English for Nurses/ Engineers or choosing authentic materials related to the field of study, including different documents and reading material related to the specific area of study. As the merits of the authentic materials outsmart their demerits it is advised that in ESP

contexts authentic materials are to be given weightage and preference. According to Robinson's explanation, in addition to the authentic materials that we use in ESP, we need to consider whether the goals that we set and the tasks that take place in the learning situation are authentic with regards to student's real work roles.

But as authentic materials are actual transactional discourses of the native speaker, produced not for classroom business as such, they may pose difficulties when used as learning material in the real classroom. In readymade commercial textbooks the possibility of finding suitable need based materials and tasks that would stimulate learner's real life situation would be less. Hence they fail to offer a rich source of input for the learners.

Developing in-house, subject specific materials which would cater to the ESP learner's specific needs is another criterion to be thought of in material selection. As in-house materials developed by the practitioner take into consideration the mental ability and other learning factors of the learner, it facilitates much more meaningful interaction by the learner. This is a challenging proposition, but if teachers can be suitably motivated and taken into confidence, this is bound to produce remarkable results.

Hutchinson & Waters (1989) put forward four elements that can be incorporated in the writing of ESP materials: input, content focus, language focus and task. The input refers to the many varied things given to

the learners as part of the language learning. They can be new language items, models of correct language use, topics for communication, opportunities to use their existing knowledge in subject matter as well as in language. Content focus and language focus refer to the non-linguistic and linguistic content that can be given to generate meaningful communication in the class room. Any activity that leads towards communication building can be called tasks. The language and content are drawn from the learner input and are selected according to what they will need in order to do the task.

3) Exercise and Task Design

All materials, in-house, authentic and commercial, communicate with the learner through different tasks and exercises structured by the trainer. In developing tasks and activities, an ESP practitioner should lean more heavily on tasks which are more learning specific than linguistic specific. Linguistic specific materials are exercises that contribute not much to the language development of the learner and are mere mechanical reproduction of the things learned. But on the other hand language specific materials are process-oriented and try to involve the learners. Linguistic specific exercises cannot be easily dispensed with in an ESP class but the tasks and exercises should be selected based on the frequency of occurrence rather than their assumed importance. Kinds of tasks that can be involved in language specifications are pre-text questions, questions interspersed in a text, and appropriate post-text questions.

Conclusion

Basic precepts about ESP make ESP implementation meaningful and result-oriented. Learner-centeredness is understanding the learners and identifying and analysing their needs. In fact, needs assessment is a systematic approach to identify the actual learner problems, to analyse their nature and cause and to establish priorities for future actions. After needs assessment suitable materials are to be selected by the practitioner to be used as the learning material in the classroom. The materials interact with the learner mainly through tasks and exercises. They should provide rich language learning experience for the learners and should prepare them to acquire necessary language skills they need at the industry.

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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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Against the Experts

V. Robert Bellarmine¹

In the title I have used the word expert. But the talk is actually against establishmentarians, people who support the system. So how many of you are establishmentarians, supporting the system of IIT? Establishmentarians are not many, especially in a crowd like this, which is good. I am going to attack establishmentarians. But, the focus of the talk is on how I learnt spoken English, or English, actually.

I was an establishmentarian, was an “expert”, until about ten years ago. And then, when I left the British Council, I lost all the positions of the head of the unit, curriculum committees, chairperson, and similar other positions. When you lose these positions, you actually get the freedom to be an anti-establishmentarian, anti-expert. So, I am in a lucky position now to be an anti-establishmentarian and anti-expert. You can call me contrarian - not having typical popular views, not having a position, and, thus, not compelled to do certain things, but be a person who has absolute intellectual freedom, at least to think what he wants to think, if not to do what he wants to do.

My village is about three miles away from the small Taluk Headquarters called Tiruchendur, about 30 kms from the port city of Tuticorin.

The further south you go, circumstances to learn English actually become more difficult. What are the difficulties in a village? First of all, my home language was a non-English language, Tamil, only Tamil. My father was very keen on fighting cases in the court, and, therefore, he had a boxful of papers in English. They were all casesheets produced by my father’s lawyer, and also by the lawyers of other people in the village. These papers were there with my father because my father used to play the role of adviser to the local people. He was knowledgeable, as far as local law was concerned, the local politics was concerned. So, there were some papers in English related to court cases.

There was one book also in my home, two books, actually, in English. One was my sister’s *Lifco English – English- Tamil Dictionary*. *The Bible* we had at home was not in English, it was in Tamil; the other book was my sister’s English textbook.

¹Edited transcript of a talk given in 2013 in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai 600036. Bellarmine retired as English Studies Officer of the British Council in India in 1997. Earlier, he taught at the Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages, Hyderabad. He had studied in Madurai and in Edinburgh. Besides teaching “slum children” under his “Teaching English to the Disadvantaged” (TED) Project, funded, among others, by *The Hindu* group of publications, he has conducted numerous communication seminars for executives in industries. Robert is one of the few progressivethinkers in ELT in India.

So, what were the terms we were using which were from English? About four hundred and fifty words were found to be borrowed from English into Tamil – paper, pencil, train. You know, such words have become Tamil now. And therefore, those words were familiar to me. But proper English words were unfamiliar to me and to the other members of the family. So I come from a family where Tamil was the home language.

Now what about my school? We had a Girls' Elementary School, a Boys' Elementary School, and a Training School in the village. Only two people conversed in English. The Head Master of the Boys' School, Susai Marian, used to speak in English. He had been educated in what was in those days called the Oxford of Tamil Nadu, Palayamkottai, or Tirunelveli. This district headquarters had many schools and colleges. They were all doing outstandingly well educationally, and also in sports. Many hockey players came from my college. Some represented Madras University. But many players for hockey, volleyball, some also for football, came from our colleges. In other words, these colleges, St John's and St Xavier's, were good at both sports and education. They were so reputable that they were known as the Oxford and Cambridge of that area of Tamil Nadu, actually. So this Susai Marian went to Palayamkottai to complete his tenth standard. That's how he learnt English.

And what about the village? There were occasions when there were three people who could speak English. The inspector of police, who came from Tiruchendur, the Taluk

headquarters, could speak English. Later, I am going to refer to these three people who were responsible for creating in me what I call Machiavellian, *chanakyan* motivation to learn English. These people were at least partly responsible for my motivation, my keen motivation to learn English. I will come back to this story in a minute. So that is the kind of school and village I come from.

Now the neighbouring town, Virpandianpattinam, where I had my high school education, is very peculiar. Because all the citizens of that town were Christians. They were Anglophiles; they loved English; they had Anglicized Indian culture. Or, you can say, they had the Westernized Indian culture, because of about two hundred years of Portuguese influence, the Western influence. Many people from this place worked abroad. They also went abroad to learn English, because that was prestigious in those days.

So, there was a small town, only about two miles from my village, where English was frequently spoken; where English was a home language; where English was the language of the school; where English was spoken even on the football field. Yet we could not benefit from that, because our village would not have anything to do with that village. Can you guess the reason? Is it religion? Language? Our mother tongue was common, Tamil. Why do you think even though there was opportunity to learn English from the neighbouring village I could not learn it? My peers, people like me, in the village could not pick up the language from that village, even though we

went to that school to get education up above the ninth standard. What was the reason? Caste came in the way. Therefore, they would have only religious activities with us, but not educational activities with us, not linguistic activities. Therefore, I lost the opportunity to learn English from them.

In the whole village, there were about 250 voters at that time. There must have been at least 2000 people in the village. And yet there was only one newspaper in English, and only two speakers of English. I had to walk three miles to Tiruchendhur, the Taluk Head Quarters, to have access to English newspapers. Remember even when I walked the three miles, went to the library, run by the Panchayat Office, I had to wait for my turn. Because I was not the only one there, but there was only one newspaper. We could not separate the sheets of the paper. They were all stitched together, and, therefore, after one person finished reading, the next person in the queue could read the paper. They were very strict with that. And, therefore, access to English materials was extremely limited.

Paucity of time was another important obstacle which I had to overcome. I used to get up at three thirty or four o'clock in the morning. Otherwise, we were not in a position to get money for food. Therefore, I used to get up at three thirty or four o'clock, walk about a mile, and go to the grove of casuarina trees; this is a kind of tree we were supposed to water to earn our livelihood. Sounless you got up early, and worked for about three hours in the casuarina grove, you would not be able to

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get any food. All your sparetime, thus, was spent on working for food.

Poverty does another thing to the learner. It doesn't give any opportunity where you have a sense of hope, hope for the future. You do not have many opportunities where you can think of a bright future. But then somebody, who may be a total stranger, will appear in your life and will help. Or, somebody who can be a role model for you, in your village, or in the neighbouring village, will transform you. So, when there is utter poverty, there is only hopelessness. Now when you are hopeless, everything gets affected; whether you want to learn English, or you want to learn to play football. When you are not hopeful, then you can learn neither this nor that. So, I was in that situation, and, therefore, eventhough I wanted to learn English, I could not do so because of poverty.

How did I overcome all these challenges? After my pre-university course, I was working in Kodaikanal, in a hotel, as a waiter. There, waiters are also called room boys. So I was one of those room boys in a hotel. Because my plan was to earn some money for two months in the summer vacation in the summer resort, and then pay the first semester fee for my Chemistry course. When I was working as a waiter, I was about seventeen or eighteen.

One day I noticed that a rather large family came from Gujarat. They stayed in the deluxe suite. There were many young and old people in the group, men and women, but I was attracted by one member of the group. It was a girl, about my age, not fat,

not too thin, of very fair skin, very attractive! At that age, any girl is attractive. But I was especially attracted towards this girl.

You know what I did? As a room boy, if I had to take tea, I would make a mistake. If they said five cups of tea and five cups of coffee, I would take six cups of coffee and four cups of tea, making the mistake deliberately so that they would ask me to come to the room again. This way I could have a look at the girl again. Now this continued for about ten days because they were staying there only for ten days. And the tenth day came, and I knew they were leaving. That meant that this girl was also leaving. That is what mattered to me. And, therefore, that day when there was an hour before they left, I went to the room with cups of tea, biscuits, snacks and so on, and when they were distributing these things among themselves, among the members of that Gujarati family, then I heard suddenly somebody shouting at me. It was this girl. She said, “Why are you staring at me like a cur!” Yes, that was the sentence.

She shouted at the top of her voice, “Why are you staring at me like a cur!” Now what is the meaning of the word “cur”? That’s what attracted me. The girl was abusing me, cursing me, shouting at me, therefore, it sounded something like a swear word, a curse. It is an animal. Cur is a special kind of dog. Do you think dog is clean? Do you think a dog is well-fed? No, do you think it is somebody’s pet? It’s a street dog, stray dog, hungry dog, dirty dog!

Actually, I was not sure of the meaning of

the word. I was not bothered about whether she cursed me, or, whether she praised me! Now that was not what mattered to me on that occasion. I was focusing my attention entirely on the term ‘cur’. In other words, what mattered to me in my life at that point, in spite of the girl, was English. In other words, I was so madly in love with English that even when somebody cursed me, abused me, called me pariah dog, I was interested in learning a word rather than feel sorry about being cursed by that girl. The point I am making here is whenever opportunities arose for me to learn English, that is what mattered to me. Whether it was a negative feeling, whether it was an occasion when somebody abused me, it didn’t matter. If that could give me an opportunity to learn a single word, I valued it highly. And I learnt it.

So what I did was to run to my room, open my old tin trunk, take my *Lifco Dictionary*, and refer to the meaning of the word. And that word became one of my possessions. Even today I have not forgotten it. Even though I have not called anybody a cur, I know what that word means, how it is different from the “dog”, the puppy.

So, the first point I am trying to make is we can learn, not only you and I, anybody can learn a second language, not only English, any second language, whether its spoken aspect or the written aspect, if the motivation to learn, especially genuine, deep, keen motivation is there. So that is the first point I am making.

Do experts agree with me? You will listen to

it after I list a few more lessons we can learn.

Earlier, I referred to the Machiavellian motivation. Can anybody find out who I am referring to. I am not sure of his nationality, it doesn't matter. Italian? He wrote a book called *The Prince*. That book was used by the royal families in Europe as a textbook to train their children in the art of ruling, the art of politics. So Machiavelli is supposed to be the father of politics. That is why, earlier I referred to Chanakya. What is Machiavellian motivation?

Let me return to my story of the Inspector from Thiruchendur. Whenever the inspector came to our village, the three people joined together – the parish priest, the headmaster of my school, and this inspector of police. These three joined together and spoke in English. They knew Tamil, but they wouldn't speak in Tamil. Why? Only then the Panchayat, the villagers, will not actually understand what they were saying.

The second thing is whenever somebody used English, these three people believed that whatever was said was true. If a woman is giving witness, and if that woman could utter one or two words in English, especially a complete sentence, they would believe her, but they would not believe the man who would really be speaking the truth. In other words, English was considered by these three people as the language of power; more importantly, as the language of truth.

Now, my father, as I told you before, used to fight for the villagers, he was very active

in the local politics. So, if my father spoke the truth, in the panchayat during the discussion, he was not believed, he was not trusted, his statements were not valued, because he could not speak English. Whereas the police officer, the parish priest, and the headmaster, when they said something, especially using English, then people who had the authority to judge thought that that was the truth. In other words, English was presumed as not only the language of power, but also of truth. And, therefore, I decided to learn the language so that one day I could use it against them, against the inspector of police, against parish priest and against the head master. That is what I achieved about ten years later.

I was able to get my M A degree, I was able to go abroad, and then come back and get the lecturer's job, and then use my position, use my English language proficiency to work against them. I went even to the Episcopal court set up by the Pope from Rome and argued my case in Tuticorin and won it. Because I spoke in English fluently, perhaps more fluently than the bishop, they passed the judgment in my family's favour. That is how my sister's marriage was saved. So at that young age I was able to see English as the language of not only power, but also the language of truth.

Earlier, I told you that I used to get up at three thirty or four o'clock. That is because I had to water the casuarina trees. But that practice had to continue because the BBC Radio, started special English programmes for learners like us at four thirty in the

morning. Even now at four thirty there is news, and after that, till about six thirty, there are special programmes for learners of English. So, even in those days with an old radio set at four thirty in the morning I started listening to good spoken English. And it went on up to six thirty in the morning. So, for two continuous hours, if I had some freedom from work, then I listened to the British Broadcasting Corporation's radio programme.

How many of you are familiar with Wren and Martin's Grammar & Composition? Good that it is taught even now! Now I am going to make an important distinction between knowledge about English and knowledge of English. If you look at the first half dealing with articles, prepositions, relative clauses, etc, then the authors deal with knowledge about English; but if you come to the second half of the book, where there are letters, essays, paraphrases of poems, and things like that, then that section deals with knowledge of English.

In the second part, they actually teach you or develop your skill to use English – to help you understand poetry, use English to understand a letter of complaint, use English to understand anything, or to write anything. So, these days we make an important distinction between knowledge **of** English and knowledge **about** English. Even in those days, even though I had not met any English language expert, I somehow felt that the second part of Wren and Martin was more important than the first part, and, therefore, I focused on knowledge **of** English, not knowledge **about** English. In

other words, I did not bother about grammar **of** English, but bothered about use of English. And that is how I was able to pick up English very quickly, even without the teacher.

1975 was a turning point in my life, because that was the time when I got an application form for which I had not made any request. From somewhere, it came to my Madurai home, and it was an application form for a fat scholarship. I was able to go to the UK for one year, carry out a post graduate education, M Sc in Applied Linguistics, with all the expenses met, including air fare, food and accommodation, money for books, money for travel, money to get even materials from abroad, like the U S and France. It was a very rich scholarship, and I did not ask for it, but the application came to my house. I knew who sent it later. What I am saying is that showed that the British Council, which sent me the application, started recognizing me as a good user of English. That's why I am choosing 1975 as the tipping point in my life.

The first point is that if you want to really overcome the difficulties, if you want to really master the language, especially spoken language, it is not enough to know the tricks of the trade. But on top of them, you need some general success mantra. That is why self-development books are so important. Today, I don't know anybody in the world, any expert in the world, who says to master English you need to know some rules of good language learning, besides some general success *mantras*, success secrets.

Now one of the first success secrets I learnt in my life even at that young age was that all of us are gifted to learn any language. This is a general rule, though the English Language Teaching specialists may not say this so openly. They write reams and reams of papers, they publish in journals, but do they openly say that all our learners actually have the gift given by God, or Nature, to learn a second language? They don't tell you that. But that is something which I observe when I notice people around. People who want to learn something can learn it.

So the first lesson I would like to pass on to you is that all of us are wired to learn a second language. There is research evidence also to prove this. A professor called Pitt Corder² of Edinburgh university, where I carried out my M Sc in Applied Linguistics, has studied this problem very deeply, and he claims that if learners have two things when learning a language, learning will automatically follow. Number one, motivation; number two, exposure. Given motivation and exposure, second language learning is automatic.

Where is this other piece of proof? You look at English medium schools. Why do you think my servant wants to send her children to the English medium school? Why do you think 500 CBSE English medium schools have been started in Tamil Nadu in one year? It is a record breaking

number. Why do you think so many parents are keen to send their children to English medium schools. Why? It is because of this, because of exposure, because that is the best situation to learn English. You have got motivation, but they are needed to give you exposure. And the exposure is ideal in the English medium situation. So, whenever English medium is used, you know, people learn the language automatically. The best way to learn a language is to use that language as the medium of instruction.

Do experts say this? No! That is the problem. They know that this is a fact; my servant knows that this is a fact; and a majority of parents know that this is a fact. But the experts don't say this. Instead, in their own institutions, in the government of Tamil Nadu maybe, in the university system, Madras University, or Madurai University, what do these experts do? They try to produce not the English medium situation. To teach English, they try to produce a separate English curriculum. They have a separate set of English text books. They have separate English language texts, and they claim that their curriculum can teach English. Is it true? Does it succeed? Does the system succeed? No!

I am teaching slum children now, in the evening. And there is a sixth standard child

²Stephen Pit Corder (6 October 1918 – 27 January 1990), generally known as **Pit Corder**, was a professor of applied linguistics at Edinburgh University, known for his contribution to the study of error analysis. He was the first chairman of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, 1967–70, and was instrumental in developing the field of applied linguistics in the United Kingdom See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pit_Corder>

who is not able to write his own name in English! Remember, English is begun in Tamil Nadu in Standard One. This boy has learnt English for six years, and yet he is not able to write his own name in English! I tried to find out, if he was suffering from dyslexia, or any brain deficiency. No, he is normal.

What does it mean? What do the experts say? This is my final point. Have you heard about a famous agricultural scientist, in America? I am referring to George Washington Carver³, who was one of the few people to create the agricultural science in America. People were not ready to eat tomato. The Blacks in America at that point of time thought that tomato was poisonous. So Carver had to go from village to village to eradicate poverty, and to show them how to eat tomato, and yet survive, be alive. He also became a great scientist. He discovered about 200 derivatives from the peanut.

Now, I am going to tell you an anecdote from his life and then compare it with actions of today's English language teaching experts.

One day Carver's students wanted to pull his leg. They wanted to play a trick on the professor. Therefore, they brought a display board with a very new kind of bug they had found. Could the professor name this specimen, this bug?

You know what they had done. They, these mischievous students, had created this bug

by putting three different parts of three different bugs together, and had tried to design a new bug. They took the body of the beetle, the legs of the spider, and the head of the ant, and fixed them here as the new kind of bug, and they showed it to Prof Carver, and said, "Can you name it?" Carver looked at it and said this was called "humbug". What is humbug? This is not a bug, this is cheating.

So what English language teaching experts are doing in the name of magical kind of syllabus, text books, learning material, training material, etc is actually humbug. What they need to do is to revise their knowledge in the light of the successful learners who are in thousands and millions in the English medium schools. Let them look at the English medium school children and how they have quickly, efficiently and effectively mastered the language. This is why when they don't learn lessons from such institutions, we say what you are doing is humbug.

So what are the lessons for us? Let me stop by saying that we should follow the successful learners if we want to continue to improve our English. Let us not listen to the experts, they are humbugs!

Thank you very much for your attention!

[Transcribed & edited by Shreesh Chaudhary, Dept of English, GLA University, Mathura 281 406]

³**George Washington Carver**(1860s^{[1][2]} – January 5, 1943), was an American botanist and inventor. He actively promoted alternative crops to cotton and methods to prevent soil depletion. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Carver>

Action research through Mentorship Model: A sustainable Framework for professional development

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ABSTRACT

Action research or classroom-based research is steadily gaining popularity in the Indian context because it focuses on the teachers' real-life classroom issues and solving those through an enquiry-based approach. English teachers at the school level need to collaborate with professionals in the field to gain insights as well as receive guidance in their journey of action research. School teachers in India are not motivated to conduct research which is largely considered the domain of 'higher education'. Thus, action research has the potential to bring research practices into the English classroom and encourage teachers to look at their classrooms critically. At present, continuous professional development (CPD) activities in the Indian context are based on the cascade model (Mathew, 1998). To manage the huge number of teachers who need to be part of CPD programs, the cascade model seems to be the most feasible method of teacher education in India. The effectiveness of this model has however been challenged. This paper argues that the mentorship or network-based model can be a sustainable framework citing British Council's Aptis Action Research Mentor Scheme (AARMS), which is an initial attempt to gauge the feasibility of the mentorship model in the Indian context.

Key words: *action research, mentorship model, enquiry-based, continuous professional development, cascade model*

Teacher education which is a continuum of professional development, enables teachers to improve their classroom practices. The first yet critical stage on that continuum is the practical component of the pre-service programme which is an extended field

experience conducted under the guidance of an experienced teacher who is often referred to as a cooperating teacher or 'mentor'. As student-teachers across the world consider this practicum of the Bachelor of Education degree as most

crucial and the mentor as critical to their success in that degree (Kirk, Macdonald, & O'Sullivan, 2006; Weiss & Weiss, 2001), it is important to focus on the field experience of the teachers under the supervision of their mentors. In India, while the pre-service training does expose student-teachers to the field, this experience is not enough to equip teachers to tackle the complex teaching-learning situations which they would encounter while in-service. This is not to claim that ours is the only country facing this challenge. It is a situation of concern in the larger fraternity of teacher educators and researchers in the field of teacher education.

In general, pre-service teacher education programmes tend to focus on the immediate and theoretical knowledge but to evaluate its impact at a distance is challenging. As teacher education is not a single entity, what student-teachers are exposed to during their pre-service training would not work in identical ways in other settings. Therefore, making changes to teacher education programmes is not a question of reforming one specific set of practices, a specific type of course, or a specific evaluation system. Instead, there is a need for a comprehensive re-conceptualization of what could be effective teacher education. Given the constraints under which we operate, this paper argues that in-service teachers need continuous collaboration and support to engage in meaningful professional learning through a social network model beyond their pre-service experience of mentoring as part of their practicum.

The challenges of pre-service teacher education programmes

The international community of teacher educators today faces dilemmas of how to bring research together with practice in ways that enable both a mutual interaction and a qualitative improving of practice. A number of reports on teacher education (Abell Foundation, 2001; American Federation of Teachers, 2000; Cochran Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2001; Haselkorn & Harris, 1998; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999) suggest that teacher's practice in the field is challenging and problematic and requires constant improvement and there is a need to raise credibility and standards. For example, Levine (2006:1) reports that 'Too often teacher education programs cling to an outdated, historically flawed vision of teacher education that is at odds with a society remade by economic, demographic, technological, and global change'. Other critiques of pre-service teacher education programmes claim that (Abell Foundation, 2001; MacIver, Vaughn, Katz, 2005; NIES, 1999)

- *The activities engaged in by preservice teachers in college/university settings are rarely relevant to their subsequent professional practice*
- *Student teaching placements are often too brief*
- *Sites are chosen to accommodate faculty and students' comforts rather than to*

challenge tacit images of good schools and good teaching

- *In fieldwork, there is often little supervision; it is often of poor quality; and it is rarely in genuine synchrony with the teacher education program*

Considering we are facing this challenge of pre-service programmes failing to equip teachers adequately for their real time teaching, it is imperative to re-imagine how in-service teachers can be supported in their continuing professional development activities.

The teacher education model in India

National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education circulated in March 2009 has been prepared in the background of the NCF, 2005 and the principles laid down in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 which necessitated an altered framework on Teacher Education which would be consistent with the changed philosophy of school curriculum recommended in the NCF, 2005. While articulating the vision of teacher education, the Framework has some important dimensions of the new approach to teacher education, as under:

- Reflective practice to be the central aim of teacher education;
- Student-teachers should be provided opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas;
- Developing capacities for self-directed

learning and ability to think, be critical and to work in groups.

- Providing opportunities to student-teachers to observe and engage with children, communicate with and relate to children.

Given that the framework promotes critical reflective practices, self-learning and generation of ideas, it is important to re-look at the existing models of providing professional development opportunities to in-service teachers.

At present, the cascade model is prevalent in our country which involves the delivery of training through layers of trainers until it reaches the final target group. This approach to training was used during the UNDP/UNESCO Pacific Educational Management Project (1990-1992) and during Phases One and Two of the current UNDP/UNESCO/UNICEF/AusAID Basic Education and Life Skills (BELS) Programme. The BELS Programme through the Primary and Literacy Education (PALE) Module aimed at upgrading the quality of basic education by training in-service teachers at primary level.

A cascade model requires a team of resource persons who can give relevant inputs and create a training material which can ensure uniformity and quality. Then it requires the selection of adequate number of trainers from the pool of best teachers. Finally, under this model the training material needs to be best in terms of content and delivery.

The cascade model works in situations

where there is dearth of resources and numbers are large. It gives a large number of people the opportunity to be involved in professional development activities by getting trained and becoming trainers. If given the necessary recognition and support by ministries/departments of education, it helps create the initiative among master trainers and teachers to become more responsible for their own professional development within schools and between nearby schools.

However, the cascade model also has certain drawbacks. There is a definite degree of dilution which results in loss of quality from level to level. As a result, by the time the training reaches the final target group, it has lost some of its “real value”. Moreover, master trainers may not always have the required skills and may also be overburdened with responsibilities. Another issue is that within the cascade model adequate monitoring and assessment of activities are not possible and there is no way of fairly measuring teacher performance on a comparative basis.

Continuous professional development of English teachers in schools

Professional development of school teachers in our country at the state level is primarily the responsibility of SCERTs and DIETs. While we deal with big numbers and a host of challenges, an effective way to address it has been the cascade model. This model as discussed earlier has its advantages as it allows us to reach out to a large number of teacher, however, its effectiveness has been

challenged by many in the field. In 2008 SCERT, govt. of NCT of Delhi, identified 200 teachers to be trained by British Council as master trainers. 40 master trainers were then sent out to train 7000 English language teachers. This was done following the cascade model. However, the Impact Study (2010) showed that only 15-20% of the teachers were carrying forward the cascading. This programme was in the format of 5 days of training followed by a break and then another 5 days followed by 2 days of follow up sessions. In 2012 the same cascading was carried out by Regional English Language Office (RELO) with Delhi government school teachers with similar low impact results.

While the cascade model has allowed us to reach out to large numbers, Impact studies show that the effect is low. Therefore, there is a need to think of alternative ways to strengthen in-service programmes. In order to bring in the component of self-inquiry and problem solving within the local contexts of the teachers, action research can be an effective tool to engage teachers in exploratory practices.

Action research through the social network model

Action research which is also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR), community based study, co-operative enquiry, action science and action learning is an approach which is used for improving conditions and practices in a variety of professional spheres. The purpose of undertaking action research is to bring

about change in specific contexts. Meyer (2000) comments that action research's strength lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems and its ability to empower practitioners, by getting them to engage with research and the subsequent development or implementation activities. Meyer states that practitioners can choose to research their own practice or an outside researcher can be engaged in helping to identify any problems, seek and implement practical solutions, and systematically monitor and reflect on the process and outcomes of change.

Action research supports practitioners in seeking out ways in which they can improve classroom practices. Koshy (2010: 1) writes that, 'Action research is a method used for improving practice. It involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection and – based on the evidence gathered – changes in practice are then implemented. It is participative and collaborative, situation and context specific, develops reflection based on interpretations made by the participants. It results in creation of knowledge through problem solving, if the solution to the problem leads to the improvement of practice. In action research findings will emerge as action develops, but these are not conclusive or absolute.

Research is about generating knowledge. Action research creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts. The purpose of action research is to learn through action that then leads on to personal or professional development. Kemmis and
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McTaggart (2000: 595) describe it as participatory research. The authors state that action research involves a spiral of self-reflective cycles of: Planning a change, Acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, Reflecting on these processes and consequences and then replanning, Acting and observing, Reflecting and this goes on.

Cohen and Manion (1994: 192) describe the emergent nature of action research in their definition and maintain that action research is: *essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustment, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion*

Considering that in-service teachers need to engage in self-enquiry and reflective practices through action research, the question then arises as to how can they be supported and encouraged to do so. The present cascade model lacks the potential to support such a practice. We argue for a social network model of teacher collaboration to enhance teacher learning and professional development. In the past 20 years, educational researchers and policy makers have become increasingly interested

in teacher relationships and teacher collaboration to support teacher professional development and capacity building in schools.

As teachers need to play an important role in curriculum implementation, researchers and policy makers have started to acknowledge the importance of teacher collaboration for strengthening schools and building individual teachers' knowledge. A social network model promotes teacher collaboration of various kinds. Using this framework, social network studies outside of education have indicated the significance of social networks for organizational performance and innovation (e.g., Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal 1998) and suggested useful principles for the design of effective initiatives to enhance the value of collaboration (e.g., Cross et al. 2002).

Social network perspective facilitates our understanding of human interactions. In order to support this claim, the social capital theory (Degenne and Forse 1999; Portes 1998; Scott 2000) is invoked by scholars. Social capital theory proposes that social structure, or the web of relationships among individuals, offers both opportunities and limitations for the exchange of resources. Individuals may tap into the resources that are available in the social structure in which they are embedded and use these resources to their advantage to achieve individual or organizational goals (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

Social network model is based on three main

assumptions (Degenne and Forse 1999): First of all, it assumes that resources, such as information and knowledge, are exchanged in relationships among individuals. These resources flow through a social network and are transferred through social interaction among the individuals—for example, by asking for advice, collaborating, or helping (Borgatti and Ofem 2010; Burt 1992).

Secondly, social network theorists believe that individuals are inter-dependent rather than independent as they are embedded in their local social context (Degenne and Forse 1999). Third, a social network perspective further implies that social networks may provide opportunities for, but also limitations for, the actions of individuals and organizations. In other words, in schools, teachers may benefit from the tangible and intangible resources that flow in a school's social network, such as instructional materials and expertise. However, teachers may only benefit from these resources if they have access to them through their social relationships. If the patterns of social relationships are not favourable for teachers to tap into this flow of resources then it will hinder the ability of the school to achieve its goals. In the last few years, educational studies have been exploring social network theory to comprehend ways in which the complex role of teacher relationships can improve teaching and learning in order to facilitate educational change. Social network model can involve teacher collaboration across schools or districts (e.g., Lieberman 2000; Veugelers and Zijlstra 2002). This can

include collaborations with universities (e.g., Cornelissen 2011); teacher support groups between schools (e.g., Anderson 2010); and school partnerships in which two or more schools collaboratively work on a shared goal (e.g., Muijs et al. 2010). It can also involve teacher collaboration within schools (e.g., Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar et al. 2010; Moolenaar 2010; Moolenaar, Daly et al. 2011; Penuel et al. 2009).

The Social network model needs to be adopted along with the cascade model in the Indian context to ensure reflexive and enquiry based approach to teacher development. As we are struggling with large numbers, rejecting the cascade model may not be an immediate solution. However, along with the cascade model if we are able to build strong social networks both within and outside schools and districts, it has the potential to begin a new discourse in India's experiences with in-service teacher education. Coupling the social network model with the idea of a cooperating teacher or mentor, as seen in pre-service training programmes, in in-service situations a mentor teacher and a group of mentee teachers will allow teachers to collaborate and learn in a reflective manner by engaging in action research projects that are embedded in their classroom practices and local micro-contexts. Collaborations between school teachers and university teacher educators/teachers, researchers, other school teachers is the first step to exploring the social network model which allows teachers to access new ways of improving their classroom practices. Such

exploratory research must be incentivised and brought into the school system to encourage and support teachers.

British Council's Aptis Action Research Mentorship Scheme (AARMS) launched in February 2017 is an initial attempt to explore this on a small scale. It identified 14 mentors who in turn build social networks with 80 teachers across India to work over a period of one year. This scheme aims at supporting English teachers and create an environment and framework that enables a group of teachers to try out different approaches and ideas, develop their reflective practice, make choices and decisions about their teaching styles, develop their confidence and help them improve their student learning.

Conclusion

Though there are a number of challenges involved in exploring the social network model in the Indian context, adopting it within the existing cascade model will be a good first step to explore ways to support teachers' continuing professional development. Tapping into the available resources within a network of schools will maximise opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practices. Specific mentors can also be stationed in a particular school (for a specific period of time) to facilitate networking and action research work. The social network model thus has the potential to encourage school teachers to collaborate with mentors and explore and address their classroom concerns emerging from authentic teaching learning contexts.

This model can be implemented in the Indian context only when school teachers are motivated at the institutional level to engage in action research. Unless such requirements are made an intrinsic part of the institutional culture, in-service professional development activities will continue to have a diluted impact.

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Efficacious Presentation Schemata

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ABSTRACT

Any presentation can be made effective with good planning and a systematic approach. The most important visual in a presentation is not that dazzling animation or PowerPoint slide overflowing with data. The most important visual is the presenter who presents his/her point of view in front of the audience. And when presenting, a large part of the “visual you” is conveyed by the means of the body language. Various studies confirm that gestures, postures, movements, paralinguistic features and facial expressions appreciably help the listeners to grasp what one says. As the audience analysis shows that the body language communication is a very important part of any presentation, one needs to be aware of their body language from the moment one stands up until the presentation is complete. This paper unveils the facets of body language communication during presentation.

Keywords: *gestures, body language, locale*

Human beings are special creatures of God with special features of expressing their emotions and feelings in words and they express their feelings, emotions, and ideas through a process of communication in which they ideate their ideas by encoding those ideas in words and receivers comprehend the ideas by decoding the encoded words and then give feedback. Until and unless this process gets completed the communication cannot be completed. The act of communicating can be broken down into the fundamentals of writing and

speaking. There are hundreds of small social cues that build upon those fundamentals that make any person as an effective communicator. Tone and body language play an enormous role in communicating to others while word choice and even the way people write the letters can convey an unspoken message. Effective presentation skills are a subset of good communication skills. All effective presentation skills may be a result of good communication skills, however, all good communication skills cannot produce effective presentation skills. All these

things are important to learn even for jobs. The following chart by Times of India

Skill survey 2016 clearly states the importance of better communication.

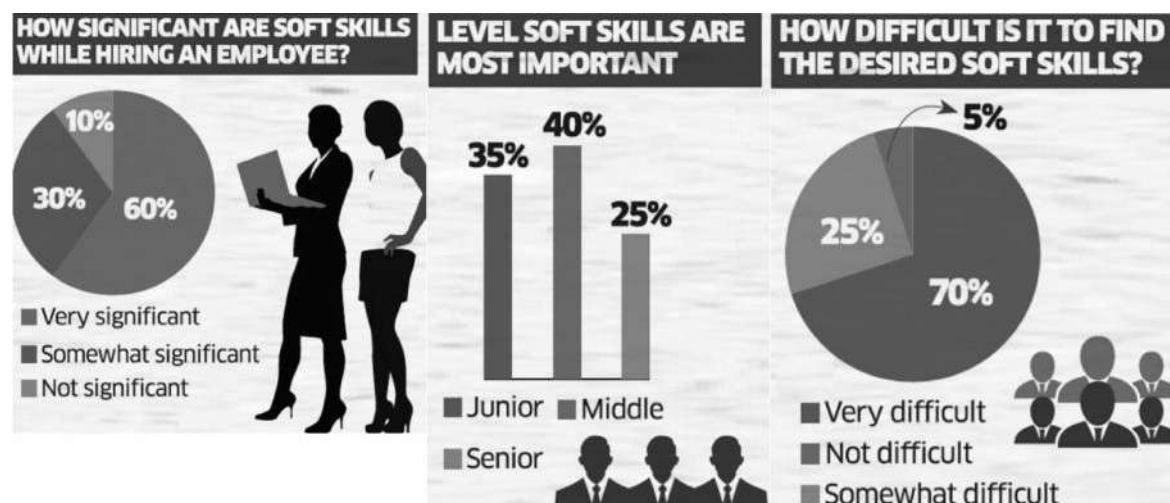


Figure 1TOI Skill Survey 2016

Let us make this point more clearly by explaining one of the oldest of all the presentation techniques and this is known since the time of Aristotle. The rule of three was described by Aristotle in his book *Rhetoric*¹ in which he portrays that people tend to easily remember only three things during presentation. We can understand it by taking an example of a kid who goes down to the shop to buy a number of things. The boy remembers only three things out of many things but if a mature woman/man goes to the shop, the same applies with them also but they recollect after putting the efforts to remember all the things. This is the rule of three and keeping this in mind we have to decide which three things we want our audience to remember. So, it can be said that a good presentation does not only require exact knowledge and enhanced matter but also needs proper body language, gestures, postures, eye contact, voice modulation and rate of speech. In other

words, it can be said that the basic three things during presentation are **body language, voice modulation and confidence**. A good level of confidence is boosts the presenter. Once a presenter acquires even the basics of it, they start to feel more confident and positive. In the long run, they will realize that their work personality will also improve.

By corroborating with Aristotle's point of view of remembering three things one should commemorate three things during presentation which are: Body Language, Voice Modulation & Confidence. First impression is the last impression; this traditional saying is always true. So, the goal of a good presentation should be to make the audience and auditors mesmerized. This goal can be achieved by the means of a bit of toil and planning as presentations can be made flourishing with good planning and a systematic approach. The most important

visual is you. The most important visual in a presentation is not that dazzling animation or Power Point slide overflowing with data. One should not parrot the slides as these slides should be used as cue. As Microsoft itself emphasizes that PowerPoint doesn't give presentations – PowerPoint makes slides. The presenter's comments should be more compelling than the slides. A presenter should keep in mind the following things:

- Do include 50% white space in each and every slide
- Do make it obvious which section of your outline you're in
- Do make each slide stand on its own which generally conveys a main point for each slide
- Do use animation but it should not be overused because it makes difficult and annoying to navigate for the audience
- Don't forget to add meaningful labels, titles, captions, etc. to graphs
- Don't use dark background and light colour of fonts
- Don't include period if anything is being written. Bullet points are incomplete sentences which should not carry periods

The most important visual is the way one presents one's point of view in front of the audience. And when presenting, a large part of the "visual you" is conveyed by the means of the body language. It is well fact that gestures, movements, and facial expressions help the listeners to grasp what one says.

We need to understand the need and demand of audience by which we can prepare the things accordingly. While analyzing the audience a presenter should analyze the following things:

- Who is my audience?
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Education
 - Occupation
 - Cultural background
 - Social status
 - Economic status
- What is their purpose to listen

This analysis gives an idea about the linguistic competence, academic background, beliefs, values and opinions and interests and attitude. All these things help in change, mould and reorganize arguments in a way that suits the audience.

It is well known fact that only a small percentage of communication involves actual words: 7%, to be exact. In fact, 55% of communication is visual (body language, eye contact) and 38% is vocal (pitch, speed, volume, tone of voice). So, the first and foremost thing for effective presentation skill is body language. Many recent studies have shown that people react most positively when a message is delivered alongside good body language. It can be better understood with an example:

Let's assume Mr X is going somewhere and he forgets the proper address. He asks a person that how to reach here. The stranger says, **the left turn is right turn** without using the gesture.

Mr X gets confused where to go because he comprehends this statement in two following ways:

- The upcoming left turn is right turn
- The turn which he has left is right turn

This statement could give better clarity by using the gestures. Otherwise, poor body language can send mixed messages and turn off an audience to what you're trying to convey to them as stated in above example. Effective presentation skills dictate the body language which helps the audience to follow what you are saying and keeps their attention; sometimes too much usage becomes overly confusing and annoying at times. In order to master effective presentation skills that involve your body, it's a great rule to make natural movements and anything that does not come or feel naturally should be avoided. Confucius deliberates, "I hear and I forget.

I see and I believe, I do and I understand." A presenter should try to involve his/her audience during any presentation by asking questions, using humours, pictures etc.

It is the human nature that s/he should be felt special during the conversation by giving the proper attention. They want to feel as though a presenter is speaking to them directly or that they are the most important

person in the room during the conversation. As eye contact is a powerful communication tool and it enables to connect with audience and their attention. But major question is that how much time we should keep eye contact to the audience? A good presenter can only look into someone's eyes for at most three seconds before either person glances away. Although eye contact shows intimacy but longer direct glance becomes more intense. So, our survey, during a professional speech, look directly into someone's eyes only for about a second. There are some cultural differences regarding eye contact. In the United eye contact is as basic and expected a form of non-verbal communication as the firm handshake. This is not true in other parts of the world. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, people avoid direct eye contact as a sign of respect.

Even within a country, people of different cultures use eye contact differently. African-Americans use more eye contact when talking and less when listening. People from Arab countries use prolonged eye contact to gauge trustworthiness. So, one should consider these cultural differences when using eye contact with your listeners. As somebody has said that the way you look at someone can make a big difference in regards to how you are perceived.

It is a real fact that breaking eye contact is a surefire way to break the connection. To attain proper attention of audience during presentations, A presenter should mentally split the room into three parts. Address

some of your comments to one side of the room, turn your attention to the middle, and then look to the last section. Try to identify one person in each section and direct the comments towards that person. The people surrounding that person will think you are making direct eye contact with them. Maintaining eye contact throughout your presentation requires preparation. Don't let anything come between you and your listeners. Crossing your arms, standing behind a lectern or chair, or talking to someone from behind a computer monitor all are the examples of blocking, which prevents a real connection from taking place. By this very fact, It is sure that the most important visual in a presentation is not that dazzling animation or PowerPoint slide overflowing with data but the most important visual is the way one presents one's point of view in front of the audience. The way that a presenter moves his/her body and limbs will also have a major influence on how the audience perceives. When presenting a presenter will normally be standing, and an ideal stance is with feet close together and the weight evenly distributed between them. We should not stand in one position, but try to inject movement as we speak. This helps to add a natural animation to our presentation as the audience have to adjust their gaze to follow us rather than stay looking at a fixed position. By developing a practiced way of moving we can add a confident and professional air to our presentation style.

A presenter should also focus on gestures; a form of body language, are also a part of

overall visual picture. There are visual reinforcements of the words and ideas a presenter is trying to communicate to the audience. Gestures include hand, arm, and head movements and can enhance the presentation or detract from it. It is an aid to, not a substitute for the expression of ideas. One should be sparing with gestures and one should give attention to certain points like arms and hands should move in a flowing and relaxed manner, at that time the gestures should be consistent with the ideas being expressed, hand gestures should be supported with your head and body movements, one should not be artificially repetitive with gestures. One should not forget that nodding the head and smiling are the effective ways to emphasize what you are saying.

The most important thing to accomplish these features is that one should have ample of confidence which can be attained by having faith in oneself. The emphasis should be on the sharing of ideas, not on the performance. Strive to be as genuine and natural as you are when you speak to family members and friends. Another important factor for confidence is knowledge. Nothing influences a speaker's mental attitude more than the knowledge that he or she is thoroughly prepared. This knowledge leads to self-confidence, which is a vital ingredient of effective public speaking.

The second most important thing for communication is how one speaks. It can be better understood by an example of river and canal to emphasize on the variation in speaking in fact about intonation, stress and

pause. The difference between a presentation with variety and one without it is like the difference between a river and a canal. If you are floating down a river, it offers you different surprises at every bend. You may go from farmland to valleys to forest, just by floating along a river. A canal, on the other hand, is a man-made channel that is straight and not very interesting. By this we want to convey that variation in tone can avoid monotony and it will allure the audience. Tone has as much if not more impact on the way people interpret what you are saying, as your word choice does. Any message said in an inappropriate tone can quickly lead to confusion and your audience reads into what you are saying and derives a mistaken meaning. Being able not only to select what you say carefully to avoid any double meanings, controlling how you say them is one of the major effective presentation skills. Effective presentation skills should not only help you communicate with the people around you but they should do so in a way that is appropriate for presentations, which can be very different from casual conversations or intimate exchanges which all have a set of skills themselves. In presentation, choosing the correct words, the perfect grammar and the best sentence structure is not going to win us any speaking awards. In English, we need to use tone, stress and the art of silence. We often face some problems regarding voice and tone which are wrong pronunciation in which sound of pronunciation is major thing which happens because of Mother Tongue Influence i.e. MTI. It plays a vital role as

words like 's' and 'sh' 'j' and 'z' and too many sounds are there. Mispronunciation leads to wrong interpretation as example:

She sells sea shells on sea shore.

Just imagine and think by replacing sound of 's' with 'sh'. So, one should learn proper pronunciation and then try to learn to put proper pause & stress on particular words as there is a popular saying in Hindi that:

Maaro mat, jane do & Maaro, mat jane do

In this sentence pause after *mat* and pause after *maaro* creates major difference so one should take care while speaking. In a presentation, there is an introduction, followed by a series of main ideas with supporting examples or illustrations. To finish there'll be a conclusion. Now think of the thread (theme, main idea) linking it altogether. It is similar to a road. We are taking our audience on a journey. Our *speech is the vehicle* carrying them along and *our mouth is the driver*.

As the driver *we make choices*. We can whirl them through so fast the scenery blurs. While we're busy negotiating a series of complicated hair pin bends at full throttle, we're gazing out the back window trying to work out what they've missed and where they are. One by one your listeners get dizzy. Then they close off their ears and sit quietly waiting for the ride to stop.

Or by contrast we can proceed *so cautiously* that our passengers want *to get out and walk*.

The third and final set of critical presentation skills is appearance. It is a sad fact that even today everyone makes judgments and decisions based upon how something or someone looks. If we fail to dress the part it will take even more work on our part to win back the audience and starting at a disadvantage is not a good idea. While it's important to be able to relate to the audience and the topic of our presentation, it's also important to always dress up just a bit more than necessary. While we'd never want to wear a suit and tie to a presentation about surfing, we also don't want to show up wearing swim trunks. Finding a good middle ground between the two extremes is part of the appearance presentation skills and it will help our presentation be taken more seriously.

Above all with these three assets of communication any human being can deliver good presentation but before this he clarity and follow the aims of presentation which are : to persuade, to inform, to motivate and to entertain. These can be attained by proper planning of writing. For the success of any presentation the audience

also plays a vital role.

During a presentation the beginning is ideal for an attention grabber or for an ice breaker. The end is great to wrap things up or to end with a grand finale. Basically, it defines our character as a mature professional. Anyone who understands the basics of presentation skills and knows how to put it into proper application is a good indication of a potential asset. Conducting a presentation is a talent and a skill. So it should not be perceived to be a typical practice because this characterizes a person as a true professional. This skill enhances our ability one step up the ladder of success in the aspect of our career.

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Enhancing Communication Skills in English through Interactive Materials

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on the effectiveness of interactive course materials to enhance advanced English communication skills of the learners. The study made use of a railway timetable along with a travelogue to engage the learners in meaningful interaction, which resulted in developing their basic and advanced communication skills. Basic communication skills are the four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing and advanced communication skills refer to language functions such as discussing, persuading, negotiating, sharing ideas, opinions and views, agreeing and/or disagreeing with others opinions, etc. Literary materials along with non – literary materials were used in order to train the learners to develop their ability to use the language in various circumstances. An action research project is carried out to train the tertiary level learners in using the language in different situations. The result was satisfactory in enhancing not only the language skills of the learners but also their referencing skills.

Keywords: interactive materials, communication skills, referencing skills.

Introduction

Interaction is an essential factor that needs to be focussed in the current scenario. Many recent researches emphasize the importance and relevance of interaction in the classroom. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and Jean Piaget, a constructivist emphasize the interaction between the human mind and environment (Oates, 1994). Vygotsky believes that

learning and development are collaborative and children develop the context of socialization and education (Oates, 1994).

Vygotsky (1978), defined social constructivism as “... the distance between the actual development of a child as determined by the independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in

collaboration with more peers.” Therefore, with the help of social interaction, such as getting guidance from the teacher, the learners understand the concepts and act accordingly.

Changes in methodology and materials

ELT has undergone drastic changes in the 21st century. The expedition propelled ELT has crossed several milestones such as chalk and talk method, teacher – centered, learner – centered, task based teaching and learning, communicative language approach and learning – centered. Now the focus is solely on learning and by all means the learners must be able to use the language. Learning – centered classrooms cater to the individual differences of the learners and also their strengths and weaknesses. Learning – centered approach provides opportunities for varied learning styles and strategies, taking into consideration multiple intelligences and the needs of the learners. ELT practitioners believe that learning is process – oriented and not product – oriented. This kind of approach is essential in this era of technology.

Interactive materials

Materials which interact among themselves to reveal and make them understand are referred as interactive materials. Instead of going to the established items of grammar book, thesaurus or appendices, learners can comprehend materials by consulting the other related materials included in the textbook. Interactive materials develop study skills and enhance self learning. Materials can be referred as interactive as

they interact with one other and enable the learners to interact with them to be more comprehensible. Interactive materials are designed in such a way that it is pertinent to the learners and keep them engaging. The learners know their progress as they do the task or activity. They receive immediate feedback. In general, interactive materials are referred to e-materials. But in the context of a semi-urban context where technology is not practiced much, interactive materials is of great help to the learners. With a wide range of materials available, the teacher can exploit them in order to enhance the communication skills of the learners.

E-materials

E-materials or online materials are an ocean of materials where learners have to spend more time to choose even amidst irrelevant materials. E-material content is available online globally and is more suitable for adult learners. The advantages of using online materials are the following: they provide feedback immediately and give a global view of the topic given; they help in independent learning and they are individual oriented. On the other hand, there a few disadvantages of using e-materials, viz. they provide objective feedback without considering the psychology of the learner and also they are not suitable for a core program.

Interactive materials as opposed to E – materials

E- Materials have multiple information and will be readily available for the learners.

Though e-materials enhance their knowledge horizon, they confuse the learners of what to learn. E-materials make the learners grope in darkness in what to choose and what not to choose. With relevant choices, a course book can be designed to give essential information as well as opportunity for referencing. Material producers must diagnose the needs, the mental make-up of the learners of certain age group and the level and amount of concepts that a learner of a particular group can take it. It is very challenging for the material producer to take account of all the above factors and prepare a text book using interactive materials.

The study demanded the learners to do home assignment on specific topics which forces the learners to consult e materials to get a global view of the topic. The study does not disregard the use of e-materials completely, but it stresses the importance of interactive materials at the beginning of the programme and slowly moves towards the consultancy of e-materials. Therefore, interactive materials are more suitable for beginners and for advanced learners, e-materials are appropriate provided the learners know how to choose the relevant materials.

Research questions

- Can the proposed interactive materials help the learners to enhance their communication skills?
- To what extent will an interactive course be effective on the learners?

Research Statement

The primary aim of this research is to study how the interactive course materials enhance advanced communication skills of the learners by involving themselves in meaningful interaction.

Hypothesis

Interactive course materials used for teaching English at the tertiary level enhance the communication skills of the learners.

General objectives

- The communication skills (LSRW) of the learners will be enhanced.
- They are encouraged to involve in the classroom activities.

Specific objectives

- Learners will comprehend the text given for listening and answer the questions.
- They will be able to comprehend the reading text (here, railway timetable) and answer the questions.
- They will be able to use appropriate words to describe a place in speaking and writing.

Description of the cohorts

The target group is the Undergraduate rural learners. They are socially, politically and linguistically disadvantaged. Out of thirty five, ten are first generation learners.

Materials & Methodology

The present experimental study uses the

principles of Andragogy and not pedagogy. These materials used in the study are practised to make the learners independent. Even after learning English for more than twelve years, the learners are not able to attain proficiency. In order to bridge the gap, the research employed interactive materials.

A short term programme with thrust on LSRW skills was planned and executed. The materials chosen were Vinu Abraham's *Floating Fantasy* and a railway timetable. The learners were asked a few questions about a place they visited, and the memorable experiences they had during their visit. Then they were given the differences between picnic, excursion and tour. They were asked to list the words used for describing places, travel, etc. through a brain storming session.

The learners were asked to listen to the travelogue by Vinu Abraham titled *Floating Fantasy*. A few questions were asked from the passage to check their comprehension. They were given a railway timetable and they had to scan for information from the timetable. An exercise was given based on the railway timetable. They were asked to choose a tourist spot and take up a role of a tourist guide and describe the place. Having the text as a sample, the learners were asked to write about a place they visited. They consulted the railway timetable while performing role play and describing a place. (Refer appendix)

Main and sub-skills

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are

the main skills focused. The sub-skills of listening include listening to descriptions and a short account of experience for details. The following are the sub - skills of speaking – sharing experiences, describing places and incidents, choosing exact words to describe. The sub-skills of reading include scanning for relevant details and reading for local comprehension. The sub-skills of writing include description of a place and tourist spots using cohesive devices. They also learn appropriate words to use for travel and tour and also descriptive words. Besides these, they refer the text and a railway timetable and use them when required. On the whole, the learners apply their knowledge of LSRW skills along with thinking skill to complete the activity by working individually and in groups.

Analysis of the material

The materials used are a literary text – *Floating Fantasy* and non literary material such as a railway timetable from newspaper. The learners are expected to consult the materials when they are given each activity. For example, the learners consulted the text which is about the experience of the author and used it as an example to describe their own experience and also while acting as a tourist guide. Interaction takes place within the materials, among the learners, between learners and materials and between learner and teacher.

This short term programme enables the learners to use the language. Their use of the language does show a significant improvement. However, factors such as

motivation and attitude of the learners affect the learning process but were worked on by continuous practice. The learners' thinking skill along with their basic and advanced communication skills is honed.

Findings

The findings of the study are listed below:

- Learners involved themselves in the activities. However, factors such as lack of proper motivation, attitude and fear of ridicule were predominant in the beginning which was reduced at the later stage.
- The learners referred to the travelogue *Floating Fantasy* and used it as a scaffolding to speak about a place.
- They shared their unforgettable experiences they had during their travel. This activity lengthened their noun and verb phrases and also enabled them to use the language without any hindrance.
- Role play enabled the learners to work in groups and each of them took turns to describe places.
- The activities enabled the learners to consult and cross refer the materials in order to speak and write. The same material was used to teach three skills. Their creativity and critical thinking faculty are honed.
- They learnt the differences among picnic, excursion and tour. They learnt to speak and write about their favourite place. They used persuasive language and details to their description about a place when they took up the role of a tourist guide.
- Constant repetition and exposure to a particular topic enabled the learners to be refined, clear and precise in their responses. The skills are integrated in the following order – listening, reading, and speaking and writing.
- The general objective was to make them involved in the process of teaching and learning which was fulfilled at the end of the programme.
- When learners are given opportunities to use the language without many restrictions, their communication skills are enhanced as a result of their creativity.
- It is found that interaction with the materials and other learners play a major role in language learning.
- Learning takes place when the classroom climate is conducive.
- Immediate feedback of the learners' performance and the learning process enhances learning and active involvement in the tasks.
- Since most of the learners do not have an opportunity to use the language outside the classroom, they were not exposed much to English. In that case, they tried to use their mother tongue which is again seen as a hindrance in language learning. Besides these, their political, social and linguistic level affects language learning.

Conclusion

Learning happens when it is of relevance to

the learners. Also learning a language takes place only if there is meaningful interaction. The learners must be involved in the teaching learning process and the teacher takes up the role of a facilitator in making the learners to participate in classroom activities and also promote interaction. Interactive materials enable the learners to use the language by enabling them to consult the materials and use them in contexts.

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BOOK REVIEW

Mohanraj, Jayashree. (2018). *Life Sutras – Collective Wisdom for the Young*. Bangalore, Prism Books Pvt. Ltd. [ISBN 938650674-2] pp x + 158. Price Rs. 175/-

The book under review is a self-help book brought out as a sequel to the author's earlier book *Skill Sutras* published in 2015 by the same publisher.

In today's world when the youth are facing a variety of challenges in the form of unemployment, discrimination, and subjected to abuse of various types - suicides, killing or taking to crime has become more of a norm than an exception. It is essential to bring these youth back to the mainstream and channelize their energies by counselling them properly. As the popular adage goes, '*we should catch them young*'. In other words, the help should reach them early in life when they are still in schools and colleges. Such work, if it can be integrated into the curriculum, nothing more can be wished for.

Both the books by the author make a serious attempt to offer help without being didactic. This is the highlight of both the books.

India has a rich tradition of storytelling. *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha* have simply not remained names in our society, but have been widely popular and have been transmitted orally from generation to generation. This goes to prove the richness of the methodology adopted and the sustained values they have transmitted. Jayashree Mohanraj, in her books has taken recourse to similar technology and developed a storyline to drive home the point. *Skill Sutras* is a sustained conversation between a mature aunt Nandita and her young nephew Raju. Raju, who is schooled in a village, reaches the town to join his course in Engineering. Though well read and informed, he feels diffident in the presence of his English speaking confident urban classmates and becomes tongue-tied when a teacher asks him a question despite knowing the answers. He shares his woes with his friendly aunt who counsels him and makes him a confident boy. This is in brief the gist of *Skill Sutras*.

In *Life Sutras*, Raju is a successful student in the final semester of his Engineering course is confident and is ready to give back to the society what he has learnt. He is badly disturbed, when

one of his juniors unable to cope with his studies commits suicide. He discusses the matter with his aunt and plans out a strategy with his friends to publish a series of stories on the notice board according to a design given by Nandita. He and his friends Ashish, Amina, Swapna, Tejas, Hemanth and Anjanli (all names beginning with Raju when put together form an acronym RAASTHA – a way forward) meet every week to get clarification on conceptual details from Nandita. To illustrate the concepts they look for stories from all possible sources and share them with each other and discuss them. The stories are put up on a specially marked notice board (with the permission of the principal) for all the students in the college to read. This brings about a sea change in the college though it happens gradually. The goodness does not stop with one college, but spreads to other colleges like a good contagion. The students open up, discuss and take the initiative to add their own anecdotes to the published ones. That ushers in a sign of willingness to learn and change voluntarily.

With 112 stories drawn from various parts of the world, based on lives of great people, the book helps students fight stress, develop positive attitude, guard their self-esteem, manage their time, help others in need and what have you. The book with its 12 chapters is modular. One may pick up any chapter and read it independently of other chapters and yet stand to gain. To support the stories and anecdotes, the book carries a few but meaningful illustrations thoughtfully crafted by Anupam Arunachalam.

There are several books available in the market on self-help. This is not just one more addition to the existing lot. It is different and has made a successful and persistent effort to fill the void that existed for a long time. The book is worth being prescribed and used as a course book or just read as bed time reading and still stand to gain.

**Prof Julu Sen (Retd)
EFL University
Hyderabad**

READING ACTIVITY

Visualization* (Comprehension and retention strategy)

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- Objective** : Facilitating students to convert words into mental pictures leading to richer comprehension and retention.
- Participation** : Individual.
- Material** : Any text.(My Greatest Olympic Prize - Jesse Owens)
- Preparation** : Reading a text with a conscious focus on the strategy of visualization until it becomes an integral part of one's reading habit.
- Procedure** :

- The moment you look at the title initiate the process of picturing it in mind and continue doing so during and after reading. The title, "My Greatest Olympic Prize", lends itself to imagine the Olympic prizes – gold, silver and bronze.
- In the story when Jesse Owens describes the German long jumper, Luz Long, as, "An inch taller than I, he had a lean muscular frame, clear blue eyes, fair hair and a strikingly handsome face." It is not difficult to picturize him in our mind's eye.
- The crux of the narration is the Luz's advice to Jesse Owens: "... why don't you draw a line a few inches behind the board and aim at making your take-off from there? You'll be sure not to foul, and you certainly ought to jump far enough to qualify." Following his advice he drew a line a full foot behind the board and jumped from there and qualified himself for the final. Interestingly, even the not so imaginative ones also can form picture of this scene.
- The scene of Luz genuinely congratulating Jesse Owens on winning the long jump is easy to imagine even by young children. Similarly, the warmth that Owens felt for Luz, "the 24 carat friendship" can also be picturized by anyone.
- The whole narration can be visualized in the form of four tableaux: a) Jesse Owens with the features of a "negro" and Luz Long, a German, b) they taking part in the qualifying round and Jesse Owens failing to do so in the first two rounds, c) Luz's advice to him and d) the friendship between them. These pictures will not easily vanish from one's memory.
- Any kind of task based on the text can be tackled by students with great ease if they cultivate a reading habit of this sort.

Learning outcomes:

- 1) Learners realize that creating mental images engages them actively with the text and rarely do they get distracted.
- 2) Learners (but not all) recognize that more than the other learning strategies visualization enables them to retain the information longer.

Further activity: Reading all kinds of texts employing visualization technique repeatedly until it becomes an unconscious reading strategy.

***Visualization:** In brief, a mental picture or a "movie in the mind". It is also referred as sensory imaging or imaging. Visualizing is a process of creating images based on the words found on the pages and the images are shaped drawing from all the five senses and the emotions they evoke.

"If I can't picture it, I can't understand it." – Albert Einstein

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