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The English Language Teachers' Association of India was registered 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.

Length: About 2000 words maximum

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Objectives of the Association

- 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.
- To promote professional excellence among its members in all possible ways.

The Journal is sent free to all the registered and active members of the Association. Our Literature Special Interest Group brings out a free online quarterly journal, *Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature*.

Our consultancy services include teacher training and bi-monthly meetings on current ELT themes relevant to the Indian context.

We host annual, national and international conferences and regional programmes on specific areas relevant to ELT today. Delegates from all over the country as well as from outside participate in them, present papers and conduct workshops.

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers

It is my pleasure to hand this copy to you. In this issue we bring you some interesting articles with a focus on current scenes in ELT, beginning with a short paper by Prof Stephen Krashen, a name familiar to English language teachers across the world. In this short write-up, Prof. Krashen refers to an experiment conducted by Ponniah and Priya on the efficiency of “aesthetic reading” in contrast to “efferent reading”. Krashen highlights the validity of the key finding and substantiates it with further evidence.

Dhanappa Metri has reported an experiment in teaching Functional English to his students. In this article, he provides tips to the readers to motivate the learners to become ‘inspired learners’ by training them to find their own materials, and read to learn so that they become proficient users of English. Metri, without saying so, has pointed to a new genre of teaching which is in vogue in certain pockets of the world – the DIY (Do-It-Yourself).

The next article by Vijayakumar Chintalapalli argues for DIY courses in higher education and focuses on using the available corpora for language learning. He elaborates how corpus can provide the necessary help to a learner to understand the various shades of meaning a word can yield. He endorses Paul Nation’s research findings and their application in the classroom, specifically in ESP courses in higher education.

Doing and reporting research helps in a teacher’s professional development. Dnyandeo Kale has reported the findings of his survey to assess the knowledge of methods that the primary level teachers of English in Satara district in Maharashtra have and their

familiarity with the labels. Based on the survey, he has been able to arrive at valuable conclusions on the changes that need to be brought about to improve the English language teaching situation in the district. His survey may be replicated in other regions (especially rural) and the findings of such surveys might help us to make generalizations from them.

The next article, a longer piece, argues for introducing a course in academic writing for the students of engineering in the state of Telangana. The author puts forth powerful arguments supported by facts and figures derived from a survey conducted by him. His arguments and findings are sound and worth sharing.

Along with these, we have our regular features. Prof. Saraswathi (‘Grammar Guru’), with her subtle sense of humour, makes us realize the importance of passive constructions and their use in real life, and addresses the question whether to convert or not to convert an active sentence into the passive. Prof. Lal, in his series on the story of the English language, touches on a very important development in the history of the language – The Great Vowel Shift. Finally, we have useful tips by Prof. Elango on teaching reading using graphic organizers (here, ‘fishbone organizer’) to enable learners to comprehend and later produce a piece of argumentative writing by demonstrating the pragmatic value of the tool.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and welcome your comments as well as contributions for the forthcoming issues – articles, book reviews, and reports on your successful classes (‘It Works!’). Happy reading.

S Mohanraj, Guest Editor

Aesthetic Reading: Efficient Enough

Stephen Krashen

ABSTRACT

Ponniah and Priya (2008) reported that “aesthetic” (fiction) readers of English as a foreign language outperformed “efferent” (non-fiction) readers on tests of English. This result is consistent with findings showing that aesthetic texts contain substantial amounts of academic language and supports the conclusion that fiction contains enough academic language to bring second language students to high levels of competence in English.

Keywords: Aesthetic reading; Aesthetic readers; Efferent reading; Efferent readers.

Ponniah and Priya (2008) compared the literacy competence in English as a second language of 50 engineering students in India who preferred “aesthetic” (fiction) reading with those who said they preferred “efferent” (non-fiction) reading. All had studied ESL for 12 years and all had same amount (quantified in terms of the number of years of schooling) of instruction in English.

The subjects were asked about the kinds of

reading they did. Based on their responses, 37 subjects were classified as primarily aesthetic readers (fiction) and 13 as primarily efferent readers (newspapers, technical, academic).

Aesthetic readers outperformed efferent readers on all tests of English literacy (**Table 1**), a result similar to that reported in Sullivan and Brown (2014) for vocabulary development in English as a first language.

Table 1. Performance of Aesthetic and Efferent Readers on Tests of English Literacy

	Aesthetic	Efferent	t	p	effect size
R.C.	6.93 (1.57)	6.38 (1.12)	1.15	0.25	0.4
Cloze	6.84 (1.34)	5.84 (1.84)	2.03	0.047	0.62
Grammar	7.71 (2.41)	5.38 (1.43)	3.26	0.002	1.18
Writing	3.55 (.94)	2.26 (0.99)	4.17	0	1.34

Grammar = rewrite a passage correcting errors

Writing: Write a passage incorporating a given sentence.

RC: Reading Comprehension

Maximum score: RC, Cloze, Writing = 10, grammar = 20

As seen in the table, aesthetic readers scored higher on all measures, but the difference was not statistically significant on the reading test. It needs to be pointed out, however, that Ponniah and Priya used a two-tail test. A one-tail test is more appropriate here, as the direction of the effect can be predicted based on previous research. For a one-tailed test, $p = .125$, still falling short of significance, but close to an acceptable p -level for statistical significance. Also, the effect size for reading comprehension is substantial.

As Ponniah and Priya (2008) point out, it is likely that the aesthetic readers read more (1), which could account for their advantage, as a number of studies have reported that those who do more reading have higher achievement in both first and second language (Krashen, 2004). Nevertheless, the results are consistent with studies showing that “aesthetic” texts contain a great deal of academic language (Rolls and Rodgers, 2017; McQuillan, 2014; Green, in press).

It has not been established that aesthetic reading is more efficient (e.g., more academic words acquired per page read) than efferent reading, but Ponniah and Priya’s results in English as a foreign language, as well as those of Sullivan and Brown’s (2014) in first language development suggest that even if aesthetic reading is less efficient than efferent reading in acquiring academic language, it is efficient enough. What is clear is that aesthetic reading counts.

NOTE

(1) Beniko Mason (personal communication) pointed out to me that this is true of Ponniah and Priya’s subjects: more subjects were

aesthetic readers than efferent readers, the aesthetic readers reported reading more and they read a wider variety of texts.

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Teaching English to the Inspired Learners

Dhanappa M Metri

ABSTRACT

This paper reports an experiment in teaching English to the inspired learners. English in undergraduate classes is mainly learnt for marks in examinations. The process of serious language learning will barely start unless the reasons for not being motivated are diagnosed and remedies are found. The expected outcome is a distant dream unless the learners are motivated to learn the language seriously. Through an action research, the writer of this paper found out the reasons behind the lethargy and skillfully inspired the learners to love English language learning... Mind blogging, involving the parents, using technology, empowering learners, enhancing learner engagement, and providing the learners with the right material brought out expected results. A teacher's love for English and for his learners along with professional commitment can definitely motivate the learners. Once inspired, the sky is the limit to learning English.

Keywords: Learning English; learner-lethargy; inspiring learners; auto learning.

Introduction

Amidst the modern miracles of ICTs having the capacity to solve almost all the academic problems, the quality of learning in general and learning of English in particular in the conventional degree courses in a majority of cases is rarely satisfactory. A committed and imaginative teacher is bound to find a solution rather than get involved in the blame game. Action research approach along with teaching is essential and this has been well suggested by Ramani (2014) that the educational practitioners should be aware of their day-to-day problems scientifically, in order to find practical solutions and improve the teaching-learning process. This paper is the result of one such investigation by a dissatisfied researcher.

Lethargic learners

Learners in India study English for about

fifteen years, but they are not proficient in any of the skills the system expects. According to the UGC Model Curriculum (2001), learners from Indian universities are expected to study a certain amount of English to gain the required competence in using English language: to comprehend English texts of a moderately advanced level, certain compositional skills required in various professions, activities in English, and the literary use of English to some extent. The learners, on the contrary, care little for the skills and their sole purpose is to score marks to qualify in examinations. The researcher has been endowed with the responsibility of teaching functional English to the undergraduate learners in a conventional college for thirty-two years, and is frustrated at the poor outcome of the efforts put in. Keen observation shows that the learners no doubt

have a desire for learning English language but want to adopt short cuts and easy methods to do so. Thus the quality of learning as well as competence achieved are deteriorating fast.

Functional English classes have very large number of students, so it is very difficult to manage and make learning effective. Heterogeneity rules the scenes due to diversity in the intelligence, emotional, and energy quotient of the learners. In addition to this, the learners have varied social, cultural, financial, and linguistic backgrounds. Their basic knowledge of English language measured in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar is mixed. The faculties, in such mismatched teacher-student ratio have stiff challenges to face. Only committed teachers are able to convert their lethargic learners into passionate learners.

Need for Inspiration

There is hardly any English educator who does not blame the system and the learners for their poor engagement in learning English language seriously. Instead of joining the chorus, there is a need for taking the bull by its horns. Teaching English in India is full of challenges but also flooded with tons of opportunities (Metri, 2013). Prasad and Rao (2019), in their interesting article, mention two types of motivation: internal and external. They call it a driving force which helps to accomplish any task creatively. Due to inspiration, inner conditions such as wishes, desires, and goals, act to move in a particular direction in behaviour.

Initiation of Inspiration

Learner desensitization

Their peers, teachers, and parents have made

learning English a difficult task towards getting a good job. As a result, learners have become shy and oversensitive. Failures in English in the memory-testing examinations have created a type of fear, a phobia among the learners. Desensitization through counter teaching theory by Wolpe was adopted. To desensitize learners, they were made to handle reading material in English other than their prescribed texts. They were motivated to watch television news and use social media consciously in English. Student reading and presentation activities were also practised. They participated in different co-curricular activities and wrote for the college annual magazine.

Involvement of parents

After convincing the parents about the sincere efforts and the interest generated among their wards, an appeal was made to provide these learners with suitable study tools. Parent collaboration is the secret to any successful innovation because Indian parents long to see their wards speak in English. The rapport with the parents proved fruitful in equipping the learners with smartphones, English newspapers, and other extra reading material.

Empowered learners

Self-analysis (SWOC) to understand one's strengths and weakness was done. The learners were well-equipped with the right study material and some online courses. Their feedback after every activity was collected and the promotion of auto learning technique created the feeling of empowerment and aroused the passionate learner in them. They were empowered with the right amount of self-esteem and ambition to develop further.

Collaborative and cooperative learning

To overcome the problem of a large class, small groups of ten students each were made to learn together and cooperate with one another. The reading materials bought by those who could afford were shared among the poor. The leader of the group whose competence in English was better took care of their problems before the facilitator remedied them.

Learning made activity-based

The speaking and writing activities published in the *JELT* and the *ELT Voices* were practised in the class. Learning was made application-oriented. For example, while dealing with interview techniques, they were made to interview people from all strata of the society. They interviewed the people in their first or local language and the interview was translated into English collaboratively. While teaching them some written communication skills, they were made to collect the material from real life and the learners appreciated such tasks. Participative techniques like role playing, debates, and PowerPoint presentations were used. The learners who got an opportunity in the process of teaching-learning became more enthusiastic in course of time.

Technological amplification

The use of audio and video files made learning quite interesting. They were motivated to prepare slides with the help of free internet clips related to their studies. The learners noticed that they were ever ready to get involved in such activities. They were motivated to visit the sites and learn English

through online courses, too. Learning was further complemented outside the class with the help of social media and mobile learning.

The outcome

Prepared learners

The inspired learners with vision prepared themselves after their self-analysis (SWOC) and understanding their own Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges. They charted the path of their journey to learn English suitable for their career. The enhanced awareness helped in building confidence, leading to their pursuing the study of English language seriously. This aptitude with zeal was fully utilized in developing effective learning of English. Once the learners were aware of their future, they came out of their lethargy and planned everything according to fixed objectives. They were charged learners, absolutely different from their own past condition. Effective learning under such circumstances was quite easy.

Scope for innovative practices

The class full of motivated learners is like the land with porous soil where anything can be cultivated. A teacher successful in winning the hearts of the learners can develop best practices to improve teaching and learning of English. The learners fully charged were ever ready to invest money, mind, and hard work. For these motivated learners, learning was no more a hated work but an enjoyable activity. The facilitator was fully involved and went beyond all ELT methods to become an eclectic English educator.

Well-equipped learner

Once their path was chosen, the learners started equipping themselves properly. The researcher observed that the learners were equipping themselves with basic tools like dictionaries, textbooks, grammar books, and websites. Most of them utilized their mobile app dictionary. Their enhanced interest motivated them to find resources beyond the textbook and the classroom in the world at large. They even started to read extensive reading material in the form of English newspapers, magazines, and journals. Their use of the library was quite interesting to watch.

Engaged learners

The learners, who usually focus on their performance in examinations, found the entire process of learning pleasurable now. Possessing the extensive reading material made them feel proud and confident. Overcoming their hesitation, they used English with pleasure. They had dreams in their eyes, so every responsibility was meaningful to them. In course of time, their enhanced passion made them prepared learners so they started browsing the topics in advance. The learners were even found preparing their own notes, keeping in mind the entrance tests for their higher studies and the competitive examinations in future. The candidates with a lot of inhibitions turned competent and confident.

Facilitator's professional satisfaction

Once the learners were motivated to be well-equipped in learning the English language passionately, the job of the facilitator became

smooth and systematic. It was equally pleasurable to the facilitator to see the enthusiastic learners acquiring skills after skills. The attendance in the class improved naturally, making the facilitator free from the problem of marking attendance mandatorily. He could see his students participating in different competitions, further enhancing their confidence.

The scope

This kind of a motivational approach is effective for not only learning English, but can be extended to the learning of other subjects as well. The teachers are free to find pragmatic solutions to genuine problems.

Limitations of the experiment

This experiment demands a lot of time and effort on the part of the teacher. It is a matter of motivation, so the facilitator needs to display love and commitment. The faculty should be prepared to provide more than bookish knowledge. The committed faculty may face distractions from their colleagues and a few learners may not be ready to change and prevent others from changing.

Conclusion

Technology has its tremendous impact on English language teaching. Learners have everything to learn and master the language. What they need is a true zeal to learn the language and it is an opportunity to the educators to inspire the learners and provide them with the right materials. The trust deficit between the academia and the society is widening fast, and the teachers committed to their profession and ready to run an extra mile can minimize this gap. They can derive

the much-needed job satisfaction, elevating themselves in the eyes of the learners, parents, the institution, and the society at large. We, the English teachers, have greater opportunities for contributing towards nation building with the human resources proficient in English language skills. Looking at our profession with the much-needed research approach is indispensable and action research is a remedy to many worries of the English teachers at all levels.

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Checklist for Manuscript Review

1. Does this article present and/or discuss **issues that are important and relevant** to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL/EFL context?
2. Is the **title** clear, short and appropriate for the content of the article?
3. Is the **abstract** brief, clear, inclusive and consistent with the content of the article?
4. Is the **introduction** relevant, meaningful and purposeful?
5. Is the **literature review** relevant to the article and focussed?
6. Does the article establish a clear **rationale** for the study and state the **problem** clearly?
7. Are the **techniques and tools** used appropriate for the study?
8. Are the **results** clearly presented and discussed?
9. Are the **findings** based on a robust analysis of the data and clearly presented?
10. Are the **conclusions** appropriate and reasonable, and linked to other studies on the topic?
11. Are **implications** of the findings discussed in the article?
12. Are the **references** appropriate, current, sufficient and consistent with in-text citations?

[See 'Manuscript Submission Guidelines for Authors' on pages 46-48.]

‘Do-It-Yourself’ English Courses for Higher Education

Vijayakumar Chintalapalli

ABSTRACT

Do-It-Yourself is an innovative practice in ELT, where the students have the autonomy to pursue their language interests. When combined with modern corpus tools such as concordances and genre pedagogy, the DIY courses can enable learners learn various aspects of language crucial for their success on specific academic programs. In this paper, I propose to introduce the concept of DIY in ESP courses in higher education context and show how they can truly promote learner-centredness in an ESP education.

Keywords: Concordances; corpora; lexical-grammatical items; DIY Courses; genre pedagogy; ESP; learner-centeredness.

Introduction

In India, most of the technological institutions offer two types of English language course: general or communicative English course and technical communication course. While the former stresses the importance of English communication skills in everyday contexts, the latter attempts to focus more on the “professional” contexts of language use such as technical report writing and presentation skills. The scope and nature of these English courses vary from institution to institution. The course content for both the courses is generally drawn from the core disciplines that both the teachers and learners can access; no content is taken from subject disciplines.

Recent Trends in English for Specific Purposes

The demand to satisfy the individual language needs of higher education students has motivated some ESP practitioners to reconceptualize the scope and nature of ESP

courses. Some earlier attempts in this direction made an effort to identify the core linguistic aspects, such as genres and lexico-grammatical features, and conventions that were typically employed by the members of the discourse communities. Materials producers typically organized the content in terms of genres, lexical, and grammatical items for instructional purposes. In order to provide a heightened awareness of specific academic genres, some practitioners attempted to design consciousness-raising activities by binding linguistic realizations such as rhetorical moves and lexico-grammatical patterns with their social and communicative purposes (Sengupta, Forey, & Hamp-Lyons, 1999). Learners were encouraged to analyse language use from the points of view of social purpose and audience.

Some other experts found it convenient to use technological tools such as language corpora in the ESP classes. Data-driven

learning was introduced by Johns 30 years ago. Johns (1991), in his seminal article, demonstrated how teachers could use computer corpora directly in the language classroom to help learners “discover” patterns of language use. Although this bold move towards the use of a rather unconventional source of language and a radical methodology “learn how to learn” managed to attract some noteworthy applied linguists’ attention (Thurstun & Candlin, 1998), its pedagogic potential was only realized much later.

Corpus-based language education and DIY courses

Understanding authentic language, according to corpus researchers, requires both syntagmatic and paradigmatic approaches to reading. In a syntagmatic, horizontal or linear analysis, we can observe and analyse authentic language as it flows. We can study different contextual properties, starting from rhetorical moves to lexical choices, to determine the texture of the texts. Similarly, the vertical paradigmatic analysis of a corpus can help us with the typical lexico-grammatical patterns. For example, studies on the frequently used lexical bundles in spoken and written academic registers have relied on paradigmatic analysis to identify functional bundles for pedagogic purposes (Biber & Barbieri, 2007). Corpus-based courses fundamentally rely on these two strategies to enable learners to understand real language use.

Several EAP and ESP projects have used computer corpora to produce frequency-based word lists for general and specific purposes (Nation, 2016). Paul Nation’s

Range program and Oxford’s *WordSmith* Tools are the popular tools used to identify technical and semi-technical vocabulary items. Although not much research is available as to how these lists have been put to use by ESP students in the classroom, several publications, including learner dictionaries, have successfully produced discipline-specific ESP materials with the help of these word lists (Smith, 2014).

However, the scope of corpus-based word lists in language education in the last ten years has spread beyond single-word lexical items to phrases and lexico-grammatical patterns in specific spoken and written registers (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010). Hyland (2008) and (Biber & Barbieri, 2007), for instance, classified bundle types based on their occurrence in different disciplines and registers. While a large number of bundles used in classroom discussions tend to organize the discourse in action, Hyland pointed out that many research-oriented bundles used in science and technology imparted ‘a laboratory-focused sense to writing’ (Hyland, 2008:14). Similarly, he showed how some bundles helped writers to express stance (*it is possible that; it may be due to*), while others signalled transition (*in contrast to; on the other hand*).

DIY corpus-based courses

DIY corpus-based courses, unlike traditional ESP courses, are intrinsically structured to promote autonomy. Besides, the scope of these courses could go beyond word lists. In fact, modern DIY courses take into consideration register or field variations, audience variations, and genre variations. In a recent study by Dong & Lu (2020), both

the instructor and students compiled a specialized corpus of engineering research articles (RAs) to study the rhetorical moves and their associative linguistic aspects. At the genre level, they tagged the rhetorical moves of RAs using specific functional labels—*making topic generalizations, indicating to gaps, presenting the present work*—that John Swales (Swales, 2004) has produced with the help of modern corpus analysis tools. Once they tagged the moves, they then extracted move specific concordances (for example, *claiming centrality*) to study how the writers realized the moves in terms of linguistic expressions (*plays an important role; however, little knowledge*). In other words, they studied the typical and frequent paradigmatic patterns that marked the moves/steps to understand how writers deployed their language resources to organize their ideas in a logical order.

Similarly, Charles from the Oxford University Language Centre designed a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) academic writing course for a group of advanced learners from different disciplines (Charles, 2012). Unlike Dong & Lu's (2020) study where every student contributed a text to the specialized corpus, Charles' study attempted to make a group of 41 students from 12 different disciplines to compile their own corpus of texts, which could be accessed later without the Internet:

- a. to learn the grammatical forms appropriate to their contexts of academic writing, and
- b. to extend and refine their vocabulary knowledge (which includes collocations).

She even allowed them to add and delete texts from their corpus, because her major aim here

was to help students correct and improve their writing independently. The students were encouraged to study, among other things, grammatical aspects (countables and uncountables: whether the word *literature* in *review of literature* takes/does not take the definite article), self-referencing practices of writers (using *I, we, our, my* in research writing), and the use of appropriate linking adverbials (*however, nevertheless, hence, and therefore*) in presenting arguments and counter arguments.

Why DIY courses?

Charles's DIY course was an interesting one in many ways:

- a. It addressed the language needs of 41 students from 12 different academic disciplines in the same course.
- b. The materials used by students represented the conventions of their academic disciplines.
- c. It promoted learner autonomy in text selection and text exploration.
- d. The course was dynamic so that the students could change their writing goals any time during the course by adding or deleting texts from the corpus.
- e. The corpora and the tools that analyse the corpora could be retained for a long time.
- f. In the long run, it reduces the reliance of students on external support such as proofreading agencies and supervisors.

What this DIY course aimed to achieve is what we generally plan to achieve for our courses: to enable our learners become

independent learners. To achieve this goal, we organize our tasks and activities around coherent independent texts, and attempt to unpack the logical relations by carefully reading every sentence in the text. This DIY course, on the contrary, allows learners to study language syntagmatically while at the same time showing patterns paradigmatically. Since the corpus contains individual texts of students' choice, the students can go through them whenever they want to unpack logical relations. The benefit of accessing paradigmatically the patterns, however, is that it exposes students to possible permutations and combinations at each level. If the corpus is too big like the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the number of permutations (collocations) one can find could be even greater. You may visit the website: <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/> and search, for example, for the contexts and the ways in which the node (the search word *significant*) could be used in writing.

However, when a student compiles a specialized corpus, which has a representative sample of texts from a specific discipline and genre, he/she will be able to identify the typical patterns used in that genre and discipline. DIY courses, instead of teaching students directly the rules, as Johns (1991) demonstrated, they ask the students the right questions to establish a purpose for learning and thereby for exploring concordances.

Earlier attempts in data-driven learning used large databases and provided students with instances that were not within the contextual and linguistic range required for them. This was messy and chaotic, often resulting in

confusion and exhaustion. However, DIY courses designed these days attempt to encourage students to choose their own texts for the corpus. This autonomy in text selection supported by teacher modelling will not only motivate students to do these courses, but also expose them to authentic language, which is textually and contextually appropriate. It will also enable us to offer truly learner-centred courses in contexts where each individual learner has specific language needs.

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Understanding of Methods and Techniques among Primary Teachers of English in Satara District

Dnyandeo Salu Kale

ABSTRACT

This study reports a small survey that was undertaken to understand problems and prospects of teaching English at the primary level in Satara district of Maharashtra. The purpose of the study was to explore the real state of teaching and learning of English in the primary schools. There are several problematic issues as well as inspiring practices associated with the teaching of English at the primary level in the district. The questionnaire designed to collect data from teachers comprised thirty objective as well as open-ended questions. This paper presents an analysis of the responses to the questions pertaining to teaching methods and techniques.

Keywords: Methods and techniques in ELT; ELT practices; primary teachers of English.

Introduction

The quality of English learnt by students has been the prime concern of all the teachers and experts in the field. When given a deep thought, language teaching appears to be a very complex process, as it involves emotional, physical, behavioural, cultural, political, historical, and practical elements. A teacher has to take them all into account while teaching any language, though the preferences may differ according to the teaching conditions. Methods and techniques used for imparting language skills play a key role in the process. "Methods serve as a foil for reflection that can aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their actions" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. xi). Imitating how our teachers taught us has been one of the predominant trends in our classroom teaching. "By exposing teachers to methods

and asking them to reflect on the principles of those methods, actively engaging with the techniques, teacher educators can help teachers become clearer about why they do what they do" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. xi).

Exposure to different methods enables them to choose the appropriate method for their classroom situations. It attracts them to a particular method, which can be used most effectively, apart from making them aware of other methods in practice. This also has a visionary aim of enabling individual teachers to practise a particular method that they feel is most effective. This would ultimately enable them to reject any method imposed on them by the higher authorities or submit to a top-down model. Where there is no single method prescribed, teachers would have an array of methods or techniques to choose from according to the

demands of the situation.

Problem of the Study

The government of Maharashtra introduced English as one of the compulsory subjects in the lower primary classrooms in 1999. A period of two decades has passed since the introduction of this revised policy about teaching English. Improvement in the quality of English learnt by students was the main concern of the policy. The expected outcomes are still not in sight. It would be interesting to study different aspects of teaching English at the primary level. Particularly, it is important to study the methods and techniques practised by teachers in the schools for imparting language skills.

Rationale of the Study

The syllabus and textbooks have been revised only twice in the last twenty years. The teaching method recommended by the syllabus committee is the Play Way Method in addition to the Lexical Approach. Teachers are not allowed to teach grammar, which was the primary focus of teaching English before 1999. Many teachers insisted on teaching grammar but could not, because of the change in policy. This has seriously affected the classroom teaching strategies and the quality of English learnt by students. In view of these imposed changes, it becomes essential to

study the methods and techniques adapted by teachers for teaching English in the primary classes. The study also explored certain unexplored practical aspects of the implementation of methods in the classrooms.

Area of the Study

Satara is a district located in the western region of Maharashtra. This has been a district of utmost importance historically and politically, as it served as the capital of the Maratha Empire during the period of Chh. Shahu, the grandson of Chh. Shivaji. It is also a major agrarian district of the state producing the best quality groundnuts, thus adding to the state revenue substantially.

Procedure

A survey was conducted to achieve the aims of the study. Based on a random selection across the district, 350 teachers were given the questionnaire. However, only 86 teachers responded. The questionnaire consisted of only two questions pertaining to methods and techniques. The first question was an objective type question. Teachers were required to choose or name the method or methods they use. The second question was intended to know what exactly they practise in the name of a particular method they have mentioned in response to the first question.

Responses to Question 1: Table 1 presents the responses of the teachers to the question.

* Every teacher was free to mention more than one method.

Method Used*	No. of Respondents	Percentage to the Total (86)	Separate	Combined
Direct Method	23	26.74	3	20
Grammar-Translation	16	18.60	4	12
Communicative Approach	41	47.67	1	40
Audio-Lingual Method	26	30.23	1	25
Situational Language Teaching	32	37.21	0	32
Total Physical Response	14	16.28	0	14
Eclectic Approach	38	44.19	10	28
Constructivism	36	41.86	7	29
Co-operative Language Teaching	27	31.40	1	26
No Grammar Approach	5	5.81	0	5
Any Other	9	10.47	0	9
No Response	3	3.49		
Invalid Responses	21	24.41		

Only 3 teachers ((3.49%)) did not respond to the question. Forty-one teachers (47.67%) use the Communicative Approach for teaching English either separately or in combination with some other approach which appears to be the most useful approach for classroom teaching. However, it is surprising to note that 44.19 % and 41.86 % teachers claim to use the Eclectic Approach and Constructivism respectively for teaching English in the classroom. Through interactions with the teachers during the survey, the researcher came to know that most of the teachers prefer to use

constructivism for teaching English, as they find it conducive to the classroom situations. It was also observed that only 27 teachers (31.39%) use only one approach for teaching English in the classroom, which means that 69.61% teachers find combinations of different approaches and methods suitable for teaching English.

A few of the responses were considered invalid, as the researcher found that the combinations that the teachers had chosen were either not rational or not possible. Hence, those were not considered for analysis.

Response to Question 2

The second question required the teachers surveyed to explain their method or way of teaching. The question expected descriptive answers based on the strategies adopted by the teachers. Their responses were as follows. (*Responses in the Marathi language have been translated.*)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Direct Method – Translation - Communicative Approach</p> <p>2 Direct method is compulsory. First, No grammar Approach, then communicative and use of audio-visual aids.</p> <p>3 For 1st standard, I do all the activities in front of students and ask them to repeat them. It needs more and more practice. I use audio and visual materials for them.</p> <p>4 Teach in English, explain in Marathi and give easy examples.</p> <p>5 Communicative approach: Students show pictures from the book and teachers give information about the picture.</p> <p>6 Spellings, words, sentences come in sequence in above methods.</p> <p>7 Translation</p> <p>8 By translating in Marathi</p> <p>9 Constructivism: This method is useful in primary education. In this method, there is actual experience, enjoy, activity-based learning.</p> <p>10 First tell in Marathi, then translate in English.</p> | <p>11 I use direct method and later explain it in easy language using audio-visual aids, etc.</p> <p>12 Speak directly in English and explain in simple English.</p> <p>13 I give parallel examples of the object and discuss them with students.</p> <p>14 Loud reading, student reading, use of dictionary for meaning/s of word/s, use of words to construct sentences, activity-based participation of students, discussion.</p> <p>15 Read aloud; explain meanings of new words in Marathi.</p> <p>16 While teaching, some basic concepts are to be explained in Marathi as the mother tongue is the best language to understand complicated issues.</p> <p>17 The books of Maharashtra Textbook Production Bureau are student-centred, structural and pleasant in presentation. Hence, I use methods given in the textbooks.</p> <p>18 In constructivism method, students, i.e. learners, actively participate in the learning process. Teacher encourages students to learn.</p> <p>19 Read the text clearly first, then explain it. Give meanings of the words. Use Marathi as per the requirements. Ask questions to get feedback from students about the content.</p> <p>20 I use the teaching method by which students understand easily.</p> <p>21 Eclectic Approach includes all the methods which I use.</p> |
|--|--|

- 22 I speak to my students in English only. Sometimes to find out unfamiliar words, I make use of dictionary. I use audio-visual aids.
- 23 As students do not use English at home, they do not understand it when spoken. Hence, I find it necessary to translate content in Marathi. They understand grammar better in Marathi.
- 24 I teach English using discussion method. I ask questions and take feedback from students.
- 25 Motivate students to share their experiences in the class.
- 26 Create situations in the classroom and outside to encourage students to speak.
- 27 Use teaching aids such as cards, charts, PPT. Practise some sentences outside the textbook.
- 28 Make students participate.
- 29 Practise action words, picture description, drilling, etc.

(**Note:** These were the actual responses, and the researcher has not tried to modify them.)

Analysis

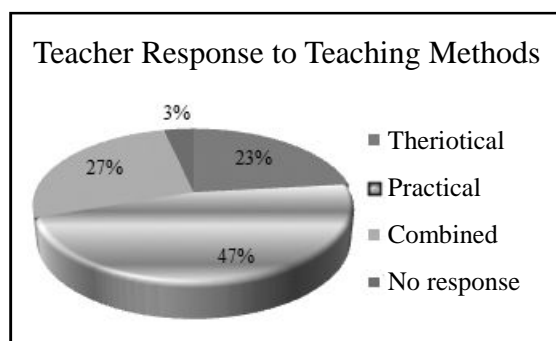
When taken together, the responses create an ideal picture of classroom teaching of English, which is not a fact. This requires further classification of the responses. Accordingly, these responses have been classified into four categories. The first category is **Theoretical Responses**, which means that the respondent teachers had just mentioned the name/s of the approach/es they use for teaching. There are some teachers

who did not mention the name/s of approach/es but gave a practical description of what they do in the classroom. These responses have been recorded as **Practical Responses**. There are some teachers who had named the approach and explained what they do in the classroom. These responses have been classified as **Combined Responses**. There are some teachers who have not responded at all. They have been classified as **No Response**.

Table 2

Category	No. of Respondents	%age
Theoretical	20	23.26
Practical	40	46.51
Combined	2	26.74
No Response	3	3.49

Source: Field Work



As Table 2 shows, 40 teachers (46.51%) elaborated their practices compared to 20 teachers (23.26%) who had just named the approach/es and method/s; 26.74% teachers had stated the approach and elaborated what they do while teaching in the classroom. These elaborations by 63 teachers (73.25%) make us think about the relevant and not-so-relevant responses. It was found that 25.58%

teachers gave responses not relevant, i.e. their responses do not match the methods they had mentioned in response to the same question or to the first.

Conclusion

Primary teachers in Satara district need intensive orientation to methods and techniques for teaching English in the primary classes. Their knowledge is either outdated or they do not want to adapt to changes in teaching techniques in line with the changing situation. Frequent training in newly developed techniques and methods to cater for their needs is one of the best solutions to update teachers' knowledge and improve the teaching-learning process.

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Grammar Guru VII

V. Saraswathi

If someone asks you “Would you like a cup of coffee?”, what would be your normal response? You might say “Yes, please,” if you are a coffee addict like me. Or you might politely refuse with a “No, Thank you.” Have you ever heard anyone saying, “No, coffee has already been had by me”? Yet this monstrosity of a sentence, which one never uses in real life contexts, has been dinned into our heads as the passive form of its innocent active cousin, *No, I have already had coffee*. Another horror I found in a grammar book is the sentence, *The rose is sweet when it is being smelt*. Why can’t we make life easier by saying, *The rose smells sweet*, and be done with it?

In his *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell says, “Never use the Passive voice where you can use the Active.” And, most experts on style endorse the view that the passive voice is always wrong. They do have strong reasons for avoiding the passive. Sentences in the passive could look awkward. They may lead to obscured meaning. Further, passive sentences are often long and wordy. In fact, we can tighten up our writing a lot if we avoid the passive.

On the other hand, there are contexts where the passive may be the best choice. Ronald Reagan, a past president of the USA, is believed to have said, “Mistakes were made” while referring to the Iran contra scandal. It is obvious who made the mistakes. The passive voice could prove a powerful tool in the hands of politicians. Kay Hudson feels

that, in some situations, the passive is not only useful but also necessary. The choice often depends on what information you want to include and what element you want to emphasize. Here are some contexts where the passive is preferred:

- (i) When the action is important, but the agent is not important.

e.g., *Rain is predicted for this afternoon*.

- (ii) When the agent performing the action is indifferent or unknown.

e.g., *The tree was cut down to make way for the flyover*.

- (iii) When the agent needs to be emphasized by being placed at the end of the sentence.

e.g., *The winning boundary was hit by Hazare*.

- (iv) In reporting scientific experiments where an air of impersonality has to be maintained:

e.g., *One gram of sodium chloride was taken*.

- (v) While reporting incidents objectively in a newspaper.

e.g., *According to a Government order all processions are banned for a week*.

Are the passive and active interchangeable? Do they mean the same thing? Are they paraphrases of each other? Not necessarily.

Not always. Look at this:

All the mangoes in this basket are spoilt.

Can we use the active voice instead? For example,

Someone spoilt all the mangoes in this basket.

Does it make sense? Even if we wangle some meaning out of it, do we ever use it? So, let's not stick to any hard and fast rules. Let's use the passive where it is appropriate. Let's turn to the active if it sounds better. Language, after all, is a matter of instinct and intuition, isn't it?

Newspaper headlines generally prefer the

passive and could end up hilarious.

Fried chicken Cooked in Microwave Wins Trip

Local Secondary School Dropouts Cut in Half

Dr V. Saraswathi, (Formerly) Professor of English (ELT), University of Madras.

[Editor's Note: *This is part of a series of articles contributed by the author and published earlier in The Times of India, Education Times from May 2008 to May 2013. We are thankful to the author to permit us to publish those articles in our journal.*]

Some useful web tools for speaking skills

Podcasting Tools

Podomatic (<http://www.podomatic.com>)

Spreaker (<http://www.spreaker.com>)

Audioboom (<https://audioboom.com>)

A podcast is an audio broadcast over the web. It is broken up into parts or episodes. Most podcasts are similar to news radio programs and deliver information on a regular basis, but they can also be comedy shows, special music broadcasts or talks. You as a teacher can set up a podcasting channel in Podomatic, Spreaker, or Audioboom.

[Contributed by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh, Dept of English, St Joseph's College, Trichy]

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The Need for a Course in Academic writing: The Perceptions of Undergraduate Engineering Students

Kakkireni Nagaraju

ABSTRACT

Academic writing epitomizes the language of scholarship which helps one to gain eligibility for higher education. The quality of students' written work determines their scholarship and acceptance in academia. Students who arrive at the university face the challenge of adjusting to the academic writing demands of their chosen field. They usually face unfamiliar writing tasks in their studies, which they find quite difficult. There is a dearth of literature addressing the academic writing needs of students in India. Though the teaching of academic writing has been practised internationally for several years, many universities in India have refrained from explicitly incorporating academic writing skills. Hence, this study attempts to explore the significance of a course in academic writing for undergraduate engineering students.

Keywords: Academic writing; needs analysis; undergraduate engineering students.

Introduction

Academic writing refers to the kind of writing that fulfils a purpose of education in a college or a university. It helps one to gain eligibility for higher education. Many research studies reveal that the academic success of the students pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate courses depends largely on their academic writing competence. Students who come to the university face academic writing demands in their chosen field. They usually find the writing tasks in their studies unfamiliar and they find it difficult to cope with them. In the wake of the enormous growth in science and technology, imparting academic writing skills to engineering students has become the need of the hour.

The present study is different from most of the studies in incorporating the views of the

students, who are the real users of the course book. The study takes into account the perceptions of undergraduate engineering students of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU), one of the premier technological universities in India, with the help of a questionnaire focusing on the academic writing demands of the course and the need for a course in academic writing.

Technical Education in India

Technical education began in India in 1874 in the form of survey schools. It started with certificate programmes and progressed to diplomas, and then to undergraduate courses in the second half of the 19th century. The eighties and nineties of the 19th century witnessed the establishment of a large number of polytechnic and engineering programmes. The fifties of the 20th century

saw the emergence of postgraduate courses. The advent of information and communication technologies increased the demand for engineering education and resulted in the expansion of engineering colleges in India. At present, there are more than ten thousand engineering and technological institutes in India.

The shift in higher education from being elitist to mass education has brought several new challenges. The amount of writing done in these courses as well as the demands made on writing skills by employers has increased. As a result, the students are exposed to substantial writing skills for which they depend on regular explicit instruction, guidance, and feedback. These issues demonstrate a need for swift and significant changes in provision for writing in higher education and highlight the requirement for a shift in both pedagogy and practical methods (Haggis, 2006).

Academic writing is given much emphasis in many countries like South Africa, Australia, and some parts of Europe. The United States has given utmost importance to this form of writing, making it a pre-requisite course in its university curricula since the late 19th century. The Dearing report of the United Kingdom highlighted the need for a radical change in attitudes to teaching in order to cope with the new challenges facing the higher education sector. Accordingly, the United Kingdom has also recognized the importance of good academic language competence among the university students.

In Asia, a few countries like China, Japan, and Singapore have started giving importance

to academic writing. Though India produces lakhs of professionals every year who serve in different parts of the world, the academic writing course in use is not being implemented properly.

Needs Analysis

‘Need’ is an umbrella term that incorporates many aspects of the teaching-learning process. It takes into account various issues like the learners’ goals, backgrounds, skills, their language preferences, proficiencies, etc. Needs are often seen as a gap between current and target needs. In terms of the employment profile of technical graduates, they need to be trained to write project proposals and reports. Besides this as a preparation to achieving the goal, they should also be given adequate training in making notes, representing information graphically, and stating findings using statistical tools.

Literature Review

The importance of learning academic writing in science and technology for the students of higher education has long been recognized. It teaches students how to think critically and objectively while conveying complex ideas in a well-structured and concise format. Many studies found that academic writing is one of the most desired skills at university, as the assessment of students takes place through writing. Academic writing fulfils a crucial function in the context of higher education. Students have to meet the expectations of their teachers in relation to academic writing skills, as writing is the most common medium used to assess students’ grasp of the content of their courses (Bickmore-Brand, 1998).

The difficulty of acquiring academic writing

competence in a second language (L2) is even greater because an L2 writer has to grapple with a wide range of issues, among which are L2 proficiency and cross-cultural differences (Davis, 1994; Leki, 1996). The students entering the university need to develop academic writing competence as writing at university is very different from the style of writing taught at school (Mullins et al., 1995).

Gonobcsik-Williams's (2006) survey of faculty across many universities in the UK indicated that they expected students to show a substantial improvement in writing by the time they graduated. Nesi and Gardner's study (2006) in the UK of the faculty across disciplines reported their finding that writing at undergraduate level should progress towards greater similarity to professional journal articles, especially on the assignments in academic writing genres. "Science seeks to generate knowledge that is objective and goes beyond an individual researcher's opinions or preferences, and that is grounded in systematically obtained data" (Hempel, 1965).

Ganobcsik-Williams's survey highlighted that "almost 90% of staff felt that it was essential to teach writing skills to university students." Maintaining standards of academic writing among the students has implications for the teaching-learning process in higher education. Braine has observed that the audiences for science and engineering writing tasks are very often outside the classroom, which makes the learning of these tasks more challenging. Jackson et al., in their investigation of undergraduate science tasks at a South African university found that the

students were not adequately getting exposed to writing assignments in the content courses that could help them in learning academic writing skills.

Nesi & Gardner (2006) gathered the views of faculty members in 20 departments across three universities in the United Kingdom about undergraduate student writing and writing tasks in various disciplines. They noticed that the types of assignments that are given in science, engineering, and other disciplines are "essays, reports, laboratory reports, project reports, research projects, dissertations, group projects, posters, website evaluation, problem sheets, case studies, reflective writing, critical evaluation, and marketing plans or proposals." This largely tallies with the needs we have identified.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the views of the students about the importance of academic writing and the need for such a course in their undergraduate engineering programme. The Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.) course offered by the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTUH) and its affiliated colleges has been selected for this study due to its popularity among the student community. The university has more than two hundred engineering colleges affiliated to it, from which one lakh students graduate every year. The undergraduate engineering students are supposed to write many academic writing tasks like essays and reports. They need to write mini and major projects as part of fulfilling the requirements of the course in their penultimate and final years of study. This is a challenging task for the students as

they have not been adequately trained to write such reports.

Research Questions

1. Do the students joining undergraduate engineering courses necessarily possess academic writing competence?
2. Do the undergraduate engineering courses demand good academic writing competence from the students to complete the course successfully?
3. Do the undergraduate engineering students of JNTUH and its affiliated colleges need a course in academic writing?

Method

The study aimed to investigate the academic writing problems and needs of the students, to identify the academic writing demands of the undergraduate engineering course, and to examine the views and suggestions of various stakeholders on the proposed academic writing course. A questionnaire was used to elicit the views of the students.

Participants and Data Collection

Any teaching-learning process has to give more emphasis to students than to the other stakeholders. Therefore, the views of the students are important in taking academic decisions that directly or indirectly influence their performance in their academic and professional life. To ascertain this, a questionnaire with 10 questions to gather their views on their writing needs was administered. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 undergraduate engineering students studying in various colleges

affiliated to JNTUH. They were given sufficient time to provide their responses.

The student questionnaire had four categories: (i) students' competence in academic writing and their school teachers' contribution; (ii) importance, nature and frequency of academic writing, (iii) academic writing requirements and feedback; and (iv) the relevance of the course and suggestions. The return rate of the questionnaires was hundred percent as the teachers from all the colleges helped in administering the tool.

The first category of questions aimed at gathering general information on various aspects of student writing with the help of questions 1, 4, and 6. The second category of questions, 2, 3, and 5, explored the importance and the nature of academic writing in their undergraduate engineering course. The third category, questions 7 and 8, aimed at gathering information on the students' awareness of their teachers' academic writing requirements and the feedback given by teachers. The last category, questions 9 and 10, gathered their views on the proposed academic writing course.

Limitations

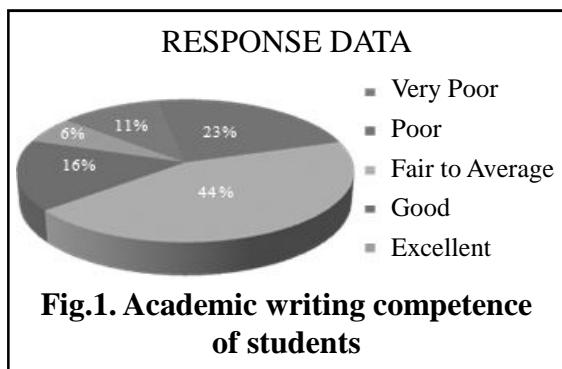
The study is limited to exploring the views of undergraduate engineering students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad and its affiliated colleges. Academic writing skills are chosen as they play a very important role in a student's success at various levels. They help the students complete the course successfully to pursue higher studies, to contribute to their knowledge base in science, and to excel in professional careers.

The undergraduate engineering course has been selected for the present study because of its popularity among the student community. More than half of the graduate professionals produced every year in Telangana state are from engineering backgrounds. This university was selected for the study as more than two hundred engineering colleges from different parts of the state are affiliated to this university.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

1. Students' Academic Writing Competence and School Teachers' Contribution

a. Academic Writing Competence



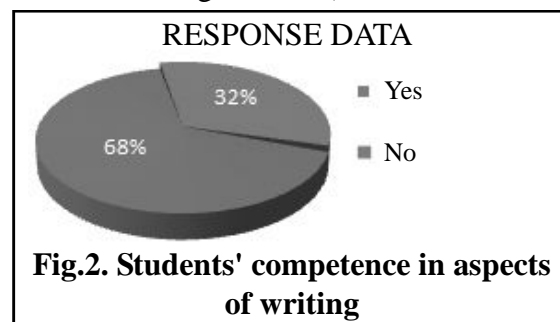
The first question was a warm-up question aimed at identifying the general academic writing skills of the students in English. The students were asked to rate how good they were at academic writing competence in English on a five-point scale. Forty-four students chose the option 'fair to average'. Eleven and twenty-three students felt that they were 'very poor' and 'poor' at academic writing respectively. The option 'good' was marked by 16 students, whereas only 6 students felt that they were 'excellent'.

b. School Teachers' Contribution to Students' Writing at University

The second question was a general question about the opinion of the students regarding the contribution of their school teachers in preparing them adequately for their writing challenges. Only 32 students felt that their teachers at school prepared them adequately for their writing challenges in English at university, whereas 68 students felt that they were not prepared by their teachers at school for their university writing demands.

c. Competence in Various Aspects of Writing

The students were asked to identify various aspects of writing that they usually find difficult in the process of writing. In order to find out the problems faced by students at different stages of writing, they were asked to indicate their competence in those areas. The competence levels were graded on a scale of 0 to 5 (5=Excellent; 4=Good; 3=Average; 2=Below average; 1=Poor).



The first part of the question was about planning writing, which was sub-divided into generating ideas, identifying main and sub-points, and developing the argument. The second part was sub-divided into finding sources of information, analyzing and presenting data and graphic representation of text. The third part (writing it up) was sub-divided into organizing the text, using appropriate vocabulary, and effective use of

connecting devices. The last part (grammar and mechanics) dealt with punctuation, writing grammatically correct sentences, and the use of tenses.

The first part (planning writing) was found to be problematic to the students in terms of organizing the ideas and developing an argument, as many students ticked the option 'average' for these two aspects; 67 and 71 students indicated that organizing the ideas and developing arguments were the two areas in which they experienced difficulty respectively. Identifying main and sub-points, on the other hand, was found to be easy for a majority of the students; 68 students ticked

'good' for this aspect of writing.

Sixty-four students felt that graphic representation of texts was less challenging among the three aspects of writing given. Fifty-seven students marked finding sources of information as 'average' and 66 students felt they were poor in analysing and presenting data.

Fifty-five and forty-seven students considered themselves to be good in organising paragraphs and using connective devices respectively. However, using appropriate vocabulary was rated as 'poor'. This is an area of concern as the students need to use a variety of vocabulary for acceptance and success in academic contexts (See **Table 1**).

Table 1. Students' Competence in Various Aspects of Academic Writing

Planning	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent
Generating & Organising ideas	5	62	16	11	06
Identifying main and sub-points	9	37	41	09	04
Developing argument	11	53	27	06	03
Investigating the question					
Finding sources of information	16	35	37	10	02
Analysing and presenting data	08	46	27	12	07
Graphic representation of text	16	34	29	15	06
Writing up					
Organizing paragraphs	02	13	51	21	13
Using appropriate vocabulary	24	47	16	09	07
Effective use of connecting devices	05	33	27	22	13
Grammar and mechanics					
Punctuation	21	43	24	08	04
Writing grammatically correct sentences	16	41	29	09	05
The use of tenses	21	49	17	10	03

The last part of the question (grammar and mechanics) was again an area of concern among the students, as students tend to give more importance to the content than the language. The students were found to be 'poor' in writing grammatically correct sentences and in the use of tenses, whereas they felt that their knowledge of punctuation was 'average'.

The students surveyed seemed to have problems in planning writing. As expressed by the teachers, many students indicated that organizing their ideas and developing an argument are two factors in which they experience difficulty. Identifying main and sub-points is not so challenging compared to the other two aspects of writing for many of the students. The students have stated that, once the points are identified, it is not so difficult for them to differentiate between main points and the sub-points.

Graphic representation of texts was found to be less challenging compared to the other two factors. This was also found by the teachers. The students are exposed to information transfer skill at their school and +2 levels, which makes them feel comfortable in this area, whereas finding sources of information and analyzing the data are not relatively new but the exposure of the students to these areas of writing is inadequate.

In respect of writing up, there was a difference between English teachers and the students on the latter's skill of organising paragraphs. The teachers felt that the students were not good in this area of writing, whereas the students felt that they were quite good. The other two aspects under this category were using appropriate vocabulary and use of connective devices. The students felt that they did not have problems

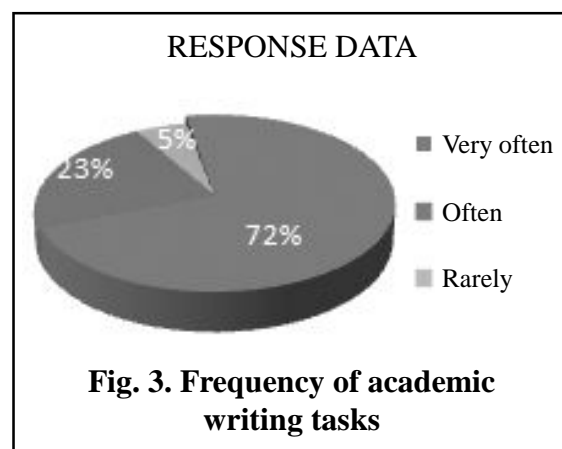
with the use of connective devices, but as found by their English teachers, they were not good at the appropriate use of vocabulary. Use of vocabulary poses difficulty to them as they are not competent in this aspect of writing.

Grammar and mechanics are areas of concern to the students as pointed out by English teachers. Though punctuation, writing grammatically correct sentences, and the use of tenses are not new to the students; most of them felt that they were average in these areas. One of the general assumptions is that the technical teachers overlook these aspects of writing while evaluating student writing.

2. Importance, Nature and Frequency of Academic Writing

a. Frequency of Academic Writing Tasks

This question (Q. 6) is about the frequency of writing tasks the students experience as part of their undergraduate engineering course. Seventy-two students stated that they were supposed to write very often, 23 students felt that they often encountered academic writing tasks during their course, and only 5 students felt that they rarely needed to write.



b. Role of Academic Writing Skills in Successful Completion of Course

The next general question was about the students' view of the importance of academic writing skills for the successful completion of their undergraduate engineering course. The response of the students to this question was almost unanimous, as 87 of them believed that a good knowledge of academic writing skills was very important for the successful completion of the undergraduate engineering course.

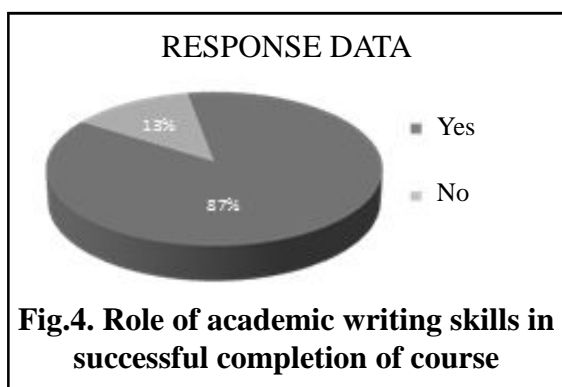


Fig.4. Role of academic writing skills in successful completion of course

c. Nature of Writing at Undergraduate Engineering Level

This question was about the perceptions of the undergraduate engineering students, whether the writing at undergraduate engineering level was different from the writing that they had been exposed to before entering the university. The students' awareness about the writing tasks they had till their intermediate and at the undergraduate level were taken into consideration. Sixty-nine students believed that the writing at engineering level was not the same as their writing at school and intermediate levels. They felt that writing at the undergraduate engineering level was comprehensive in

terms of quality and quantity. Only 34 students felt that the nature of writing at the undergraduate level was the same as writing at school and +2 levels.

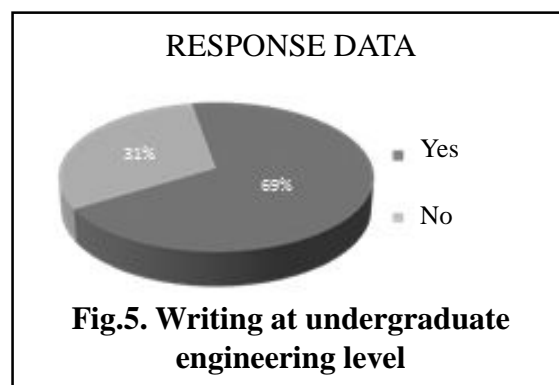


Fig.5. Writing at undergraduate engineering level

3. Academic Writing Requirements and Feedback

a. Awareness of Academic Writing Requirements

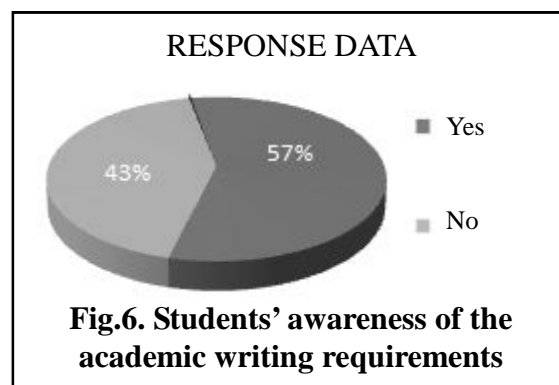


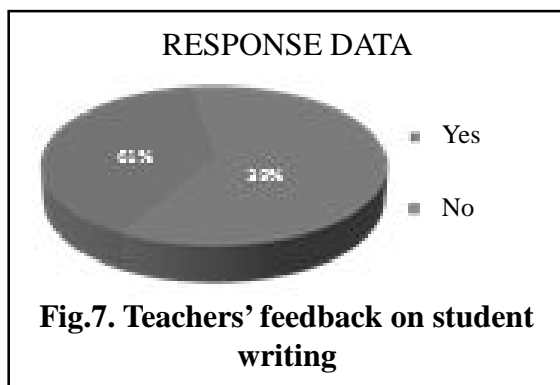
Fig.6. Students' awareness of the academic writing requirements

The students were asked whether they were aware of the academic writing requirements of their programme, as this awareness on the part of the students was very important in fulfilling the academic writing requirements successfully. Very often there exists a communication gap between the students and the teachers regarding the academic requirements. The teachers do not always clearly communicate to the students about

these requirements. This gap could be filled by the teachers by making the students aware of what is expected of them in terms of academic writing.

Fifty-seven students responded that they were not aware of the academic writing requirements of their programme; the remaining 43 students felt that they were aware of their academic writing requirements to be essential.

b. Feedback on Student Writing



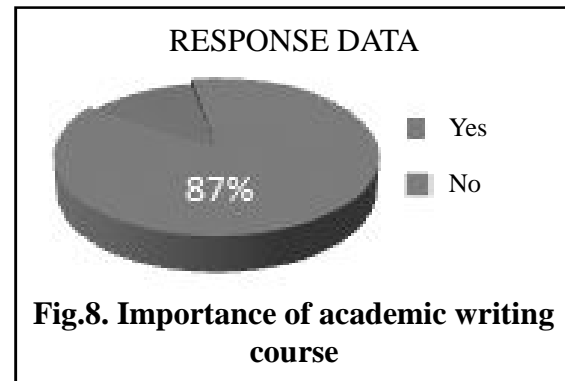
The next question was about feedback, which is one of the important factors that are not given due importance by the technical teachers in general. Literature on student writing emphasizes the role of feedback in fine-tuning the writing skills of the students. Effective feedback by the teachers on student writing has the potential to bridge the gap between the expectations of the teachers and the students in terms of academic writing requirements.

In response to the question whether the teachers comment on their writing, 60 students said that their teachers did not usually give feedback on their writing by evaluating and commenting; 39 students

responded that they generally received feedback on their writing by the teachers.

4. Relevance of the Proposed Course and Suggestions

a. Need for a Course in Academic Writing



This question was aimed at knowing the students' opinion on the need for a course in academic writing in the first year of their four-year undergraduate engineering course. Since the target group is the students, it was felt that their views are important in the designing of the proposed writing course. The students unanimously expressed their view that a course in academic writing would immensely benefit them by helping them in successfully accomplishing the writing requirements of the course; 87 students welcomed the proposal for a course in academic writing.

b. Writing Tasks to be Included in the Course

This question was asked to identify the academic writing needs of the students. The students were asked to mark the academic writing tasks that they wanted to be included in the proposed writing course. The list included many writing tasks that are usually

set in the context of undergraduate engineering education. Apart from the tasks mentioned, the students were also given an option ('others'), where they could include anything that was not specified in the list.

This question, which was a common question in both the teacher and the student questionnaires, was felt to be important, as the inputs given by the student community would be useful in identifying the writing tasks that are to be included in the proposed course. The students ticked all the writing tasks that were given in the tabular format, starting from an essay to a wide variety of writing tasks like research articles.

The students' preference for writing tasks like essays and laboratory reports was nearly cent percent. This is true as essays and laboratory

reports constitute a major part of their writing throughout their four-year undergraduate course. They are followed by project reports, technical reports, presentations, letters, etc. Their preference for research articles, case studies, and thesis writing was low, but these are also important.

Eighty-nine students preferred essays, 91 laboratory reports, 78 technical reports, and 81 project reports. Research articles did not find much response from the students, as only 31 of them ticked the option. Conference papers, presentations, and letters got good responses as 47, 59 and 62 students felt that they needed these writing tasks in the proposed academic writing course. The other writing tasks selected were memos by 44 students, case studies by 34, and thesis writing by 17 students.

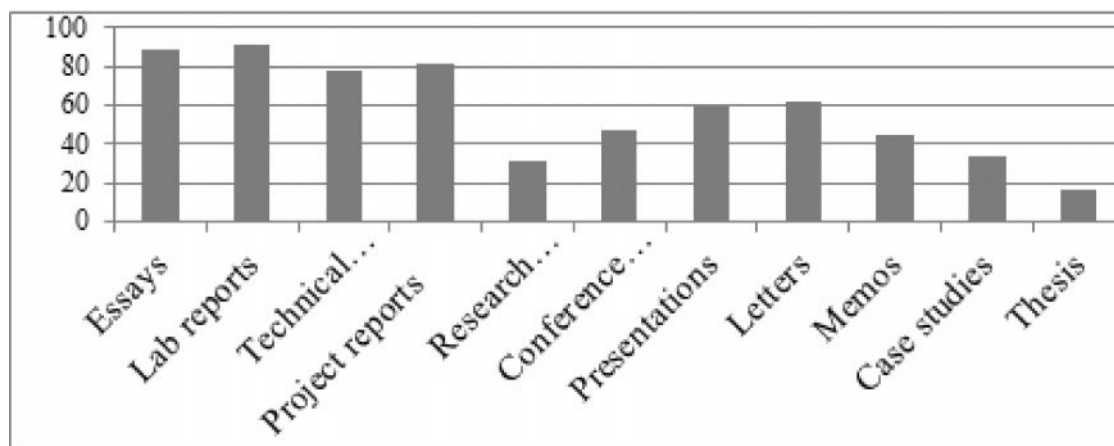


Fig.9. Writing tasks for inclusion in the course

Findings

The students' responses mainly focused on the importance of and difficulties in acquiring academic writing skills, the role of their school teachers in preparing them for

university writing demands, their awareness of academic writing requirements and teachers' feedback, and finally, their views on the proposed academic writing course and suggestions.

a. Students' Academic Writing Competence and School Teachers' Contribution

According to most of the students, good academic writing skills are important for the successful completion of their studies. The students encounter various problems in their academic writing, right from the stage of planning to the final draft. The school, according to the majority of the students, has played a limited role in preparing them for the writing demands of the university. In response to the question, whether the nature of writing at undergraduate engineering level is different from the writing that they have been exposed to in their schools, the students felt that demands of writing at school were very different in nature. Undergraduate engineering course demands a wide variety of writing tasks that form a part of the course ranging from an academic essay to project reports.

b. Importance, Nature and Frequency of Academic Writing

The questions that were asked under this category received positive responses from the students in respect of the proposed course in academic writing. The students have responded that good academic writing skills are very important in successful completion of the undergraduate engineering course. According to them, the nature of writing at undergraduate level is different from the kind of writing they were exposed to in their pre-university education. The students have also said that they need to write a variety of academic writing tasks during their undergraduate engineering course.

c. Academic Writing Requirements and Feedback

In response to their awareness of academic writing requirements, many of the students seem to have different opinions. The students are not clearly aware of the academic writing requirements. This communication gap between the students and the teachers is also contributing to the students' problems in academic writing. The teachers need to provide feedback regularly on the written texts produced by the students. Students have their own attitudes and perceptions about the feedback they receive on their writing.

Learners are always to be treated as active participants who view all comments about their work as valuable, useful, and helpful for improving their writing (Hyland, 2006). Studies carried out in the area of students' perceptions and preferences of the kinds of feedback have demonstrated that students possess very strong views about the types and amount of feedback offered by their teachers (Ferris, 1995).

d. Relevance of the Proposed Course and Suggestions

Almost all the students expressed the view that a course in academic writing would definitely help them to cope with the academic writing demands of the undergraduate course. The students' responses to the questionnaire have given valuable information on various aspects of writing. A majority of the students welcomed the proposed course in academic writing.

The study on students' perceptions and beliefs has revealed that knowing students'

perceptions and beliefs can play a crucial role in developing the right course to meet their needs. The questionnaire used to survey the academic writing competence of the students has also served an additional purpose. Apart from collecting information on academic writing, it has also been useful in raising the students' awareness about specific issues in academic literacy and writing. The completion of this questionnaire is, therefore, considered to be important in establishing a relationship with the students, which will help in communicating to them that their needs and expectations are given due consideration in designing a writing course for them.

Conclusion

A majority of the students have felt that they are either poor or average in their academic writing competence. It is clearly evident from the students' response that academic writing is very important to them. Most of the students have also favoured the need for a course in academic writing. They feel that the introduction of a course in academic writing for the undergraduate engineering students will equip them with academic writing skills.

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The Story of English 7: The Great Vowel Shift

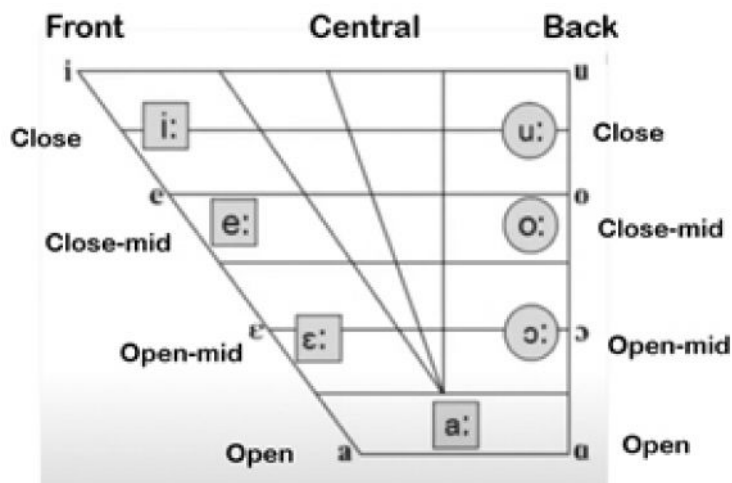
C A Lal

A few significant sound changes took place in the period of transition from Middle English to Early Modern English starting around 1350 CE. The most significant of this was the Great Vowel Shift, a process which went on till around 1700 CE, which marks the end of Early Modern English. The Great Vowel Shift affected the English sound system so much that the English of Chaucer is very much different from that of Shakespeare, whereas the differences between Elizabethan English and Modern English are far fewer. This change was called the Great Vowel Shift (GVS) because of the fundamental manner in which the ME vowel system was altered by it.

We do not have definite information about what caused the GVS, though the changes

in English phonology that began in the Old English period itself and augmented to a very high degree by the Norman Conquest, might be held accountable on a basic level. The GVS caused ME long vowels to be pronounced with a greater elevation of the tongue and closing of the mouth. All the seven ME long vowels became closer in quality, and those already as close as they could be became diphthongs. Changes took place both among the back and front vowels. This is considered to be an isolative change, though ongoing linguistic research might throw up new clues that indicate otherwise.

The seven long vowels of Middle English, which were particularly affected by the GVS, are described in the diagram below.



ME long front vowels: close - /i:/, close-mid - /e:/, open-mid - /ε:/, open central - /a:/

ME long back vowels: close - /u:/, close-mid - /o:/, open-mid - /ɔ:/

For those who are not familiar with vowel positions, here is a note that will help them understand the figure better. The geometric figure represents the space available in the oral cavity for the human tongue to move while producing vowel sounds, with Front, Central and Back indicating the front, central and back parts of the tongue. In 'open' position, the tongue is as low as it can be in the production of vowel sounds, and in the 'close' position it is as high as it can be towards the roof of the mouth, leaving minimal space for the air from the lungs to flow freely. 'Open-mid' position is a little above the 'Open' position, and 'Close-mid' is a bit below the 'Close' position. The diagram shows the Cardinal Vowel positions, which helps us describe the position of articulation of any vowel sound. The seven long ME vowels are represented here and their quality is different from their Modern English equivalents in varying degrees.

The changes of these ME vowel sounds under the GVS can be summarised as follows with examples. The changes happened very slowly, over several centuries from say 1350 to 1700 CE, not necessarily in any particular sequence.

1. The half open /ɔ:/ sound, found in ME words like *goat* and *hope* became a close /o:/ sound. The /o:/ later evolved into the diphthong /ou/, which has since become /əʊ/ as used now. **Change - ɔ: > o: > ou > əʊ.**

2. The ME /o:/, on the other hand, became the /u:/ sound heard in words like *hu:s* and *mu:s*. M.E /u:/ evolved into a diphthong;

probably /əʊ/ at first and by the seventeenth century reached its present day quality /au/ as in *house*. **Change - o: > u: > əʊ > au.**

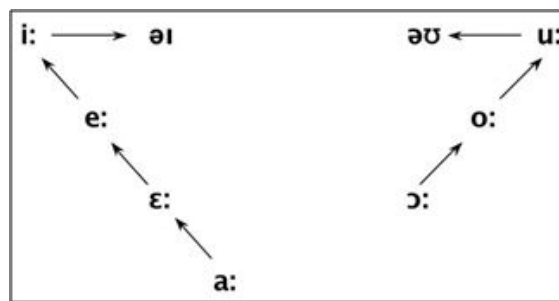
3. Middle English /a:/ used in *bake* and *dame* became closer, to /ɛ:/ and then it got further close and became /e:/ and later got diphthongized to modern /eɪ/. **Change - a: > ɛ: > e: > eɪ.**

4. Middle English /e:/ used in *meet*, *green* and *deed* had become /i:/ as we hear it now. **Change - e: > i:.**

5. M.E /i:/ used in *mice*, *five* became diphthongized to /əɪ/ and then to /aɪ/. **Change i: > əɪ > aɪ.**

6. Middle English open vowel /ɛ:/, (which was similar to modern /e/ sound, only a bit more open and long in quality), probably became /e:/, (which is similar to modern /i:/, only a little less close in quality.)

This image shows all the changes, except the later developments of /aɪ/ from /əɪ/, and /au/ from /əʊ/.



Changes other than the GVS

There are comparatively fewer changes in the ME short vowels and consonants. One notable change in the former was the

deviation of the phoneme /ʌ/ from /u/. In ME, there was no /ʌ/ sound, so *cut* was pronounced as /kut/. In the seventeenth century, there developed /ʌ/, which took over /u/ except in certain words where the /ʊ/ sound was retained due to the influence of neighbouring labial consonants or /l/: *full*, *bull*, etc.

In consonants, /w/ sound was lost in words like *sword* and *two*; the final /b/ sound was lost in words like *climb*, *comb*, and *lamb*. ME words like *fader* and *hider* became *father* and *hither*; the /h/ sound was lost in words like *light*, *eight*, and *height*. Also, the initial 'k' sound was lost in *knee* and *knight*, and the /t/ sound was lost in words like

castle, *bristle*, *Christmas*, and *soften*.

All these changes resulted in the total loss of the phonetic quality of the English language. The spelling of English had become generally fixed before these changes operated to the full, and was not modified when the quality of the sounds discussed above changed. In the following part in this series, we will look at the impact of Renaissance on the English language.

Dr C A Lal, Professor of English, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
[Editor's Note: This is part of a series of articles tracing the history of the English language, to be continued in this column.]

SOME USEFUL WEB TOOLS FOR SPEAKING SKILLS

English Central (<http://www.englishcentral.com/>)

English Central is a video site bringing voice to learners. It makes use of both speech recognition and text-to-speech facilities for language learning.

Online Voice Recording Tools

Audiopal (<http://www.audiopal.com>)

Vocaroo (<http://vocaroo.com/>)

Both Audiopal and Vocaroo are very simple voice recording tools. You don't need to sign up in these sites. You can record your speech and download it as an mp3 file from these sites. You can preview your recording and can email it to anyone right from these sites. Additionally, Audiopal offers some more facilities. You can record your speech by making phone calls to the numbers given in Audiopal.

Podcasting Tools

Podomatic (<http://www.podomatic.com>)

Spreaker (<http://www.spreaker.com>)

Audioboom (<https://audioboom.com>)

A podcast is an audio broadcast over the web. It is broken up into parts or episodes. Most podcasts are similar to news radio programs and deliver information on a regular basis, but they can also be comedy shows, special music broadcasts or talks. You as a teacher can set up a podcasting channel in Podomatic, Spreaker, or Audioboom.

Voki (<http://www.voki.com>)

Voki lets you create customized speaking characters. Voki can be an effective tool to practise speaking skills in literature classes. It encourages creativity and interactivity in your classes.

WhatsApp groups

WhatsApp offers another opportunity for language learners to practise their speaking skills. Teachers can create a WhatsApp group for their classes. Learners can record their speeches (up to 1 minute) and can share them in the group. This allows interactivity and peer support in your speaking skills class.

[Contributed by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh, Dept of English, St Joseph's College, Trichy]

BOOK REVIEW

Maley, Alan (Ed.). (2019). *Developing expertise through experience*. British Council.

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Publisher: The British Council

Format: Paperback / softback

[Available for download at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/K033_Developing_Expertise_Experience_Web_0.pdf]

Published: 31/08/2019

How important is it for teachers to reflect on their own experiences as learners and teachers? Why is it important for teachers to conceptualize and theorize their practices? How do teachers' beliefs, values, and experiences contribute to their personal and professional development? These questions have been raised by teachers at different times in various forums.

The book *Developing expertise through experience* edited by Alan Maley is a collection of learning, teaching, and training experiences, reflections, and narratives of twenty professionals based on Prabhu's concept of 'the teacher's sense of plausibility' (Prabhu, 1987). In the foreword, Prabhu defines plausibility as "a feeling or perception that occurs to one, not something that can be aimed at, worked for, or predicted." He further explains that "plausibility is commonly seen as a state of knowledge short of certainty." Differentiating 'certainty' from 'plausibility', he states that "certainty signals an end point, while plausibility is always a stage in understanding that can change and develop

infinitely". In another article, *Plausibility*, in the book *Perceptions of Language Pedagogy* (2019), he elaborates it: "Plausibility is not a fixed concept but a developing perception. As long as one maintains what I have called an alertness to events, such perceptions can gradually lead one to a clearer and more comprehensive view."

Both Prabhu and Maley believe that teachers/professionals, by sharing their personal perceptions of plausibility and personal theory of teaching with fellow teachers, can help everyone in the profession have a sense of self-worth as teachers. So the aim of the book, according to Maley, is to explore how teachers' accumulated experiences and reflections enable them to build a personal theory of teaching action. In other words, the book is an exploration, amplification, and celebration of Prabhu's notion of 'the teacher's sense of plausibility'. For every teacher and trainer, their values, beliefs, and experiences matter as these factors lead them to become professionals.

Twenty contributors, carefully chosen from a wide range of countries and different teaching contexts, age, gender, and length of teaching experience, have shared their personal histories of people who inspired them, certain critical moments that shaped their beliefs, publications that influenced their thinking, and various other factors that contributed to their professional growth and development of a personal theory of teaching.

While reading the narratives of the contributors, readers can relate to their experiences and bring back to mind their own experience of how they learned and how they

were influenced by various factors such as personalities, books, and incidents. The book has a lot of interesting and insightful anecdotes and can help readers sharpen their perceptions. Besides a detailed foreword on the value of shared experiences by Prabhu and an introduction by Maley, the book has twenty chapters by twenty professionals from different parts of the world.

In the first chapter, Robert Bellarmine, who served the British Council Division, South India, as English Studies Officer (ESO) and later as examiner and examiner-trainer for the Cambridge ESOL examinations, discusses the development of his sense of plausibility and its implications in a detailed manner. He narrates his experience of how he developed his 'teacher's sense of plausibility' (TSOP) at various stages and shares how his face-to-face interactions with Prabhu shaped his thinking. Bellarmine gives a list of beliefs he acquired after becoming a teacher, and the salient ones are:

- (1) Good teachers of English transcend the prescribed texts and bring in stories, anecdotes, and the like connected with the texts and classroom incidents.
- (2) Most good teachers have or develop a sense of humour. (They need it to survive!)
- (3) The procedural syllabus consisting of cognitive tasks is much more effective than the communicative, functional, and structural syllabuses.

John F Fanselow, Professor Emeritus at Teachers College, Columbia University, narrates his experience of how his earliest experiences of language learning and education have affected his current views and practices. He says how the words '*You can*

change the world, but please don't unless you know what you are doing!' he heard in a talk about bullying and school shootings resonated with him and prompted him to write the book *Small Changes in Teaching, Big Results in Learning* (2018). The message is that teachers should know what they are doing in order to be real transformers.

From little steps to giant strides: The story of my professional journey is quite an inspiring narrative by an African teacher. Kuchah Kuchah, currently the President of the IATEFL, was born and raised in Cameroon, where he had limited learning resources and challenging experiences. He narrates beautifully how he was able to overcome challenging situations and achieve his professional development in Cameroon and, after moving to the University of Warwick, to study for an MA in EYL. Kuchah shares his experience of how he was able to know the difference between 'pedagogy of autonomy' and 'pedagogy for autonomy' and realize the importance of theorizing from practice: "It may, therefore, sometimes be more useful to encourage teachers to theorize from their practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Ramani, 1987) than to expect them to implement some learned theory."

Christine CM Goh, Professor of Linguistics and Language Education at Singapore's National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, introspecting on her professional journey, says that two kinds of knowledge have influenced her beliefs and practice: documented knowledge and practical knowledge, which she describes as knowledge that she co-constructed with her peers and her students in her daily enactment of teaching and learning in the workplace.

Dr Phuong Le, Phu Yen University in Central

Vietnam, shares how she developed herself professionally at different stages in different places while interacting with people of different nationalities and cultures. Her beliefs about language and learning languages include:

- (1) Language and culture cannot be separated.
- (2) Knowing another language can change a person's viewpoints and lifestyles.
- (3) The more fun learners have in learning, the more success they have as learners.

The experiences and reflections of other contributors including Tessa Woodward, Adrian Underhill, and Fauzia Shamim are also noteworthy. It is clear that all these experts have developed their expertise through experience and exchange of their reflections on their professional development can definitely enlarge and sharpen other practitioners' perceptions.

The objective of the book is achieved as the contributors, who have decades of experience in language education, have shared their sense of plausibility and how their experiences and beliefs have helped them reach their professional goal in an engaging and convincing manner. Each article, written in a simple and non-academic style, offers insights into language learning, language teaching, and professional development.

Stating that the underlying theme of the book is the significance of experience, Maley has summarized, in a systematic way, the recurrent themes in the twenty chapters to show how a number of thematic threads weave the narrative together. It appears as a part in the *Introduction*. It would have been better if it had appeared as a separate and last chapter of the volume.

To take it forward and include this in professional development training, Maley suggests a range of CPD activities at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/e-file.pdf>. They are useful CPD activities.

Albert Einstein has rightly said that "The only source of knowledge is experience" and it is essential to value the experience of ELT practitioners and professionals in order to generate ideas and create knowledge. It is also important to pay attention to personal experiences of learners and teachers in teacher education. Exchange of personal stories can be a rewarding experience for teachers. Andrew Wright, one of the contributors, asks the right question: "Experiencing and studying language both have their parts to play. But if we have two legs, why hop?"

I believe that "experience is a lesson of the past to lessen the burden of the future" (Michael Sage) and the experiences shared by the ELT practitioners can give us insight into English language education. The contributors have given their own perceptions and beliefs about language and language learning. As 'plausibility' is not 'certainty', it is always good to be critical and develop our own personal theory of teaching.

I am not sure whether any such book which values teachers' personal experiences is available in the market. The book deserves a place in the bookshelves of passionate teachers of English, teacher trainers, and teacher educators, as it can motivate everyone in the profession to become a reflective practitioner and professional.

Dr Albert P'Rayan, ELT resource person and columnist.

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ELT@I at the TESOL Affiliate Network Forum 2020

Hello and welcome to everyone present at this forum, and Namaste!

I am Professor Ramani and I proudly represent the English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELT@I), an affiliate of TESOL, at this TESOL Affiliates Network Forum 2020.

A brief note on ELT@I: Our association, the oldest professional association of English teachers in India and perhaps in the world, with over four thousand members and fifty chapters across the country, organized its golden jubilee annual conference last October and its peer-reviewed, flagship journal, *Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT)*, published its golden jubilee number in 2015. The journal and the association were both launched by Padmashree S. Natarajan, a great educationist from Madras, the bimonthly journal much earlier than the formal association.

ELT@I has been offering its services in all areas relating to English studies in India. Over the years, it has conducted and supported hundreds of workshops, seminars, and conferences at local, regional, and national level on a variety of themes and topics of relevance. It has thus provided several fora, including the journal, for English teachers and researchers in English language studies nationwide, to share their views, practices, and perspectives with fellow teachers across the country. Events conducted in recent years include face-to-face workshops on virtual learning, blended learning, flipped classrooms, use of digital tools for teaching and learning in the 21st century, and so on.

In the wake of the current lockdown necessitated by the spread of the Corona-19 virus, ELT@I has taken the initiative to conduct online professional development programs and, on this occasion, I would like to share our experience of conducting two such programs.

The first was a free, six-week online workshop on Shakespeare conducted using Edmodo and thirty-five English teachers across the country registered for this. The following topics are covered in this workshop:

1. Getting to know *King Lear*,
2. Notes on *The Tempest*,
3. Enduring relevance of *Much Ado About Nothing*,
4. *Coriolanus*: Critical observations, and
5. Developing sensitivity to literature through *The Merchant of Venice*.

The main posts on these topics were made by four senior teachers acting as resource persons and these were followed by discussions through online posts on the same platform.

The other program recently started is a free, twelve-week online refresher course using the same tool, Edmodo, and the topics being covered include:

1. Continuing professional development,
2. Learning strategies and learning styles,
3. Action research,

4. Class management,
5. Time management,
6. Catering for individual differences among learners in the class, and
7. Professional etiquette.

Eighty-seven members of ELT@I have registered for this online course, with eight presenters as resource persons, obviously an increase in the number of participants and presenters.

We are planning to conduct more courses and workshops online. The response to both the online programs has been reasonably good. It has, however, to be noted that the quality and quantity of interaction could be improved by introducing more online programs and suggesting how to have meaningful and productive discussions online. Besides, more and more practising teachers should be

encouraged to become online learners as a significant step towards their own professional development.

P. N. Ramani

ELT@I, INDIA

[Editor's Note: This is the text of the presentation made on behalf of ELTAI, an Affiliate of TESOL International Association, at the TESOL Affiliate Network Forum 2020 held online at 10 am (EST) {7.30 pm IST} on April 20th, 2020. There was another online session at 3.30 pm (EST) on April 22nd. The presenter is grateful to ELTAI for nominating him to represent ELTAI at this event. The TEN affiliates, which participated in the Forum spread over the two days were: BETA; CATESOL; ELTAI; GATESOL; NILETESOL; NYSTESOL; SPELT; TESOL Greece; TESOLANZ; and TEX TESOL II (Sant Antonio).]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Members of ELTAI who read the contributions to the journal are free to give their views on the contents of the articles/papers published here. The letters should reach ELTAI (eltai_india@yahoo.co.in) with Cc to the Editor (ramanipn@gmail.com) within a month from the date of receipt of the journal.

Reading Activity

Argumentative Writing – Using a Graphic Organizer (Fishbone)*

K. Elango

Objective

To enable readers to enhance their comprehension skill and, more importantly, retention skill, as it has become challenging these days.

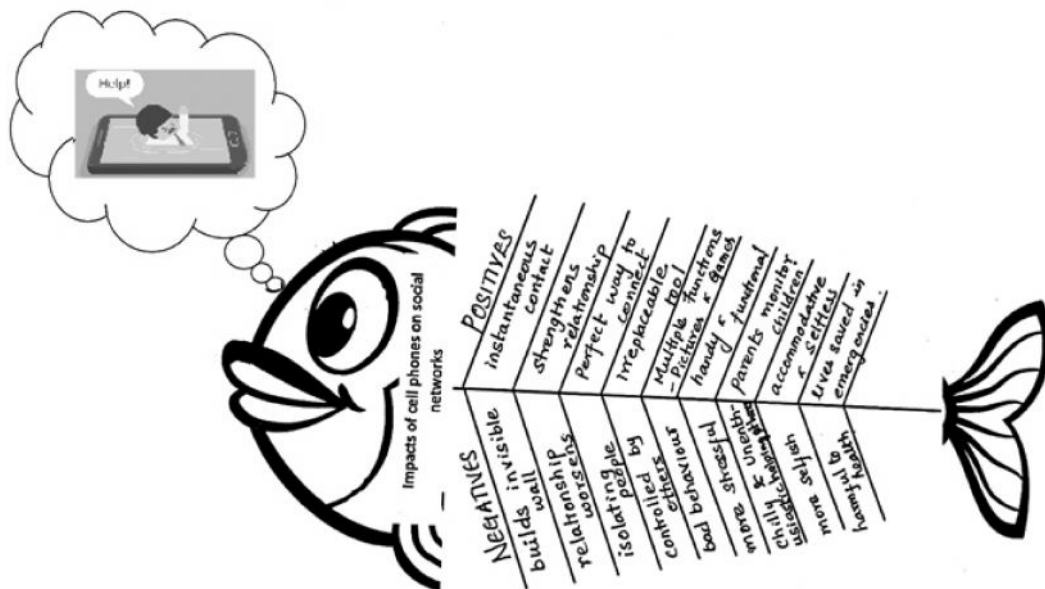
Participation: Individual

Material

Any argumentative piece of writing, for example, “Impacts on Social Network Using Cell Phone” Source: <https://ifpgod.wordpress.com/about/impact-on-social-network/>

Procedure

- Go through the essay rapidly to get a sense of the writer’s ideas, for and against the impact of cell phones on our social networking, the way they are structured,
- and his standpoint.
- Make your second reading intensive and take notes by sorting ideas on both sides.
- Arrange the ideas of for and against and match the exact contradictions, even if they appear in different parts of the text.
- Download/draw a fishbone diagram and place these ideas along each bone – all the ideas supporting the proposition at the top and those against it at the bottom. Take care to place the ideas opposing each other on either side. You may retain interesting expressions of the writer for their original flavour.
- The finished fishbone organizer enables you to make the writer’s standpoint clear and to infer whether it is balanced or lopsided.
- You may either agree or disagree with the



views of the writer and understand the strength of his arguments.

- As a reflective reader, you can build up his arguments on the topic. The benefit of familiarizing yourself with others' ideas is that they can act as prompts to formulate and expand your own ideas.

Learning Outcomes

1. Readers realize that they need to read carefully to identify whether the writer has any viewpoint and drives it home to influence the readers, albeit implicitly. The writer's arguments can play a catalytic role in making one formulate one's own ideas.
2. Readers recognize that a collective presentation of them in a visual form rather than the arrangement of ideas in a linear form can help them to hold on to them in their memory for long.

Further Reading

Any polemical text, consciously focusing on identifying the writer's position and generating one's own views.

***Fishbone diagram:**

This graphic organiser is ideal for visually representing argumentative ideas, identifying the writer's standpoint and expressing one's own views.

Note on the essay: "Impacts on Social Network Using Cell Phone".

Source: <https://ifpgod.wordpress.com/about/impact-on-social-network/>

It is an interesting essay, which examines the impact of cell phones on our social networking. Against the popular surveys sponsored by cell phone companies, the writer attempts to dig beneath the data to

establish the negative impact. It is a balanced piece of writing, which considers both the sides. Reading it is rewarding.

Significance of Retention

A feature that characterizes good learning is the ability to store information in long term memory and recall it promptly when required. This has become a real challenge to a majority of learners in the tech-driven age. Besides, the West does not emphasize it much as a learning process and the technological devices have now become more handy to store, with the result that more and more learners seem to be losing their ability to retain information as knowledge. Hence, this skill has to be cultivated rigorously among learners to make them better learners and leading to better communication skills.

The following research-proven strategies can effectively improve memory, enhance recall, and increase retention of information:

1. Focus your attention.
2. Avoid cramming.
3. Structure and organize.
4. Use mnemonic devices.
5. Elaborate and rehearse.
6. Visualize concepts.
7. Relate new information to things you already know.
8. Read out loud.

(Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/great-ways-to-improve-your-memory-2795356>)

Dr. K. Elango, National Secretary, ELTAI & (Formerly) Professor of English, Anna University.

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Manuscript Submission Guidelines

SUBMISSIONS

The JELT is an international, **peer-reviewed journal** published by the English Language Teachers' Association of India based at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, but with about 50 chapters in different parts of India.

The JELT is published **six times a year** – February, April, June, August, October and December. The overall aim of the journal is to promote the professional development of its readers, namely English teachers teaching at all levels, researchers and teacher trainers around the world. The journal, therefore, accepts submissions on all aspects and issues relating to the teaching and learning of English in ESL settings.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SUBMISSIONS

Each submission will be evaluated for its suitability for publication in terms of the following criteria.

The article should:

- Reflect current theories and practices in English language teaching.
- Be relevant and appeal to the wide readership of the journal.
- Be well written and organized, with sufficient explanation and examples to enable readers to apply the ideas and insights in their own classes.
- Discuss the topic in the context of other

work related to the topic.

- Be written in clear and concise language, making it easy to read.

Please see the checklist for reviewing manuscripts given at the end of these guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

There is no specific deadline for manuscript submissions for each issue and authors may send their submissions anytime.

Authors are expected to follow strictly the following guidelines while preparing their articles for submission:

1. The article should not have been published previously in any form (print or online). A short declaration to this effect should be given on a separate page at the beginning of the article submitted.
2. The maximum length of the article including figures and tables should be 2000 words (excluding the abstract). The manuscript should contain an abstract in 100-150 words).
3. All pages should be double-spaced with a clear margin of 1 inch on all sides.
4. The title should be brief and focused, not broad or vague.
5. The article should carry only the title, abstract and the main paper.
6. The title, author(s)' name(s) [the last

name first], affiliation [i.e., the name of institution(s) the author(s) belong(s) to; city, country] and email address should be provided on a separate cover sheet for the article. ***Please note that the author(s) need NOT send their photo(s).***

7. Only sources cited in the article should be listed as references at the end of the article.
8. The article should use the author-date format for citations and references (e.g., Anderson 1997; Anderson 1997, p.17). *See the Chicago Manual of Style (15th edn.) for more details and examples.*
9. The tables and figures used in the manuscript should have numbers in sequence and clear, descriptive titles. The titles should appear above the tables and below the figures. The tables should NOT be sent as images; the contents of the tables should be typed and included in the manuscript.
10. If authentic samples of students' written output are included, they should be typed. The scanned copies of such material should be sent separately as attachments for verification.
11. A list of all the references cited in the text should be given at the end of the article.
 - In each reference, only the author's last name and initials are to be provided.
 - The year is placed after the author's name.
 - Only the first word of the title and the

sub-title (after a colon) are capitalized along with proper nouns.

- Titles of books and journals should be in *italics*.
- Quotation marks are not to be used in the title.
- For electronic sources such as websites, the date of accessing the source should be given in brackets after the URL.

12. The filename of the article (in MS Word format) sent as an email attachment should contain key words from the title and the (lead) author's name.

CHECKLIST FOR MANUSCRIPT REVIEW

1. Does this article present and/or discuss ***issues that are important and relevant*** to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL/EFL context?
2. Is the ***title*** clear, short and appropriate for the content of the article?
3. Is the ***abstract*** brief, clear, inclusive and consistent with the content of the article?
4. Is the ***introduction*** relevant, meaningful and purposeful?
5. Is the ***literature review*** relevant to the article and focussed?
6. Does the article establish a clear ***rationale*** for the study and state the ***problem*** clearly?
7. Are the ***techniques and tools*** used appropriate for the study?
8. Are the ***results*** clearly presented and

- | | |
|--|---|
| discussed? | on the topic? |
| 9. Are the <i>findings</i> based on a robust analysis of the data and clearly presented? | 11. Are <i>implications</i> of the findings discussed in the article? |
| 10. Are the <i>conclusions</i> appropriate and reasonable, and linked to other studies | 12. Are the <i>references</i> appropriate, current, sufficient and consistent with in-text citations? |

Consultancy Services by ELTAI

ELTAI is happy to announce its consultancy services in any area of teaching English, especially the use of technological tools for the teaching and learning of communication skills in English. The consultancy will specifically provide resource persons for conducting training workshops on virtual learning, covering the use of digital tools for teaching English in the context of the 21st century, including the following:

- Virtual Classroom
- Wiki
- Google Drive
- Google and Yahoo Groups
- Blogging
- Social Networking
- Mobile Learning
- Flipped Classroom

ELTAI resource persons may also conduct workshops on using these tools and technological resources for developing specific language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as teaching vocabulary and grammar interactively and in context.

Institutions which require consultancy in these areas may write to Prof. S. Rajagopalan at eltai_india@yahoo.co.in with CC to Dr. P. N. Ramani at ramanipn@gmail.com.

ELTAI also encourages its members to design and undertake action research (AR) projects at school and college levels and will be happy to support such projects financially as and when such proposals are called for and to the extent possible. After announcements to this effect, teachers may submit their AR project proposals to either Prof. Rajagopalan or Dr Ramani, as indicated.

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